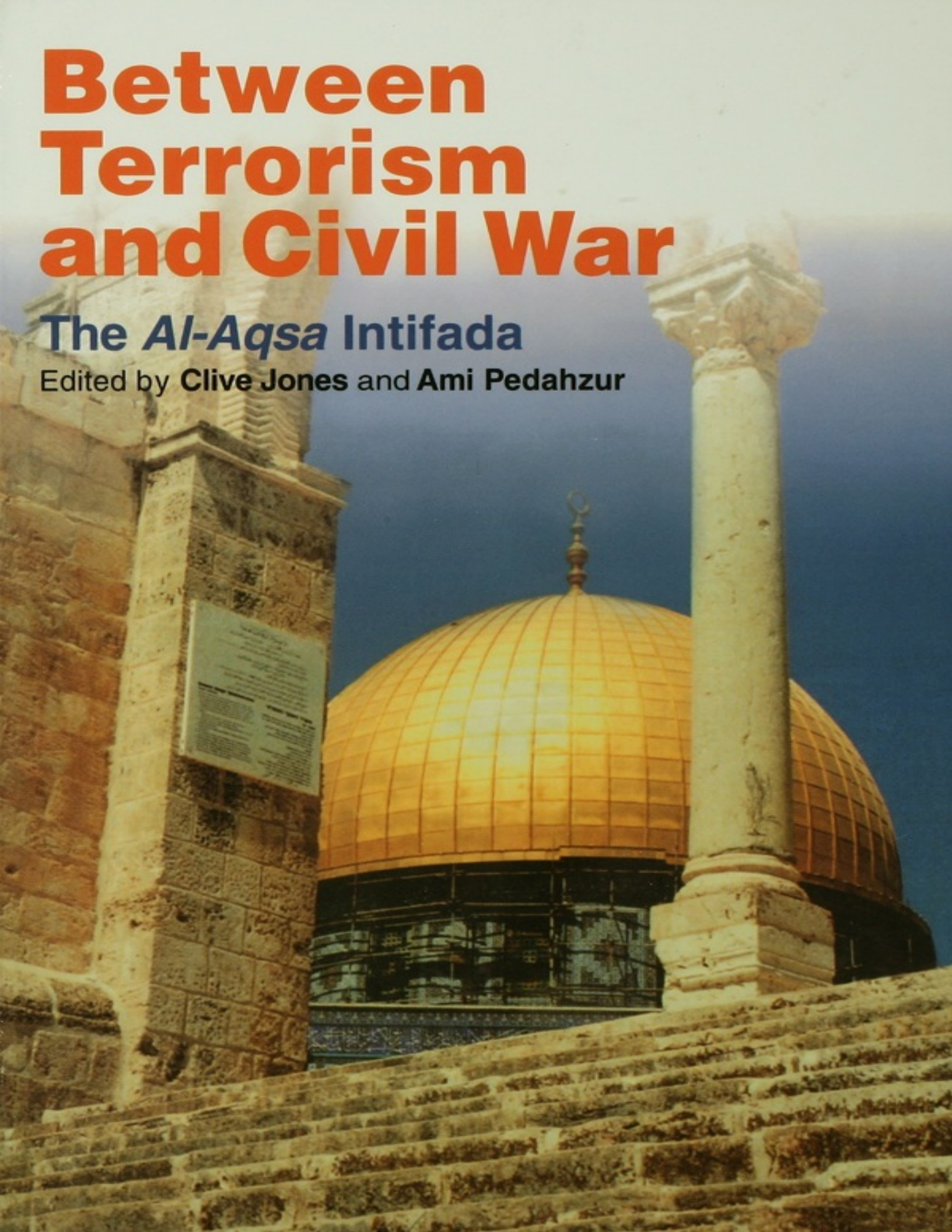
Between Terrorism and Civil War

The *Al-Aqsa* Intifada

Edited by **Clive Jones** and **Ami Pedahzur**



BETWEEN TERRORISM AND CIVIL WAR

Definitions of the *Al-Aqsa* intifada have ranged from being part of the global war on terrorism, an asymmetric inter-state war, to being part of the on-going Palestinian struggle for national liberation. All have validity as explanatory paradigms, but equally, none can capture fully the dynamics of this conflict.

By constrast, this volume seeks to explore whether the current violence, its origins and dynamics can best be understood as a manifestation of civil war. In so doing, it explores the following questions: how the use of violence by all parties has been conditioned and or constrained by the domestic factors pertaining to their societies; how external actors have dealt with the violence internally, and how, in turn, this has impacted on their relations with Israel and the Palestinians; and what does the conduct of the *Al-Aqsa* intifada suggest about the broader issue of state boundaries and state legitimacy in the contemporary Middle East.

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A Framework for Analysis

CLIVE JONES

It has become almost an axiom among keen observers of the current violence between Israel and the Palestinians to understand the present through the prism of the past. Following the horrific Seder massacre in Netanya on 28 March 2002, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon addressed the nation in sombre tones, and spoke of the Jewish state being at war with the Palestinians. The emotions stirred up by his speech reminded many of the national mood on the eve of the June 1967 War, when, faced with the animus of its surrounding Arab neighbours, Israel's very existence appeared to be at stake. This call to the barricades has a powerful resonance among a polity where defence has been the dominant totem around which national life has come to be organised.[1] For others, the map for reading the contours of what has come to be known euphemistically as the Al-Aqsa intifada is to be found in the events of 1947–48 when two communities battled for political ascendancy and territorial hegemony over the territory that was British Mandate Palestine.[2]

The comparisons, to be sure, are often disturbing in their exactitude. The indiscriminate use of terror bombings, particularly in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, was a prominent feature of the internecine violence between Palestinian and Jew between November 1947 and May 1948. Professor Yoav Gelber defined this period as a ‘civil war’ between Jews and Palestinians for control of land and resources, albeit one that ‘took place under British sovereignty and in the presence of British troops’. He goes on to note:

> Throughout the civil war, [the] characteristic tactics were urban guerrilla raids or shooting attacks on isolated rural settlements, and ambushes on the opponents' transportation lines. No territory could be gained — even temporarily — and decisive determination of an outcome of hostilities was impossible. Lacking proper objectives, the antagonists carried out their attacks on non-combatant targets, subjecting civilians to deprivation, intimidation and harassment. Consequently, the weaker, less cohesive and backward Palestinian society collapsed under a not so heavy strain.[3]

Then, as now, such violence, often indiscriminate in its choice of targets, is seen as a strategic threat to Israel since at its heart lies the atavistic fear that such violence denies the legality, if not the reality, of the other. The contemporary refrain from Israeli politicians and the international community that the elected *Rais* of the Palestine National Authority (PNA), Yasser Arafat, must do more to control the Islamist militant groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, again, finds an uneasy echo in events over half a century ago. As leader of the pre-state *Yishuv* — the Jewish community in Palestine — David Ben-Gurion had a tense relationship with members of the right-wing militias *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and the *Lehi*. The extent to which Ben-Gurion was able and willing to control these two groups whose terror activities brought heavy retribution on the *Yishuv* from the Mandate authorities was only resolved to his satisfaction with the departure of the British Army in May 1948. Therein, perhaps, lies the moral in dealing with the present violence.

However prescient, analogies remain imprecise guides to understanding the present violence.

Unlike the internecine conflict of 1947–48, a state of Israel exists and has recognised formally, under the 1993 Oslo accords, the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. In this regard, the violence occasioned (though not caused) by the insensitive visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount/*Harem al-Sharif* in Jerusalem on 28 September 2000 appeared in concord with an inter-state conflict, albeit conducted between two parties whose military capabilities remain vastly unequal. Such a view, while parsimonious in explanation, denies the central role that borders, or rather the lack of them, play in how one can or should interpret the conflict. Israel, alone among the member states of the United Nations (UN), has never formally declared the exact location of the borders of the state, a legacy of the competing political agendas within the broad scope of Zionism.[4]

The Palestinian terror attacks have now forced the issue of borders to the fore of Israel's political agenda. While justified by the exigencies of securing the mass of the Israeli population inside the old Green Line, Israel's construction of a security fence just beyond its pre-1967 boundary with the West Bank exposes political cleavages that have always simmered between Israelis and Palestinians and among Israelis themselves.

For the Palestinians, the erection of a security fence is but another example of how Israel tramples on their sovereign rights as land is confiscated unilaterally beyond the Green Line. For the settlers, the fence represents the emergence of a de facto border that denies legitimacy to their eschatological claims to ‘Judea and Samaria’ as the state comes to sacrifice their world-view by reference to a casuistry that denies the very essence of what a Jewish state should be.

For the settlers, the security fence implies the acceptance of a border with its concomitant demands on sovereign recognition of a foreign entity.[5]

For them, ironically, viewing the conflict as a civil war, rather than just part of a broader global campaign against terrorism supports their world-view as it at least acknowledges that control over land and resources remains a contested issue, and that Palestinian claims to the self-same space can and should be challenged.

The Palestinians share the same sentiment over the erection of a border fence with the settlers but for profoundly different reasons. Aside from the expropriation of land, any border fence adds to the economic distress of Palestinians unable to travel into Israel proper in search of menial employment, while settlers will be allowed to exit and enter as they please along specially-constructed routes. Adding to their frustration, no plans have been announced for any of the settlements to be dismantled or abandoned.[6]

From a Palestinian perspective, little incentive therefore exists to support a cessation of violence against Israel, or indeed to restrict attacks only to the symbols of Israel's presence in the Occupied Territories, be they settlements or military targets. In this regard, the Palestinian strategy in this ‘war’ has proven to be a doubled-edged sword. On the one hand, attacks inside the pre-1967 border have, to use the parlance of nuclear strategy, imposed a balance of terror, however grotesque or inhumane this may appear to the outside observer. On the other, the retribution exacted by Israel has been costly, both in terms of lives lost, property demolished and infrastructure destroyed. This cycle of violence between two national movements appears more akin to an inter-, rather than intrastate conflict. Indeed, Israel's Operation ‘Defensive Shield’ was defined as a calibrated response designed to root out the ‘terrorist infrastructure’ in Palestinian-controlled territory.[7] Defining the conflict as a war on terrorism, an asymmetric inter-state war, a

struggle for national liberation or a civil war therefore tells as us more about the political position of those offering such definitions, than it does about the nature of the conflict itself. All have validity as explanatory paradigms, but equally, none can capture fully the dynamics of this conflict.

While conscious of such limitations, this collection frames its analyses of the Al-Aqsa intifada within the construct of civil war. With the end of the Cold War, much has been made of the shift in the very nature of 'civil conflict'. Removed from the exigencies of superpower competition, civil war has become 'neo-medieval', where gratuitous violence in failing or failed states is motivated by criminal rewards rather than any overt ideological, let alone political, agenda. The extent to which the Al-Aqsa intifada correlates to either an 'old' or 'new' definition of a civil war or internecine conflict requires, in the first instance, an elaboration of those self-same definitions.

THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA AS CIVIL WAR

It has been argued that the 'civil wars' of the contemporary age are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from the 'civil wars' of the past. 'Old' civil wars were defined by a clear clash of competing ideological viewpoints seeking to impose their respective normative values over the same society or ethnic group in a given geographical space. Sometimes these wars attracted outside intervention but this did not change the essential dynamic of the conflict. The Spanish Civil War, the Chinese Civil War, the Greek Civil War, and even the Korean and Vietnam wars all exhibited to a greater or lesser degree, such variables. By contrast, the new civil wars, what Donald Snow has referred to as 'Uncivil Wars', contain little that is ideological and, by inference, noble.[8]

Oft-cited examples are the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia where the simple pursuit of private gain in the form of controlling access to the raw — be it diamonds, timber or other natural commodities — of a failed or failing state deny any ideological motivation to the actions of the protagonists beyond pure greed. Such perceptions are merely reinforced by the arbitrary and savage nature of the violence meted out, including the horrific spectacle of forced amputations on a whole population irrespective of age, race or gender. In short, the main actors in the new civil wars are motivated by little more than greed, with little or no recourse to the need to ameliorate some collective grievance, be it ethnic or ideological.

This clear dichotomy between old and new civil wars has, however, come to be challenged. Stathis Kalyvas has noted that those who impute little political or ideological motivation to combatants in 'new' civil wars have failed to appreciate fully the diversity of factors that motivate and propel protagonists to engage in the most savage forms of violence. Kalyvas highlights the work of scholars such as Paul Richards who, contrary to the popular image of the rebels in Sierra Leone as a bunch of ill disciplined thugs bent purely upon terrorising the local populace for personal gain, noted the high level of political consciousness that underpinned their action. As Kalyvas notes, 'Their ideological motivations are simply not always visible to observers looking for "Western" patterns of allegiance and discourse. They make the flawed assumption that organisations using religious idioms and local cultural practices to mobilise people — rather than easily recognisable universalistic appeals — lack any ideology.'[9]

The ethnocentric prism through which the current taxonomy of 'civil wars' is constructed is therefore flawed according to Kalyvas because it simplifies historical precedent and contemporary patterns of civil war. For example, 'warlords' are not the latest manifestation of

the new civil wars but existed previously in Lebanon and China. Moreover, despite the pejorative connotations of the term, 'warlords levy taxes, administer justice, maintain some degree of order, and generally assume the burdens of government in the areas that they control.'[10]

In short, the apparent transitory nature of groups that is so often portrayed in the literature concerning 'new' civil wars is often at variance with a reality Western politicians cannot, or will not recognise. This is not to excuse the extreme forms of violence and brutality that such groups inflict upon defenceless populations. Rather it is to highlight that while Western moral sensibilities determine only madness in the behaviour of rebel groups such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, method can and does determine their bloody actions. The forced amputation of women and children in rural areas between 1995 and 1996 was seen as a form of particularly savage barbarism. In fact, it was a vicious attempt to prevent people coerced into the rebel movement returning to their villages to harvest crops. Once word spread that the rebels would forcibly amputate the limbs of defectors, people gave up trying to return and remained beholden to, if not captives of, the rebel agenda.[11]

To date, the Al-Aqsa intifada has yet to exhibit the brutal extremes of the civil conflicts in West Africa, though incidents such as the lynching of two Israeli reserve soldiers in Ramallah in October 2000 by a Palestinian mob suggest that no conflict that is internecine in nature remains immune from such visceral spectacles. Following on from the arguments of Kalyvas, it is a conflict that demonstrates more continuity than perhaps change in the nature of civil war. It should be noted from the outset that the very term, intifada remains a contested issue.

Aside from its first four months, the current violence bears little resemblance to the mass street demonstrations and stone-throwing that marked the intifada of 1987 to 1993. Indeed, the proliferation of militias under the auspices, though never the full control, of the PNA has resulted in the conflict developing through several consecutive stages: popular uprising in Palestinian areas 'A'; attacks upon Israeli military targets and settlements in the Occupied Territories and East Jerusalem; attacks upon Israeli civilian targets within the Israel's pre-1967 border; Israel's massive military response in areas A and targeted attacks on individuals, infrastructure and symbols deemed responsible for the ongoing violence. To be sure, these periods are not mutually exclusive. For example, targeted assassination has been a constant tool of Israeli policy irrespective of the wider ramifications that this policy invariably incurs. For example, the killing of Israel's tourism minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, was a direct response from members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to the killing of their leader, Abu Ali Mustafa.

Like 'old' civil wars, this conflict has clear ideological and political underpinnings. For the PNA, ending Israel's occupation of Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza remains the common denominator that unites all Palestinian factions. Yet the very fact that we can write of Palestinian factions also highlights the often fragmented nature of the PNA. Arafat's incompetent and often corrupt authority has allowed a myriad of groups and militias to emerge under enigmatic leaders able and willing to mobilise support for anti-Israel activities.

Until his arrest in April 2002, the best-known of these leaders was Marwan Bargouti, the self-proclaimed leader of the *Tanzim* militia in Ramallah. While Bargouti was at least nominally associated with Arafat's own Fatah movement, his appeal on the Palestinian street and the increased daring of *Tanzim* attacks suggest a comparison with a type of warlordism emerging. With the infrastructure of the PNA devastated by the ferocity of Operation 'Defensive Shield' in April 2002, warlordism, defined here as the appeal of a strong individual within geographical

confines, appears set to continue to define the contours of Palestinian politics.

If the emergence of warlords at least defines part of the fragmented Palestinian approach towards this conflict, definitions for Israelis remain more oblique yet no less important. Premier Ariel Sharon's view that reaching an accommodation with the Palestinians is impossible until 'they are badly beaten' carries an emotive appeal for a nation that perceives itself to be under siege.[12] The proliferation of car stickers in the spring of 2002 declaring 'Brother, be strong', was an open manifestation of an ill-defined, yet still tangible fear across Israeli society that their very existence was in peril. The spate of suicide or 'homicide' bombings is seen as strategic threat since, at their very core, lies the denial of Jews as a nation to live in their own sovereign space even if Israel were to withdraw fully from the territories captured in and occupied after June 1967.

Such a position sees terrorism as a manifestation of civil war since claim is made upon all the land and merely serves to act as a rationale for those on both sides who oppose real territorial compromise on the basis of ideology, religion, strategy or a combination of all three. Behind such public expressions of social solidarity, Israelis have difficulty in defining this conflict, something that negates the formulation and implementation of coherent policy options. The recent furore over the construction of the 'security fence' is the most recent example. As Ze'ev Sternhall has noted, 'The less a society is convinced of its moral lightness, the less certain it is about the aims of the war that has been forced upon it by its rulers — and the more it needs propaganda, pressures and threats.'[13]

Because terrorism remains decentralised and ad hoc, the coherence of society based around a defined, existential threat has come to be questioned. Dr Yechiel Klar of Tel Aviv University has defined the conflict as one of 'Privatised War'. He notes:

> Every individual remains exposed to his own private risk, without a national framework in whose name the citizens fight, or which protects us. There is a sense of the privatization of fear, not of any danger to the nation's existence. In war, there is a goal that unifies; in our current situation, there is no shared collective goal. [Operation] Defensive Shield was among other things an attempt to create a sense of war, but it was a fleeting episode and the attempt did not really work.[14]

The use of terror in this inter-communal war contains therefore an essential paradox. Conventional interstate wars can threaten the survival of the state as well as the people. But the very idea of the all-powerful state was a psychological bulwark for the citizen. In the present conflict, the wave of suicide bombings does not by itself endanger the physical existence of the state, but it does threaten the existence of each individual. It has become a war which has exposed the limits of state power against the fragmentary nature of the PNA, its warlords, and among a Palestinian people who feel they have little to lose.

Simply put, a cleavage exists between description of the conflict and prescriptive measures required to ameliorate its worst excesses. The conflict exhibits clear patterns associated with civil violence but Israel's response has varied from treating the violence as simply a manifestation of criminality, to being a brazen attempt to embroil Israel in a wider *inter*-state conflict. Conspicuous by its absence has been any appreciation in the Israeli, or indeed Palestinian, literature of this conflict in terms of an intrastate conflict with acts of terrorism being its most public manifestation.

It is this particular aspect of the conflict that this collection seeks to address. It deliberately eschews a hard and fast theoretical framework in favour of an approach that embraces conceptual flexibility. It examines not only the internal dynamics that have determined Palestinian and Israeli attitudes and responses to the current violence but also the response of surrounding Arab states to a conflict that has posed serious questions regarding regime legitimacy and stability. Bearing in mind this broad conceptual approach, these essays aim to examine the following themes:

1. The extent to which this conflict can or should be considered a civil war or variants thereof.
2. How the use of violence by all parties been conditioned and/or constrained by the domestic factors pertaining to their societies.
3. How external actors have dealt with the violence internally and how, in turn, this has impacted upon their relations with Israel and the Palestinians.
4. What does the conduct and scope of the Al-Aqsa intifada suggest about the broader issue of state boundaries and state legitimacy in the Middle East?
5. As a civil conflict, does the Al-Aqsa intifada represent a micro 'clash of civilizations' as well as a clash of national identities?

The above themes are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, some of the issues raised will be more appropriate to particular issue areas or case studies than others. Indeed, it is the intention of the editors to encourage as wide-ranging a debate as possible. By examining the Al-Aqsa intifada as at least constituting a manifestation of a civil war, it is hoped that this collection will contribute to a broader understanding of the role that internecine violence now plays in shaping the scope and direction of both regional and global politics.

NOTES

1. See the interview by Lally Weymouth with Ariel Sharon in Newsweek, 139/13, 1 April 2002, pp.34–5.
2. Ze'ev Schiff, 'The Blunders of Lebanon', *Ha'arelz*, 7 June 2002, p.B3.
3. Yoav Gelber, *Palestine 1948* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 2001) p.4.
4. P. R. Kumaraswamy, 'The Legacy of Undefined Borders', *Tel Aviv Notes* (Tel Aviv University — Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies/Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies) No.40, 29 May 2002.
5. Aluf Benn, 'PM Okays Green Line Border Fence', *Ha'aretz*, 4 June 2002.
6. Danny Rubinstein, 'Why the Palestinians Don't Want Separation', *Ha'aretz*, 11 June 2002.
7. Mark A. Heller 'Operation "Defensive Wall": A Change in Israeli Strategy?', *Tel Aviv Notes* (Tel Aviv University — Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies/Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies) No.34, 4 April 2002.
8. Donald Snow, *UnCivil Wars: International Security and the New Internal Conflicts* (London: Lynne Reinner 1996).
9. Stathis N. Kalyvas, '"New" and "Old" Civil Wars: A Valid distinction?', *World Politics* 54 (Oct. 2001) pp. 104–5.

10. Ibid. p. 105.
11. Ibid, p.116.
12. Amos Elon, ‘No Exit’, *New York Review of Books*, 49/9 (23 May 2002) p. 16.
13. Ze'ev Sternhall, ‘Immoral Imperative’, *Ha'aretz*, 16 May 2002.
14. Lily Galilee, ‘At War with Ourselves’, *Ha'aretz*, 16 May 2002.

The Causes of Vigilante Political Violence: The Case of Jewish Settlers

AMI PEDAHZUR and ARIE PERLIGER

On Friday morning, 27 February 1994, 29 Palestinian worshipers were killed and more than 100 were wounded in Hebron after they were attacked by Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish settler, who came from the nearby settlement of Kiryat-Arba. This event was without doubt one of the most devastating acts of violence ever perpetrated by Jewish settlers, but it was merely a single event in a long period of continuous brutal violence between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish settlers in the territories of Judea, Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip. Israeli police investigated more than 1,130 cases of settler violence during the five years prior to the Hebron massacre. Furthermore, between 1987 and 2002, more then 120 Palestinian citizens were killed as a result of settler violence. However, the violence was not unilateral; in the same period, 459 Israelis were killed by non-organized acts of Palestinian violence in the territories.[1]

This contribution examines the main factors contributing to settler violence in the territories by using the conceptual framework of vigilante violence.

First, we address the concept of vigilantism in order to employ it as a theoretical framework which will help determine the main catalysts of Jewish settler political violence.

Second, we will investigate the development of Jewish political violence in Israel and especially in the territories by evaluating the relevant historical and political factors.

Subsequently, we will incorporate major examples of settler vigilantism into our model of vigilante violence in order to analyze and improve our understanding of settler political violence.

Finally, we will try to assess future tendencies in the relationship between Jews and Arabs in the territories.

CONCEPTUALIZING VIGILANTISM

Various scholars seeking to understand and explain the eruption of religion-based political violence among Jewish settlers in the past 25 years have emphasized important variables, such as the cultural and ideological components of violence,[2] sociological elements,[3] and several have even used rational-organizational theories.[4] Still, there is a need for a useful theoretical tool which can help us achieve three important goals regarding our understanding of settler violence:

1. To distinguish between the various types of violence.
2. To define the motivation behind the different types of violence.
3. To indicate the relationship between the different types of violence and their organized or spontaneous nature.

By incorporating settler violence into the theoretical framework of vigilantism, we would like to address these three goals and increase our understanding of the factors contributing to this

violence.

Interest in vigilante political violence stems from the study of a more general phenomenon, that of vigilantism, which was deeply embedded in North American frontier culture and includes both positive and negative aspects. The former implies the organized action of citizens aiming to maintain public order, while the latter, and more commonly mentioned aspect, refers to illegal measures often employed in the effort to keep order and avenge the initial crime, thus taking over the state's role in protecting its citizens.

Research undertaken by Rosenbaum and Sederberg was essential in defining vigilantism, and helps shed light on the phenomenon.[5] They argued that, 'Vigilantism is simply establishment violence. It consists of acts or threats of coercion in violation of the formal boundaries of an established sociopolitical order which, however, are intended by the violators to defend that order from some form of subversion.'[6]

Gurr's definition[7] of vigilante terrorism as '[violent] activity intended to protect the status-quo or to return to the status-quo of an earlier period' closely matches the previous definition, and as Rosenbaum and Sederberg contend, the ultimate aim of vigilante violent groups is to maintain the existing socio-political order and thus provide support for the current ruling system.[8] Sprinzak greatly contributed to clarifying the concept of vigilante violence, elaborating it in the following manner:[9]

> A vigilante movement never sees itself in a state of principled conflict either with the government or with the prevailing concept of law. It is not revolutionary and does not try to bring down authority. Rather, what characterizes the vigilante state of mind is the profound conviction that the government or some of its agencies have failed to enforce their own order in an area under their jurisdiction. Backed by the fundamental norm of self-defense and speaking in the name of what they believe to be the valid law of the land, vigilantes, in effect, enforce the law and execute justice. 'Due process of the law' is the least of their concerns.[10]

Although the roots of the concept are embedded in American political culture, which is substantially different from the political culture which developed in Israel, it is still very useful in defining Jewish political violence in Israel, as previously mentioned by several critics.[11] Sprinzak's contention, that vigilante violence is not in conflict with the laws of the state, may initially seem inappropriate to the Israeli context. However, careful examination of the issue confirms that it is does pertain to most cases of Jewish political violence in Israel and especially in the territories. Specifically, the fact that the incentive for most instances of settler political violence is religious and the violence is often grounded in a theological basis, raises doubts regarding the compatibility of settler religious values with the laws of the state of Israel. It suggests perhaps, that, not unlike Muslim acts of terror, Jewish vigilante violence is based on the intention to replace the state's legal system with a religious legislature.

Nevertheless, evidence indicates that the majority of the perpetrators of Jewish violence have expressed their commitment to the state of Israel, its values and laws. This is mainly due to the fact that the system in Israel is a combination of strong national-religious components and diluted democratic elements. While many of the perpetrators of Jewish political violence would prefer to give greater emphasis to the religious component at the expense of democratic values, a complete transformation of Israeli legislature was never their intended goal. In fact, even the

activities of the so-called ‘Jewish Underground’, the most sophisticated and violent of Jewish terrorist organizations still active in Israel to date, is included, according to Sprinzak, within the definition of ‘vigilante terrorism’.[12]

TYPOLOGY OF VIGILANTISM

To further substantiate the rationale for using the concept of ‘vigilante political violence’ to help define and explain Jewish settler political violence in the state of Israel, we apply the triple-level typology of vigilantism as proposed by Rosenbaum and Sederberg.[13] Researchers of this typology advise caution against the risk of oversimplification. However, despite this problem, the suggested typology may be potentially useful for our analysis, according to the following schema:

Vigilantism I: Crime Control Vigilantism

This refers to the violent vigilante struggle against perpetrators who, after causing damage to property or harm to people, manage to escape the arm of the law due to the authorities' inefficient, corrupt or lenient treatment of their crime. This category is particularly relevant to North American history, which provides an abundance of examples of private groups who took steps to ‘restore’ justice.[14] In Latin America, this phenomenon was implemented by death-squads, who acted in numerous countries and often included former law enforcement personnel. Out of uniform, these trained policemen gave themselves the ‘right’ to extend the realm of the law and ‘improve’ the justice-seeking process by systematically assassinating criminals. The same methods were used by special anti-terrorist forces in Spain who initiated terrorist acts against ETA activists.[15]

Vigilantism II: Social Group Control Vigilantism

This type of vigilantism aims to control competing groups or groups vying for a new social order. Vigilantes, in this case, do not focus on criminals, but rather on population groups who aspire towards either social or political change or desire to improve their own status in the social arena. If vigilantes suspect the situation to be a zero-sum game, the likelihood that they will turn to violence increases significantly. This violence may be directed towards groups with certain primordial traits (such as race, religion, status or tribe), economic or political characteristics. Examples of this type of vigilantism include the Klu-Klux-Klan's activities in the early twentieth century, which aimed to return the ‘Afro-American population to its proper place’, the Muslim Brothers' religious struggle against secular movements in Egypt in the 1930s and radical Muslim sects active in Pakistan.

Vigilantism III: Regime Control Vigilantism

This occurs when certain groups feel the current regime is not protecting their interests sufficiently and by means of violent action, they aim to alter the regime's functioning. Therefore, the violence is aimed at political officials. If this violent perpetration is initiated by officials, particularly those involved in national security, it can often result in a *coup d'état*, such as the case of King Farouk's overthrow in Egypt.

The typology proposed by Rosenbaum and Sederberg,[16] which takes into consideration the intended target of the vigilante act (individual perpetrators, groups who wish to undo the status

quo, and political officials/representatives of the regime), also contributes another useful feature. Its analytical units may shed light on the processes leading to the phenomenon of vigilante political violence and the fine distinctions which characterize each sub-type as presented in Table 1.

The alternative, newer model, which is based on the assumptions of Rosenbaum and Sederberg,[17] states that the first necessary condition for vigilante activity is a provocation, initiated either by individuals or a group,

TABLE 1
A MODEL OF VIGILANTE POLITICAL VIOLENCE

	Vigilantism I	**Vigilantism II**	**Vigilantism III**
Goal of the Provocation	Directed at individuals or their property	Aimed at the regime in order to change the status quo regarding the allocation of values	Aimed at the regime in order to change the status quo regarding the allocation of values
Anticipated Response	Efficient enforcement of the law applied to the perpetrator	Maintaining the status quo desired by the group	Maintaining the status quo desired by the group
Perceived Response	Insufficient response as perceived by vigilantes	A change in the status quo or an unwillingness to maintain it	The group perceives the response as completely incompetent
Target of the Vigilante Activity	Individuals or group responsible for the provocation	The groups that aim to change the status quo	The current regime or its representatives
Characteristics of the Vigilantism	The victims or relatives of the victims of the provocation	Members or representatives of the group affected by the change	Members or representatives of the group affected by the change
Nature of the Vigilante Activity	Sporadic and spontaneous	Planned and organized	Ranging anywhere from spontaneous reaction to revolution

and directed toward others. This provocation can be in the form of damage to the members or property of the group, with the intent to undermine the group's social status or instigate reform in the value system which constitutes the basis of the current social order. No violent action is committed at this stage, since the potential vigilantes still await the response of the official authorities. An official response that is considered satisfactory significantly reduces the likelihood of a vigilante-type response. However, if the group assumes that a sufficient and just response on behalf of the official authorities is an unlikely scenario, the risk of a violent response increases. As the previous typology demonstrates, the goals of vigilante activity range from attacks on individuals and groups or acts executed against inept and helpless regimes, which are not capable of protecting their citizenry from provocations.

Not only the targets, but also the type of vigilantism is subject to change. In vigilantism I, we

may assume that the victims of the provocation were 'near or dear' to the vigilantes, whereas in vigilantism II and III, the vigilante response would probably come from representatives of groups most likely to be affected by a change in the status quo or social order. These distinctions can also indicate the nature of the vigilante response: In the first case (vigilantism I), we expect a swift, spontaneous and less sophisticated reaction shortly following the provocation, while in the other two cases (vigilantism II and III), an organized and well-planned reaction demonstrating a high level of sophistication becomes more likely.

Prior to featuring the model in order to explain the development of Jewish settler political violence, we should consider the particular conditions which help generate this phenomenon. Hence, we first review the historical and political conditions in the state of Israel which helped create the setting for the rise in Jewish political violence.

JEWISH POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The phenomenon of Jewish political violence, present in the state of Israel ever since its establishment, is unusual because it cannot be explained by the typical reasons accounting for political violence. This is due to two factors, the first cultural and the second, historic-political. Culturally, despite the acceptance of certain illegal elements, which were an integral element of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and later found a voice in the state of Israel as well,[18] the tendency to avoid political violence and terrorism was a leitmotif throughout the years of Jewish exile and affected the activities of many Jewish communities. Whether motivated by free will or fear, most Jewish communities complied with the rules of the countries where they lived, no matter how harsh or discriminating, and this attitude was supported both in religious and traditional terms.[19]

The historic-political factor renders this phenomenon unusual. Jewish nationalist goals which motivated the political violence that developed in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century (and became the domain of various Jewish underground organizations such as '*Etzel*' and '*Lehi*') were realized with the establishment of an independent Jewish state in May 1948. A sovereign Jewish home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel was the primary reason for the existence of most political groups from both right and left of the political spectrum, and it was also the rationale for the majority of groups who chose to use violence as their strategy. Moreover, the rationalization for violence committed by more senior groups – expressed as concern over the safety of Jewish residents facing attacks from either ruling powers or Arab neighbors – was also eliminated once the monopoly of power was placed in the hands of the Jewish state.

However, from the beginning of the 1970s, Israel witnessed a new wave of Jewish violence, mainly in the territories, which could be divided into two main types:

1. Organized violence of the 'Jewish underground' and other small extremist groups.
2. Sporadic violence of settlers.

Both types of violence were aimed particularly at the Palestinian population in the territories. How can we explain the fact that in the several decades since the establishment of the state of Israel, the phenomenon of Jewish violence has erupted and persisted? What are its characteristics? What are the factors leading to its growth? In general, we can indicate two main approaches to these questions, one related to historical conditions, and the other concerned with

political ones.

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

Earlier, it was mentioned that Jewish communities in the Diaspora, being a persecuted minority under tyrannical regimes, learned to restrain their tendencies toward violence. This inclination began with the great trauma following the disaster suffered by the Jewish people after the unsuccessful Jewish revolt against the Romans in AD 66–73. The Jews were expelled from their land and became a minority, often persecuted in the countries in which they settled. This trauma, accompanied by centuries of oppression, which included a high degree of suspicion and distrust of the local legal system and its rulers, led the Jewish communities in the Diaspora to act according to the guiding directive, 'the rule of the country is your abiding law'.[20] Problems arose when the local law contradicted Jewish traditions or the Halacha (The Jewish Traditional Law). In order to deal with these situations, the Jewish communities developed complex non-legalistic norms and practices that helped them to deceive the rulers.[21]

This attitude did not change with their immigration to Israel. The fact that the establishment of the state of Israel took place relatively quickly, founded by immigrants from every corner of the globe, including a majority who had lived under hostile and non-democratic regimes, did not exactly smooth the way for the formation of a strong democratic basis for the young state. In fact, according to Negbi, in the first years of statehood, there was an atmosphere of contempt, alienation and even hostility toward the national legal authorities.[22] The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, wrote on this issue:

> The people of the State of Israel have yet to absorb sufficiently the notions of national recognition and responsibility suitable to a sovereign nation. In most countries of the Diaspora, Jews suffered from a harsh and hostile law and had to be shrewd in order to elude the discriminating legal restrictions imposed upon them. Habits acquired over generations cannot be erased in a few years, and a new immigrant cannot immediately turn into a native or a reformed citizen. A reformed state requires the reformation of moral values, manifested in a reformed and educated citizenry.[23]

Thus we may conclude that while it is true that Jews in Israel lacked a tradition of political violence, at the same time, a tradition of legalism and trust in the authorities was also absent. In fact, suspicion toward the ruling authorities, particularly regarding its willingness to protect Jews and their respective collective interests, has become an inherent factor in the Jewish collective memory and, therefore, also in the political culture of the new political entity established by this community.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The political conditions that evolved in the state of Israel are, to a great extent, an outcome of historical conditions. Despite the desire of the state's leaders to see Israel evolve into a liberal democracy fashioned after the Western model, the type of rule which actually emerged was somewhat removed from this template. As early as the mid-1970s, sociologist Yonathan Shapiro claimed that Israel's democracy was more a matter of procedure than of essence.[24] Even though the formal foundations of a democracy, such as free and fair elections, parties' electoral campaigns, and recurrent rotations of administration, were all practised and maintained, other components essential to democratic thought, such as protecting basic individual rights, including

the freedom of speech, congregation and to practice one's faith, were either missing or deficient.

Many aspects need to be considered in reference to the constricted nature of Israeli democracy, first and foremost, the status of the Arab minority.[25] However, regarding the phenomenon of Jewish violence, the most important aspect is the inherent tension between the wish to maintain Israel's status as a democracy vis-à-vis the Jewish character of the establishment, both in ethnic and religious terms. The connection between religion, ethnic nationality and the state, creates a constant tension between two cultural value systems that are often considered mutually exclusive. Moreover, this tension has far-reaching implications for the official procedures of the state's management.

The status of religion in the state of Israel is one of the main obstacles to the drafting and approval of a legislative constitution, leaving many unclear and unresolved issues marked by the tension between democratic law and the rule of tradition. Thus, the fact that most perpetrators of Jewish violence come from a religious background is not surprising. That is to say, although religion has a strong hold on the country, the current government of the state and its systems are for the most part under secular control, and this is considered by many sections of the religious populace to be both alien and temporary.[26] Thus, the tension between religious and democratic value systems leads many citizens to treat the state's current status with guarded suspicion and to question the viability of the state in its current ambiguity.

The outcome of the 1967 War only intensified the tension. The Israeli victory and the fact that Israel succeeded in reclaiming areas of great historical and traditional significance (i.e., Jerusalem and the Western wall, as well as Hebron and the Tomb of Patriarchs), seemed to many of the religious Zionists (a sector that traditionally tried to combine the Zionist movement with Jewish religion) another landmark in the rebuilding of the new Israeli state. According to this sector, the reformed state would include three essential elements: control over all of biblical Israel, a population of Jews and government under Jewish law (the Halacha).[27]

These three elements were the basis of emerging messianic feelings among many of the younger generation of religious Zionists. Moreover, many of them, with the encouragement of their religious leaders, saw themselves duty-bound to act in order to speed up the realization of this vision, which was called, '*Geulah*' (specifically, the salvation of the Jewish people by achieving all aforementioned three elements in the state of Israel).[28] The most prominent act was settling the lands of Judea and Samaria. The organizational tool used in the implementation of their ideology was the *Gush Emunim* movement. The massive success of the settlement operation, which led to significant demographic and geographical changes in the territories, is illustrated in Figure 1. This presents the current map of the settlements at the time of the Al-Aqsa intifada.

As Figure 1 shows, there is almost no area of the territories where Jewish settlement did not break ground. Moreover, there is no Palestinian city without a Jewish settlement adjoining it, a phenomenon that places in stark relief the daily friction between the two communities. As noted before, the roots of the *Gush Emunim* movement are in religious Zionism, and the fact that most of the settlers in the West Bank and Gaza came from a religious background created a territorial rift, whereby the population on either side of the 'Green Line' was distinguished by the inhabitants' degree of religiosity and ideological determination.[29]

Furthermore, the fact that many of the settlements were established without the government's

consent led many of the settlers to feel ambivalent about the state's legal system. It also gave rise to the question, which of the two systems was their first priority, the messianic-religious or the democratic-political one.[30]

The first major clash between those two normative systems ensued with the evacuation of the Sinai settlements[31] (as part of the peace agreement with Egypt) in early 1982. During the evacuation, many of the settlers of Judea and Samaria joined their Sinai counterparts in their struggle. Once the Israeli authorities began removing settlers, a wave of violence

FIGURE 1
SETTLEMENT MAP

erupted. It was then first demonstrated that religious settlers were not afraid to use violence when their religious ideological beliefs were put at risk by democratic principles. The dichotomy between religious and democratic normative frameworks became most obvious in the struggle against the Oslo Agreements and was underscored by two main developments.

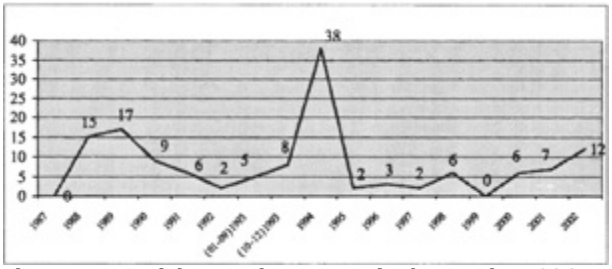
First, there was the growing use of religious terminology, symbols and rationalization in order to de-legitimatize Prime Minister Rabin's government.[32]

The second was the increase in settler aggression following the Oslo Agreements. Just two months after the accords were signed, the so-called ‘Jewish intifada’ broke out. In reaction to several Palestinian terrorist acts against Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and settlers in the territories,

hundreds of settlers participated in riots which included the burning and stoning of Palestinian Arabs and their cars, blocking traffic on many roads in the territories, and even several killings were reported.[33] Aside from the onset of the 'Jewish intifada,' other major landmarks of settler violence against Palestinians were Goldstein's massacre of 29 Palestinians in Hebron and several armed attacks against Palestinians in the same city between July and November 1995.

The outburst of Jewish violence in the wake of the Oslo Agreements is illustrated in Figure 2 (based on 'B'Tselem' Reports, 1994, 2001, 2003, and Israeli police archives), which presents the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli settlers in the territories during the years 1987 to 2002.

FIGURE 2
NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS KILLED BY ISRAELI SETTLERS IN THE TERRITORIES DURING THE YEARS 1987–2002*



This data were gathered from B'Zelem reports and the Jewish terrorism database at the NSSC in Haifa University, and contain only those events that are indentified beyond any doubt as vigilant acts of settlers. It should also be noted that several attacks at the same place and time were calculated as one event. Finally, we can assume that there are many events that do not get any coverage, hence they have not been documented or calculated in the above graphs.

As shown in Figure 2, in the six years between 1987 and September 1993, 54 Palestinians were killed, whereas, no more than one year later, this number was almost equalled when 46 Palestinians were killed. Furthermore, between 1988 and 1993, the average number of police investigations was 162.6; in 1994 alone, more than 310 investigations were launched in connection with settler violence against Palestinian Arabs. Overall, after some calm periods between 1996 and 1999, we can see a new rise in the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli citizens between 2000 and 2002. In sum, the political context of clashes between religious elements and the democratic basis of the Israeli state has had a major role in the intensive history of settler violence.

VIGILANTISM AMONG JEWISH SETTLERS IN THE TERRITORIES: APPLYING THE MODEL

A review of settler violence in the territories throughout the years uncovers glaring examples of all three kinds of vigilantism. In the following sections, the model of vigilantism described above will be used in order to examine some major examples of the three types of vigilantism and thus serve as a tool to help analyze and improve our understanding of settler political violence.

Vigilantism I

As noted, this category of violence refers to crime control violence which erupts when perpetrators feel they need to take the law into their own hands in order to uphold justice. The rationale behind their acts is based on the perception that the government lacks the willingness or ability to address their needs. In many ways, they see themselves as alternative mechanisms for

restoring law and order. The security arrangements imposed on the territories during the 1970s were a major catalyst for the emergence of type I vigilantism among the Jewish population. Over the years, the IDF and Israeli authorities intentionally encouraged settlers to participate in the security tasks of maintaining law and order in their own districts. This was carried out by establishing territorial defense units manned by volunteers from the settlements together with the assistance of IDF logistic backup, which included weapons and other equipment.[34]

Therefore, the nature of this situation, in which settlers assisted military authorities, led many of them to arrive at questionable conclusions regarding when and where to draw the line between legitimate and non-legitimate acts of self-defense. In many cases, this predicament caused them to engage in what they perceived as independent law-keeping initiatives. In general, the settlers' violence in this category of vigilantism can be divided into two main types.

The first includes situations where settlers respond to a direct provocation in a manner that is more aggressive than necessary and, of course, against the law.

The second type is initiating organized independent acts of revenge against the Palestinian population.

One of the most infamous events of the first type of violence involved Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a well-known settler leader in Hebron. In September 1988, when stones were thrown at his car, he shot and killed a nearby Palestinian. Tragically, he did not shoot at the Palestinians who were throwing stones at him, but at those across the road, who were completely innocent. The Israeli Supreme Court called this behavior '…an act that seriously damaged the self-existence of any civilized and humane society'.[35] Several months later, in a similar event, another political leader of the settlers, Pinhas Valerstein, chased and shot a Palestinian youth who had set a tire alight in an attempt to block the road Valerstein was driving on.[36] In both cases, the court found that the defendants were not in life-threatening situations and therefore guilty by criminal law. During the past two years of the Al-Aqsa intifada, these kinds of acts of self-defense intensified and became more organized. Towards the end of the year 2000, the settlers mounted 'independent armed patrols' which would respond to stoning and road-blocks in the territories by the use of firearms against Palestinians.[37]

It should be emphasized that these and similar acts were supported by the political leadership of the settlers. Already in March 1993, the *Yesha* council (a municipal organization which unites all the elected mayors and ideological leaders of the settlements) recommended responding with firearms also in non-life-threatening situations in retaliation for Palestinian stone-throwing attacks on settlers' cars. But the real incentive for this type of attack was revealed by the mayor of the 'Benjamin' regional council, Pinhas Valerstein, who, in an interview with *Ha'aretz* newspaper, declared that the problem was the non-responsiveness and lack of efficiency of the authorities in regard to the growing incidents of attacks on settlers in the territories. He said, '… we won't let this situation of the daily stonings of settler cars continue without response'.[38] With respect to armed patrols, the motivation was the same as declared by the *Yesha* council head, Beni Cashriel: '…they are initiated because the army is incapable of properly safeguarding traffic in the territories'.[39]

Hence, the motivation behind this type of violence clearly fits the first type of vigilantism. The provocation is directed at individuals and their property, perpetrators perceive the response as insufficient, and the targets of vigilante acts are those whom the settlers perceive as the guilty

ones. Finally, as anticipated, the nature of the vigilante act is, in most case, spontaneous.

At this stage, it is important to address the other kind of violence included in the first type of vigilantism, that of mass organized reaction to provocations of Arab violence. The foundations of this violence are already rooted in the acts of the Jewish underground, which was active at the beginning of the 1980s. The Jewish underground, most members of which were settlers, initiated several acts of terrorism which stunned the Israeli public. The most prominent was the attempt to assassinate several mayors of Palestinian cities in the territories, shootings at Palestinians students in the Islamic college in Hebron and a plan to blow up the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

The important fact, from the perspective of the present essay, is that at least for some of the aggressors involved, acts were committed for what was perceived as the inadequate response of the authorities to Arab attacks on Jews in the territories. As stated by Hagai Segal, a member of the Jewish underground, 'All acts have been perpetrated from within four] feelings of revulsion and despair at the inefficiency of the IDF to protect the Jewish population in the territories.'[40]

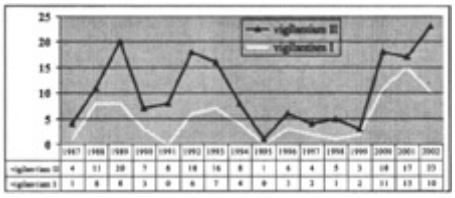
Moreover, their actions most often followed incidents of radical Arab violence (their first initiative, the assassination attempts, was in response to the killing of Aaron Gross, a yeshiva student from Hebron). Thus their violence can be defined as a radical, organized version of the first type of vigilantism.

This type of violence continued for years afterwards, although not at the same degree of destructiveness or level of organizational structure. Mostly, it was characterized by actions of a group of settlers who responded to specific cases of Arab violence against settlers or settlements in the territories. Three examples illustrate the typical dynamic of this brand of settler violence. The first occurred on 8 October 1992, when Arab youngsters from the village of Yhabud threw stones at settlers' vehicles passing by. The response came later the following night, when settlers assailed the village by shooting, throwing stones, breaking into houses and damaging cars parked in the streets.[41]

The other two examples occurred during the Al-Aqsa intifada, when such incursions became more frequent. In mid-January 2001, after the killing of a Jewish settler named Roni Zalah, in Gaza, hundreds of settlers reached the Moasi area in the Gaza Strip and started shooting, burning cars, setting fire to Palestinian farmers' fields and attacking Palestinian civilians who were passing by.[42] But the most radical acts took place at the beginning of July 2001, a few days after the killing of a Jewish infant girl named Shalhevet Paz, in Hebron. In the ensuing days, the settlers attacked Palestinian civilians, torched shops in the center of Hebron and threw stones at houses. The most radical act was using a gas container to destroy a Palestinian store in Hebron.[43]

These kinds of acts became so frequent during the Al-Aqsa intifada that a high-ranking police commander was quoted as saying that, 'Almost any event of Palestinian attack elicits ad hoc a violent response that is organized by the settlers'.[44] *Ha'aretz* reported in mid-July 2001, that any time a settler is attacked by Palestinians, the settlers respond by burning Arab farmers' fields and attacking innocent Palestinians civilians.[45] Figure 3, which represents the frequency of attacks of the first and second types of vigilantism, illustrates the increase in attacks regarded as type I vigilantism during the Al-Aqsa intifada.

FIGURE 2
FREQUENCY OF ATTACKS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND TYPES OF VIGILANTISM*



This data were gathered from B'Zelem reports and the Jewish terrorism database at the NSSC in Haifa University, and contain only those events that are indentified beyond any doubt as vigilant acts of settlers. It should also be noted that several attacks at the same place and time were calculated as one event. Finally, we can assume that there are many events that do not get any coverage, hence they have not been documented or calculated in the above graphs.

Figure 3 shows that in three different periods, there was a rise in the number of attacks of vigilantism type I: at the time of the first intifada, at the time of the left-wing government of prime minister Rabin and the signing of the Oslo Agreements, and during the Al-Aqsa intifada. These findings illustrate that, as dictated by the model, the main motivation of this kind of settler vigilante violence was derived from earlier provocations by radical acts of violence committed by Arabs. According to which categories do these acts correspond with the model. As demonstrated in Table 1, they fit most of the characteristics of the first type of vigilantism as presented in our model.

First, the provocations were aimed at individuals or their property.

Second, in most cases, the settlers responded because they expected that security force retribution would be too weak or insufficient. In addition, although vigilantes were not themselves victims, they all belong to the same communities. In the same way, their Arab targets and the provocateurs are also associated with each other.

Finally, regarding the nature of the vigilantism, while the attacks were more organized than simple acts of self-defense, in many cases, they were in fact spontaneous.

Vigilantism II

The second type of vigilantism is aimed at restraining groups who are vying for a new social and political order. As described in the model, the provocation for this kind of vigilantism is when a rival group initiates violent acts against the ruling regime in order to change the status quo. This leads to a counteraction of vigilante violence by the group who wants to maintain the status quo. Hence, in the context of our discussion, this implies the violence of settlers whose motives were their willingness to prevent any process that would lead to changes in Palestinian civilian status in the territories. Two forms of violent acts appear to be relevant.

The first was mostly seen during the earlier intifada, when a variety of Jewish groups took steps against what they perceived as a type of Arab violence, which could possibly lead to a change in their civilian status and harm the progress of the Jewish population in the territories.

The second kind of violence, manifested in solo attacks, was most notable in the period following the Oslo Agreements.

One of the most prominent groups to which can be ascribed the first type of violence was the ‘Committee for Road Security’. Given its name, one might assume it was a primarily *defensive* security force; however, the truth is that it tended to initiate attacks against the Arab population

in the mid-and late 1980s. Its members perceived violence in the first intifada as an attempt at a civilian revolution which might endanger Israeli control over the territories.[46] In order to counter this danger, they instigated systematic, violent acts against Palestinian Arabs. Typically, before they acted, they would gather information on police and IDF patrols, and if there were no security forces in the particular area, they would enter the Palestinian city with several cars and begin to attack innocent civilians and set cars and houses ablaze. The organizational structure of the Committee was paramilitary and comprised almost 1,000 members.[47]

Although the Committee has ceased to exist, acts of violence executed by groups of extremist settlers continued and escalated during the Al-Aqsa intifada. On 23 January 2003, a group of settlers from Hebron attacked several Palestinians and stabbed a citizen named Iahad Salhab from the village of Gabel Carbag. On 10 September 2002, 15 settlers attacked Palestinian pupils from the Cortuba girls' school in Hebron. However, one of the most violent acts occurred three months earlier, between 26 and 27 July, when a group of settlers carried out brutal attacks on Palestinians. Among other things, they broke into Palestinian houses in Hebron wrecking and burning several houses.

Aside from attacks perpetrated mostly inside Palestinian cities, settlers were also responsible for assaulting Palestinians in their cars on the roads. On 14 December 2000, a Palestinian named Mustafa Alian was killed after his car was stoned by settlers. On 1 January 2001, Marwan Abu-Alion, who was driving home from work, was overtaken by a car with settlers inside. They shot him, wounding him badly.

Another type of activity perpetrated by groups of settlers against Palestinians was driven by their attempt to deprive the Palestinians of their lands and houses. In June 1991, settlers uprooted 200 trees on the land of a Palestinian citizen in the village of Kipin,[48] and in May 1992, hundreds of settlers entered Palestinian fields in the Gaza Strip with bulldozers and destroyed houses and groves. These kinds of acts became even more common at the start of the Al-Aqsa intifada. In June 2002, inhabitants from the settlement of ‘Carmi Zur took control of more than 400 acres of land belonging to Palestinian peasants from the village of Halhul. When the peasants tried to approach their own land, the settlers first began to threaten them before finally beginning to shoot at them.[49]

On 5 October 2002, almost 250 Palestinians from the village of Inbus who came to harvest their crops were attacked by settlers with firearms, preventing them from reaching their groves. In September 2002, settlers who occupied the fields surrounding the village of Yasuf, not only expelled Palestinians from their own fields, but also then stole their crops for themselves.[50] During the Al-Aqsa intifada, these kinds of attacks increased in frequency, as shown by reports compiled by the Israeli human rights organisation, *B'Tselem*.

For example, during the month of October 2002 alone, 12 cases of violence against Palestinian farmers were formally registered. Moreover, Figure 3 shows that this type of vigilantism became prominent with the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada. Despite the fact that there was an increase in acts of vigilantism during the first intifada and after the signing of the Oslo Agreements (similar to vigilantism type I), it must also be emphasized that this kind of violence was incited by earlier violent provocations, although not necessarily targeted directly at the vigilantes themselves.

A second (the first was group-instigated) kind of settler violence which can also be considered

as vigilantism type II is characterized by *individual* acts by settlers with no previously known record of engaging in such demonstrations of violence. Their motivations for perpetrating violent attacks are to be found in the overall social and political situation of the settlers, and therefore these acts seem to belong to vigilantism type II. Two major events mark this category of actions. The first, as already mentioned, is the brutal slaughter of 29 Muslim worshippers at the Al-Ibrahimi mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron by Dr Baruch Goldstein, a settler from Kiryat Arba. The second incident was the murder of a captured and bound Palestinian terrorist by a settler named Yoram Shkolnik in March 1993. At his trial, he argued that he felt his life was seriously in danger. This contention was overruled by the court, which eventually found him guilty.[51] Both these acts, perpetrated just before and after the signing of the Oslo Agreements, came at a time when the more radical elements among the settlers believed that their vision of *Eretz Yisrael*, was being sacrificed by a secular leadership an the alter of political expediency.

To conclude, the two kinds of (group- and individual-instigated) violence we described fit most of the attributes of the second type of vigilantism as proposed by the model and can be seen in Table 2.

First, the acts described are planned and organized (especially when they are group attacks).

Second, attackers belong to the group which is affected by the proposed social change. Moreover, victims of the vigilantism belong to the group that wants to initiate political and social change. But most important, the motivation for these acts does not stem from the feeling that authorities are inefficient in keeping law and order, or from spontaneous feelings of revenge. On the contrary, vigilantes, in this case, are motivated by the fact that they perceived the situation as a series of events which constitute a challenge to their political status supremacy in the territories. This explains why this kind of violence occurred mostly during the first intifada and after the Oslo Agreements. More than at any other time in the past, the political status quo in the territories in those periods was in jeopardy.

Vigilantism III

The third type of vigilantism refers to violent aggressions against representatives of the current regime in situations where vigilantes feel the regime is responsible for change in the political status quo. This kind of vigilantism was first demonstrated by settlers at the beginning of the 1980s, during the evacuation of the settlements in the Sinai peninsula. According to the peace agreement signed between Israel and Egypt in 1979, Israel was obligated to evacuate all Israeli settlements in Sinai by April 1982. The settlers refused to leave, and, joined by hundreds of settlers from the West Bank, they barricaded themselves on the roofs of their houses and refused to come down. Soon, violent clashes broke out between IDF troops and the settlers.

Other groups acted in more radical ways; for example, some settlers occupied a house with explosives and gas balloons and threatened to blow themselves up. These kinds of violent clashes became one of the symbols of the settlement legacy. On many future occasions, every time an Israeli government attempted to evacuate a settlement, no matter what its size or population, settlers engaging in violence was one of the most prominent feature of their response. The most recent incident, at the time of writing, was clashes between settlers and security forces in the illegal settlement of Havat-maon. More then 24 policemen and soldiers were injured during the removal of the settlers.[52]

This analysis of the third category of vigilantism cannot conclude without addressing the most

radical attack of Jewish violence against an Israeli sovereign government. This was the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995, by Yigal Amir, a law student from Bar-Ilan University who was known as a radical religious-nationalist and who lived a great part of his student life in different settlements. The main motivation for this assassination, as declared by the perpetrator himself, was to stop, at any cost, what he perceived as the gravest threat to the spiritual and territorial integrity of *Eretz Tisrael*.[53]

By killing Rabin, he believed he could stop the peace process which appeared destined to lead to the evacuation of the settlements. Therefore he aimed at the uppermost representative of Israeli authority, choosing assassination as a violent panacea to any attempt to remove Israel's hegemony over what he considered to be a wholly Jewish dispensation. As demonstrated, the acts of violence outlined above corresponded with the attributes of the third kind of vigilantism as dictated by the model. Motivation for the acts stem from the vigilantes' need to maintain the status quo and are aimed at a regime representative. In addition, perpetrators are members of the group that is threatened by the changes, and the nature of the attack ranges from spontaneous reactions to organized violent protests.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article we tried to use the conceptual framework of vigilante violence in order to confront three main tasks:

1. Distinguish between the various types of settler violence.
2. Define the motivation behind the different types of violence.
3. Point out the relationship between the different types of violence and their organized or spontaneous nature.

This was put into practice by creating a model which indicated the characteristics of the different kinds of vigilantism. Afterwards, we used the model to analyze the diversity of settler violence.

In general, two main conclusions can be drawn.

First, a distinction can be made between five different kinds of settler violence: two forms of vigilantism type I; another two of the vigilantism type II and one that belongs to vigilantism type III. Hence, almost any kind of violence perpetrated by Jewish settlers in the territories can be defined by applying our model of vigilante violence.

Second, most of the model's assumptions regarding the relations between the motivation and the nature of the violent act, and the provocation which leads to violence have been identified and clearly delineated.

In more specific terms, we can see that settler violence is commonly derived from two main motivations. First, settlers feel that Israeli authorities lack the ability to protect them, and second, settlers have the need to maintain their superior civilian status in the territories. Moreover, the second motivating factor is clearly related to a more organized and radical violence, while the first one is generally associated with more spontaneous and minor expressions of violence. From the above, we can assume that expressions of settler violence are a part of a zero-sum struggle between two communities who are both resolute in their will to claim superiority over the other side. In such a case, any attempt by Israeli authorities to supervise the violence is perceived by settlers as a preference for the other side, thus inadvertently fanning the flames of vigilantism.

The model also indicates the relation between the type of provocation and the nature of the vigilante act. Hence, when the provocation is aimed at the authorities, the violent vigilante response of the settlers is more radical. It seems that some of them perceive themselves, when engaged in vigilante acts, as defenders, not only of their families, but of their country, their government and, at least in the cases of Goldstein and Amir, their religious identity as well. In these situations, settlers have tended to act more violently in comparison to situations where they are defending only themselves.

Where do all these conclusions lead us in regard to the future developments of settler violence in the territories? The overall picture seems to be both pessimistic and optimistic at the same time.

From a pessimistic approach, we can conclude that there are no signs of any fundamental change in the particular historical and political circumstances accompanying the vigilante motivation of the settlers. Hence, we cannot assume any rational reason for the diminution of settler violence.

However, from the optimistic point of view, in recent times, it has been possible to see some indications of socio-demographic change among the settler population.

First, they have become a more established and bourgeois society, hence, perhaps they may be less inclined to initiate organized radical violence.[54]

Second, in the last decade, there have been major changes in the components of the settler community, for example, the dominance of Jewish Zionists has been declining.[55]

Finally, their leadership has shown in the last few years a tendency to try and compromise with authorities and initiate ongoing dialogue. This can be seen in the evacuation of non-legal settlements towards the end of 2002, when the settlers agreed to evacuate some of the settlements of their own volition.[56] To date, however, such evacuations remain the exception rather than the rule. But it is exactly over this issue that the government and settlers will have to make the choice between compromise and confrontation, if Israel, as a society, is to avoid the worst excesses of internecine violence.

NOTES

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In the Shadow of the Al-Aqsa Intifada: The Palestinians and Political Reform

AS'AD GHANEM and AZIZ KHAYED

The formation of a new Palestinian government under Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas in April 2003 appears to be a major turning point in Palestinian politics, not least because it marks a clear departure from the hegemony exercised by Yasser Arafat over the Palestine national movement since 1969. It is this political point of departure that distinguishes the events of 2003. The debate over the post of prime minister, resisted fiercely in some quarters because it has been perceived as bowing to American and by extension, Israeli, pressure, is nonetheless part of an ongoing debate over political reform that has marked the political development of Palestinian nationalism.

This essay does not deal at length with the process of reform or its relationship to the political negotiations. Rather it attempts to question the accepted narrative surrounding the reforms: namely, that they are the result of pressure exercised by Israel, the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) upon a recalcitrant Palestinian leadership reluctant to embrace political reform in the midst of a vicious conflict that has imposed a huge cost, both physical and material, on the Palestinian people. Rather, it is argued that demands for political reform within the Palestinian national movement have a long lineage, developing through a series of historical epochs that have defined the internal development of the Palestinian national movement since the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964.

The first part of the article examines briefly the main argument that pressure for reform has always resulted from pressure applied by external actors, most notably Israel, the US and more latterly, the EU.

The second part traces calls indigenous to Palestinian society for political reform from 1964 onwards.

Finally, the third section deals with the ongoing debates over reform that have taken place more recently within the internal arena of Palestinian politics in the shadow of the Al-Aqsa intifada.

POLITICAL REFORM: THE EXTERNAL DEMANDS

The debate over the need for widespread political, security, financial and administrative reforms to the Palestinian Authority (PA) has long been a demand of the international community. With the failure of Camp David talks in the summer of 2000 and the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada these demands were somewhat held in abeyance. But with the carnage visited upon both Israeli and Palestinian streets reaching a climax in April and May 2002, reform of the PA once more came to be seen as a basic condition for the resumption of peace negotiations by Tel Aviv, Washington and Brussels. The need to embrace democratic reform, publicly at least, was taken by this triumvirate to be the panacea not only to restarting the negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian interlocutors, but also a prerequisite before any Palestinian state could exist next to

Israel. Moreover, from the perspective of a White House whose ‘war on terror’ posited a catch-all definition oblivious to context, such reforms circumvented any meaningful role for Arafat, much to the satisfaction of Israeli officials. Accordingly, the reforms pushed through thus far, most notably the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas, are seen as the result of exogenous pressure.

The Israeli demand that resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians be contingent on widespread political reform to the PA dates from the visit by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Washington in May 2002. During this visit Sharon placed primacy on his demand that the Bush administration accept reform of the PNA – in effect the political emasculation of Arafat – as *the* condition before negotiations with the Palestinians could resume. Sharon's demands did little to disguise his true sentiment. Since coming to power in February 2001, Israel's bullish premier has displayed utter contempt for the PA, a contempt rooted firmly in his personal loathing of Arafat. Aluf Ben, one of Israel's most noted analysts of its domestic political scene, has interpreted Sharon's aversion to the PA chairman as a fear that in any negotiations Arafat might ‘beguile’ him into concessions, just as he had his predecessor, Ehud Barak.

Such casuistry aside, Sharon's ideological predisposition, be it informed by security considerations or historical association, remains inimical to the establishment of a fully functional state of Palestine. By placing the demand for reform on the table Sharon, publicly at least, suggested a softening of attitude, though his previous demands that Israel would not negotiate under fire, and that ‘seven days of quiet’ – a complete cessation of Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets anywhere before negotiations could resume – set the tone of debate in the US.

Washington's official policy towards the Israel-Palestine conflict remains predicated on the two-state solution, a commitment reaffirmed by President George W. Bush in November 2001 and again in April 2002. His first public call for widespread reform of the PA came on 26 June 2002 while presenting his peace plan, drawn up in the aftermath of yet another visit to Washington by Sharon in May 2002. In this speech, Bush declared Arafat to be an obstacle to peace and that consequently, his replacement as head of the PA was deemed necessary if ‘a true democracy founded upon freedom and a constitution that guarantees separation of authorities [and] democratic elections’ was to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The speech by Bush was clearly of a piece. Both Secretary of State Colin Powell and the National Security Advisor, Condoleeza Rice, had argued that for peace negotiations to be meaningful, reform of the PA had to be a prerequisite. On 5 May 2002, during an interview with ABC TV Powell declared that, ‘When the Palestinians start rebuilding internally once again, they should do so in a democratic way that's neither corrupt nor supportive of terrorism.’

Washington's main concern was that any reform be linked directly to the security level, particularly the issue of ‘combating terrorism’ and in the economic sphere, the imposition of serious controls on the financial behavior of the PA in general and Arafat in particular. The State Department pressed the issue of accountable financial monitoring, resulting in pressure for the PA to appoint Salam Fayyad, a Palestinian with American citizenship, as minister of finance in 2002. In July that year, representatives of the US, Russia, the United Nations (UN) and the EU met in Madrid to outline the steps to be taken in order to put flesh upon the bare bones of Bush's vision of a two-state solution. After extended discussions this ‘Quartet’ produced what has become widely known as the ‘Road Map’. This ‘map’ has received international and Arab support, though Palestinian and Israeli positions surrounding the conditions of its implementation have, to date, remained more equivocal. The ‘map’, to mix metaphors has three stages.

The first stage requests that the Palestinians begin the process of political reform, commencing with the appointment of a Palestinian prime minister. This, as already noted, took place in April 2003. These Palestinian reforms should be accompanied by complete termination of Israeli settlement activities by the end of May 2003. Israel's compliance with this demand has, to date, been decidedly mixed.

The second stage, extending from June 2003 until the end of the year 2003 posits a complete termination of Palestinian and Israeli military operations and an Israeli withdrawal from the areas that were reoccupied at the beginning of the Al-Aqsa intifada and the re-establishment of PA in those areas vacated.

The third stage, to be completed by the end of 2005, envisages a final end to the conflict, a resolution to issue of the right of return of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the demarcation of permanent borders between Israel and Palestine, precisely the issues that derailed the Camp David talks in 2000.[1] Given the timetable, the chance that extremists on either side could engage in acts of provocation that blur the contours of the map must remain high. Indeed, according to one Palestinian commentator, it remains less of a map and more of a wish list.[2]

Nonetheless, publication of the 'Road Map' was seen as proof that reform to the PA was driven externally and that by extension, Palestinians proved, if not unwilling, then incapable of pushing through reforms against the entrenched hegemony exercised by Arafat and his cohorts. While external pressure, particularly in the midst of a bitter internecine conflagration, clearly has had an impact on the process of political reform, the essential dynamic of reform remains endogenous Palestinian society. Although never uniform, such pressure has long played a part in the development of Palestinian politics and national identity. To this extent, rather than being unique as a catalyst for change, the Al-Aqsa intifada is merely the latest progenitor, albeit a particularly violent one, that has propelled reforms *derived internally* to the fore of Palestinian politics.

THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT: A HISTORY OF REFORM

The euphoria surrounding the signing of the 'Oslo Accords' in September 1993, designed to effect a process of reconciliation between two competing national movements over the same land and resources disguised developments that had been taking place over three decades within the Palestinian national movement. Following the Israeli capture and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the June 1967 War, the first manifestation of an independent Palestinian identity as a reaction to the Israeli occupation began to emerge. While this development was by no means linear, the political identity that emerged demonstrated the key facets of a democratic society with respect to its basic characteristics. It featured rival parties and factions, voluntary organizations and institutions, representative leadership and community organization, all of which played some part in confronting the Israeli occupation. In short, the politics of participation allowed for a Palestinian civil society to emerge, and one that acted as best it could as a buffer between the occupation authorities and the individual Palestinian citizen.

In parallel to developments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, calls for reform to the political structures of the PLO marked its development from 1964 onwards. What emerged however was a juxtaposition between an emergent civil society among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and those Palestinians in the Diaspora subject to the personal authority of Arafat. Since his return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1994 and his election as *Al-Rais* in 1996, Arafat has done

much to impede the emergence of an alternative leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and has resisted attempts to have a clear separation of powers between the executive and the legislature.

The hegemony exercised by Arafat remains the legacy of his domination of the PLO. Through his control of Fatah, Arafat, initially at least, consulted widely with close associates in the Fatah leadership as well as with leaders of other factions in the PLO, such as the heads of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).[3]

But such consultation became an increasingly rare commodity. The Seventh Palestine National Congress meeting in June 1970 led to the establishment of a Central Committee of the PLO, a body fully controlled by Arafat. This neutralized the Executive Committee, and became, in effect, the government of the PLO. It was through the Central Committee that Arafat was to exercise power over the disparate elements of the PLO between 1970 and 1982 in what became known as Fatahland in South Lebanon. It should be noted that the creation of truly representative Palestinian institutions in a people buffeted among and between regional rivalries and existing in what amounted to a condition of perpetual war made the emergence of democratic institutions particularly problematic, leading to a culture of secrecy that permeated the decision-making process. But the legacy of this was the absence of any law or effective institutions requiring the chairman to consult with a cabinet or legislature or obtain the consent of a defined majority. Moreover, the absence of any mechanism to supervise finances, left practical control of the organization's revenues and expenditures in the hands of a small coterie of advisors.

Even while Arafat rid himself of the need to consult with others he gathered around him a set of ‘yes-men’ as his advisors and assistants. Over the years, these came to occupy senior positions as advisors or departmental heads and even senior positions within the PLO, including membership in the Palestinian National Council (PNC). This was very much the politics of patrimony and ensured that the key structures of the PLO remained beholden to him and him alone. At the same time, Arafat remained astute enough to champion traditional methods of decision-making in the organization and its institutions (the PNC, the Central Committee, the Executive Committee and other forums), especially the reliance on consensus and avoidance of formal votes to put majority support on record. In practice, motions submitted for debate were already circumscribed with votes cast usually rigged well in advance. Organizations or individuals not happy with the decisions or motions did boycott meetings or walk out but this did little to affect outcomes.

Arafat's control over the decision-making apparatus of the PLO only increased after its expulsion from Lebanon in 1982 and its consequent exile in Tunis. This process was accelerated when two of Arafat's most trusted lieutenants, Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Salah Khalef (Abu Iyad), leading figures since the founding of the organization, were assassinated. As a result, Arafat promoted a new generation of aides and assistants who were beholden to his political munificence.

This strict patrimonial hierarchy has since become the defining feature of the PA despite its ostensibly pluralist structures, not least the separation of the executive from the legislature. Using the office of the president, under which Arafat claims a popular mandate, Arafat has continued to concentrate power in ways that negate the role of the Palestine National Assembly. The proliferation of security services to ensure regime stability remains the most apposite

example. Palestinian institutions and the general population have been subject to means of control that remain anathema to the emergence of democratic accountability or anything resembling good governance. Rather, the concentration of power in the hands of a selected few, surveillance (intimidation) and the dispensation of financial largesse (bribery) have become the hallmarks of Palestinian politics in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian political system operates by virtue of the centralization of power in the presidency and its head, Yasser Arafat. All decisions, both external and internal, are made exclusively by Arafat who, according to the testimony of those close to him, invests many hours in the 'how' of consolidating all decision-making, even over minor matters. Political, economic and security issues are fully subject to Arafat's direct authority and supervision, and these constitute the main manifestations of the centralization of political power in his hands.

Even issues that logically should rest within the domain of lower-ranking officials, such as a director general of a given ministry, the director of a public office or director of a specific department within a ministry, require Arafat's attention. Dozens of people are employed in the office of *Al-Rais* (the President) as assistants or advisors on various topics, including the director general of the president's office, media advisor, advisor on Israeli affairs, advisor on police affairs, advisor on economic affairs and advisor on educational affairs. Advisors are supplemented by a large number of functionaries who bear the title 'director general in the president's office'. The requirement for such a large number of personnel is unheard of in the offices of chiefs of state of modern governments. What is more, these assistants and advisors advise only the *Ra'is*: their remit does not extend to actually formulating and implementing policies. This remains the exclusive privilege of the *Ra'is*.

Cabinet meetings, with the participation of the ministers and the *Ra'is*, are merely a forum for Arafat or ministers to report the activities of their ministries or, at most, for consultations. No truly significant decisions are taken here. Ministers have frequently reported that they learned about political moves by the PA, such as talks with Israel or arrests of opposition figures, only after the fact and usually from the media. Appointments in the public sector tend to be the exclusive privilege of the *Ra'is*. It is he who proposes or at least confirms appointments to the various government ministries and agencies, such as the Broadcasting Authority and Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as to bodies that should, by rights, be free from political inteference, such as universities, research institutes and the judiciary. These institutions include some that emerged as alternatives to those imposed by Israeli authorities under the occupation, as well as voluntary and nonprofit associations that focus on issues of social welfare that emerged both during and after the first intifada.

The second mechanism used by the *Ra'is* and his aides to concentrate power directly in Arafat's hands is through the economic means available to the PA. This is manifested mainly through Arafat's personal control of expenditures and supervision of revenues. Aside from those that belong to the PLO (the Palestinian National Fund) and the Fatah movement (its own finance ministry) bom controlled by Arafat before the establishment of the PA, the *Rais* continues to control flows of capital through three main channels: the PA Finance Ministry, the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) and special funds at Arafat's disposal.

The third mechanism used by Arafat and his close associates to exercise political hegemony under the auspices of the PA is the security forces. An appendix to the May 1994 Cairo (Gaza-

Jericho) agreement provided for the establishment of a Palestinian police force to handle security in areas controlled by the PA. The September 1995 Interim Agreement on the transfer of the Palestinian cities to the direct control of the authority stipulated that 'the [Palestinian] Council shall establish a strong police force', into which 'the Palestinian police force established under the Gaza-Jericho Agreement will be fully integrated', and that it and the Israeli security forces would be the only security agencies present.[4] The accord between Israel and the Palestinians included agreement on the establishment of six security agencies to serve the authority: civilian police; general security; preventive security, intelligence, presidential police, and civil defense. The fourth article of Annex I to the interim agreement details the spheres of authority, composition, deployment, recruitment methods and weaponry of the various forces.

These six forces, established by agreement between Israel and the PA soon mushroomed exponentially. Within less than two years they had turned into 11 separate security forces with distinct spheres of authority, each with its own commander reporting directly to Arafat and receiving instructions from him. These security forces derive their legitimacy from the *Ra'is* and implement his wishes in the arenas of domestic and external security. These 11 forces are: the civilian police; the Border Police; the Coast Guard; the Campus Police; the West Bank and Gaza branches of the Preventive Security service; the General Intelligence Service; military intelligence; Force 17; the Presidential Security Service; the National Security Force; and the Special Security Force. All the security forces are directly controlled by Arafat, by virtue of his position as a commander of the Palestinian armed forces before the establishment of the authority. In principle they can be divided into three categories: the Palestinian security forces/army, including the army, military intelligence, and Force 17; the police, including the civilian police and Civil Defense; and the special security forces, including Preventive Security and General Intelligence. These security forces play a central role as the implementers of security activity, both internally and externally. They employ techniques and methods to impose a regime of surveillance and intimidation upon political opposition, activists in human rights organizations, and critics of the PA. In sum, the PA has developed the attributes of a police state.

The frequency and variety of the assaults on citizens by the security forces have left the average Palestinian citizen with a sense of insecurity in their daily lives. Violent excesses range from random shooting at individuals in civilian areas, illegal detentions, detention for prolonged periods without charge, the intimidation and maltreatment of members of the judiciary, failure to implement Supreme Court decisions, abduction and concealment of persons and, in one case, the use of fortune-tellers to identify criminals. The use of bribery has also become endemic within the PA. Arafat has used the promise of financial or political largesse to buy the support of key individuals, families and interest groups for the authority. In many cases ministers or prominent persons in the authority ask Arafat to appoint their daughter, son, or some other relative to a senior post. The chairman also agrees to requests from close supporters whose relatives have fallen foul of the the law or have been tainted by corruption to transfer them from one job to another without bringing them to trial or in some cases, having them dismissed due to their nefarious activities. Arafat is fully aware of the vast power he has accrued as a result of acceding to these requests. It allows Arafat to call in political favours at critical moments, however distateful to the individual concerned these may be.[5]

In summary, the PA is supposed to function as a democratic system akin to those in the West, where 'the people remain the source of legitimacy of the regime that exists through the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, based on the principle of separation of powers, in a

manner clarified in a constitution'.[6] This is supposed to include structural arrangements for the separation of powers (legislative, executive and judicial), intended to guarantee democratic behavior on the substantive level, including:

- equal treatment of all citizens;
- equality before the law;
- maintenance of a reasonable level of welfare;
- the liberty and freedoms appropriate to a democratic regime;
- government transparency;
- the accountability of the authorities to citizens;
- freedom of information; and
- all the procedures and conduct associated with a democratic system.

In practice, the degree of separation of powers in the PNA remains far from this ideal. The executive branch regulates the day-to-day administrative and structural control of the PA, irrespective of the wishes of the legislature.

REFORM AND PROTEST: THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

From the foundation of the PLO in 1964 to the present day, the political development of the Palestinian national movement has been marked by persistent calls for reform from within its own ranks. The first moves towards reform resulted in the removal of Ahmed Shuqeiri, the first initial head of the PLO, and the transfer of the PLO's leadership to the Fatah movement in 1968. The styptic methods of decision-making adopted by Shuqeiri were heavily criticized. The first notable Palestinian demands for his removal came from the Higher Arab Commission which presented a memorandum on 6 September 1966 calling for a meeting of the Arab League's Council to discuss the style of leadership within the PLO. The memorandum highlighted the necessity of taking the effective and proper measures for reforming the PLO and accused Shuqeiri of individualism, domination and extemporization, describing the three years of his leadership of the PLO as 'full of wantonness, problems, blunders, political bluffs and subordination and of downgrading the Palestinian question to the level of wangling and secondary disputes and of forcing it into Arab conflicts and quarrels'.[7] It also stated that the Palestinian masses including the workers, peasants and dwellers of the refugee camps were not represented properly and that under Shuqeiri nepotism had marked the appointment of officials to positions of power. The commission also stated that the PLO was devoid of any democracy or freedom of opinion and that it placed the fate of the Palestinian question and people under the mercy of an autocratic dictatorship.[8]

Matters were brought to a head in the aftermath of the June 1967 War, not least in the increased acrimony that marked relations between Shuqeiri and the *Fedayeen* 'freedom fighter' organizations.[9] The executive committee of the PLO now split into two broad factions: the first backed Ahmad Shuqeiri who argued that the PLO should continue in its political role and leave to the Arab states the task of confronting Israel and recovering their lost land. The second argued for a more proactive strategy with the emphasis placed on guerrilla warfare that could act as a catalyst for pan-Arab support in the confrontation with Israel. These tensions soon surfaced in the Executive Committee of the PLO with accusations of mismanagement leveled directly at Shuqeiri. Typical was the accusation that he 'had not worked for the development of the PLO's

revolutionary role', and 'that his political practices were autocratic, as he considered himself a head of state rather than the head of an organization striving for liberation'.[10]

The differences soon reached a climax. In mid-December 1967 seven members of the executive committee presented Shuqeiri with a memorandum requesting his resignation due to the 'methods he utilized in running the PLO'. The Fatah movement issued a similar statement on 10 December 1967 requesting Shuqeiri's resignation due to his public declarations which they described as 'misleading and delusive'. The statement also mentioned that autocratic rule by the head of the PLO allowed the internal struggle to dominate the external agenda of the PLO, a position that did nothing to facilitate the self-proclaimed aim of the organization: the liberation of the Palestinian people. The Fatah statement also added that the paucity of political, military and indeed communication strategies only served to undermine the unity of national purpose and had produced an organization devoid of direction or purpose.[11]

Such criticism was echoed by the PFLP as well as Palestinian trade unions. Under such harsh criticism, Shuqeiri submitted his resignation to the Palestinian people and to the secretary-general of the Arab League on 21 December 1967. The executive committee then decided that Yihya Hammoudeh should become acting president of the committee and subsequently, they broadcast a communiqué in which they indicated that they 'would work in cooperation with all factions to achieve national unity and develop the organization's bodies through establishing a council in which the people's will is represented and from which a responsible group leadership will emanate'. Thus the first reform of the PLO leadership saw power shift to those factions intent on confrontation with Israel, the most powerful of these being Arafat's Fatah movement.[12] The demands for political reform reached a crucial turning point when in 1968 the National Council ratified an amendment of the name 'Palestinian Covenant' to 'Palestinian National Covenant'. These amendments embedded the ideas of the Fatah movement within the broader body politic of the PLO, moving it away from a pan-Arab view to one concerned primarily with the emancipation of Palestinian nationalism.

Just over one year later, between 1 and 4 February 1969, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) met in Cairo where Yasser Arafat was elected president of the executive committee, while a new national council was formed in order to distribute certain seats to the various Palestinian factions. In line with its position as the largest faction within the PLO, Fatah was allocated the most seats of any one group. It should be noted here that the PFLP and the Palestinian Liberation Army boycotted the Council's meetings, accusing Fatah of trying to dominate the PNC. Such dissension did little to change the outcome. Fatah emerged from the Council's meeting of 1969 in an unassailable position, a position which led to a radical change in the make-up of the PLO and its leadership.[13]

Shuqeiri's removal was made possible by two interconnected factors.

First, he became a scapegoat in the wider Arab world for the disaster of June 1967, and, second, by attacking his autocratic rule, Fatah gave voice to popular discontent with the direction of the PLO while offering an alternative agenda that eschewed nepotism and corruption.[14] This included reforming the PLO's apparatus, including the National Council and the Palestinian National Fund in addition to the Palestinian Liberation Army and rebuilding them in a more proper manner.

THE SPLIT IN FATAH IN 1983 AND THE DEMAND FOR REFORM

Fatah itself did not remain immune for very long from internal discord. By 1974, its leadership, dominated by Arafat, had moved towards a more pragmatic agenda that called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in any part of liberated Palestine as a step towards the full recovery of the land. This so-called interim program was seen by many within Fatah as a weakening of resolve to liberate, at one go, all Palestine and the destruction of Israel as a Zionist entity. In 1975, such dissent became public when a group of Fatah leaders, acting under the banner of 'The National Democratic Current', attempted to champion the rejectionist faction as a vehicle for hardening attitudes within the Fatah movement over any compromise with Israel. Headed by Abu Saleh, Abu-Mousa and Naji 'Alloush, this attempt to usurp the authority of Arafat failed. As a result, 'Alloush split away from the mainstream Fatah movement to form his own independent faction.

Yet such cleavages over the issue of pragmatism versus absolutism continued to bedevil Fatah, none more so than in the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. In the aftermath of the PLO's forced departure from Beirut in September 1982, resentment over the leadership of Arafat and his willingness to brook compromise spilt over into bitter internecine conflict among Palestinians left in the refugee camps of Lebanon. Nimer Saleh (Abu-Saleh), a member of the Central Committee, had been a member of the PLO delegation to the Arab summit in Fez, Morocco. Convened in the aftermath of Israel's invasion, the Fez summit, despite the vacuous appeals to Arab solidarity, broke new ground in that a majority of Arab states expressed a willingness to recognize the Jewish state as part of a comprehensive peace plan for the whole region. This included a full Israeli withdrawal from *all* territories captured and occupied after June 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. In its aftermath, Saleh issued a statement objecting to the PLO's acceptance of the Arab peace initiative, while at the same time, demanding reform of both the Fatah movement and the PLO.

On 17 November 1983, during a meeting of the Revolutionary Council of the Fatah movement, Colonel Abu-Mousa, a member of the Revolutionary Council, delivered a speech which included an explicit criticism of the positions of the movement's leadership, and in complete concord with Saleh's thinking, demanded wholesale reform to the institutions of Fatah and the PLO. These demands were distributed in printed form en masse to the members of the movement. In the 16th meeting of the Palestinian National Council the Fatah leadership prevented its Central Council member – Nimer Saleh – from participating in the meeting. Already, concerned at the rising mood of militancy within Fatah towards his leadership, Arafat had moved to curb dissent. New military cadres were purged of undesirable elements while Abu-Hajem, an officer accused of cowardice during Israel's invasion of South Lebanon was appointed by Arafat to command the remnants of Fatah's military forces in Lebanon. This inflamed opinion further, leading Nimer Saleh (Abu-Saleh), Colonel Abu-Mousa, Samih Abu-Kweik Abu-Khaled al-'Amleh, all members of the Fatah Central Committee, to break away from the movement and form their own organization, '*Fatah al-Intifada*'.[15]

This group declared in their first communiqué that:

> Our movement aims at reinstating the Central Committee and the Revolutionary Council who have failed to carry out their roles as leading bodies as their authorities were infringed upon and dangerous stands were imposed on them, which represents a violation of our bylaws and political program, as a result of the autocracy of an individual who takes major and crucial decisions after consulting with only a few other individuals.

It was a clear indictment of Arafat and his style of leadership.

Abu-Mousa and Abu-Saleh's calls for reform concentrated on two pivotal issues: the political positions of Arafat and the internal reform within the Fatah movement. It soon became clear that '*Fatah al-Intifada*' enjoyed the military and financial backing of Syria and its president, Hafez Al-Asad. Compromise with Israel remained anathema to a political leader whose ideological legitimacy, subject to increasingly violent attacks from radical Islamist groups within his own country, could not afford any compromise with the state of Israel. Accordingly, Al-Asad and his regime accused Arafat of being 'too moderate' in his attitude towards Israel and rumors of secret talks with King Hussein of Jordan in 1983 concerning joint peace overtures towards the Jewish state remained for Damascus beyond the political pale. The Syrians, who always looked to control the Palestinian agenda, supported Abu-Mousa and Abu-Saleh as part of their strategy to undermine Arafat and impose Syrian hegemony upon the Palestinian national movement in its struggle for independence.

Abu Mousa said that the reasons for the split were in protest against Arafat's individualism and his monopolization of organizational, political and financial decisions.[16] While searching for a resolution to the crisis, the renegade factions – now calling themselves the national alliance – believed that unity within the PLO could never be achieved while Arafat remained at the helm. Samih Abu Kweik, one of the leaders of the alliance, called for a boycott of any Palestinian institution headed by Arafat. Abu Khaled al-'Amleh, another member of the alliance, argued that solving the crisis within the PLO would require depriving Arafat of his legitimacy by highlighting the fiction of independence and unity which had become Arafat's mantra to the Palestinian people. Accordingly, the 'National Alliance' called for the formation of a unified body for national redemption that would create a temporary framework under the tutelage of the Palestinian National Council and members of the Executive Committee untainted by association with Arafat.[17]

The ensuing crisis exposed the deep-seated enmities within the PLO. Violence between competing factions soon broke out in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon as Arafat loyalists sought to protect their influence from Abu Mousa and his Syrian-backed militia. The war of the camps had started. Palestinian factions took positions ranging from support for the demands of the National Alliance to outright rejection of their calls for the dismissal of Arafat and his cohorts. For some, the public expression of unity remained paramount if the PLO was to remain credible. Already, George Habash, secretary-general of the PFLP, had warned in June 1983 that the consequences of any split would be disastrous, particularly in light of the fact that in the aftermath of Israel's invasion, the PLO had been scattered to the four corners of the Arab world.[18] Unity remained all if Palestinian nationalism, embodied in the PLO, was to remain viable.

To this end, the PFLP tried to broker an agreement. In October 1983 it put forward several proposals designed to maintain unity with the PLO while concurrently, seeking to reform its institutional base. Among the most prominent articles on reform that came to be ratified by the Palestine National Council were the achievement of the principle of a unified leadership in all frameworks and bodies of the PLO, and the termination of factional hegemony; the unification of financial collection in the framework of the Palestinian National Fund, all PLO's finances should be placed under the aegis of a trust fund managed under strict and accountable guidelines.[19] Yet these reforms were never to be realized. It was only with the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada

in December 1987 that, after four years of bitter internecine conflict, the ‘war of the camps’ fell into abeyance.

DEMANDS FOR REFORM BETWEEN 1993 AND 2000

The establishment of the PA did nothing to lessen calls for reform. These calls for comprehensive reform became louder after the publication of a critical report by the PA Public Monitoring Body (PMB), and later, an investigation committee formed by the Palestinian Legislative Council to carry out a fact-finding mission on the basis of the PMB's report. These calls for reform reached their apogee with the resignation of Dr Haidar Abdul-Shafi's from the Legislative Council in protest over the political corruption and the publication of the ‘statement by the Twenty’.

In May 1997, a 250-page report by the head of the PMB was published. The report of the PMB, which performs the function of the state comptroller, covered the period from the founding of the PA to the end of December 1996. To date, this has been the first and only report of its kind since the establishment of the authority. This report, which includes statistical analysis, details the financial and administrative malpractices carried out by public servants, including the heads of all ministries, government institutions and local authorities. The report registered the financial transgressions, and occasionally administrative ones too, within these ministries and institutions, with particular attention to the issue of dissipating public funds. Not surprisingly, it made several far-reaching proposals about the financial structures of the PA.

The most important of these involved holding the Executive of the PA responsible for presenting a budget on time and remaining committed to its articles; and holding accountable ministers and officials accused of dissipating public funds, including those who exploited their office in order to reap personal benefits. In addition, regulation of employment practices, most notably the need to appoint people to positions in government bureaucracies on the basis of actual need and ability, rather that through grace and favor, was recommended. Given its almost total reliance on foreign aid and continued subventions from Israel in the form of remittance payments, the PA simply could not afford a bloated public sector.

In addition, the PMB recommended new laws to provide legal coverage for monitoring systems of donations and grants presented to the ministries, and a system for managing the purchase of imported goods and services. It also recommended that the security forces be denied the role of finance collectors from institutions, companies and merchants or from interfering in any way with customs control or taxes. Indeed, the security services were identified as the main fiscal miscreants, being particularly proliferate in the improper use of government cars, petrol allowances and telephones. The report also recommended that the payment scales be unified within the Ministry of Finance and the General Employees Bureau and cover government employees in both the West Bank and Gaza. In addition to these general recommendations there were recommendations specific to each ministry and institution.

Two months later, on 27 July 1997, a report was published by a special committee established by the Palestinian Legislative Council. The committee was composed of members of the Budget Committee and the Financial Affairs and Public Comptroller's Committee. Its task was to investigate the allegations of financial mismanagement within the PMB report. Some 60 pages long, the report presented a general recommendation consisting of three articles. The general recommendation concluded that the president or the head of the PA should dissolve the cabinet

and form a new one including technocrats and people qualified and competent to deal with financial management, the provision of health care and so forth. Public functionaries guilty of corruption or those who had failed to meet their responsibilities should be removed forthwith.

The report included steps to be taken towards comprehensive administrative and organizational reform. These included the clear separation of cabinet meetings from those of the Palestinian leadership so that the cabinet would be able to shoulder the responsibilities and tasks of establishing and building a state based upon the rule of law and the emergence of a vibrant civil society. This was an explicit criticism of Arafat's style of government where, despite the trappings of collective decision-making, policy remained the preserve of a select few. Finally, where accusations of corruption against certain ministries proved well-founded, individual ministers should face prosecution, a move deemed necessary if public trust was to be built between the leadership and the people.

Yet good governance remained the exception rather than the rule. The failure by Arafat to implement any of the recommendations of the PMB or the Special Committee led to the resignation from the PLC of perhaps its most influential member, Haida Abdel Shafi, on 10 October 1997. His departure represented a protest against internal Palestinian conditions and a candid demand for reform. The pivotal cause for his resignation was the executive authority's tendency to marginalize the role of the Legislative Council, notwithstanding its total disregard for the law and constitutional principles. The most important issue was the executive authority's postponement of ratifying the Basic Law, which left the relationship between the authority's bodies and the state apparatus in legal limbo and only served to accentuate the autocratic tendencies of the Executive.

In his letter of resignation, Abdul Shafi protested against the closure by the PA of several charitable institutions under the pretext that they belonged to Hamas, which had claimed responsibility for a series of bloody attacks, including suicide bombings, against Israeli civilians. Such measures, enforced under strong pressure from Tel Aviv, effectively sidelined any formal debate by the Legislative Council and took little account of the popular mood within Palestinian society.

The resignation of Abdul Shafi was followed two years later by the so-called 'statement of the 20’. Signed by 20 prominent personalities and published on 27 November 1999, the statement was an explicit protest against the continued corruption of the PA and repeated calls for comprehensive reform of the authority from the very top downwards. Of those who signed the statement, nine were members of the Legislative Council while others included a previous minister and mayors. The statement was explicit in its criticism of Arafat and of his failure to tackle the endemic corruption within the authority. It also mentioned conditions in Palestinian prisons and the unfettered rule of the security forces which, the statement concluded, operated under a ‘terrifying series of lies and delusions’. The statement's closing remarks included a call to the people to take a unified stand against hegemony and corruption. It should be noted that the Palestinian security forces subsequently imprisoned for a period of three weeks some of those who had signed the statement.

Such instances of political abuse have become all too common themes in the reports compiled by the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR). Between 1995 and 2002, this commission has published eight annual reports on the status of the Palestinian citizen's rights. Each report included several recommendations in the fields of financial management,

legal reform and the administration of public security. All have consistently called for the ratification of the Basic Law and reform of the Palestinian constitution that included establishment of a unified legal system in all areas under the control of the PA. Persistent calls for an independent judiciary punctuate the reports while calls for reducing the number of ministries, defining the mandate of those that remain and enshrining them in law remain themes throughout. Moreover, the reports call for the powers accrued by the security forces to be curtailed and for respect of public freedoms and human rights, including freedom of political association, to be enshrined in law. The role of the public comptroller responsible for overseeing the competent functioning of public ministries and officials should be placed on a statutory basis, holding all accused officials to account.

Finally, the PICCR has called consistently for the number of courts and employees in the judiciary system to be increased while at the same time arguing that the state security court system be disbanded. National and presidential elections must be held on time while those elected to the PLC or who attain public office should not retain private business interests while holding official positions.

Despite the political wreckage of the Al-Aqsa intifada, calls for reform indigenous to Palestinian society continue to be made. On 16 May 2002, the PLC issued a statement under the title ‘Declaration on the Development of Reform of the PA's Institutions’, otherwise known as the ‘Reform Program’. This declaration came after the PLC listened intently to a speech by Arafat at a PLC meeting the previous day where *Al-Rais* had called by for a process of administrative and financial reform to be implemented. How sincere Arafat was in this call remains a moot point. Nonetheless, the PLC moved swiftly to capitalize on Arafat's public declaration of intent. As with previous documents, the PLC called for constitutional, financial, administrative and judicial reform. On the constitutional level the PLC called for rebuilding and revitalizing the PA's institutions by demanding that the president of the PA ratify the Basic Law and commit all bodies and institutions within Palestinian society to respect its legal jurisdiction in all spheres of Palestinian public life. Arafat, in a parlous situation both at home and abroad, finally ratified the Basic Law on 29 May 2002, a move born more from expedience than desire.

Concerning the reform of the Security Forces, the PLC emphasized that its task remained to ensure the protection of the ‘country, its citizens and their private and public property and to keep public order and implement the rule of law’. The PLC presented several suggestions in this regard, the most important of which was ‘issuing a law to regulate the security forces' actions and place the conditions upon the recruitment of individuals, and to ensure that the authority and mandate under which they operate complies fully with the Basic Law’. With regard to administrative reform of public institutions, the PLC broadened the recommendations made by previous reports to include placing the head of the public monitoring commission, the head of the employment bureau, the head of the financial authority and the heads of the independent public bodies that are not part of the ministries under the auspices of the PLC. The Basic Law actually enshrines the right of the PLC to appoint the heads of those institutions. To date, however, Arafat has made these appointments without deference to the wishes of the council. The PLC has also recommended reviewing the public monitoring commission's law in order to delineate its role, responsibilities and relations with the various governmental and non-governmental organizations and to present its annual and quarterly reports to the PLC. It should be noted in this context that this law was issued by the president of the PA in 1995 before the election of the Legislative Council.

In light of these myriad reports, the Palestinian cabinet declared its intent to implement the reforms suggested. Arafat did declare the formation of a new cabinet on 9 June 2002. This cabinet tendered its wholesale resignation just two months later in order to avoid the PLC withdrawing its support over what it considered to be Arafat's cosmetic embrace of reform, seen most clearly in the fact that portfolios were reshuffled among the same tired faces. Faced with such opposition from the legislature, the cabinet resigned en masse. Only at the end of October 2002 was Arafat able to form a cabinet that gained the approval of the PLC.

It should also be mentioned that on 12 June 2002, Arafat issued a declaration calling for the formation of a ‘ministerial committee for reform’ that would cover the economic, security, financial, judicial and administrative realms. Arafat reaffirmed his commitment to this committee by reading this declaration once more before the session of the PLC on 29 October 2002, convened to confer approval on the new cabinet. The declaration dealt with the president and government's vision of reforms in a section titled ‘Implementing a Reform Program and Developing and Consolidating National Unity and Democracy’. The declaration focused on three spheres: security, the judiciary and the administration of public funds.

On the level of security Arafat promised to complete the amalgamation of the police, preventive security and civil defense forces with those run by the Ministry of Interior, and to rebuild the security forces while curbing their interference in political, financial or media concerns unless clearly stipulated under the law. Concerning the judiciary, the government promised to work on unifying the Palestinian legal system and on allocating budgets to support the judicial authority by building courts and appointing judges. In the economic sphere, the plan called for ‘placing all the PNA revenues from taxes, fees, interest, grants, loans and external aid in a unified account in the treasury and to implement the principle of a unified treasury in the administration of public funds’. Arafat's commitment to this plan is binding on his cabinet.

CONCLUSION

After the defeat of June 1967 the Fatah movement appeared to champion the reform process and remove the Palestinians as merely a political football, subject to the wider game of inter-Arab rivalry. The hegemony exercised by Fatah within the PLO in turn led to the crisis of 1983 and the violent military confrontation between Fatah members under the leadership of Arafat and renegade factions supported by the Syrian regime against Arafat. Current calls for reform to the political structures of the PA remain of a piece. Despite the perception that calls for reform originate outside the arena of Palestinian politics and therefore, have always to be imposed by external actors, this essay has argued that calls for reform have always been part of the Palestinian political culture, demanded by Palestinians for Palestinians. Indeed, despite pressure from Israel and the US for reforms – reforms which strike an unhealthy balance between security concerns and the rights of the individual Palestinian – the current debate over reforming the PA clearly preceded the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000.

The extent to which Arafat is able, let alone willing, to implement reforms must remain subject to some circumspection. Undoubtedly, his powers have been severely curtailed and his image tarnished by what some regard as his foolhardy support, at least in its initial stages, for the Al-Aqsa intifada. Indeed, the violence offered refuge from increased public dissent over the nepotism and corruption that have defined his regime. But equally, his ability to implement reforms remains handicapped by over 1,000 days of violence that have left over 3,000 Palestinians and Israelis dead, and the infrastructure of the PA in virtual ruins. But this should

not detract from the fact that Palestinian calls for reform have always been, and remain, an important leitmotiv of the Palestinian people, its institutions and political culture. How and when these reforms come to be realized by the PA remains the principal challenge of the future.

NOTES

1. See Edward Sheehan, 'The Road Map and the Fence', *The New York Review of Books* 50/11 (3July2003)pp.8–13.
2. Said Ghazali, 'For Palestinians, this is a Map that Leads to Nowhere', *The Independent*, 1 May 2003.
3. As'ad Abd el-Rahman (ed.), *The PLO: Its Roots, Founding, and Activity* (Beirut: PLO Research Center 1987).
4. See Interim Agreement, section 14.
5. See As'ad Ghancm, *The Palestinian Regime: A Partial Democracy* (Brighton, Sussex Academic Press 2001).
6. See 'The Basic Law of the Palestinian National Authority', Appendix No.2, Section 2, in Ghanem (note 5).
7. Ghazi, Hussein, *Palestinian Political Thought 1963–1988* (Damascus: Dania Publishers 1993) p. 120 (in Arabic).
8. Naji Alloush, *Thoughts of the Palestinian Resistance Movement 1948-1987, in Palestinian Encyclopedia*, Pt. II, Vol. 3 (Beirut: 1990) p.921 (in Arabic).
9. As'ad Abdul Rahman, *Palestinian Resistance within the Framework of the PLO*, in *Palestinian Encyclopedia*, Pt. II. Vol. 5 (Beirut: 1990) p. 187 (in Arabic).
10. Muhammad Hassani Haykal, *An Illusionary Peace: Before and After Oslo* (Beirut: al-Shurouq Publications 1996) p.20 (in Arabic).
11. Hussein, (note 7) p. 120.
12. Maher Sharif, *Searching for an Entity: A Study of Palestinian Political Thought* ((Nocosia: The Socialist Center for Research and Studies 1995) p.147 (in Arabic).
13. Rhaman(note3)p.l89.
14. Hussein (note 7) p.121.
15. Sharif (note I2)p.320.
16. Ibid, p.321.
17. Ibid, p.341.
18. Ibid, p.322.
19. Ibid, p.340.

TIPH: Preventing Conflict Escalation in Hebron?

KARIN AGGESTAM

Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada, the debate about international intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has intensified. The Palestinians have repeatedly appealed for some kind of international peacekeeping operation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip whereas Israel has consistently resisted any attempt to internationalise the conflict. However, there are today a growing number of Israelis who have come to accept the idea of international intervention, which derives primarily from a deeply-felt pessimism about peace negotiation as a strategy to resolve the conflict.

For nearly ten years, a Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) has been in place. It is an international mission approved by the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (PA). In fact, TIPH constitutes the first ever Israeli-sanctioned mission to the Occupied Territories. Yet relatively little is known about it and even less is known among academics as few articles have been published about the organisation.[1] During 2000, I had the privilege to serve in TIPH during both a fairly calm period prior to the Al-Aqsa intifada and after its outbreak.[2] Hence, this essay aims to present insights into, and an analysis of, the operations of TIPH as well as a critical assessment of its achievements and failures in preventing conflict escalation in Hebron.

The first part of the contribution discusses and analyses TIPH's mandate and its operations. The second part assesses critically the various strategies that TIPH uses as a way of preventing conflict escalation, and how its operations have changed since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada. The study concludes with a brief discussion on international intervention in general and some lessons that can be drawn from the experience of the TIPH.

HOW TO PREVENT CONFLICT AND ENHANCE SECURITY IN HEBRON?

Hebron is one of the major cities in the West Bank as well as being among the most conservative and religious. It is here that the patriarchs Abraham, Jacob and Isaac are said to be buried with their families in the Cave of Machpelach. Since both Jews and Muslims refer to Abraham as their ancestral father, the site has historically been a contested place and (re)claimed by various religious groups and leaders. The Ibrahimi Mosque, which in this article will be referred to as the Tomb of the Patriarchs/*al-Haram al-Ibrahimi*, was built on the site in the seventh century.

Today, there are approximately 140,000 Palestinians residing in Hebron while 6,000 Israeli Jews live in the outskirts of the city in the settlement of Kiryat Arba. Historically, there had always been a Jewish presence in the city until the 1929 massacre of 67 Jews by Palestinian Muslims during the British Mandate in Palestine. After the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, small groups of Israelis illegally began to settle Hebron. By 1971, Kiryat Arba, established on a hilltop overlooking Hebron, received official recognition by a Labour-led coalition government. According to the settlers, they are only reclaiming what they view as Jewish property abandoned after the 1929 massacre.[3]

As a consequence, four settlements have been established in the old city of Hebron where 450 Israeli settlers presently live. The first step of establishing the settlement of Avraham Avinu was taken in 1976 when the Labour-led government approved the building of a synagogue. Another three settlements, Beit Hadassah, Beit Romano and Tel Rumeida, were soon to follow, which were later legalised by right-wing governments. For the Palestinians, the Israeli occupation and the settlements are seen as illegal, contradicting international law and undermining Palestinian aspirations for national self-determination. Hence, the settlements should in their view be uprooted and the control of the Tomb of the Patriarchs/*al-Haram al-Ibrahimi* should be under Palestinian authority. Because of its religious significance for Muslims and Jews, as well as for being the only city where Israelis live in the midst of the Palestinian community, Hebron is often described as one of the most volatile places in the West Bank.

It is within this context that TIPH is operating. In the first section of the article, I will discuss the reasons why Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) accepted an international presence in Hebron and the content of its mandate. TIPH's main task is focused on preventing conflict escalation in Hebron. In the theoretical literature on conflict prevention, two types of strategies are often mentioned, namely direct and structural prevention. These two approaches will guide the analysis in the second section.[4]

BILATERAL CONSENT TO AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE IN HEBRON

Even though the international presence is limited to the city of Hebron, it is the first time ever that Israel has given its consent to such a mission in the Occupied Territories. It is therefore important to elaborate upon the background and reasoning why TIPH was established. TIPH is part and parcel of the peace process and thus, has to be analysed within that context. Since the early 1990s, Israel and the Palestinians had been trying to achieve a negotiated settlement to the conflict. However, it was in 1993 that a first breakthrough was made in the negotiations. In secret back channel negotiations in Oslo the parties agreed to a Declaration of Principles (DOP). The challenging task has since been to translate these overarching principles into concrete and detailed steps that can be implemented.[5]

Immediately after the signing of the DOP in Washington in 1993, the parties began negotiations on an Israeli territorial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho in the West Bank. In contrast to the confidential and small-group negotiations in Oslo, these negotiations were competitive and tough, often resulting in deadlocks. One reason was that the Israeli delegation now primarily consisted of military personnel. As the Israeli chief negotiator in Oslo, Uri Savir stated, ‘The transition from Palestinian dependence on us to mutual dependence was difficult for the Israeli establishment. I was learning that the struggle to free Israel from the occupation was one thing, while the struggle to free Israelis of an occupier's mind-set was another.’[6]

Moreover, the parties held dissimilar understandings about the appropriate interpretation of the DOP. Israel adopted a minimalist approach, primarily focused on transferring civil and administrative power, while the Palestinians emphasised a maximalist approach with territorial recompense at its heart.

In February 1994, a Jewish settler, Dr Baruch Goldstein, from the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba entered the Ibrahimi Mosque and shot dead 29 and wounded over 100 Palestinian Muslims who were praying. Intense clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinians soon erupted and a

curfew was imposed on the Palestinian population. Consequently, the negotiations entered a complete deadlock. The PLO insisted that as a pre-condition before resuming any negotiations the Jewish settlers had to be evacuated from the old city. Furthermore, the Palestinian delegation maintained that there was a need for an international presence.

Officially, Israel rejected the idea of an evacuation of the settlers but secretly the Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, considered removing some of them from Tel Rumeida. Yet, such a decision was never taken despite the fact that this particular settlement was illegal at the time.[7] Uri Savir later revealed that the Israeli government decided not to evacuate 'for fear of creating an uproar due to the vehement reaction the extreme right was preparing. The measure was in fact never carried out, which I believe was a serious mistake in the struggle against the radical right.'[8]

At first Israel also rejected the idea of an international presence even though the DOP calls for a 'temporary international or foreign presence, as agreed upon'.[9] At the same time, the Israeli government became increasingly aware of the implications of the Hebron massacre among the Palestinian public. Growing support for Hamas could be detected along with a decrease in support for the peace process in general and the PLO leadership in particular. Yasser Arafat emphasised this dilemma to the Israeli negotiations. 'I am definitely interested in moving forward', he declared, 'but I need the trust of my people. You have an elected government, a parliament, clear laws. Trust is not the only bond between Israelis and their leaders. But it's all there is between my people and me.'[10]

Consequently, in order to resume the negotiations Israel did agree to a temporary international presence, signed on 31 March 1994, and the deadlock was broken. Shortly afterwards, TIPH was set up – on 8 May 1994 – consisting of Norwegian, Italian and Danish observers. The mission lasted only until 8 August since the parties were unable to agree on an extension. However, after a year the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators reached another significant agreement (the Interim Agreement, also called Oslo II) in September 1995, containing arrangements for major Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Israel swiftly withdrew its troops from all the large cities in the West Bank (Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, Qalqillyah, Tulkarm) but withdrawal from Hebron was delayed for several reasons.

First, Hebron is the only city with a presence of settlers in its midst.

Second, Israeli elections were to be held in May 1996. It was predicted that Shimon Peres, who took over as prime minister after the assassination of Rabin, would gain a sweeping victory.

However, the election campaign was haunted by the increasing violence and terrorism of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Peres' popularity was undermined while his rival candidate, Benjamin Netanyahu, was gaining increasing support under the slogan 'peace with security'. Since the redeployment of Hebron was domestically sensitive in Israel, a tacit understanding between Peres and Arafat was made to delay it until after the elections. Yet, the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators agreed to set up a second TIPH mission in May 1996, with only Norwegian members, awaiting an Israeli withdrawal after the elections. Peres was not re-elected but was replaced by a new right-wing government headed by Netanyahu, a fierce critic of the peace process. It was only on 17 January 1997, and after active intervention by the American administration, that Israel and the PLO concluded a 'Protocol on Israeli Redeployment in Hebron'. Subsequently, a third TIPH mission was set up in early 1997, consisting of Swedish, Swiss, Turkish and Italian members under Norwegian leadership.

THE MANDATE OF THE TIPH

As mentioned above, in 1993 the parties had already agreed to a 'temporary international or foreign presence'. In addition, UN Security Council Resolution 904, which was issued after the Hebron massacre in 1994, called 'for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory, *inter alia* a temporary international or foreign presence'.[11] As part of the Israeli redeployment in Hebron, the parties reiterated in the 1995 Interim Agreement, the call for an international presence in Hebron.[12] Awaiting the redeployment, a temporary agreement was signed on 9 May 1996. The agreement was superseded by the Hebron Protocol in January 1997 and a new TIPH mission was established. The Hebron Protocol states that Israel will redeploy from 80 per cent of Hebron (HI) where the PA will resume control over internal security and public order. Israel will retain full security control of 20 per cent of Hebron (H2), that is, the old city and the Tomb of the Patriarchs/*al-Haram al-Ibrahimi*.[13]

The mandate is outlined in the 'Agreement on Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron'.[14] TIPH is to 'assist in monitoring and reporting the efforts to maintain normal life in the City of Hebron'. The main tasks are to observe and promote a feeling of security, stability and 'an appropriate environment conducive to the enhancement of the well-being of the Palestinians and their economic development'. It is also to assist in the promotion and execution of projects initiated by the donor countries and to encourage economic development and growth in Hebron. Moreover, TIPH is to provide observation reports and coordinate its activities with Israeli and Palestinian authorities (to be discussed at greater length in the next section). However, it is not to have any military or police function and cannot interfere in any disputes, incidents or activities of the Israeli security forces or the Palestinian Police. The personnel are supposed to enjoy freedom of movement in order to perform TIPH's mission in Hebron.

To fulfil the mandate, the agreement contains a request to Norway, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey to provide 180 members for the mission, with Norway tasked with establishing and coordinating TIPH activities. Finally, the mandate emphasises that TIPH relates to Hebron as one city despite the division of HI and H2. The mandate is to be renewed by the parties every three months though in practice it is made every six months.

A few days after the signing of the agreement on TIPH in 1997, the participating countries signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Temporary International Presence in Hebron'.[15] It outlines the operational guidelines for the mission in accordance with the bilateral agreement signed between Israel and the PLO. In that Memorandum, TIPH will accordingly 'elaborate on daily situation reports based on internationally recognised human rights standards' and coordinate its activities closely with the parties. It underlines that these situation reports are not 'for public use'. Furthermore, the memorandum clarifies that TIPH will enjoy freedom of movement but will not enter privately-held areas, military camps and security installations without specific permission from the appropriate authority.

There are several ambiguities and restrictions in the mandate.

First, the mandate stipulates that one of TIPH's tasks is to promote economic development and prosperity among the Palestinians. This is a point frequently stressed by the Israeli side since it is less controversial than the task of monitoring the conduct of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). However, the main activities of the TIPH centre around observation and reporting on incidents

primarily in the Israeli-controlled area of H2.

Second, despite the reference in the agreements to TIPH's freedom of movement in Hebron, its members are not allowed access, even when wearing uniforms and on duty, to the area in and around the Tomb of the Patriarchs/*al-Harara al-Ibrahimi* since Israel defines it as out of TIPH's area of responsibility. There are also several other locations in the old city where TIPH is at times denied access.

One such place is the area surrounding what the Palestinians refer to as the Mosque of Al-Arbain and the Israelis call the Tomb of Yishai and Ruth. This is yet another disputed area between Jews and Muslims. The site is situated close to the settlement of Tel Rumeida and several attempts have been made by settlers to convert the existing mosque into a Jewish national shrine. For instance, the door has been painted blue and at the entrance one can read Hebrew inscriptions, referring to the tomb of Yishai and Ruth. These changes contradict the Hebron Protocol, which states that, '[t]he two parties are committed to preserve and protect the historic character of the city in a way which does not harm or change that character in any part of the city'. Palestinians have not been allowed access to the site in recent years while the Hebron settlers visit and organise regular tours for tourists, which are advertised in the largest English-speaking newspaper in Israel, *The Jerusalem Post*.

Third, TIPH lacks any power of enforcement and has often to struggle with the question of legitimacy. TIPH is frequently accused by the Israeli authorities and the settlers in particular of a Palestinian bias. Yet, the TIPH mandate was constructed precisely to compensate for the Palestinian weakness since there is such a huge discrepancy and asymmetry of power between the parties.

DIRECT PREVENTION: STRATEGIES TO AVERT CONFLICT ESCALATION

Direct prevention differs from structural prevention in regards to time, goal and strategy. These strategies are focused on a limited and pragmatic agenda of prevention that does not claim to present or prescribe a comprehensive formula to resolve all outstanding issues. Instead, efforts are centred on controlling and removing the imminent causes of conflict. Frequently-used strategies derive from traditional tools of diplomacy such as negotiation and mediation. Most of TIPH's activities can be viewed as direct prevention, which will be discussed in the section below.

Reporting and Observing

The main and most important task of TIPH is to monitor the situation in Hebron on a daily basis in order to report on various incidents that might lead to conflict escalation. Consequently, the majority of its members are serving as observers.[16] TIPH is a civil and unarmed mission[17] but recruits members from civilian life as well as from the police and the military. This variety of backgrounds enables TIPH to have patrols (made in pairs) that consist of an Arabic/Hebrew speaker and a police/military person. This is a security as well as a cultural advantage when operating in such a sensitive environment as Hebron.

The daily observer reports are documented with video and digital cameras. Since TIPH is primarily operating in the Israeli-controlled area of H2, the majority of the reports concern incidents related to the conduct of the IDF, such as arrests, harassment, detention of minors and the use of force against the Palestinian population. There are also several reports about the

behaviour of the settlers residing in the old city of Hebron, which primarily concern harassment of Palestinians, trespassing and material damage to Palestinian property. Most reports about the Palestinians concern demonstrations, Molotov cocktail-throwing and stone-throwing. All the reports are assessed by a special Report Assessment Group, which evaluates them on the basis of TIPH's mandate and international human rights. However, there is an ongoing discussion within TIPH about the appropriate interpretation of the mandate and the applicability of human rights, which has implications for the evaluation of the reports and the focus of the monitoring activities. Some members argue for a wider interpretation of the mandate to include monitoring more closely human rights abuses by the PA in the HI area.

To illustrate, TIPH has received information that a Palestinian television station was closed on several occasions because of its critical reporting of the PA. Some members argue that TIPH ought to monitor such incidents whereas others argue that it is beyond its mandate.

Most of the incident reports are forwarded to the IDF and the Palestinian Police Forces (PPF) for clarification and information. This is made on a daily basis through the liaison system, which is one of the most important communication channels in which relations with both sides are nurtured. Until the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada, this system worked well as a whole.

Finally, on the basis of the daily observation reports, TIPH puts together several analytical reports of the current situation in Hebron. The six member countries are provided with a Weekly Report (bi-weekly since 2001). The Periodic Reports, covering three months, are written and sent to the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the PA. However, these reports are confidential and not accessible to the public.

This puts several constraints on TIPH, though it was voluntarily imposed by the six member countries. TIPH cannot, for instance, share detailed information with other human rights organisations. Yet, one valid and often stated argument for confidentiality is that it facilitates more constructive discussions between the Israeli and Palestinian side and enhances the credibility of TIPH. If the reports were public it is assumed that the parties would be more inclined to justify their actions mentioned in the reports rather than trying to resolve the issues of dispute. Also, information contained in the reports could be misused by other groups, thus causing damage to TIPH's reputation and integrity as a third party.

Negotiations Between the Parties

TIPH is facilitating negotiations and communication between the Israeli and Palestinian parties in two different forums. In the Joint Hebron Committee (JHC) daily incidents and military and security problems are addressed whereas policy and diplomatic issues are dealt with in the Monitoring and Steering Committee (MSC). There are also several subjects regarding implementation of signed agreements that TIPH closely monitors and raises during these meetings as they concern the normalisation of life for the Palestinians in Hebron.

For instance, the wholesale market, Hasbahe, is still not opened as a retail market. The Israeli settlers claim that the site is part of the property of the pre-1929 Jewish community. It has therefore been an ongoing flashpoint of tension between them and the Palestinians. Also Al-Shuhada Street, the main road in the old city, is still not open for traffic in both directions since it passes by the Israeli settlements. However, regarding the status of the site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs/*al-Haram al-Ibrahimi*, TIPH is not addressing the issue since the parties agreed in 1994 to disagree about its status and thus to keep the present situation as it is.

(a) Joint Hebron Committee Meeting

According to the agreement, the JHC should meet every week but has in practice met every three weeks (until 2001). TIPH chairs the meeting though the venue is rotating between the IDF, the PPF and TIPH. Each side is represented by their respective commanders together with the heads of the District Civil Liasion (DCO), and representatives from the Israeli Police and Border Police. The agenda is based on TIPH's daily reports and assessment of the current situation in Hebron as well as on suggested topics by the parties. TIPH tries to encourage the parties to find ways to resolve tensions and ease daily life for the Palestinians living under the Israeli occupation. For example, there are recurring problems over IDF observation posts on the roofs of Palestinian civilian houses and trespassing of settlers on Palestinian privately-owned land. Detention of Palestinians, particularly minors, is also frequently discussed as are clashes between Palestinians and the IDF.

These topics are difficult to resolve since they touch upon the core of Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance. The harassment by settler youth of TIPH members, in the form of throwing eggs, damaging patrol cars, hitting and kicking members, and so on, has also been discussed on several occasions because IDF soldiers have not intervened on behalf of TIPH. Despite assurances from the IDF commander to address the problem, it has not been satisfactorily resolved to this day. Regarding stone-throwing and harassment by settler youth (against TIPH or Palestinians), the IDF usually claims that they are ‘only kids’ and no arrests or intervention are usually made, a sharp contrast to cases of Palestinian stone-throwing where the IDF does not hesitate to carry out arrests while concurrently blaming the parents for encouraging such behaviour.

The success of the JHC varies over time, depending on the situation in Hebron as well as how relations between TIPH and the parties are nurtured. The meetings are important in themselves given the fact that the parties meet on a regular basis to discuss various topics and to hear each side's version of events. In this forum, TIPH can receive further clarification regarding issues that have not been satisfactorily resolved through the liaison system. For instance, settlers frequently trespass on Palestinian property as a strategy to (re)claim places. In Tel Rumeida, settlers (often women) stage picnics on privately-owned Palestinian land to demonstrate their claims. In these instances, TIPH and the PPF have received useful information and clarification from the IDF about its position on the issue as well as its strategy to handle this kind of incident.

Since TIPH operates mainly in the Israeli-controlled area, the majority of issues in the JHC concern the conduct of the IDF. As a result, the IDF feels at times scrutinised in its military operations and has on several occasions questioned TIPH's activities and impartiality. The problem emanates to a certain extent from the mandate, which stipulates that TIPH is to enhance the security of the Palestinians only. It also derives from a pre-conceived Israeli assumption that a third party such as TIPH is to act in a strictly *neutral* manner without any preferences and intentions to influence events. However, since TIPH's mandate is focused on the well-being of the Palestinians, its task is to act in the most *impartial* way possible compatible with the mission's mandate. Since Israel still occupies parts of Hebron, it is probably unavoidable that the IDF feels targeted and criticised by TIPH. In all other places in the West Bank, the IDF operates freely.

(b) Monitoring and Steering Committee

One of the more important documents that TIPH produces is the Periodic Report, which is an analysis and assessment of the situation in Hebron over the past three months. It includes policy-recommendations about how to resolve some of the most disturbing incidents and obstacles to the security and well-being of the Palestinians. On the basis of the Periodic Report, Israeli and Palestinian diplomats meet in a Monitoring and Steering Committee (MSC), which is chaired by a Norwegian diplomat, to discuss the situation in Hebron,. Also present are diplomats from the six member states. In contrast to the JHC that deals with ongoing daily tensions, this forum tries to address policy-relevant questions.

The success of the MSC meetings very much reflects the present stage and progress in the peace process. Usually, the Palestinian side tends to view the report positively whereas the Israeli response has varied over time. On several occasions the Israeli Foreign Ministry has criticised the report for being too harsh in the analysis of IDF's conduct and the settlers' behaviour whereas it is too lenient on Palestinian violence. Furthermore, it has criticised TIPH's use of terms, such as, 'settlers'. The Israeli Foreign Ministry much prefers the terms ‘Israeli citizens’ or ‘the Jewish community of Hebron’ as Israel does not view H2 as occupied but rather as an administrative area. Despite the fact that all six member countries view the Israeli occupation of Hebron as illegal and contradicting international law, TIPH has not been consistent in the use of terms. Thus, the quality of the Periodic Reports has varied over time. This is partly due to the lack of institutional memory of TIPH and of qualified analysts (its members rotate every six to 12 months) as well as an attempt to please the Israeli side.

To sum up, TIPH has several strategies to influence events in Hebron but has to operate under the restrictions outlined above. Israel has consistently pursued a policy of limiting TIPH's influence and leverage since Israel in principle rejects the idea of an internationalisation of the conflict. The Israeli fear is that the TIPH-model may be used in other places in the Occupied Territories. TIPH has therefore become what may be described as a ‘local’ phenomenon, relatively unknown to many outsiders. Moreover, it is not clear in what ways the six member countries are utilising TIPH's information in other diplomatic arenas, even though the ‘Local Contact Group’ (consisting of local diplomats) and TIPH meets monthly to discuss TIPH's activities.

STRUCTURAL PREVENTION: PEACE AND WELL-BEING AMONG THE PALESTINIANS

In contrast to direct prevention, structural prevention attempts to resolve deep-rooted causes of conflict. In the theoretical literature, structural prevention is often described as aiming towards democratic institution-building and reconstructing conflict-ridden societies by addressing economic, social and political structures. Obviously such an approach requires a long-term engagement of a third party, which at first glance seem to be in contradiction of a temporary mission such as TIPH. However, the reason why such an analysis is made here is that the TIPH's mandate also includes some aspects of structural prevention.

Promoting Social and Economic Development in the Palestinian Population

As stated in the mandate, one of the tasks is ‘to help promote stability and an appropriate environment conducive to the enhancement of the well-being of the Palestinians of Hebron and their economic development’. TIPH has a sub-division that nurtures community relations with the Palestinian population and tries to address, through a variety of projects, some of the social

and economic problems that the Palestinians are facing in Hebron. Most of the projects are relatively small, easy and quick to implement, ranging from financial support to cultural institutions, school books, summer camps, sport and education events to building sun/rain shelters in Palestinian schools. Priority groups are women, youth, and poor neighbourhoods.

TIPH has also decided to reinvest its tax breaks into the local Palestinian community, which has resulted in some larger donor projects, such as the purchase of advanced medical equipment for Palestinian hospitals and supporting reconstruction and preservation work in the old city of Hebron. TIPH also strives to cooperate with local organisations such as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee on various projects. The six member countries have several independent donor projects in Hebron but relatively few of them are coordinated with TIPH. Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada many of the activities mentioned above have been reduced. Instead, efforts are made to provide emergency relief to the Palestinians, such as delivering food and medicine during curfews.

Even if the mandate specifically refers to economic development, it is not a prioritised activity within TIPH. The importance of these community-related activities in comparison to observing have been debated within TIPH as well as between the six member countries. The TIPH community relations sub-division has seen a reduction of staff and financing. Hence, to make the claim that TIPH contributes in any substantial way to Palestinian economic development in Hebron would be an exaggeration. Furthermore, is it a realistic aim and task of such a relatively small and temporary mission as TIPH? Yet, these community-related activities fulfil other functions as well, such as generating goodwill and confidence for TIPH among the Palestinian population. It should be noted that all TIPH members reside in Hebron. Considering that Hebron is a very conservative and religious city, some Palestinians are provoked by the secular lifestyle of the observers and the presence of women who are not wearing traditional clothing. Moreover, some Palestinians have expressed disappointment that TIPH does not interfere in incidents but only observe them in a non-reactive fashion. Thus an important task of the community-related activities is to disseminate information about TIPH in general and its mandate in particular.

Promoting Stability and Peace

According to the mandate, TIPH exists to promote stability and peace in the city of Hebron. This remains an ambitious goal; doubts must exist over how TIPH may enhance its position under the present circumstances of the Israeli occupation. Moreover, it is peculiar that while peace is mentioned, the agreement does not say anything about co-existence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians. This is perhaps a major oversight given that, as mentioned, some 450 Israeli settlers reside in the old city of Hebron.

The environment is extremely volatile as Palestinian neighbourhoods surround all the Jewish settlements. The settlers belong to the most extreme and ultra-nationalist part of the settler movement and reject outright TIPH. Its presence is viewed from a zero-sum perspective – that is, TIPH infringes their legitimacy to reside in Hebron. Even though they are not covered by the mandate and have no desire to be, they accuse TIPH of ‘one-sided racism’ and of being completely biased in favour of the Palestinians. According to their spokesperson, ‘TIPH observers arrive in Hebron with preconceived notions and, perhaps, anti-Semitic attitudes.’[18]

Furthermore, they frequently draw a historical analogy to the Holocaust and compare TIPH members with Nazi soldiers. In their own words, TIPH:

> …is part of an international anti-Semitic condition that has been operating against the Jewish People for many generations, a condition which found its worst expression in the terrible Holocaust of the 1940s. Sorrowfully, a sizable portion of the countries from which you arrived collaborated with the Nazi beast of prey.[19]

As a consequence, a lot of anger is directed towards TIPH members on patrol, who, as mentioned, frequently experience harassment, verbal as well as physical, by settler youth in particular. Despite IDF soldiers being present during these incidents they remain passive without intervening on behalf of TIPH. It appears, however, that the IDF and the Israeli Police are not completely in agreement over how to enforce law and order among the settlers in Hebron. The IDF has publicly criticised the attitude of the Israeli Police for not being 'fair' as the police have opened many files against the settlers.[20] As a consequence, Israeli policemen are disliked and viewed with suspicion by many settlers. According to the major general of the Israeli Police, the settlers 'simply don't want us to be there'.[21] By way of illustration, the settlers openly express their gratitude to IDF soldiers for their protection by giving them drinks and food in the streets, while completely ignoring Israeli policemen.

Concerning TIPH, the settlers reverse the argument of harassment and state that they are the ones who feel harassed by the constant monitoring and reporting by TIPH of their activities. The settlers see themselves 'performing a mission of universal justice, one which every person of intelligence and culture, untainted by anti-Jewish prejudice, is obligated to support: to rebuild the Jewish community, and not to allow the plot of anti-Semitic Arabic murders to be fulfilled'. Consequently, in their view, 'TIPH has become an anti-Jewish organization that is ready to support every unjust and abominable act on condition that it is perpetrated against Jews' .[22]

Furthermore, their spokesperson has publicly referred to TIPH's Periodic Report, which is supposed to be a confidential document, as 'entirely false'. Harassment of Palestinians, damaging and trespassing on their property are simply viewed as 'complaints of Arabs' that hold no truth. Thus, 'TIPH's influence on IDF is thoroughly negative'.[23] Several efforts have been made to build confidence and improve relations with the Hebron settlers but without achieving any significant progress. The settlers have officially declared to TIPH members that, '[w]hen you abandon your organization and your one-sided, hostile approach, you are invited to visit here as tourists'.[24]

THE TIPH AND THE OUTBREAK OF THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA

The summer of 2000 was characterised on the one hand with optimism that the Camp David negotiations might result in an agreement. On the other hand, there were indications that the Palestinians were mobilising for some kind of violent struggle for complete territorial independence since Palestinian statehood remained at the apex of the regional agenda.

Few would have predicted the scale of violence that broke out in September. As in so many other cities in the West Bank, the Al-Aqsa intifada led to daily clashes between Palestinians and the IDF. The pattern of violence was appallingly predictable. Around midday, young Palestinians and students clashed with the IDF at the border between HI and H2. The Palestinians were throwing stones and Molotov cocktails and the IDF responded with firing rubber-coated metal bullets and at times with live ammunition.

At night, the shooting began around the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Sharet Al-Sheikh and

Abu-Shneineh in HI where Palestinian snipers positioned themselves on rooftops of civilian houses and directed fire against the Jewish settlements in H2. The IDF responded with heavy fire both from the ground as well as from helicopters. Even if the settlers were directly targeted they still refused to take defensive measures as suggested by the IDF since it would, according to them, make a settler 'behave like an animal in a cage'.[25] Instead, they demanded the reoccupation of Sharet Al-Sheikh and Abu-Shneineh. Following the murder of a ten-month-old Jewish baby by a Palestinian sniper in March 2001, acts of revenge among the settlers increased.

Shortly after the murder, they entered Sharet Al-Sheikh and Abu-Shneineh and fired on Palestinian houses. During curfews, the settlers have damaged Palestinian property and sprayed anti-Muslim slogans, such as 'Muhammad is a pig' .[26] In the first few months, the IDF expressed some understanding of the duress that the settlers suffered from since they were shot at daily and particularly at night. However, in April 2001 a Palestinian store was destroyed by an explosive device wounding several Israeli policemen in the process. Commenting on the incident, the IDF commander stated that the 'law is toothless here. I have no means to remove the hooligans.'[27]

Settler violence continued to escalate as a tit-for-tat response to Palestinian violence. In July 2002, violence broke out after the funeral of an IDF soldier who was killed by Palestinians in an ambush outside the city. The incident was described by Moshe Givati, an advisor on settlement security to the Israeli Public Security Minister, as 'a pogrom against the Arabs of Hebron'. He also concluded that the police and the army 'were too restrained. Considering the events, much more force should have been used.'[28] The situation in Hebron further deteriorated in November 2002 when Palestinian gunmen opened fired on Israeli settlers walking between Kiryat Arba and the Tomb of the Patriarchs/*al-Haram al-Ibrahimi*. Nine IDF soldiers, including the newly-appointed Hebron commander, the most senior Israeli officer to be killed during the Al-Aqsa intifada, were shot dead. The immediate response from the IDF was the reoccupation of the Palestinian-controlled H1 area.

To assume that TIPH should be able to prevent this kind of conflict escalation described above would simply be unrealistic considering the restrictions imposed on the mission and the fact that violence is not only limited to Hebron. The outbreak of this large-scale violence has posed a major challenge to TIPH and its operations. Furthermore, the parties have become increasingly uneasy with TIPH. The IDF has from the outset viewed its presence as a burden in areas where violence is taking place, which has had consequences for the security of TIPH members (e.g., gun-pointing against TIPH members by IDF soldiers). Many Palestinians, on the other hand, are upset that TIPH has not been able to intervene more forcefully and thus questioned the impartiality of the mission.

In November 2000, die security situation eroded further. During a visit by the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, to TIPH and Hebron her car was shot at. There have also been shootings close to the TIPH bases. Yet, the most severe incident took place in the end of March 2002 when two observers were shot dead and one wounded while driving on a bypass road (which is primarily used by Israelis) in a clearly marked TIPH car.[29]

As a result, the operations and patrolling of TIPH have been restricted and even at times come to a halt. The reoccupation by the IDF of HI has further exacerbated the difficulties of patrolling and TIPH has been restricted on several occasions in its freedom of movement. The harassment by settlers of members on patrol has also increased. The settlers accuse TIPH of preventing the IDF from responding appropriately against Palestinian violence. TIPH consequently bears 'a

large share of the blame of the situation, due to your one-sided, knee-jerk support of the Arabic terrorist aggressor.'[30]

Due to the security situation, TIPH has reduced in 2001 the number of its members from 88 to 60, only a third of the number stipulated in the agreement, which might seem like a paradox during such a tense period. The six member states have, however, preferred to emphasise the civil character of the mission and the limitation of operations during violent circumstances. The security of its members remains its primary responsibility requiring that TIPH observers monitor the ongoing violence from a distance. As one member noted, 'TIPH cannot fulfil its mandate in areas of armed fighting'.[31] Yet, despite the limitation of operations, it is still important to underline how valuable it is that some kind of international monitoring is taking place in Hebron in contrast to many other places in the West Bank, which are restricted because of curfews and closures.

From the outset, TIPH appealed to both sides to show restraint and criticised the IDF for excessive use of force and the PFF for the lack of intervention during Palestinian shooting and clashes. It has, however, been difficult to facilitate communication and negotiation between the parties. Both of them quickly exhibited after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada what may be described as cognitive closure. Their mindsets are now dominated by their distinct narratives of the 1948 War. The JHC has not been held since May 2001 and the Israeli government no longer views the PA, under the aegis of Yasser Arafat, as a legitimate governing body. Symbolically, the IDF demolished PPF's headquarters at the end of July 2002 after 10–15 wanted Palestinians entered the building, refusing to leave. TIPH has also been accused of passing on information to Palestinian terror groups. While these rumours and accusations have been denounced by the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the IDF, the suspicion remains among many Israelis that TIPH remains inimical to the long-term security interests of the Jewish state.

CONCLUSION: BEYOND THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA

Since TIPH is the first mission that Israel has ever sanctioned in the Occupied Territories, its experience is important. One may argue that there is an inherent paradox between TIPH's operational activities and its mandate. On the one hand, the agreement establishing TIPH stipulates ambitious long-term goals for the mission such as peace enhancement, and promoting security and economic development in the city of Hebron. On the other hand, its operational activities remain limited to observing and monitoring the present impasse without any power or mechanisms of enforcement. One of several reasons is that Israel all along has been concerned with the risk that TIPH might become a model for other types of international intervention in the Occupied Territories, that is, an internationalisation of the conflict.

Greater international involvement in the Occupied Territories curtails Israel's freedom of action. The deeply-felt mistrust about international intervention also emanates from the negative experience that Israel has had with the UN in general and international peacekeeping in particular, such as UNIFIL in Lebanon.

The Palestinians have for a long time appealed for international intervention but anything that seems positive for the Palestinians has, for the Israelis, appeared negative. This assumption of a zero-sum game has been confirmed in a recent Israeli public opinion poll. The poll also indicated that if international intervention was to take place the presence of monitors from only two nations, the US and Britain, would be acceptable to a majority of Israelis.[32]

Still, after over three years of violence, terrorism and a collapsed peace process, international intervention is becoming more acceptable among some Israelis. The idea is based on a recognition that it is impossible to hold on to the Occupied Territories. At the same time it originates in strong misgivings about achieving any results from the negotiations and of a deep mistrust towards the Palestinians. Some argue for Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, others for incremental and reciprocal steps while a few advocate international trusteeship.[33]

As Daoud Kuttab states, some kind of international intervention is necessary at this stage as a 'short-term medication for a long-term ill.'[34] Even though the models are different from TIPH, several important lessons can be drawn from its experience.

First, even though TIPH members are not allowed to intervene in incidents, an international presence still has a restraining effect and helps to lower the level of violence.

Second, TIPH suffers from a contradictory mandate, which is ambitious, vague and limited at the same time. Thus, a mandate needs to be clearly and realistically defined and goals must be matched with consistent strategies and resources to achieve them. Most importantly, the mandate must stipulate enough power for the mission to generate and enforce compliance by the parties.

Third, no international intervention will be effective if a third party is unable to gain confidence and credibility among the parties. To intervene impartially in an asymmetrical conflict such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict poses a major challenge since the stronger party will do what it can to minimise the role and influence of the third party whereas the weaker party will constantly appeal for more powerful involvement.[35]

NOTES

1. See, for example, Karin Aggestam, 'From Theory to Practice: Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH)', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 14/2 (2001); Justus Weiner, 'The Temporary Presence in Hebron: A Unique Approach to Peacekeeping', *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 16/1 (1998).

2. In TIPH, I was Sweden's senior national representative as well as the head of the division responsible for research, information and analysis. The division is also in charge of writing the Weekly and Periodic Reports, legal advice, external relations, liaisons with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Palestinian Police Forces (PPF), community relations and local development projects.

3. There are, however, Jews descended from the pre-1929 Jewish community who do not condone the Israeli resettling of Hebron. See, for example, 'Descendants of the Families of the Hebron's Jewish Community, Statement on Settlement in Hebron, Tel Aviv, 6 December 1996', in Mahdi Abdul Hadi (ed.), *Documents on Palestine. From the Negotiations in Madrid to the Post-Hebron Agreement Period*, Vol. 11 (Jerusalem: Passia 1997).

4. See for example, Peter Wallensteen, 'Preventive Security: Direct and Structural Prevention of Violent Conflicts', in idem (ed.), *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Past Record and Future Challenges* (Uppsala: Univ. Dept. of Peace and Conflict Research 1998); Raimo Väyrynen, 'Preventing Deadly Conflicts: Failures in Iraq and Yugoslavia', *Global Society* 14/1 (2000). For a critical analysis of conflict prevention, see Karin Aggestam, 'Conflict Prevention: Old

Wine in New Bottles?', *International Peacekeeping* 10/1 (2003) pp. 12–23.

5. For detailed analysis, see Karin Aggestam, *Reframing and Resolving Conflict: Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations 1988–1998* (Lund UP 2000).
6. Uri Savir, *The Process. 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (NY: Random House 1998) p. 215.
7. The settlement in Tel Rumeida was later legalised by the Netanyahu government after the murder of Rabbi Shlomo Ranaan.
8. Savir (note 6) p. 132.
9. 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements September 13, 1993', available at <www.mfa.gov.il>.
10. Quoted in Savir (note 6) p.127.
11. 'UN Security Council Resolution 904 regarding the Hebron massacre, 18 March 1994', in Hadi, *Documents on Palestine* (note 3) p. 160.
12. 'The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip', available at <www.mfa.gov.il>.
13. 'Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron, 15 January 1997', available at <www.mfa.gov.il>.
14. Available at <www.tiph.org>.
15. Ibid.
16. There are three divisions within TIPH: (1) Operations in which the majority of the members serve as observers; (2) Staff that are responsible for analysis, assessment, community relations and liaisons with the IDF and the PPF; (3) Support that administrates TIPH (housing, finance, vehicles, etc.).
17. TIPH members are allowed to carry light weapons but TIPH has preferred to be an unarmed mission. The advantage is that TIPH avoids the ethical and moral dilemmas of having to use force, which may harm the impartiality of the mission. Until the outbreak of violence in 2000, the threat assessment and security situation justified such a decision.
18. David Wilder, 'To TIPH or not to TIPH', *Jerusalem Post*, 17 Dec. 2000.
19. Jewish Community of Hebron 'An Open Letter: To the members of TIPH', 1 Aug. 2001, available at <Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.>.
20. Nadav Shragai, '"Outsiders" Blamed for Hebron " Hooliganism"', *Ha'aretz*, 3 April 2001.
21. Baruch Kra, 'Regional Punching Bag. On the Beat in Hebron', *Ha'aretz*, 7 Jan. 2002.
22. Jewish Community (note 20).
23. *Jerusalem Post*, 17 Dec. 2000.
24. Jewish Community (note 20).
25. *Ha'aretz*, 3 April 2001.
26. 'settler Attacks and the Lack of an IDF Response', Human Rights Watch, available at

<www.hrw.org/reports>.

27. *Ha'aretz* (note 26).
28. Amos Harel and Jonathan Lis, 'Minister's Aide Calls Hebron Riots a "Pogrom"', *Ha'aretz*, 30 July 2002.
29. It is still doubtful who killed the observers but the IDF has arrested a Palestinian suspect.
30. Jewish Community (note 20).
31. TDF Reoccupies the Palestinian Controlled Part of Hebron', press release, 29 April 2002; 'Settler Youths Escalate Attacks on TIPH Patrols', press release, 24 Aug. 2002; press release, 9 Sept. 2001, available at <www.tiph.org>.
32. 'Poll: 90% of Israeli Jews back West Bank Operation', *Ha'aretz*, 6 May 2002.
33. See further, Isabel Kershner, 'Lessons from Kosovo', *The Jerusalem Report*, 2 Dec. 2002; Aluf Benn, 'Three Consequences of the Conflict', *Ha'aretz*, 12 April 2002.
34. Daoud Kuttab, 'For Short-term Relief, an International Presence', *The Jerusalem Report*; 17 June 2002.
35. On asymmetry and mediation, see further, Karin Aggestam, 'Mediating Asymmetrical Conflict', *Mediterranean Politics* 7/1 (2002).

Jordan, the Palestinians and the Al-Aqsa Intifada

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The outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada (uprising) had an entirely different impact on Jordan from that of the first intifada 13 years previously. When the first intifada began in December 1987 Jordan still felt a certain responsibility for the West Bank, despite the Rabat Arab summit resolution of 1974 that recognised the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The first uprising came as a surprise for the three concerned parties – Israel, Jordan and the PLO – yet King Hussein was the first to read the writing on the wall and to correctly grasp its full meaning. Namely, that it heralded a long and painful process that was to dominate the Israeli-Palestinian scene and to influence its surroundings. The king therefore took pains to prevent the infiltration of the intifada to the East Bank and it is likely that his final decision to dissolve Jordan's ties with the West Bank, a few months later, was made *inter alia* under the influence of the intifada.

The Al-Aqsa intifada broke out, for Jordan, in a different setting. For over a decade Jordan's territorial and national aspirations had been confined to the East Bank. The country had a peace treaty with Israel; the late King Hussein was succeeded by his son Abdullah and the public was preoccupied mainly with economic problems as well as the implications of the democratisation process that the kingdom was undergoing.

THE JORDANIAN-ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN TRIANGLE

In the quest for the historical dimension of Jordan's attitude to the Al-Aqsa intifada, one can perceive it as a part of the Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian triangle, which has influenced and shaped the Jewish-Arab conflict for more than two generations.[1] Three major events – King Hussein's decision in 1988 to give up his country's claim to the West Bank, the Israel-PLO declaration on principles in 1993 and the Jordan-Israel peace treaty in 1994 – imparted a certain stability to this triangle.

For the Hashemite Kingdom, the centre of gravity of Jordanian-Palestinian relations shifted from the West Bank-East Bank sphere to the East Bank exclusively. Yet these relations were influenced by the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Those Palestinians in Jordan who were not happy with the attitude of either the regime or the indigenous society, or those who felt that the major component of their identity was a ‘Palestinianism’, now had an alternative, at least in the eyes of the Jordanians: they could simply migrate to the West Bank to live under the PNA. If they wished to remain in Jordan they would be treated, legally and practically, like any other non-Jordanian Arab national. If they wished to enjoy political rights, as in the era prior to July 1988, they would have to adapt to the new reality, bear allegiance to the Hashemite crown and assume Jordanian (or at least joint Jordanian-Palestinian) identity.

The PLO-Israeli negotiations that followed their mutual recognition, had occasionally stirred a public debate in Jordan on whether or not the Hashemite Kingdom should become involved in them. Many Jordanians believed that their country had severed ties with the West Bank in order

to be completely detached, once and for all, from the ‘Palestine question’ and that Jordan should have nothing to do with the bilateral talks. Others, however, claimed that some of the issues on the Israeli-Palestinian agenda such as the future of Jerusalem, economic relations, refugees and the final border along the Jordan Valley, also concerned Jordan, and might even prove crucial for the state's future. Senior Jordanian officials had privately confided to Israeli interlocutors (yet always formally denied) that at the end of the day they would rather have an Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley, to form a buffer zone between their country and the planned Palestinian state. Historically, Jordan's persistent fears of a small, unsatisfied, and radical Palestinian state inclined towards irredentism predated even the annexation of the West Bank in 1950.[2]

Since the Israeli-Palestinian discussions over most of the aforementioned topics had been inconclusive or had reached an impasse, Jordan's concern regarding the West Bank focused mainly on these issues:

I. The fear of mass Palestinian immigration that would threaten Jordan's delicate demographic equilibrium

Such immigration waves could be the result of direct or indirect Israeli measures or due to economic hardship in the West Bank. The fear of Israeli encouragement for such a process emanated from the fact that right-wing Israeli politicians had reiterated since the late 1970s the claim that ‘Jordan is Palestine’. Namely, if a Palestinian state was ever to be established it should be in Jordan (the East Bank) where the Palestinians constituted a majority. Simultaneously, this would pave the way to an Israeli annexation (creeping or otherwise) of the West Bank.

II. The importance of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for the deteriorating Jordanian economy

Jordan hoped that the PNA's territories would constitute a potential growing market that might absorb some of its exports and somewhat alleviate that country's acute economic difficulties. Following the accession of King Abdullah II, in February 1999, Israel was asked, both by the United States (US) and Jordan, to allow the latter to increase its $30m trade with the West Bank at the expense of Israel's $2.5bn trade. Israel, in a good-will gesture, complied.

III. Regional instability, caused by the reluctance or inability of Israel and the PNA to successfully conclude their negotiations

This instability had harmed Jordan, particularly its economy. Against this backdrop one could detect, from early 2000, some indications of a change in King Abdullah's attitude to Israel. Immediately after his accession, the young monarch adopted, out of domestic and regional constraints, a different policy from his late father's. While King Hussein had publicly adhered, time and again, to peace with Israel, his son settled for a mere formal commitment to the peace treaty. Moreover, while Hussein had perceived normalisation as the supreme manifestation of this peace, Abdullah left the decision of whether or not to normalize relation with Israel to the discretion of any individual or organisation.[3]

Abdullah eventually came to realise that to negotiate his country's economic difficulties (his prime concern since coming to the throne), to create jobs, to encourage investments and to facilitate tourism, a formal, bilateral, peace treaty was not enough; regional stability was essential. Determined to overcome destabilising factors, King Abdullah offered his good offices to mediate between Syria and Israel on the one hand, and, on the other, he endeavoured to persuade the Palestinian leadership to embrace the political option. In 2000, in an effort to win the position of honest broker, Abdullah made two short visits to Israel, for the first time since his

accession. It seemed as if further detente in bilateral relations was about to occur. But then came the Al-Aqsa intifada.

Its outbreak in late September 2000 and the ensuing violence, intensified Jordan's interest in the above-listed focal points. The regional instability that Jordan had painstakingly tried to counter grew worse, and the damage to its economy increased. Simultaneously, fear of a massive Palestinian influx also heightened. Many West Bankers perceived Jordan as a safe haven (either temporary or permanent) from the harsh conditions and the bloodshed caused by the intifada. Moreover, Jordan and the Palestinians alike suspected that Israel might take advantage of the upheaval in the West Bank in order to transfer its population to Jordan.

Such fears intensified after Ariel Sharon became prime minister of Israel in February 2001, as he had been one of the begetters of the 'Jordan is Palestine' notion 20-odd years earlier. There were also fears that Sharon might try to resettle the Palestinian refugees from Lebanon in Jordan, an intention attributed to him as early as in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon in the 'Peace for the Galilee' operation. Throughout the intifada, therefore, the authorities placed restrictions on Palestinians travelling to Jordan. Those who wished to do so were now required to deposit the sum of 1,000 Jordanian dinars to guarantee their timely departure. While Palestinians criticised those restrictions some Jordanian nationalists regarded them as an insufficient barrier against the alleged Israeli intention.[4]

Jordan's attitude to the intifada was also dictated by an additional constraint: its domestic situation. The democratisation process that Jordan had undergone since 1989, highlighted freedom of expression and the holding of free and democratic general elections, and it had contributed to the strengthening of the emerging civil society. Political and social forces became openly critical of the government for being too hesitant to introduce additional and more radical reforms. Leading among them were the union of the professional associations, as well as some Islamic factions and left-wing activists. They also demanded changes in Jordan's regional and foreign policy – first and foremost that the government reconsider its peace treaty with Israel. Simultaneously they conducted a perennial nationwide campaign against normalisation of relations with the Jewish state.

The free general elections brought to parliament a bloc of opposition forces that threatened to undermine the shrinking pro-govemment majority. The government promptly changed the election law in a manner that limited the chances of election of opposition candidates (particularly those of Islamist leanings).[5] Opposition forces initiated a legal and public campaign against the government, to force the amendment of the disputed law. In 1997 it entailed the Islamists' boycott of the recent general elections. Such developments presented the regime with a serious dilemma: how to safeguard the central role of the Hashemite crown while simultaneously continuing democratisation. From October 2000, the Jordanian government had to take into account not only the potential impact of the intifada on the fragile tissue of Jordanian-Palestinian relations, but also on the government-opposition tension. Hence, the outbreak and early course of the intifada were exploited by both government and opposition to enhance their respective positions against each other. One of the opposition steps throughout that period was the massive instigation of public opinion against Israel. Anti-Israeli sentiment overstepped the traditional divide between Palestinians and Jordanians, and was embraced, to varying degrees, by most of the public.

EARLY RESPONSES

As early as 2 October 2000, less than a week after the eruption of violence, a mass demonstration was organised by the union of the professional associations and several Islamist groups, in support of the Palestinians. The organisers denounced ‘Israel's brutality’ and demanded the closure of its embassy in Amman. Continuous and intensified expressions of solidarity with the Palestinians and protests against Israel included, in addition to mass demonstrations with the burning of the Israeli flag, public rallies and strikes, as well as written and oral criticism of the government and virulent anti-Israeli propaganda. Demands to suspend relations with Israel or to abolish the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty enjoyed ever greater and wider public support and were even heard in the parliament.

The professional associations initiated and led most activities. They prepared a blacklist of individuals and organisations accused of normalising relations with Israel, and leaked it to the press. They also organised a ‘march of return’ of Palestinian refugees, 20,000-strong, heading for Allenby Bridge on the Jordan River; they were stopped by the police. The Jordanian Monetary Exchange Society forbade the use of the New Israeli Shekel (NIS), and money-changers were not allowed to make any transaction in the Israeli currency.[6]

For its part the government publicly committed itself to the Palestinian cause. The King undertook to put all Jordan's resources at the disposal of the PNA and to provide as much food, medical assistance and treatment, as was needed. He personally donated blood. Palestinian intifada victims were hospitalised in Jordan as government guests. Jordan had also delayed the departure for Israel of its newly-designated ambassador.

Simultaneously, however, as early as 6 October the government banned demonstrations of support for the intifada. The prime minister called for a cessation of all acts of protest after a demonstrator at one of the refugee camps was killed in an encounter with security forces. Even though political observers questioned the legality of the government decree, the police did arrest participants in what were defined as unlawful acts of protest.[7]

Later on, when the anti-normalisation committee (ANC) of the professional associations published another blacklist of ‘normalisers’, against the government's will, the confrontation between the two sides heralded a new chapter, with the arrest of several members of the ANC. The government insisted that its duty to protect civil liberties included the right to establish business ties with Israel. As previously implied, while the professional associations and other opposition groups took advantage of the intifada and its derivatives to defy the government, the latter made use of the same situation to curb the political activities of the professional associations.[8]

The intifada uncovered yet another dimension to the gap between regime and public. The government-controlled media were accused of not playing ‘a constructive role’ in supporting the Palestinians. Their coverage of the uprising was construed by viewers and listeners as not being sufficiently empathic with, or enthusiastic for, the Palestinian cause. The media were depicted by a Jordanian paper as ‘one of the first and unexpected victims of the Intifada’. Jordanians preferred to watch external networks such as Al-Jazeera or even CNN to the local ‘official channels’.

From the second half of November 2000 the intensive coverage of the intifada was reported to be subsiding.[9] The professional associations still strove to keep the public interest alive by

constantly ‘producing’ acts of protest (against Israel) and acts of support (for the Palestinians). In the course of 2001 the government remained consistent in demonstrating support for the PNA and solidarity with its population: human and material assistance continued, as well as denouncements of Israel's policy.

In the same period the level of public interest in and identification with the intifada vacillated back and forth between low and high tides. This was reflected even by press coverage, which fell into a certain routine, to be occasionally broken by major events or new episodes of deadlier Palestinian violence and a harsher Israeli response. Such were the cases in February 2001, when Ariel Sharon was elected Israeli prime minister; in April when the violence intensified; and in May when the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948, was commemorated on the date of Israel's Independence Day.

The professional associations and the Islamist factions still laboured to keep the flame burning and to spur the public into showing more empathy for the Palestinians. They also remained the bearers of the anti-Israeli banners, and their activity probably contributed to the fact that the coverage of the intifada in the Jordanian press was characterised by an all-out condemnation of Israel for allegedly committing ‘atrocities’, ‘massacres’ and ‘barbaric acts’.

In mid-May 2001, the police had dispersed forcefully Islamist rallies in commemoration of the *Nakba*. Several participants were injured, including leaders of the Islamic Action Front (IAF, the political party of the Muslim Brothers). Following these events, the interior ministry reiterated that organisers of any rally or demonstration must obtain written permission in advance. Official spokesmen insisted that the government had no objection to people expressing themselves legally. They noted the many rallies recently held in support of the intifada. What the government opposed were activities that would endanger public security and stability.[10]

Beside its impact on government-opposition relations, the intifada also exacted its price in Jordanian-Palestinian tension. It revived the apprehensions of earlier decades.

First and foremost, as noted, was the fear that Jordan would be turned into a Palestinian state, ‘the alternative homeland’ (*al-watan al-badil*) as Jordanian terminology coined it. Namely, Israeli pressures would lead to an influx of Palestinians from the West Bank to Jordan. Some politicians believed that Jordan should be more actively involved in the Israeli-Palestinian channel in order to foil the alleged Israeli intention of a Palestinian exodus. In a closed parliamentary session several MPs expressed their regret and disappointment that Jordan was denied participation in the US-Israeli-Palestinian final status negotiations held a few weeks before at Washington.[11]

A cruder and more dangerous development occurred in another parliamentary session about a week later, and demonstrated how the intifada threatened to tear the delicate inter-communal fabric apart. A war of words erupted between deputies of Palestinian and of Jordanian origins, and each party accused the other of collaborating with Israel. Jordanian deputies questioned the Palestinians' loyalty and advised them to return to Palestine to fight [the Israelis] there. Another went as far as stating that the only way to put an end to the issue of Jordanians of Palestinian origin was ‘through launching a civil war’.[12]

The whole scene resembled parliamentary debates 50 years before, just after the annexation by Jordan of the West Bank, when mutual political accusations were exchanged, occasionally accompanied by physical violence.[13] Such events, in addition to the militant atmosphere created

by the ongoing demonstrations and rallies and by the virulent anti-Israeli speeches and press articles, appeared to pose a genuine challenge to stability and public order.

RESORT TO NON-DEMOCRATIC MEASURES

In June 2001, King Abdullah issued a decree dissolving parliament. On the face of it this was a legal procedure within the word and spirit of the constitution, providing that the general election, due in November, were to be held on time. Simultaneously the king asked his government to submit a new election law. The king's steps served a twofold purpose: first, he created the impression that he might meet the opposition's most burning desire, the amendment of the current law, and second, he was granted an extension for the period in which the government could rule and pass as many laws as it wished, without parliamentary supervision.[14] A new election law was indeed enacted but it was far from satisfying the opposition's demands. Instead of pacifying the public arena it increased political unrest.

As the first anniversary of the intifada approached, the government, fearful of a new wave of protests, passed another law that restricted demonstrations and rallies. According to some observers this law ‘tightened the screw on public gathering’.[15] In early September tension between the government, which ruled with practically no checks and balances, and the opposition reached a record high. Two days before the attack on the World Trade Center, a Jordanian journalist depicted the government's steps as ‘the taming of democracy’. He warned that ‘the holy union between people and government may be broken’.[16]

Throughout the first year of the intifada, Jordan continuously supported the PNA materially, politically and morally. Besides demonstrating solidarity with the ‘brothers across the river’, those gestures also served political goals.

First, the majority of Jordan's population, as noted, were of Palestinian origin. It was important therefore for the government to demonstrate that its commitment to the West Bankers was no less compelling than was public opinion.

Second, the government was eager to prove that its attitude to the intifada did not just add up to a ban on demonstrations and the arrest of anti-normalisation activists. Its constant practical and humanitarian support for the PNA was also designed to offset its image as portrayed by the opposition.

The factors underlying Jordan's endeavour to defuse the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see above) became more acute during the intifada, in particular the threats to Jordan's political and economic stability. Even before the outbreak of the intifada Jordan's economy was in dire straits. It mainly suffered from a high unemployment rate and a mounting external debt,[17] and it was striving for foreign investments in job creation projects. The Palestinian uprising worsened the condition of almost all economic sectors. Jordan's trade ties with Arab and other countries shrunk and many investors and business people withheld their investments or business ventures. The number of tourists declined by more than 30 per cent and the volume of trade between Jordan and the PNA also plummeted.[18]

Jordan indeed tried if not to contain Israeli-Palestinian violence, at least to lower its intensity. But Jordan could accomplish only minor things to this end. Its leaders who met Yasser Arafat were at pains to persuade him to restrain some of his people's activity but to no avail. Indirect efforts to influence Israel to avoid excessive reaction to Palestinian violence elicited no positive

response either.

The impact of the events of September 11 was as traumatic in Jordan as elsewhere. Yet Jordan's reputation of being a pro-Western Arab-Muslim country but with an opposition decidedly Islamist in its orientation added an extra domestic dimension to those events and to the ensuing American reaction. The attacks in New York and in Washington and their aftermath did not divert Jordan's interest away from the intifada. To a certain extent the contrary was even the case: the two events were perceived by the public as well as by the government, as somewhat connected and as two sides of the same coin. As regards Jordan's public opinion, even though the entire political spectrum denounced the attacks in the US, not a few regarded them as an Israeli-American plot to damage Islam and the Arabs. Others accused Israel and the US of taking advantage of the 'incident' to tarnish the Muslims as terrorists. Many believed that Israel might exploit the new global atmosphere to intensify its oppression of the Palestinians. Being a protégé and an ally of the US, Israel, under Sharon, would enjoy a free hand, with President Bush's acquiescence or even backing, to introduce even more harsh measures in countering the intifada.

As regards the regime, the events of September 11 increased the threats to stability and public order, already somewhat uncertain due to the intifada. They compelled the King to resort to additional non-democratic means. As previously shown, in the first year of the intifada the government took advantage of the opposition's reaction to settle old scores and as an excuse to curtail its influence; but in the second year things became rather more complicated. The king's dilemma grew more acute than ever before. He had to choose between democratisation and survival of the regime. On the face of it, in light of the developments of the last year, any attempt to accommodate these two options appeared futile.

The most crucial test case was that of the forthcoming general election, to be held no later than November 2001. The idea of running an election campaign in the post-September 11 atmosphere, in the shadow of the American attacks in Afghanistan, and under the impact of the intifada, was a nightmare for the regime. The strong public pro-Palestinian and pro-Islamic feelings, as well as anti-Israeli and anti-American ones, were likely to influence the Jordanian electorate and to tip the scale. If the elections were held on time, a landslide victory was highly probable for anti-government candidates, who would throng an overwhelmingly critical, militant and opposition-based parliament. Since Jordanian governments are constitutionally accountable to both the King and the parliament, no Cabinet could function and survive unless it enjoyed the cooperation and confidence of the latter. So as a direct and immediate outcome of the September 11 events, and owing to the cumulative impact of the intifada, King Abdullah decided to postpone the forthcoming general elections to an unspecified date. The formal reason given was that the government needed enough time to set the logistical and administrative stage so to ensure 'fair and transparent polls'.[19]

Public criticism on this decision and of the ongoing incumbency of the government without a parliament, caused the King to set a new date for the elections. It was decided to hold them in September 2002 but they were later postponed once more to 'the last quarter of 2002' and then, again, to 'the spring of 2003'. The later postponements, however, were no longer put down to technicalities, but were explicitly attributed to the 'difficult regional circumstances', namely, the expected 'developments in the Palestinian and/or the Iraqi arena…'.[20]

Even if domestic issues had somewhat diverted public attention from the intifada, it was rudely thrust back towards it in the first half of 2002. This was particularly on account of the

Palestinian suicide bombing of Jews celebrating Passover eve in a hotel in Natanya and the ensuing Israeli response. The incursion by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into PNA-controlled territories, and the siege of Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah and of armed Palestinian militants holed up in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, invigorated anti-Israel feelings and activities in Jordan. This wave of increasing bilateral violence, however, also served as a turning point in Jordan's attitude to the intifada and precipitated active government interest in all its aspects.

On the one hand, deliveries of medical and material support to the PNA were intensified, under the personal supervision of King Abdullah. On the other hand, the King showed a greater interest in the development of the 'Palestinian question'. 'After Israeli withdrawal', he maintained, 'we have a big role to play'.[21] While expressing more than once his 'extreme anger' over Israel's policy and 'oppressive measures', as well as support for the Palestinians' right to a sovereign and independent state in their homeland, he refrained from supporting or praising the intifada as such.

Moreover, Jordanian officials denounced the suicide bombings as disastrous for the Palestinian cause. An editorial in *The Jordan Times* boasted that Jordan was the first to condemn this manifestation, as well as those who used terrorism as a means to attain political goals. The Jordanian Muslim Brothers severely criticised Foreign Minister Marwan Mu'ashir for condemning the suicide attacks. King Abdullah himself voiced a similar denunciation of Muslims who resorted to terrorism. He even indirectly criticised the Palestinians for using those methods.[22]

Jordan was not only in favour of a Palestinian state but also called for expediting the target date for its establishment to within three years. Simultaneously, it supported the proposed reforms in the PNA, and Jordanian legal experts were reported to assist the Palestinians in the preparation and formulation of a constitution.[23] On the other hand, Jordanian observers occasionally criticised Arafat and his associates for all their shortcomings and for the alleged corruption within the PNA. Yet they insisted that this corruption was the concern of neither President Bush nor Prime Minister Sharon. Only the Palestinian people, when freed from occupation, could fight it. To press this argument even further, Jordanian officials and observers alike deplored and criticised Sharon's reference to Arafat as 'irrelevant'.[24]

SHIFT OF INTEREST

As already noted, in the second half of 2002 the public discourse in Jordan was largely dominated by internal matters, as tension between government and opposition mounted over the repeated postponements of the elections. To a certain extent these developments temporarily overshadowed interest in the intifada. But towards the end of 2002, the Palestinians were once again in the limelight. As US preparations to attack Iraq intensified, so did accusations that Israel intended to take advantage of the impending Iraqi crisis to transfer the West Bank Palestinians to Jordan. As noted, such alleged intentions had been attributed to Israel two years before, on the outbreak of the intifada, and were periodically repeated thereafter. The gathering storm over Iraq precipitated them. The fact that this grim forecast had never materialised did not alleviate Jordan's fear of such an eventuality, given the devastating impact it might have on the country's economy, political structure and entire nature. King Abdullah and his officials reiterated Jordan's opposition to Israel's alleged plans. Moreover, Jordan's nightmare, in case of a war in Iraq, became twofold: floods of refugees on both its eastern and western borders.[25]

The preoccupation of Jordan's public and regime with the possible inflow of Palestinian refugees, albeit an intifada-related issue, reflected the growing tendency to focus on domestic affairs. Since two-and-a-half years of violence had seemed to lead nowhere, many Jordanians, as previously implied, had second thoughts about the usefulness of the intifada. True, the media constantly reported the events in the West Bank and Gaza, and meticulously recorded Israel's 'atrocities' there. But editorials in the leading Jordanian newspapers, which customarily dealt frequently with those topics, gradually shifted their main interest to other subjects, most notably, the crisis over Iraq. Occasional articles on the armed conflict in the territories sometimes seemed to pay lip service to the Palestinians, to whom they expressed less sympathy than they did hostility to Israel. Content-analysis of the Jordanian press actually suggests its greater interest in Israel's domestic arena (particularly on the eve of the January 2003 Israeli general elections and their aftermath) than in developments within the PNA.

The Jordanian regime was in favour of the various international initiatives to break the impasse and to work out a political solution for the conflict. Nevertheless, more and more Jordanians, officials and private citizens, felt that they could do very little about the Palestinians and that no progress on the Israeli-Palestinian agenda could be expected before the settlement of the Iraqi crisis. Only then was the international community, in the form of the 'Quartet' (the US, Russia, the EU and the UN) likely to coax the parties concerned into an externally-imposed solution. A recent public opinion poll conducted by Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies revealed that about 70 per cent of the Jordanians did not believe that a Palestinian state would be established in the next three years.[26]

To cap it all, the anticipated general elections also diverted the national agenda away from the intifada. True enough, in view of previous broken promises the government's undertaking to hold them in the spring of 2003 (see above), met with scepticism and were taken with a pinch of salt. Yet a kind of election fever took hold at the end of 2002 and in early 2003, sweeping both government and political parties.[27] The focus on domestic issues was the outcome of the continuous government-opposition tension. It emanated, as shown, from the regime's reluctance to speed up democratisation for fear of losing its political supremacy. This tension was exacerbated by the intifada (and the September 11 attacks) during which the regime resorted to non-democratic means in order to assure its survival.

Among the Jordanian public the feeling was growing that, despite King Abdullah being a young and progressive monarch, with certain social and economic accomplishments to his credit, the democratic process under his reign was slowing down, if not coming to a standstill. The dissolution of the parliament and the postponement of the general election were the most telling measures to enhance such feelings. The legislation process was proceeding without a legislature. This had been practically superseded by the executive which frequently enacted temporary laws. This conduct sparked much criticism, particularly because some of these laws limited freedom of expression and of assembly.[28]

The king was accused of deviating from the course set by his late father, King Hussein. The fact that no general election had taken place since his accession was also held against him. In the prevailing atmosphere the king devised a sort of 'counter-attack'. This was intended to alleviate fears of backtracking from the path of democratisation, to declare the introduction of comprehensive and nation-wide reforms, and to propose a new, internal and regional, national agenda.

In October 2002, King Abdullah put forth a new slogan: 'Jordan First' (*Al-Urdun Awalan*), which both heralded and reflected major changes in the focal points of Jordan's foreign and domestic policy. This was the beginning of a well-organised twofold government campaign: first, to set a new order of priorities for the state and for its people, and, second, to unite all Jordanian citizens around common national values and goals. The first point implied, yet did not explicitly state, that Jordan should place its national interests before any other factor, and its people and regime should not invest most of their energy and resources in supporting external causes. They should rather focus on Jordan itself and obtain national unity. So as not to antagonise other Arab states or pan-Arab activists in Jordan, the king and the government made it clear that their country would remain loyal to its supranational obligations (i.e., pan-Arabism, Islam). 'Jordan has succeeded in striking a balance between its national interests and pan-Arab responsibilities.' To avoid criticism that such statements might generate, commentators and officials clarified, in so many words, that Jordan would not ignore the Iraqis and/or the Palestinians.[29]

The second goal was to achieve the aforementioned national unity (mainly, to defuse the tensions between citizens of Palestinian and Jordanian origin). As King Abdullah put it, 'Jordan First should be the common denominator among all Jordanians with no differences of origin, orientation, views, talents, faith, or races.'[30] In other words, the future political conduct of the people (for example, in elections) should be decided by national rather than by sectoral, communal, factional, ethnic or religious considerations. The 'Jordan First' campaign, as noted, was also depicted as a prelude to a wide range of promised reforms, designed to show that the democratisation track had not lost its momentum and was even gaining impetus. First and foremost, it was the harbinger of holding the expected general election in the coming spring.[31]

Special committees were formed to translate the general idea of the national project into practical steps, in order to strengthen democracy as well as harmonise the various segments of society. Among the wide-ranging issues discussed within this ambitious programme were the allocation of a quota for women in the parliament, amendment of the political parties law, the establishment of a High Court for constitutional affairs, revision of school curricula, war against poverty and corruption, and improvement of the level of services for the public in government departments.[32]

When this essay was concluded (February 2003) little concrete progress had been made. Still, the 'Jordan First' campaign captivated the internal scene. Besides government-released information on progress in the various committees' work, different groups within Jordanian civil society debated this idea and how to regard it.[33] While the public's domestic attention was preoccupied with the 'Jordan First' initiative, its interest in external affairs was attracted to the crisis in Iraq. Interest in the intifada was certainly downgraded.

CONCLUSION

After the late King Hussein gave up his country's historical claim to the West Bank, in 1988, Jordanian interest, of regime and public alike, in the 'Palestine question' decreased somewhat. The almost immediate inception of a democratisation process marked the intensifying focus on domestic issues.

The mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO and the ensuing Jordan-Israel peace accord, reduced Jordanian attention to Palestinian affairs still more. The outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada

reinvigorated the general interest in them. In spite of the ostensible common solidarity shown towards the Palestinians, the regime and public opinion differed in their attitude and motivation. Public solidarity was more authentic than that of the regime, mainly because more than half of Jordan's population are of Palestinian origin. To their feelings of national solidarity one should also add inter-Arab sentiment shared by many non-Palestinian Jordanians as well.

The government's attitude to the intifada was more practical and pragmatic. It was indeed motivated, *inter alia*, by a genuine sense of solidarity, but it was devoid of sentiment and free of pre-1988 commitments. In a way the government's main interest in the uprising was a mirror image of the public's, namely an attempt not to alienate its own Palestinian population and to ease inter-communal tension. To achieve this, the government had also to appease Jordanian nationalists, who believed that the Palestinians had already gained greater influence and enjoyed more rights than they deserved. They were afraid that the government planned on more gestures towards the Palestinians, at their expense.[34] The regime therefore sought a golden thread in its response to the intifada, in order to assuage intramural hostility.

The intifada had a negative impact on the public, and constituted a threat to the regime's stability. The government was particularly afraid that the uprising might generate a possible mass migration from the West Bank. Those apprehensions incidentally coincided with the King's reassessment of the democratisation process. The growing tension between the government and the opposition, and the latter's demand for more radical democratic reforms, could have gnawed away at the executive's authority.

The government indeed somewhat slowed down the process and enacted laws that made it easier for the regime to curb opposition activity. The most telling instances were the election law, and the press and publication law. The King suspected that the forthcoming general elections could produce an overwhelmingly anti-government parliament. He therefore took advantage of the unrest precipitated by the intifada to dissolve the parliament and to postpone the election for its successor, under the pretext that certain emergency measures were required to negotiate the challenges brought about by the uprising. After two years of intifada, however, the cause and the effect of the government's moves had to some extent changed places. Public attention had come gradually to focus on the internal impact of the government's measures, rather than on the causes that ostensibly elicited them.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Joseph Nevo, ‘The Political Context of the Triangle: An Overview’, in Joseph Ginat and Onn Winckler (eds.), *The Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli Triangle: Smoothing the Path to Peace* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 1998) pp.11–27.
2. The Jordanian prime minister expressed such fears to the British foreign minister as early as Feb. 1948. See John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1957) p.63.
3. This approach played into the hands of those who vehemently and aggressively fought any expression of normalisation, such as the union of the professional associations and various Islamist groups.
4. *The Jordan Times*, 30 July 2002; Fahed Fanek, ‘Should We Worry about “Transfer”?’, *The Jordan Times*, 26 Aug. 2002; Daoud Kuttub, ‘The Bridge Policy Needs to be Revisited’,

The Jordan Times, 13 Dec. 2002.

5. This law, commonly known as the 'one-man one-vote law', stipulated that electors were allowed to vote for only one candidate, even when three or four seats in the parliament were allotted to their electoral district. Since most of the Jordanian electorate tended to vote according to traditional patterns, many would vote first for a tribal candidate and only then for the candidate they supported politically. When this option was removed, most of them adhered to tribal candidates.
6. *The Star*, 5, 12, 19, 26 Oct. 2000; 9 Nov. 2000; *Al-Ray*, 3, 5 Oct. 2000.
7. *The Star*, 19 Oct. 2000; 16, 23 Nov. 2000. It seems that even the US administration was impressed by the efficiency of the Jordanian security forces in negotiating these demonstrations. When criticising Israel for the large number of casualties caused by the IDF's suppression of Palestinian demonstrations, American officials pointed out that the Jordanians were dispersing demonstrations of thousands of Palestinians with practically no casualties at all. Raviv Drucker, *Harakiri, Ehud Barak: BeMivhan HaTotzaah* [Harakiri, Ehud Barak: The Failure] (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot 2002) p.337.
8. Between 1967 and 1989, when the Jordanian parliament was practically paralyzed and the activity of political parties was banned, the resultant political vacuum was filled, with government acquiescence, by the professional associations, which gradually became the core of political life in Jordan. When parliamentary and party politics were resumed in the late 1980s and early 1990s the associations were reluctant to concede their political role, and this issue became their major bone of contention with the government. See Joseph Nevo, 'Professional Associations in Jordan: The Backbone of an Emerging Civil Society', *Asian Studies Review* 25/2 (June 2001) pp.169–84. See also, *The Star*, 7, 14 Feb. 2001.
9. Other Arab networks were also criticised for losing interest in the intifada. *The Star*, 19 Oct. 2000; 2, 16 Nov. 2000.
10. *The Star*, 13 June 2001.
11. *The Star*, 17 Jan. 2001.
12. *The Star*, 24 Jan. 2001.
13. See, for example, *Al-Hayat*, 18 Nov. 1952; *Filastin*, 1 Feb. 1953.
14. When the parliament is not in session (a few months each year) the government is authorised to pass 'temporary laws'. Such edicts are later debated, and endorsed or rejected by the parliament when it reconvenes.
15. *The Star*, 30 Aug. 2001.
16. *The Star*, 12 Sept. 2001.
17. Unemployment rate estimations varied between 18 and 26 per cent. The external debt was around $7bn.
18. *The Star*, 10 Oct. 2001.
19. The Jordanian constitution allows the postponement of parliamentary elections for a period not exceeding two years.
20. *The Jordan Times*, 29 May 2002; *Al-Ray*, 18 July, 16 Sept., 19 Dec. 2002.

21. *The Jordan Times*, 9 June 2000. Abdullah made it clear, however, that Jordan had no interest in speaking on behalf of the Palestinians or entering any political union, neither a federation nor a confederation, with the PNA.

22. *The Jordan Times*, 29 July, 17 Dec. 2002; *Al-Ray*, 24 Jan. 2003.

23. *The Jordan Times*, 9 June, 30, 31 July, 16, 28 Aug., 2, 3 Sept., 13 Oct., 17 Dec. 2002; *Al-Ray*, 16 Dec. 2002.

24. *The Jordan Times*, 30 July 2002; Musa Keilani, '"Remaining actively engaged" is Important', Ibid., 4 Aug. 2002; Hassan Abu-Nima, 'Reforms or Reforming Corruption', Ibid., 28 Aug. 2002.

25. *The Jordan Times*, 30 July, 16 Aug., 29 Sept., 13 Oct. 2002; 13 Jan. 2003; *Al-Ray*, 30 July, 16 Aug. 2002.

26. *The Jordan Times*, 15 Jan. 2003.

27. *The Star*, 18 Dec. 2002; *Al-Ray*, 19 Dec. 2002; *The Jordan Times*, 13 Oct., 23 Dec. 2002, 16 Jan. 2003.

28. See, for example, *The Jordan Times*, 22 Dec. 2002, 16 Jan. 2003.

29. Minister of Information Mohammad Adwan, *The Jordan Times*, 21 Oct. 2002; Fahed Fanek, '"Jordan First" – Understanding and Misunderstanding', *The Jordan Times*, 2 Dec. 2002; King Abdullah's interview with an Arab television network, *Al-Ray*, 24 Jan. 2003. See also, King Abdullah quoted in *The Jordan Times*, 13 Oct. 2002; *Al-Ray*, 31 Oct. 2002.

30. *The Jordan Times*, 31 Oct. 2002.

31. A recent editorial in *The Jordan Times* implied that the king was determined to hold the elections 'by June', *The Jordan Times*, 9 Jan. 2003. The decision whether or not to hold the elections by June may serve as a test of the king's genuine intentions. As noted, parliamentary elections can constitutionally be postponed for no longer than two years. Since the parliament was dissolved in June 2001, another adjournment after June 2003 would be an infringement of the constitution.

32. *Al-Ray*, 31 Oct., 19 Dec. 2002, 9 Jan. 2003; *The Jordan Times*, 1 Nov., 20, 23 Dec. 2002.

33. *The Jordan Times*, 16 Jan. 2002.

34. Adnan Abu Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process* (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press 1999) pp.237–61.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada as Seen in Egypt

HASSAN A. BARARI

Undoubtedly, the sudden eruption of the Al-Aqsa intifada, on 28 September 2000, has posed a fundamental challenge to many Arab countries, particularly those that have signed peace treaties with Israel. A chain of events – the persistence of the intifada, the unremitting Israeli incursions into the 'liberated' Palestinian cities and the lethal use of force by Israel to subdue what is widely deemed in the Arab world as a legitimate national resistance against colonial occupation – has placed those countries in an unenviable position. Their failure to alter the course of events, to alleviate the pressures on the Palestinians or even to influence the Palestinians' conduct, let alone the Israelis', has exposed their impotence. Somewhat unsurprisingly, Egypt, the focus of this essay, has been in a particularly awkward position. Notwithstanding Egypt's relentless efforts to be an influential actor in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, events that have unfolded since the flare-up of the intifada have only underlined the limits of Cairo's influence.

Being viewed as the largest and most powerful Arab state, Egypt has always been expected to play a leading role in supporting the Palestinians in their unyielding quest to realize their national objectives. This, however, has created a dilemma for the regime in Egypt. Egyptian diplomats have been grappling with how to reconcile two different yet interrelated policies: the firm public posture against Israel and a commitment to maintaining normal and peaceful relations with that state. Hence, Egypt's perception of, reaction to and conception of, the intifada are the focus here. The conclusion considers Egypt's conception of the intifada by linking it to the wider argument presented in this collection: whether or not we can place the intifada under any rubric of a civil war. For a full understanding and appreciation of Egypt's perspective, a brief overview of its involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict is thus necessary.

EGYPTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Ever since the onset of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the centrality of the Egyptian role has never seriously been contested. Egypt has been viewed as a state without which the Arabs could neither make peace with nor wage war against Israel. Given this centrality, it is not unnatural that the protagonists of the conflict have hardly overlooked Egypt's perspective and policies regarding the current intifada.

Egypt's approach to both sides, particularly Israel, has evolved during the Arab-Israeli conflict. The relationship between Egypt and Israel can be broken down into two continuous yet different phases. The first one extends from 1948 to the conclusion of the peace treaty in 1979. During this epoch, Egypt and Israel were engaged in a formal state of war. The second stage is from 1979 until the present, when a peaceful modus vivendi has characterized their relationship.

The unanticipated visit to Israel undertaken by Egypt's president, Muhammad Anwar Sadat in 1977, took the Arabs and the Egyptians alike off guard. Neither were they prepared to deal with such a bold move nor to cope with its immediate repercussions. Since then, a sweeping shift in Egypt's foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel has taken off. For a myriad of reasons, the Egyptian decision-makers, chief among them Sadat himself, reached the conclusion that Egypt's

entanglement in the Arab-Israeli conflict had hitherto brought more cost than benefits.[1] Therefore, Egypt would be much better off if it broke ranks with the Arabs and signed a separate peace treaty with Israel.

This move towards peace with Israel was triggered by Sadat's pragmatic approach to a plethora of fundamental problems facing Egypt. Chronic economic problems, an alarming rate of population growth and Sadat's realization that the only avenue to recover Sinai would be through diplomatic negotiations, forced him to divert attention inward. Faced with this reality, Sadat opted for his bold move by disengaging from the Pan-Arabist principles and pursuing, to use the parlance of the Arabs, a separate peace. Essential to his understanding was that peace with Israel would not only grant Egypt relief, but would also be a means to divert resources towards internal development projects of vital importance.[2]

During the near quarter century since the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, one cannot help but note how stable and sustainable that peace has been. It has survived many regional troubles including serious disputes between the two sides. Despite ill-advised Israeli government policies towards the Palestinians, which served to complicate Egypt's inter-Arab position, one could make a case that Egypt's decision on peace was final and indeed strategic. Peace, for instance, prevailed despite the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the border dispute on Taba (a resort on Sinai), the first intifada and, apparently, the current one.

These examples notwithstanding, it can be seen that this re-orientation of Egypt's foreign policy has not automatically relieved Egypt from its subsequent involvement in the conflict. Egypt, with all its history and strategic weight, could not afford *not* to play a role, albeit a less effective one, in the Middle East peace process. Besides, Egypt took it upon itself to help bring peace to the Middle East. Therefore, immediately after Egypt's ostracism by the Arab world, in the aftermath of its separate peace with Israel, Egypt's first priority was to restore its broken diplomatic relations with other Arab countries while concomitantly maintaining its ties with Israel. By the time the Gulf crisis erupted in 1990–91, Egypt had fully resumed its relations with the Arab countries, including Syria, and relocated the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo, thus assuming once again a leading role in inter-Arab politics and particularly a significant role in the Middle East peace process. For Egypt:

> It was a triumphant return to the Arab fold, an avowal of its enduring centrality even when Arabs believed they had excluded it, for [President Hosni] Mubarak made no compromises on his country's relations with Israel. The other Arabs even succumbed to Egypt's demand to relocate the headquarters of the Arab League from Tunis back to Cairo, the city in whose skies fluttered the Israeli flag.[3]

However, one should be careful not to take Egypt's role as a given. Indeed, even when Mubarak succeeded in putting an end to Egypt's isolation in the Arab world, other countries had already firmly established themselves as important regional players. Egypt, therefore, became an actor, albeit one with a major role, among several important players in the already consolidated multi-polar Arab system. Moreover, it has come to be constrained by the many terms stipulated in its treaty with Israel.[4] Notwithstanding the peace treaty with Israel, Egypt has maintained one line of thinking and never seriously deviated from it: that is, Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 borders on all fronts remains the prerequisite for genuine and comprehensive peace. This stance has often set Mubarak and the succeeding Israeli governments at loggerheads over the latter's intransigence in considering negotiations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

Against this backdrop, Egyptian qualified support for the Palestinians in their bid to realize their right to self-determination has been a constant pillar in Egypt's foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel. That is why we find that Egypt, since the Madrid Peace Conference, has been heavily involved in the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations in order to offset the imbalance of power between the Palestinians and Israel and, in effect, to control the pace of peace. Furthermore, Egypt has conditioned the normalization process on Israel's attitude towards the remaining issues of the conflict with the Palestinians and the Arabs.[5] Egypt remains loyal to this understanding up to the present.

While Egypt's yearning for a stable and peaceful Middle East, and its aspiration to be an indispensable linchpin of the peace process, is beyond question, its style of resolving this issue remains problematic and even confusing to many observers. This became evident when Jordan successfully concluded a peace treaty with Israel in October 1994 and the Palestinians signed the Oslo II accords in September 1995. While the blessing of Egypt was sought by both sides, its role in the process was relatively small. The fast pace of the peace process posed a dilemma for Egypt. Allowing the peace process to proceed at such a rapid pace, Egyptian policy-makers believed, might undermine Egypt's regional role.

Initially, Egypt began to feel that the process was moving too fast. For this reason, in 1995, the then foreign minister, Amr Musa, branded those who were keen to normalize relations with Israel as *muharwiluun* (those who rush or scurry), a term coined by the late Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani in his harsh criticism of the Oslo accords.[6] It is not a secret that Israel's approach to peace during the Rabin and Peres government presented Egypt with a predicament. Peres' approach to realizing his vision of the new Middle East, in which Israel could have played a leading role, was a source of concern to Egyptian leaders.[7]

To resolve this quandary, Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan, a widely respected Egyptian scholar, contends that, ‘Egypt sought to maintain the peace process without necessarily concluding it. Managing rather than solving the peace process was meant to grant Egypt enough time to rebuild from within in order to be ready for the post-conflict era thus securing its regional role.’[8]

Seen in this way, the coming of Netanyahu to power in Israel in May 1996, and the subsequent gradual reverse in the peace process, must have relieved Egypt from its regional dilemma mentioned above. Yet despite the setbacks in the peace process, Egypt maintained its dialogue with Israel. To the Egyptians, Muhammad Abel Salaam, an expert and analyst at the Center for Strategic and Political Studies in Cairo, argues, ‘the channel of communication with Israel is a red line that the regime believes should not be touched’.[9] Therefore, the Egyptian-Israeli relations were characterized by constant dialogue. Peace, fragile as it may be, remains an Egyptian interest.

Accordingly, ever since the successful conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in 1979, Egypt's foreign policy regarding the peace process has been governed by three main concerns.

First, to secure a form of regional stability that reduces any challenge to Egypt's regional role.

Second, to rebuild Egypt from within to be ready for the post-peace era. Egypt realizes that once peace comes to the Middle East, Israel would be then a normal actor that can compete with Egypt in what Egyptians often refer to as their ‘Arab depth’.

Third, to help the parties to the conflict to reach peace, although at a pace that suits the

Egyptian perspective. The realization of these objectives entails Egypt playing the role of controller of regional interactions.

The exceptionally volatile nature of the Middle East, coupled with the often-opposing interests of the parties to the conflict, has meant that Egyptian decision-makers have not often found it easy to realize these conflicting objectives. This problem came to the fore when the Al-Aqsa intifada began in September 2000. This presented Egypt with a cutting-edge dilemma that until now the Egyptian government has been grappling with.

EGYPT RESPONDS TO THE INTIFADA

It is striking to note that, during the intifada, there has been a degree of compatibility between the positions held by the regime, on the one hand, and the opposition and other political forces on the other. There are probably some differences over the adequacy rather than the correctness of Egypt's diplomacy. This section explores the official as well as the popular reaction to the intifada.

The Official Level

Arguably, Egypt's number one interest is not the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as much as the maintenance of regional stability. This, however, is not tantamount to saying that Egypt opposes the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, the onset of the intifada and its potential to upset regional stability has presented Egypt with the dilemma of how to cope with the consequences of violent Palestinian-Israeli interactions in which the Palestinians are markedly the underdog. Like all other Arab states, Egypt condemned the visit by Sharon to the *Haram al-Sharif* (known also in Israel as the Temple Mount), the catalyst for the intifada, and the resultant Israeli excessive use of force designed to crush the Palestinians.

Anticipating the worst, Egypt was quick to warn that if the violence could not be contained promptly then the worst was yet to come and the situation would be explosive. Osama al-Baz, political advisor to President Husni Mubarak, was among the first to present such a prognosis of the far-reaching impact of the intifada.[10] Via political and diplomatic contacts with both the Israelis and the Palestinians, Egypt has sought to achieve three objectives since the start of the intifada: to defuse tension, to regain tranquility and stability, and to cajole both sides into negotiations. All of Egypt's moves have been confined to the diplomatic arena. Hence, the idea of interfering militarily to ward off a Palestinian defeat was never entertained by President Mubarak. He stated, over and over again, in an unequivocal manner, that war was no longer an option. He counseled prudence and, on many occasions, reminded the Egyptians as well as the Arabs that war has become an old-fashioned idea. The fact that Egypt's population of 65 million people, require a basic level of societal security precluded a reckless decision driven by sentiments and panic.[11]

Mubarak, as an experienced statesman, has responded out of an awareness of the regional balance of power. He knows that in foreign policy there is no free ride. In a nation-state system, states tend to conduct their foreign affairs according to the balance of power and the resultant cost-benefit analysis. Henceforth, no matter what Israel's policies, Mubarak would be unlikely to support the Palestinians militarily, thus tossing Egypt's fate into fire.

Interestingly, even the opposition did not call for Egypt to fight militarily for the Palestinians. In an editorial run by *Al-Wafd* – a daily paper of the Al-Waft Party – Abbas al-Tarbili responded

to calls made by some Arabs for war on Israel, by saying that, 'the time for the Arab fighting to the last Egyptian soldier is over…we call for reason to sit quietly and rationally to decide what exactly we need to do'.[12] Faced with this new grave situation, and in order to avert the repercussions of Arab outbidding on the internal stability of Egypt, the government cooperated with other hawkish Arab countries to water down their bombastic statements. Cairo also tried to appear a staunch supporter of the Palestinians by adopting strong rhetoric against Israeli policies, but continued to work diplomatically with both sides. In a bid to restore tranquility in the West Bank and Gaza, Egypt sought to actively involve the Americans in the peace process.

Against this backdrop, and after a brief vacillation, President Mubarak, who understood that he did not have the luxury of doing nothing, hosted a meeting on 17 October 2000 in Sharm el-Sheikh with Ehud Barak, Yasser Arafat, Bill Clinton and King Abdullah II in attendance. The outcome of the meeting was seen to be positive, since both Barak and Arafat signed a fragile agreement to ease the military confrontation. Mubarak was instrumental in securing this agreement, however delicate. The working assumption was such that a ceasefire agreement would grant Egypt more leeway in relations with other Arab countries. He sought to use this 'diplomatic achievement' in the Arab Summit held in Cairo, a few days later, to preempt radical Arab states from a perilous outbidding.[13]

Egypt followed up this meeting by intensifying its contact with all parties to get them to commit to the agreement lest it lead to regional instability. In a strongly-worded letter sent to the Israeli premier, Ehud Barak, President Mubarak underscored the importance of implementing the agreement that entailed a cessation of provocative acts against Palestinians and their property and the immediate withdrawal of Israeli tanks from the entrance to all Palestinian urban areas. Mubarak strongly criticized the Israeli policies as they placed Egypt and the Arab World in such an awkward situation that would damage the stability and security of the region.[14]

Due to internal pressures in Egypt, and the escalation of the situation in the Occupied Territories, coupled with Israel's use of excessive force (such as attacking the Palestinians using the most advanced F16 fighters), President Mubarak took a hard-hitting position towards Israel, and ordered the withdrawal of the Egyptian Ambassador from Israel in November 2000. While this move was significant in that it expressed Egypt's discontent with the Israeli iron fist policy, the decision was a desperate move in order to bridge the gap with the radical mood of the Arab public. As Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan succinctly puts it: 'Egypt's regional credibility and status were held hostage to such move. Thus it was designed to ward off domestic as well as Arab criticisms.'[15]

The political and electoral ascendance of Sharon – a renowned hawk and forever associated in Arab eyes with the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in 1982 – was not welcomed in Egypt. Due to heightened mistrust of the new Israeli premier, Cairo took a strategic decision not to deal with him. According to Muhammad Abdel Salaam, this was the first time that Egypt laid a hand across the red line of maintaining communication.[16]

During the two years of Sharon's government, Mubarak reiterated time and again that Sharon was not a man who could make peace. In an interview Mubarak granted to Israeli television, he referred to Sharon in rather pejorative terms: 'I met Sharon once in my entire life, in March 1982, along with Shamir when the latter was a minister of foreign affairs. After this, I have not seen him at all. I hear his bombastic statements from time to time and his stories about Sabra and Shattila.'[17]

On the whole, the Egyptians have been reiterating the mantra that 'Israel should understand that force will never work'. The best avenue, they maintain, is to go back to the negotiating table with the Palestinians to iron out their differences and hammer out a deal that would at least subdue the situation. This has been a recurrent argument in Egyptian politics. Ibrahim Nafie, editor-in-chief of the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram* – widely regarded as the mouthpiece of the regime – argues in a series of articles that military force would not work. In a reaction to the explosion in a pizza restaurant in Jerusalem, in August 2001, Nafie, although not supporting the attack, shows an understanding of such an action. He wrote: 'blowing up the pizza restaurant in Jerusalem, as we warn in Egypt, is a blatant example that violence begot nothing but violence… it is not possible to dictate terms to unarmed Palestinians by using arms, even nuclear weapons'.[18] President Mubarak also exhibited an understanding of the motives behind the suicide bombing when he said: 'there should be an inquiry about the reasons; he who was the architect of the aggression had his relative killed by the Israelis. A desperate person who suffers from starvation does not fear death.'[19]

Concerned by these developments, Egypt has supported all initiatives designed to bring Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table. In cooperation with Jordan, Egypt launched a diplomatic initiative in April 2001 to end the bloody situation in Palestine. This joint initiative took the form of a framework for mutual steps to be adopted by the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (PA) with the purpose of reaching a ceasefire, building confidence and eventually resuming negotiations.[20] Israel never seriously considered this initiative, as the Sharon-led government was adamant about forcing the Palestinians to surrender, a line of thinking that failed all along as the intifada proved its reslience. Egypt also backed Saudi Arabia when the latter launched the Arab peace initiative, which calls for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines as a quid pro quo for peace and normalization. Sharon failed to respond to this rather unprecedented and bold Arab step, and instead took advantage of the Passover (Seder) suicide attack in Netanya to launch Operation 'Defensive Shield' on 29 March 2002. Faced with what was perceived as Sharon's stubbornness, Egypt announced the freezing all of communications with Israel.

Mubarak concluded that Sharon would not be moved and it would be better to wait for his replacement. Egypt tried in a subtle manner to interfere in Israeli politics in an attempt to trigger a change that would eventually bring into power more pragmatic and moderate forces. Therefore, while trying to isolate Sharon regionally, Egypt cultivated some contacts with Labour leaders both inside and outside the government and, of course, with the opposition. In the run up to the election of 2003, moderate figures such as Yossi Sarid, the leader of Meretz, and Yossi Beilin, who defected from Labour to join Meretz, were received warmly in Egypt. Such a move was meant to convey a message to the Israeli public that Egypt can only do business with such people.

With a looming war in Iraq, and the almost certain victory of Sharon in the election, Egypt initiated another bold tactic, directed this time at the Palestinians. It hosted the talks between Palestinian factions in Cairo aimed at reaching a ceasefire agreement (referred to in Arabic as *Hudna*), albeit a unilateral one. According to this line of thinking, once Egypt succeeded in securing a unilateral Palestinian ceasefire, Egypt might then hope to extricate a similar pledge from the Israeli government, thus protecting the Palestinians.

The architect of this move was the Director of General Intelligence, General Omar Suleiman.

General Suleiman presented Mubarak with three primary reasons that obliged Egypt to intervene in the conflict at this juncture, albeit belatedly. These reasons were linked to the impending war in the Gulf.

First, the United States (US) was about to take action in the Gulf, and Egypt, as an ally, must help out at this time by subduing the Israeli-Palestinian arena.

Second, Sharon would be liable to take advantage of the offensive in Iraq to step up military activities against the Palestinians, thereby rendering a possible future solution all the more difficult.

Finally, an escalation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict during a likely war in Iraq would tend to have a negative effect on Egypt and stimulate the 'street' to demonstrate against what would be perceived as the regime's impotence. Unlike previous attempts in which Egypt sought to get the two parties committed to a ceasefire, this time Egypt departed from that line and counseled the Palestinians to put together a unified strategy and offer a unilateral *Hudna*. Emad Gad, an Egyptian expert on Israeli affairs, explains the rationale of the Egyptian initiative:

> Omar Suleiman supervises the negotiations file. He is an accepted face to the Israelis and it is difficult to criticize him. There was a sign of Palestinian internal serious bickering and hence there was a need to contain it. The suicide bombings are harmful politically and should be put off. Egypt also sought to help the Palestinians to arrive at a common Palestinian agenda to deal with the issue after September 11. The PA might collapse and Hamas would, in this case, take over and this is not what the Egyptians want to see.[21]

General Suleiman demanded that they sign a commitment to a full and unconditional *Hudna* that applied squarely in both the Occupied Territories and within Israel proper. Egypt hoped that the US would compel Israel to agree to a ceasefire as a quid pro quo for the Palestinian *Hudna*. The objectives of hosting the Cairo talks were to forestall Sharon from exploiting the discrepancies among the Palestinian factions, and, more crucially, to avert an all-out attack against the Palestinians in the case of war in the Gulf. It is worth noting, however, in connection with this, that frustrating Sharon's design to bring about a collapse of the PA remained an Egyptian interest. The significance of the PA stems from the fact that it is the most important aspect of the Oslo agreements that Israel, under Sharon, has been seeking to evade.[22]

After the landslide victory of Sharon, Mubarak realized that continuing with the same policy of ostracizing Sharon would not work. Driven by this new thinking, Mubarak decided that it was time to turn over a new leaf with Sharon. Mubarak is reported to have said: 'Now, after Sharon won the election, 'I invited him, once he finished forming his government, to meet in Sharm al-Sheikh to discuss how to get out of the neck of the bottle and go back to negotiations.'[23]

The Popular Level

The continuation of the intifada, coupled with the harsh reactions of Israel to the Palestinians' actions, aroused the sentiments and feelings of the Arab masses in an exceptional way. The confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israelis provoked demonstrations on university campuses in Egypt, accompanied by all kinds of belligerent and bombastic statements. The role played by the trans-border mass media, which is not under the control of the regime, together with daily coverage of the intifada and what were viewed as draconian Israeli policies against the Palestinians, have a key role in inflaming and electrifying the Egyptian masses. Moreover, in

their coverage of the intifada and the Israeli policies, the Egyptian media were allowed to voice harsh criticisms of the Israeli government. In fact, it does not take a lot of effort for any observer to note that there have been countless articles demonizing Israel and labeling it as a terrorist state. The *El-Akhbar* daily, for example, ran an editorial entitled the 'The Constant Massacre', depicting Israeli actions as criminal. The editorial states:

> By all yardsticks, what is taking place in the Palestinian territories is a crime in which all Israelis are partners and the victim is the unarmed Palestinian people… On the top list of criminals, of course, the butcher Sharon, head of Likud and the one behind the massacres of Sabra and Shattila, who stirred up the Palestinians by his visit to the mosque, and then comes Barak who ordered his army to fire indiscriminately at the Palestinians.[24]

The chain of events and the internal upheaval ignited by the intifada, although not against the regime, embarrassed the leadership, who felt the necessity to accommodate demonstrators and sometimes to outbid them. Western interests were safeguarded by preventing demonstrators from coming close to them. It was left to the mass media to cover and express the Palestinian standpoint within the confine of words and not deeds. Most of the demonstrations were confined to Al-Azhar and the University of Cairo, and whenever they tried to go out, the police prevented them.

Egyptian disenchantment with Israel's policies has expressed itself in a multitude of ways. On the cultural level, an anti-Israeli song composed by an unknown Egyptian singer, Sha'ban Abdel Rahim, propelled him into public prominence. The fact that this song captured the hearts of many Egyptians had less to do with the (rather poor quality) song but to do with anti-Israel sentiments. The catchwords in the song 'I hate Israel and love Amr Musa', were reiterated by many, as the latter is widely seen as having a tough stance towards the Israelis. Another telling example of the mood of the Egyptians was when Egyptian television aired, during last Ramadan, a series entitled 'A Knight without a Horse'. The program was thought to be based on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the infamous Tsarist forgery that fueled pogroms against Jews in nineteenth-century Russia. The book details an alleged Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. The Israeli press was inundated with articles protesting the broadcasting of this television series, branding it as blatant anti-Semitism. But who cared? Continued exposure to daily scenes of violence in the Occupied Territories allayed any popular concern over historical exactitude or xenophobic demonstrations.

The popular reaction was not confined to demonstrations, but also took the form of setting up popular committees. Around 25 committees were formed to support the Palestinians.[25] Chief among them was the Popular Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada, which came into being on 13 October 2000. Although these committees do not have a legal base, tremendous public sentiments pushed the government to overlook their legal status. A main feature of this committee is that its leaders are of the 1970s generation – a generation which has been excluded from government and opposition parties alike. This generation has a different political horizon.

Given the weakness and the belated reaction of the opposition political parties, this committee quickly came to the fore. As Fareed Zahran, the committee leader, stated: 'We soon became the most important factor in expressing support for the Intifada, to the extent that – although illegal – the security apparatus began to deal with us as a political party.'[26] This committee has been active in gathering material aid to the Palestinians. Moreover, two petitions were lodged and sent to the president of Egypt and to the United Nations secretary-general. The one to Mubarak asked

for a severing of diplomatic relations with Israel and an end to normalization, and that to Kofi Anan asked for the provision of international protection to the Palestinians.[27] Also, in a letter sent to the Egyptian foreign minister, Ahmed Maher, the committee asked for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Egypt, the freezing of all relations with the 'Zionist enemy', and the summoning of the American ambassador to protest the almost unreserved American backing for Israel.[28]

The committee has been very active in trying to pool all political resources to help the Palestinians in their predicament. On 11 June 2001, the committee hosted a meeting attended by representatives of political parties, political forces, professional associations and non-government organizations. They agreed to declare 28 June as a day of Egyptian solidarity with the Palestinians and to send an aid convoy to the Palestinians. The following is an excerpt from statement released at the end of the meeting:

> We call on all political parties, political forces, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, Egyptian popular committees, and all Arab masses to offer whatever possible of political, moral, and material aid to the Palestinian Intifada which in these tense circumstances is subject to American pressure and Zionist aggression aimed at aborting the Intifada and wasting its sacrifices. We stress our complete solidarity with the demands of the heroic Intifada, chief among them are the right of return, international protections, and the right to resistance in all form to liberate the national soil and establishing an independent state with Jerusalem as a capital.[29]

The Egyptian Committee for Boycotting Israeli and American Products is another popular committee established in the intifada's aftermath. It is a loose framework to cope with the political activists who are not absorbed by parties. The majority of them are leftist (Marxist and Nasserist), defected Islamists, and independents. While acknowledging the lack of impact of the boycott upon the American economy, Ahmed Baha' el-Deen, one of the most visible leaders, contends that 'we know that we are not going to harm the American economy. Yet the moral side of our activities is important. We also need to raise and educate the masses to take a stand and take the masses from passivity. In this regard the committee did well.'[30]

The activities of this committee should not be conflated with yet another hidden problem that indeed cast some doubt on the work of the committee. Many of those involved in the activities of this committee have been looking for a niche to settle accounts with other business competitors. In many cases, it is enough to edge businesses out of the market when the name of a shop or a product is added to the blacklist. This pushed the Trade Chamber in Cairo to issue a statement in which it makes clear that some products and places mentioned in the blacklist for boycott are neither American nor Israeli.[31] For example, a Pakistani restaurant was blacklisted by the committee, even though it has nothing to do with either Israel or the US. Sainsbury, a supermarket chain thought to have strong links with Israel, in which 6,000 Egyptians were working, was forced to close down. Some people it seemed, were using the intifada to further their own parochial economic interests.

The most accommodating reaction came from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Leaders of this organization were careful not to confront the state over their policy towards the intifada and their continued ties with Israel lest they be crushed by the government. Therefore, their reactions emerged as a function of their tense relationship with the state over the last seven years. Moreover, they are careful to show approval of the state: when the government withdrew the

ambassador from Israel, they issued a statement of support, which was not the case with the Nasserists.[32]

The Muslim Brotherhood formed a committee in October 2002 to support the intifada, providing it with an explicit framework that set it apart from those associated with secular nationalist parties. This is the first such Islamic committee, and is an important political development despite their reluctance to oppose government policy towards the intifada in public. Yet even where events have been organized to garner public support for the Palestinian cause, members of the Brotherhood have retained a low profile. For example, in April 2002 not one member of the Brotherhood attended one such demonstration despite it being prearranged with them.[33]

Not only did the intifada weaken the peace camp in Israel, but it also pushed the peace camp in Egypt into marginalization or, even worse, into irrelevancy. The peace movement in Egypt, which has never enjoyed a popular standing, was further sidelined. Moreover, its leaders opted for a popular slogan, and joined the chorus in Egypt that demanded Israel be held responsible for the breakdown in the peace process. There is no doubt that, for the overwhelming majority of the Egyptians, the outbreak of the intifada was set off by Sharon's visit to *Haram al-Sharif* in Jerusalem and that, more importantly, the visit was designed by both Sharon and Barak to trigger an escalation in violence to justify using force against the Palestinians. Although this claim has never been substantiated with any hard evidence, it has become broadly accepted. In a letter sent by the leader of the Cairo Peace Association, Salaah Basioni, to the Israeli peace camp, he stressed that it is not unnatural that the Palestinian revolution is against occupation. He snubbed the Camp David peace proposals, tabled by Barak and supported by Washington, claiming that they would not have led to any Israeli withdrawal (including Jerusalem), and did nothing to address the issue of Palestinian refugees.[34]

Despite what appeared to be a volatile Egyptian ‘street’, the myriad of popular activities never constituted a menace to internal stability. Undoubtedly, the regime would not have hesitated to resort to force to ensure internal stability, but the fact remains that the public at large understands well that there is a constraint on what the state can do to ameliorate the Palestinians' plight. Egyptians were reminded repeatedly that Cairo, while supporting the Palestinians in their bid for liberation, would not fight for them. What Egyptians are aware of is that Egypt has paid in blood and currency more than enough to defend the Palestinians and the Arabs.

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE INTIFADA

The terrible events of September 11 triggered a debate in Egypt and in the wider region over the utility, rather than the morality, of militarizing the intifada. The resultant American perception of terrorism, and the success of the Sharon government in placing their systematic repression in the context of a global war against terror, have dealt a severe blow to the PA's international standing. Hence, many people in the region began to cast doubt on the wisdom of unleashing these military operations as a tool for struggle. Yet, one should be careful not to muddle the criticism leveled against the suicide bombings as a tool of resistance with the almost ubiquitous Egyptian support for the Palestinian cause. One can discern two schools of thought within Egypt regarding militarizing the intifada: one advocates non-violent resistance and the other advocates violent resistance.

Non-Violent Resistance

Understandably, the overwhelming majority of those who are against militarizing the intifada, particularly the suicide bombings beyond the Green Line, are pragmatic and driven by cost-benefit calculations rather than a moral stand against killing civilians. To them, the intifada should be one tool among others that should be used or discarded according to its usefulness. Essential to this understanding is the distinction between means and ends. Abdel-Moneim Said, the director of the Center for the Political and Strategic Studies based in Cairo, is among the most forthright in his criticism of violence. In a series of articles published in the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*, he built a strong case against what one might term as 'fetishism' of violence by some Palestinian factions. Said asserts that the Palestinians ought to be concerned with liberalizing the territories occupied by Israel but not with struggle per se. Suicide bombings as such might satisfy revenge for a while but will not alter the situation on the ground.[35] He argues that, 'The aim is not resistance but liberating the land. Resistance is part of a larger historical process in which tools and methods vary. In this sense, resistance is not a negation of peaceful settlement but an integral part of it and thus should not be defined according to the wishes and timing of some political groups.'[6]

Said does not conceal his respect for what he sees as Palestinian youths' desire to sacrifice their lives for their country. Yet, he maintains, some military operations within Israel proper did not serve the objective of the Palestinian struggle. On the contrary, they led to the loss of some liberated territories. Said severely disparaged those who are obsessed with what he terms 'permanent struggle'. In this connection, he made a distinction between the proponents of, to use Trotsky's term, the 'permanent revolution', who are in favor of an endless struggle, and those who are preaching a limited struggle to achieve definite objectives.[37] Explicit in his criticism is a dissatisfaction with some Palestinian factions, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who sponsor the permanent struggle thesis.

As mentioned previously, the terrorist acts of September 11 pushed this point of view to the fore. Critics of the Palestinian conduct felt less constrained to voice their displeasure with the intifada, and many believed that it had outlived its usefulness. There was a certain understanding among the proponents of this perspective that the world after September 11 had shifted towards zero tolerance of terrorism. Despite their conviction that the Palestinian violence came as a result of the Israeli occupation, they argue that violence has played only into the hands of Sharon. It helped him place Israel firmly in the anti-terror camp, thus pushing the Palestinians to defend the morality of their violent policies. This school of thought demands that the Palestinian leadership be made more receptive to new global changes in order to survive in a changing world.

Another argument advanced by some of the proponents of a civilian intifada is that suicide bombings against civilians are morally wrong and politically counterproductive. In addition to their incompatibility with basic human principles, they have not helped the Palestinians realize their declared objectives. On the contrary, the Palestinians have paid dearly and this strategy has played havoc with the infrastructures of the PA. More importantly, these operations have only harmed the legitimacy of the Palestinians' right to resist occupation. Western public opinion, an important component to offset the imbalance of power between the Palestinians and the Israelis, regards Palestinian military action within Israel as mere terrorism.

Politically, suicide bombings have played into the hands of the antipeace forces within Israel and strengthened them. Accordingly, the peace camp in Israel has shrunk to the point of

disappearing. Sharon's long-lasting argument, that the Palestinians' ultimate objective is to drive the Jews into destruction, was given additional ammunition by a campaign of suicide bombings. Sharon's lack of desire to embark upon negotiations with the Palestinians was, therefore, never seriously challenged inside Israel. Opinion polls conducted in Israel revealed unprecedented support for Sharon's policies, despite his failure to deliver security.[38] A close look at these opinion polls clearly reveals a paradox: while the majority support left-wing policies regarding peace with the Palestinians, the majority of people are also in favor of Sharon's harsh policies against the Palestinians. This might look paradoxical, but it shows that the radicalization in the Israeli public is not a given and is indeed susceptible to change.

That the Palestinians have resorted to violence, albeit as response to the occupation, has dictated an uneven conflict in which the Palestinians are in an inferior position militarily. This has led to enormous casualties and costs to the Palestinian people. It has lost tens of its best leaders over the course of the intifada, due to the controversial assassination policy pursued by Israel. By dragging the Palestinians into armed conflict, Israeli propaganda has succeeded in portraying the conflict as one between two equal sides. Therefore, critics of violence in Egypt question the wisdom of falling into this trap, especially when the liberation of Palestinian land under the current balance of power is clearly not possible.

Those who subscribe to this worldview do not see eye to eye with those who wish to place the violent intifada in a historical context by putting it on the same par as other nations' experience with colonization. The Algerian and Vietnamese experiences are irrelevant and cannot be used as benchmarks. Even the Lebanese model of forcing the Israelis to withdraw unilaterally from South Lebanon cannot serve as a good guide for the current intifada. In the Lebanese case, for example, South Lebanon has never been claimed by the Zionist movement as part and parcel of the biblical land as have the West Bank and Gaza. Therefore, there was no religious or historical attachment to South Lebanon and, consequently, no settlements had been constructed

The lesson of the first intifada (1987–93) was that it was evident that the strength of the Palestinians derived from their inalienable national right to a state of their own and not from any military prowess they may or may not possess. The first intifada had exposed the immorality and brutality of the Israeli occupation, allowing the Palestinians to win over international opinion, shocked at the images of Israel's often arbitrary use of force to subdue demonstrations.[39]

But the scale of suicide bombings that has marked the Al-Aqsa intifada has appeared to rob the Palestinians of much of the sympathy they enjoyed in the court of world opinion during the first intifada. Moreover, to many Israelis, the current intifada increased the legitimacy of the occupation as a defensive measure against an adversary that would not be satisfied short of wiping out Israel.[40]

Among the proponents of this perspective, one can discern two trends.[41] The first one is a minority who cast doubt over the utility of the violent intifada and the futility of resistance. They advocate transforming it into a popular, non-violent resistance akin to methods of non-violent resistance employed by Gandhi against the British. Advocates of such thinking are often accused of being defeatist and of spreading what Al-Sayyid Awad Othman terms the ‘compliance culture’.[42]

Violent Resistance

The other trend highlights the positive side of the violent intifada. First, it boosts the spirit of resistance and steadfastness among the Palestinians and, second, it shattered the Israeli theory of security. Thus, they ask for a rationalization of the intifada and restricting the scope of violent activities within the 1967 borders.[43]

The starting point for the proponents of the militarization of the intifada is the legal aspect: the right of Palestinians to resist occupation is enshrined in international law. They dismiss the conflation of Palestinian resistance with terrorism. Using violence to achieve legitimate political objectives in the face of a military occupation and colonial settlement is legitimate. From the standpoint of international law, vengeance actions and resistance are lawful. Therefore the martyrdom attacks – to use the parlance of the Islamists – fall within the 'revenge deterrence', whether they target civilians or soldiers.[44]

In their efforts to impress their point of view, advocates of this approach resort to history to demonstrate the efficacy of resistance. History, they maintain, is loaded with a plethora of cases in which many countries obtained their independence through revolutionary uprisings and wars for independence. Seen as such, the intifada is a Palestinian war for independence.[45] The Lebanese model is usually invoked to support this position. Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan has succinctly put it:

> …the Israeli unilateral withdrawal in May 2000 from Lebanon gave new impetus to the radical trends among the masses. The interpretation was such that the Israeli withdrawal was brought about by the armed struggle undertaken by Hizballah. This set a model for many that armed struggle is the only feasible avenue left for the Palestinians to realize their national objectives.[46]

Champions of adopting resistance in all forms mock the call that nonviolent tactics would be feasible. They claim that Palestinians have followed this sort of resistance for years and that Israel has proved to be capable of coping with it without sustaining serious losses. At the heart of this reckoning is the conviction that Israelis comprehend nothing but the language of physical force. Ironically, this is also the understanding of the Right in Israel, who insist that it is only force that the Palestinians are capable of understanding.

To date, they seem to confer less weight on world public opinion. The pro-Israel tilt in American foreign policy towards the region is not lost on them. They contend that changing the tactics of the intifada will probably not be enough to force the Bush administration to play a fair game and follow an even-handed policy towards the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Nonviolent resistance might bring world sympathy but will not drive out occupation, dismantle settlements and liberate territories. The Palestinian losses in the intifada do not impress proponents of this option. Palestinians are thought of as having a moral superiority because their cause is based on justice, and therefore they are more resilient than the Israelis. In his reaction to the call to suspend military operations within Israel, Fahmi Huweidi, a moderate Islamist writer, argues: 'the irony is that despite what has been inflicted on the unarmed Palestinian society, it knows no fear and its morale is boosted day after day'.[47]

Diaa Rashwan, an Egyptian political analyst, contends that suicide bombing is a tactic that is politically and strategically desirable.[48] He maintains that political forces in Egypt appreciate suicide bombings and indeed use the word 'martyr'. It is an important symbol to prove the ability of the resistance to influence the dispute. It is a tool that emphasizes the Palestinians' right to

resist, and nobody in Egypt sees them as terrorists. Rashwan goes on to say:

> To fully understand this phenomenon, suicide bombings should be placed in a historical context. The first who committed suicide was a Jew in what is known as Massada complex. Also, during the Second World War, the French and some Jews, in resisting Nazism, targeted both soldiers and civilians. Therefore if the French admit that hitting civilians was a historic mistake, we will then do the same.[49]

Others also stressed the strategic value of keeping a strategy of suicide bombings and the necessity of inflicting human losses on the Israeli side. Abou Elela Mady, one of the Islamist leaders who defected from the Muslim Brotherhood, argues that what the Palestinians are doing is part of a legitimate war for liberation. He said:

> I don't forget that this entity [Israel] is strange and that it is not an ethnic conflict: they came and usurped the land. The Israeli thinking is molded by the theory of de facto – rights are changed by de facto, and this is a strange and western mentality. If the west does not understand our logic, the conflict will continue. Elites might respond to this but people do not accept it. The conflict will not come to an end but it is possible to arrive at an interim settlement because of the imbalance of power. Palestine remains an Arab occupied land. I, as an Islamist, have no problem with interim solution over 1967 but will not concede this is not a final solution. I am for one state for all but would send Jews back to the place where they came from.[50]

What is of paramount importance to them is that the intifada inflicts casualties on the Israeli side. They do not concur with the argument that killing civilians is an act of terror or that the scope of the intifada should be restricted solely to the territories captured and occupied by Israel following the June 1967 War. They counter this argument by using apocalyptic terms. '[I]t is ridiculous to speak of civilians and soldiers in such conflict. The distinction is between combatants and non-combatants. Majority of Israelis fall within the fighter category. It follows that the scope of military operations is all of Israel.'[51]

CONCLUSION: THE INTIFADA AS A CIVIL WAR?

As was demonstrated in this essay, the intifada has exposed the hollowness of Egypt's self-perception as a defender of Arab security. Egypt's top priority became the restoration of calm and the continuance of stability in the region. Seen in this way, Egypt has been active in diplomacy in order to accomplish this objective. Nonetheless, many Egyptians, including the regime, have started to understand that the intifada has outlived its usefulness and that the Palestinians should opt for another tactic. Egypt's efforts to halt the Palestinian side of violence could be seen as Egypt's new thinking that militarization of the intifada, although legitimate, is a real blow to the Palestinian cause. The Palestinians, according to this mode of thinking, should ditch their violent tactics for at least one year. Implicit in Mubarak's turning over a new leaf towards Sharon is the need to stop violence and prepare the ground for genuine peace talks.

Evidently, the definition of the Al-Aqsa intifada has been a bone of contention among the protagonists of the conflict. 'Defining the conflict', as Clive Jones correctly argues in the introduction of this collection, 'as a war on terrorism, an asymmetric inter-state war, a struggle for national liberation or a civil war therefore tells us more about the political position of those offering such definitions, than it does about the nature of the conflict itself. Based on this, it

seems that the aphorism ‘where you stand depends on where you sit’ accurately depicts the perspectives of both the Israeli and the Arab sides alike. Therefore, whereas the mainstream in Israel identifies the intifada as a campaign of terrorism aimed at coercing the Israelis to acquiesce to the ‘unreasonable’ Palestinian demands for withdrawal, Egyptians, as demonstrated here, perceive it the other way around. They do not see eye to eye with what they construe as Israeli eagerness to conflate legitimate struggle with terrorism.

Egyptians view the intifada as a legitimate tool employed by the Palestinians after they have exhausted all diplomatic avenues to realize their national objectives of liberation and independence. On this issue, there is a complete identification between the government and opposition. None of the political forces, whether mainstream or marginal, envisage the intifada as a civil war, let alone a manifestation of terror. When the Algerians gallantly fought tooth and nail against the French and gained independence, it was not civil war. Likewise, in their resistance against the Nazi forces, the French attacked civilians. This was never perceived as civil war. On the contrary, it was called a war for liberation.

Regardless of the military tactics used by some Palestinian factions – including suicide bombing within Israel – in their confrontation with the Israeli occupation, their cause remains noble. While it is true that there are some factions who continue to claim all of historic Palestine – which places them very close to definition of civil war – the Palestinian mainstream position has settled for liberation within 1967 borders. Accordingly, placing the intifada and the Palestinians' unwavering resistance of occupation under any rubric of civil war would only harm its standing. In a nutshell, despite some differences, the Al-Aqsa intifada is seen in Egypt as a war for national liberation.

Egyptian support and appreciation for the legitimate Palestinian war for liberation should not, however, be taken at face value. As this study demonstrates, the Egyptians are somewhat divided over the wisdom of militarizing the intifada. While perhaps a majority (leftist, Nasserist and Islamists) remain in favor of the continuation of a violent intifada, a minority (liberals) take issue with this position. The latter contend that the militarization of the intifada will not pay off at the end of the day. More troubling still is the regime's stance. While Mubarak certainly agrees with the liberals, he has been obliged to adopt a firm verbal stand against Israel. It seems that the only way to move on from this ambivalent stance is to bring about a peaceful dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

NOTES

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‘Stressing the Probable, Postponing the Improbable’: Hizballah in the Shadow of the Al-Aqsa Intifada

MATS WÄRN

Early June 2000, the outskirts of the village of Ghajar in the eastern area of South Lebanon: a squad of Hizballah guerrillas was sitting in the shadow of a tree, sheltering from the harsh glare of the sun. Barely 100 meters away, behind a fence and a few sandbags, Israeli soldiers were manning a light machine gun, vigilantly observing the scene. The two archenemies of the Middle East: so close, the situation so volatile, yet so calm. Nothing happened. The notorious Hizballah guerrillas were chatting peacefully, sitting in a ring, like a soccer team taking a break. At that moment, observing the serenity and the fixed positions of the antagonists, one could assume this to be the final triumph for Hizballah.

Two weeks earlier, the Israeli army had unilaterally withdrawn its forces from South Lebanon. All along the border zone, Hizballah personnel were overlooking Israeli settlements without taking hostile action. In the aftermath of the withdrawal, no atrocities were committed by Islamist guerrillas against those in South Lebanon suspected of aiding and abetting Israel and the South Lebanese Army. For years the Israeli political and military establishment had justified the necessity of maintaining its presence in Lebanon, in spite of the mounting material and human costs, by arguing that the occupation of a ‘security zone’ was necessary to prevent Hizballah from harassing Israeli civilians of the north. Now this argument was being put to the test and Hizballah was confounding the skeptics.

Yet observers remained puzzled. What was Hizballah up to? Were the guerrillas just biding their time before continuing their jihad in order to ‘liberate Jerusalem’ from its Israeli occupiers, or would Hizballah, as a domestic political movement, concern itself primarily with Lebanese politics, hoping to reap the popular dividends of its triumph in national elections? For the skeptics, Hizballah's belligerent stance and persisting guerrilla campaign on the slopes of the Shebaa farms, in addition to the abduction of Israeli soldiers in the same vicinity soon after the withdrawal followed by allegations of involvement in cross-border operations, confirmed a perception of a movement unyielding in its quest to bring about the destruction of the Jewish state.

More apologetic observers preferred to highlight the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, of which South Lebanon remains a small, if visible, part while pointing out that the situation along the Israel-Lebanon border is quiescent, a notable achievement in a region where violence, be it the Palestinian intifada, the crisis over Iraq or the continued concerns over the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, dominates political discourse.

As such, this essay questions the stereotypes that dominate Western perceptions of Islamist movements, hell bent on violence or enmeshed in their own vision of establishing an Islamic Utopia. In this regard, Hizballah provides a most apposite example. Beyond the images of a radical movement which employs violence in pursuit of some ideo-theological end, a more concrete, mundane political agenda operates, shaped by the exigencies of context. From this

standpoint, it follows that any approach to Islamism requires ideological deconstruction, an analysis of 'the secular logic' of politics' that drives such movements when ideological push comes to political shove.[1] Indeed, pragmatism, not least in Hizballah's approach to the Al-Aqsa intifada suggests that, rhetoric aside, the movement accepts that its actions must be conditioned by context.

AN ENEMY IDENTIFIED AND OBSCURED

When the American president, George W. Bush, declared 'war on terrorism' after the appalling events of September 11, 2001, an editorial in the British daily newspaper, *The Independent*, noted somewhat dryly that, 'You cannot declare war on a tactic; it is as if President Roosevelt responded to the attack on Pearl Harbor by declaring war on bombing.'[2] Terror understood as an 'ism', reduced dogma or doctrine hardly explains the political or social dynamic that usually lies beneath any conflict. Neither would such an application tell us much about the actor behind the deed, except for highlighting his (or her) grisly character. Moreover, the notion of terrorism, as commonly understood in Washington, typically entails a view of Islamism, or Islamic fundamentalism as terror's midwife. As Andrew Sullivan, columnist at *The New York Times*, put it:

> From the assassination of Anwar Sadat to the fatwa against Salman Rushdie to the decade-long campaign of Bin Laden to the destruction of ancient Buddhist statues and the hideous persecution of women and homosexuals by the Taliban to the World Trade Center massacres, there is a single line. That line is a fundamentalist, religious line. And it is an Islamic line.[3]

Such demarcation echoed Samuel P. Huntington's thesis of clashing civilizations coming to blows because of incompatible values and cultural norms; a perspective which, Roxanne L. Euben points out, captures a 'popular mood' that sees Islamism as a 'particularly foul emanation from that netherworld of fanaticism, where disciples of the violent and irrational abound'.[4] These images, however understandable in the immediate aftermath of horrific acts of violence, only serve to simplify a complex phenomenon. The very notion of 'terrorism' indicates wickedness and malice, leading the observer into approaching the subject 'antagonistically, as a threat, with a view to facilitating its defeat'.[5] As a result, the observer risks losing conceptual objectivity, becoming embroiled with stereotypes that do little to illuminate the subject. As Mirsepassi notes in his treatment of Huntington, 'Everything fits in advance to a preconceived model, and in this unconscious imposition there is a blindness to specificity, detail, ultimately to actuality, and hence the possibility of dialogue and understanding is foreclosed.'[6]

The polarisation of debate over Islamism remains today the most apposite example. One influential camp reads the Islamist phenomenon as a mere quest for establishing a divine, Islamic state, despite recent attempts by Islamists to concede, or modify, their supra-Islamic claims of forwarding such allegedly absolutist, theocratic project, by acknowledging the legitimacy of the pluralist social and political fabric in which they operate. Even if Islamist movements have participated in elections and won seats in parliament in countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, the observers of this camp understand these strategies as foul attempts, or 'dirty tricks', for deceiving the non-Islamist public. As Daniel Pipes argues:

> For the record: Islamism is a Utopian ideology that seeks to use the government and other institutions to establish a totalitarian domination over the lives of the individuals. Islamists,

> like other political radicals, are ready to use whatever the tools are at hand; so when violent attempts to take power appear to have reached a dead-end, they are quite ready to pursue the same ends through less violent means. This does not make them democrats nor does it render their movements tolerant or pluralist.[7]

There remains, however, a hollow ring to the idea that the Islamist agenda is conditioned solely by the desire to establish an Islamic state. The aim to achieve political hegemony (and the instrumentalism or rational choices involved in that aim) is, as Brannan *et al*. suggest, 'undoubtedly useful in understanding organizational decision-making, yet few (if any) sub-state activists groups engage in their struggles solely for strategic concerns. There is invariably a multiplicity of social, ideological, theological, and other factors that need to be accounted for.'[8]

How then should we understand Islamism beyond the quest for an Islamic state governed by the shariah? On what political and social grounds is this phenomenon nurtured, constrained or mobilized by various forces and factions in society? Islamists who opt for integration may not be within reach of capturing the state through the ballot box, but as they pursue a political agenda in interaction with other actors, either through alliance formation in parliament or in wider society, they still impact upon the political life within their given milieu. Beyond ideals and full-scale plans, Islamist groups, as with any political movement or actors, are constrained, as well as sustained, by the context in which they must operate. In short, the character and ambitions of these actors must be contextualized.

This context includes the historical processes that have shaped the Arab world: the colonial and neo-colonial exploitation of resources; the absence of independence and socio-economic stagnation; authoritarianism and repression; and the brutality of occupation and expulsion, the cumulative impact of which amounts to a regional political landscape defined by a sense of inferiority and humiliation.

By contrast, Islamist movements have offered a more daring, indeed progressive, model of development where piety and religious fidelity have formed a potent mix leading towards empowerment. The Islamic revolution in Iran, the defeat of the Soviets at the hand of the mujahidin in Afghanistan and the determined resistance of Hizballah in South Lebanon are examples where, guided by the courage of conviction, Islamist movements have emerged triumphant against the odds.

Yet such examples, however emotive in their functional appeal, remain more than the sum of the gun in one hand, the Qur'an in the other. The functional understandings of Islamist movements, most clearly seen in the outcomes of their actions, ought to be supplemented by what Roxanne L. Euben has called a 'dialogical model of understanding', that is, providing these movements with their own choice if scholarly research is to move beyond glib assertions that confuse intent with capability. Considering the ambiguities and discrepancies that characterize much of religious dogma and its interaction with daily, mundane politics, such a dialogical approach offers 'an orientation that presupposes the possibility of a reciprocal and transformative "fusion of horizons" and thus carves out an analytical space for the voices of the [Islamists] themselves'.[9]

That is, the subject itself ought to be given an arena to provide reason for the rationale of the struggle, which may or may not seem spurious to a secular audience. Context is crucial for understanding, yet a successful maneuvering within this terrain needs vision, analytical

sophistication and the virtue of realistic perspectives. Lending Islamists the voice to comment upon their own actions might clarify the interaction between these elements. ‘Islam is, above all, what a majority of Muslims say it is’, Francois Burgat points out. ‘In reality, it is therefore Islamist individuals who have created Islamism, rather than the other way around.’[10]

Nevertheless, such a move towards dialogue can give rise to misgivings. ‘Don't get duped, don't chew up everything they say’, a Swedish diplomat exhorted me before I went to Beirut for a string of interviews with Hizballah spokesmen in 1996. ‘They'll tell you, the foreign student, one thing and their own cadres something else’, a Lebanese academic informed me at the time.

These attitudes, of course, prevalent then and now within influential quarters, assume Islamists to be involved in something dubious, indeed illegitimate, concealing a hidden agenda, as the ‘foul means’ outlook would have it. Naive Western students with notebooks in hand, tape recorders on, would be taken for a ride. According to Burgat, such attitudes have implied that the Islamists who do not fit the preconceived norm would not be listened to. Only those that do would be given a hearing.[11] This is, of course, a grave methodological problem. Yet in my own encounters with Hizballah officials, it was obviously clear that they were better-versed in the reality in which they operated (and survived) than the majority of observers, be they journalists, diplomats or academics, who reported on their deeds.

TAKING ON HIZBALLAH

In my first interview with a Hizballah official in 1996, he asked the first question: why had I bothered to travel all the way from Sweden to Beirut to meet with the movement? I told him of my time of service with the Swedish contingent of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) during the early 1990s, and the way that we had readily believed the Islamist guerrillas in South Lebanon to be a band of frightening fanatics crazy enough to challenge the mighty Israeli forces. And the seeming paradox of having these perceived zealous militants - claiming to embody the Party of God – represented in the Lebanese parliament. I also noted that the Hizballah of the 1980s greatly differed from the Hizballah of the 1990s. ‘I'm curious about the transformation of your movement’, I said, ‘the way Hizballah has changed’. ‘Well, you're wrong’, he replied. ‘We haven't changed. The situation has changed.’[12]

Indeed it had. The disastrous 17-year civil war was over. The Saudi-brokered Ta'if Accord of 1990–91 had enabled the warring Lebanese elites to raise their sectarian strife and division into an era if not of reconciliation, then at least reconstruction under the hegemony of an ever-wary Damascus. For Hizballah, the accord and the ensuing parliamentary elections of 1992, in which the movement decided to participate, implied a coming in from the cold.

Since its emergence in the early 1980s, the Islamist movement had been seen by many, both in Lebanon and beyond, as nothing more than Iranian surrogates, fighting more for the sake of Tehran than Beirut. True, allegiance to the icon of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, was visceral, and Hizballah's organizational set-up of clerics mirrored the structure of the Islamic Republic; financial largesse flowed from Iran (and still does) while during its formative years, Iranian Revolutionary Guards were garrisoned in the movement's stronghold of Baalbek in eastern Lebanon. Indeed, while passing through some Southern Lebanese villages in 1992–93, I remember the masses of Iranian flags along the road; few, if any, were Lebanese.

Yet the impact of Lebanon's 15-year civil war resulted in what observers termed the

‘Lebanonization’ of the movement. By 1990, it had become embedded in the mosaic of the Lebanese social and political scene, renouncing its assumed submission to Tehran. Hizballah leaders deny the notion of ‘Lebanonization’, however, by claiming that its Lebanese credentials were authentic from the very beginning. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hizballah since 1992, has time and again rejected the notion of Hizballah as being an initiative ordered by Iran. ‘Hizballah was formed by a Lebanese decision’, he affirmed in an interview in 1996, ‘contrary to the accusations that claiming Hizballah was [an] Iranian [creation] – it was a Lebanese decision; founded by a group of Lebanese with a Lebanese leadership, and the Lebanese grassroots and freedom fighters are Lebanese.’[13]

In fact, the genesis for Hizballah's existence was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. ‘Hizballah was at its inception – in thought, mind, conscience, feelings and plan – centered on resisting the occupation, nothing else. Any one who tells you there were other [aims], do not believe him. And I have been in this movement since its inception.’[14]

While the Israeli invasion was designed to remove, once and for all, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as both a military threat and more importantly, a political symbol of Palestinian national aspirations, the IDF soon faced a thriving resistance movement that became the embryo of Hizballah. These guerrillas, most of them Shi'ites, were largely an amalgam of various nationalist and left-wing groups that had fought side-by-side with the PLO, yet, significantly, its leadership was now formed by young Shi'ite clerics who imbued the struggle against Israel's occupation with a religious, as opposed to a purely national dimension.

These clerics held in contempt the corrupted sectarianism of the Lebanese elites, most notably, the Shi'ite, secular leader Nabih Berri. His decision to participate in the National Salvation Committee (NSC), a political body formed by the Lebanese President Ilyas Sarkis in the wake of the Israeli invasion, was tantamount to treachery in their eyes, as they considered the NSC to be designed to sustain a Christian hegemony in Lebanon under the tutelage of ‘Israel's man’, Bashir Gemayel, the intended future president of Lebanon. As'ad Abu Khalil has called Berri's decision, ‘the singlemost important event’ in the history of the emergence of Hizballah.[15] The young, committed clerics turned away in disgust from Berri, accusing his Amal movement of treason for accepting Israel's political architecture. Zeal and commitment would prove to be the point of reference for the new cadres that now emerged. ‘We were a young movement wanting to resist a legendary army.’ Sayyed Nasrallah later recalled:

> This kind of direction required special kinds of men who would not worry about their homes being destroyed or about becoming hungry, thirsty, wounded or injured. The need was for men with the spirit of jihad, self-sacrifice and endless giving. The only name that befits a group born with such motivations and spirit, a group which has pledged itself to the Almighty God and which takes decisions of self-martyrdom when resisting its enemies, despite the huge military and fighting imbalance of power between them, is the name Hizballah [Party of God].[16]

The zealots caught the world's attention with a series of explosions: spectacular suicide attacks against the US embassy in April 1983 in Beirut and the headquarters of the American and French troops that formed the MNF (Multi National Force) the following October in Beirut. These two attacks left over 300 US Marines and French paratroopers dead and undermined any hopes that Washington and Paris may have entertained of establishing political order of a kind in Lebanon. The ferocity of these attacks was matched by attacks on Israeli positions. By 1985, Israel had

withdrawn most of its troops from Lebanon, save for those patrolling its self-styled ‘security zone’. The invasion had cost the Israeli forces over 600 dead, mainly at the hands of the Islamic Resistance Movement. As the Israeli project failed, the Israeli army pulled back from Beirut, withdrawing southwards. The resistance had enjoyed its first success. As with the Islamic revolution in Iran, faith had triumphed and had proved to be a force where religious piety could prevail over secular, corrupt ideologies and states.

The Lebanese clerics forming Hizballah's nucleus enjoyed close personal and ideological relations with Tehran, many of them having studied in the same schools in Najaf, Iraq. The regional political partnership between Syria and Iran was, on the one hand, grounded in the fear of isolation and, on the other, the product of a profound ideological animosity towards Israel. Thus the Lebanese resistance was the perfect joint venture. As financial, moral and ideological support flowed from Iran, Syria provided the strategic shield that Hizballah needed to continue its military operations in South Lebanon.

Yet, the view that Hizballah has emerged as a mere agent for these regimes, still a popular view in the international and Israeli media, would be to deny the local dimension of Hizballah's existence. As Sayyed Nasrallah affirmed, its leadership cadres were all Lebanese; its field of action was Lebanon, even though the Palestinian struggle would remain as a vital component of its ideological platform. Moreover, Hizballah's constituency remained the deprived, marginalized Shi'ite community, which, since the Lebanese National Pact of 1943, designed to regulate political associations between the main Christian, Sunni and Shi'a confessions, had left the latter in a position of perpetual subservience.

FROM RADICALISM TO PRAGMATISM

Three years after Israel's 1982 invasion, Hizballah had emerged from a patchwork of militant cells into a political movement with a hierarchical organization and increasingly popular support. In February 1985, on the first anniversary of the martyrdom of Raghid Harb (a local resistance leader assassinated in the south), the movement released a political program called *The Open Letter Addressed by Hizballah to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World*.[17] It represents an ideological milestone of Hizballah as it defines clearly its allegiances, goals, ambitions and the way it has chosen to realize them, and while much of the political context has changed, a representative of Hizballah handed me a copy during a visit I paid to one of its offices in 1998, thereby indicating its continued relevance to the movement. Some of its more salient features are worth noting.

First, the proclaimed allegiance to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the ‘rightly guided imam’, Ayatollah Khomeini, demonstrated that Hizballah adopted a ‘Khomeinist’ assessment of the world as being run by the material greed of the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, both stuck in a ‘struggle for influence and interests’. By contrast, the oppressed countries, akin to what Franz Fanon referred to as the ‘wretched of the earth’, become the bone of contention and the ‘oppressed people have become its fuel.’[18]

Second, the main nemesis remains the state of Israel. The confrontation with the Zionist state carries both moral and instrumental features: moral, because Israel is seen as ‘aggressive in its origins and structure’ having been ‘built on usurped land and at the expense of a Muslim people’; instrumental, because the Jewish state is regarded as an American ‘spearhead’ aimed at dividing the Arab world, making peace treaties with corrupt Arab regimes while isolating those who

refuse to accept such hegemonic power.[19]

These Arab regimes aligned with Washington, ‘are implementing the policies set for them by the White House circles to smuggle their countries' wealth and divide it among the imperialists by various means’.[20] However, Hizballah formulates a crucial distinction between these Arab governments and the people they rule. ‘We have great hope in the Muslim peoples that clearly have begun to complain in most countries.’ The manifesto continues, ‘The day will come when all these brittle regimes will collapse under the blows of the oppressed.’[21]

From a global perspective, the movement envisages a time when less developed countries, be they Latin American, African or Asian, shall join in a common effort of tipping the global balance of power in their own favor. Yet the home ground is Lebanon, and the movement seems aware that the Lebanese arena, with its volatile mix of religion and ethnicity, is hardly the ideal setting for the Islamist project. While this remains an ideal, it cannot be imposed by force. Indeed, the manifesto offers ground for inclusion: it pleads concord and cooperation with anyone desiring the same objectives over which Islam has no monopoly. These objectives remain concerned with liberating all South Lebanon from occupation and the dismantling of the confessional system which no amount of incremental reform can redeem.[22]

At the time of its publication, such calls for unity fell on many a confessional deaf ear. In South Lebanon, Islamist guerrillas found themselves battling the rival Amal movement and, on occasion, UNIFIL troops as well. In the eyes of Hizballah, the blue berets hampered the resistance to the Israeli occupation, making a mockery of its mandate to enforce UN Resolution 425 which called for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon. This stance, initially at least, did little to enhance the popularity of Hizballah among the local population. As a Lebanese sociologist, a native of the south recalls, the movement's ‘ideology and line of behavior differed too sharply from anything corresponding to a collective aspiration’.[23]

In addition, resentment towards Hizballah increased in the wake of widespread kidnapping of Westerners, mostly journalists, conducted by underground cells purportedly affiliated to the movement. While denying involvement, Hizballah spokesmen often appeared ambiguous over the extent of the movement's culpability, something which further undermined their public reputation. Nevertheless, the Ta'if agreement of 1990 and the ensuing peace heralded a changing milieu and one which Hizballah now had to adapt to. As the anti-Syrian forces in Lebanon, led by the dissident Lebanese general Michel Aoun, were crushed, a regime was installed in Beirut of a distinctly ‘pro-Syrian’ hue. Hostages were soon released; militias were disarmed and the sectarian system kept intact save for minor modifications that benefited the main Muslim sects.

Certainly, the new situation benefited Hizballah. While the militias handed in their weapons, the authorities in Beirut allowed Hizballah to continue its armed attacks against the Israeli and South Lebanese Armies (SLA) targets in the ‘security zone’. Backed by Beirut and Damascus, Hizballah remained in the ascendancy. Amal no longer posed a threat to the movement while relations with UNIFIL improved. ‘Before 1991, we couldn't talk to these guys’, Timor Goksel, spokesman for UNIFIL, recalled:

> We had a big problem with that, very difficult communications. When we had a communication, they were very angry with us, very suspicious. In 1991, they came to us themselves and said, ‘Look, let's forget the past and start again. We will have dialogue; we will talk to you guys. We have decided that you're not our enemy.’ Before that they were

actually treating us like enemies, in the mosques, in their lectures and so on.[24]

He also noted that Hizballah amended its attitude to the locals, dropping its hardline imposition of Islamic mores and social values that had previously led to severe restrictions on drinking, gambling and dancing. A tacit understanding was also formed between the UN troops and the Islamic resistance. As the former could not control guerrilla activities in South Lebanon, UN forces were left to ensure the Lebanese villages were saved from the worst ravages of fighting between the Israeli Army and SLA on the one hand, and Hizballah on the other. UN officers in the field made a clear distinction between the 'local defenses' of fighters affiliated to Hizballah on an ad hoc basis, and the more professional, secretive branch of the Islamic Resistance. The problems that erupted between UNIFIL and the resistance usually concerned local defense units who tried to fire at the SLA or Israeli positions from positions close to civilian villages. For the most part, the Islamic Resistance, conducted its operations well away from either the UN or civilian areas, planning its routes and hideouts in advance of any operation.[25]

From 1992, Hizballah's strategy of accommodation and dialogue extended to participation in the parliamentary elections in 1992. Despite harsh criticism from some within the party over such involvement, Hizballah spokesmen argued that participation remained crucial if Hizballah wished to become embedded as an actor of influence within the Lebanese political scene. The emerging peace did not negate the right to continue the resistance against the occupation, though sectarian politics continued to dominate Lebanon's political landscape. The bad side of it was that the sectarian system remained. As a member of the movement's politburo pointed out, 'Our rejection of something does not mean we cannot coexist with it, refusing it does not mean we cannot live with', he argued. 'That's why we have taken part in this system, hoping that we can change it from within. And this is for us nothing illegitimate.'[26]

Hizballah MP Husayn Hajj Hasan maintained that the movement's choice for integration should not be understood as an abdication of the desire to form a society within the framework of an Islamic state. Yet, such a vision, he said, was not realistic in a place as heterogeneous as Lebanon. 'In our country, there is a large percentage of Christians. We respect their history and we will live our present together. We also look forward to the future together. They are our fellow men. We will build our state together.' Making no claim to represent all Muslims, he added that Hizballah was aware that 'some Muslims adopt ideas that do not necessarily suit Islamic thought'.[27]

Therefore, Hizballah's ambitions did not extend to the establishment of a state ruled by the shariah (such a proposition would only 'scare the hell out of everybody here', as one observer in the field put it).[28] As an alternative, a spokesman noted that the party would propose laws which other parties could agree upon, whatever their creed – and these laws could, though not explicitly, accord with shariah. Importantly, Hizballah officials stressed that their rejection of the confessional system concerned its sectarianism, not that it failed to fulfill the criteria and features of an Islamic state. Sectarianism, they argued, was based on a tribal, clan-based logic, which inevitably seduced Lebanese politicians to issue short-sighted policies with the aim of consolidating their own power bases and dire client-networks. It formed a society void of ideology, values and a common direction. 'In this respect', one spokesman put it, 'citizens will lose the aspect of citizenship and every sect will try to improve their own situation, not to act with others in order to improve society as a whole.'[29]

Sayyed Muhammed Husayn Fadlallah, the prominent Shi'ite ideologue with a deep spiritual

affiliation to Hizballah, stated, ‘Sectarianism is preventing the Lebanese from being related to their homeland because every sect believes that [the sect] is its own homeland.’[30] Speaking at the height of the resistance's campaign against the Israelis towards the end of the 1990s, he complained that because of sectarianism some Lebanese did not care about what went on in the south, they merely considered their own sect in their own area. By digging deep into Lebanese politics, Hizballah set out to counter such trends.

EMBEDDING THE STRUGGLE: THE SOUTH AND BEYOND

Hizballah's strategy of accommodation triggered suspicions from several quarters, not least from within its own ranks. Former secretary-general Sheikh Subhi Tufayli left Hizballah to lead a revolt in the Eastern Bekaa in the summer of 1997. He issued a stern warning to both the Lebanese state as well as Hizballah. ‘Unfortunately, in our country and in the Middle East generally’, he told a Lebanese weekly newspaper, ‘people have little hesitation in laying their convictions to one side in order to keep their places. This sort of thing is against my principles.’[31]

Such criticism was clearly embarrassing for Hizballah officials. One spokesman conceded that Tufayli's comments were valid with respect to the poverty in Bekaa, but the movement was forced to make choices, and challenging the hegemony of a state apparatus, backed by Damascus, would be foolhardy in the extreme. ‘For us’, he said, ‘resistance [in the south] is a great concern and our number one priority, and therefore we must have a strong and solid base.’[32]

Assailing the state would merely put such priorities at risk. Yet, even the assumed aims of the armed struggle met harsh criticism from within. In April 1998, a close aide of Tufayli lashed out at Hizballah for proposing a bill in parliament that would provide amnesty for defectors from Israel's armed ally, the SLA:

> We can't accept the bill to pardon the militiamen who collaborated against their people. [And we] can't understand how the resistance movement whose initial goal was to destroy Israel, can accept UN Resolution 425 and hint that it may stop attacking Israel in the case of a full withdrawal from the south…What happened to the goal of liberating Jerusalem, the city revered by Muslims? Has the resistance movement limited its goal to the implementation of 425?[33]

Hizballah officials refuted such scorn as ignorance of existing political realities. Flexible and mediated strategies would pay off; rigidity and dogmatism would not. Hizballah, one spokesman argued, had to fight vile images and struggle for acceptability in Lebanese society:

> stressing that we are not an Iranian community or Iranian mercenaries as the propaganda used to portray Hizballah. Still, there are dogmatic people who would not accept any change that will deliver such criticism. Take, for example, the issue of liberating Jerusalem: since the Lebanese have only agreed upon liberating Lebanon, Hizballah has not said that it will not liberate Jerusalem – we have just dropped that issue, in terms that we do not talk about it. We will first liberate Lebanon, and then we can talk about that issue. Just because that we used to talk about it and now we don't, some people think we have deviated from it, which we have not.[34]

Hizballah's ambition was to become embedded as a congruent part of Lebanon's political

context, stressing the possible, postponing the improbable. This involved a firm relationship with the state, a continuing dialogue with an apprehensive and wary Lebanese society and, above all, the ability of the Islamic Resistance to continue to prosecute its campaign against the occupation successfully. Many within Lebanese society regarded this as futile, given the disparity between the military capabilities of the IDF and the guerrillas. But Hizballah were becoming arch exponents of what, to use the current jargon, is 'asymmetric warfare'. For its part, Israel tried to capitalize on such perceived divisions within the Lebanese polity by widespread bombing campaigns, targeted assassinations and emphasizing the righteousness of fighting 'Islamist extremism'. As one Israeli official put it, 'They don't just want us to get out of Lebanon but out of Jerusalem, and it is better if we fight them there [in Lebanon] even if the price is heavy.'[35]

Such assumptions were widely disseminated by media outlets and willingly consumed by various institutions throughout the duration of the war in South Lebanon. 'Israel stands united in the hope of crushing Hizballah, this tool of Iranian murderous implacability', an editorial in the Swedish largest daily, *Dagens Nyheter*, noted as Israeli jets and artillery pounded Lebanon in Operation 'Grapes of Wrath' in 1996. Acknowledging that the campaign was 'an act of defense' which, not withstanding the fact that it 'lacked support under the requirements of international law on proportional reactions', the editorial argued that 'had not Hizbollah launched its rain of missiles, Israel would not have had the inclination to show off its superior military capability'.[36]

Hence, Israel was the thinking subject, protecting its security, however reluctantly, by unleashing its deadly arsenal. No mention was made that Tel Aviv, by its very occupation of the south, remained in clear violation of international law and UN Resolution 425. The adversary, Hizballah, was reduced to a shallow terrorist image, a malign extension of Iran's regional intrigues. The paradigm Islamist extremism – detached from any context, be it historical, cultural or sociological – would by design explain everything, and indeed nothing.

Few acknowledged that Hizballah's rationale concerned South Lebanon and, at the time, hardly anything else. In discussions, UN personnel would verify that the Lebanese Islamists at no point in time had tried to physically breach the border to Israel. Furthermore, the firing of *katyusha* rockets formed part of a 'balance of terror': if Israel tried to kill Hizballah's top leadership outside the 'security zone' or if it killed any Lebanese civilians, the guerrillas would retaliate by launching their old-fashioned Russian rockets.

The massacre of Lebanese civilians in the UN compound at Al-Qana forced Israel to bring 'Grapes of Wrath' to a premature end without achieving any of its objectives. In its aftermath, UN officers argued that the balance of terror emerged between Israel and Hizballah in which the conflict in South Lebanon came to be regulated by 'rules of a game'. These rules allowed attacks on military targets but forbade attacks on or emanating from civilian areas. In short, Israel had actually condoned continuing attacks on its own soldiers in the 'security zone', tantamount to admitting that it was an occupier.

For its part Hizballah refused to supply Israel any information of what it would do should Israel withdraw from the south, something that puzzled observers. Such ambiguity was deliberately constructed, designed not to concede one single guarantee to a despised enemy, thus depriving Israel of any benefit from its fateful invasion and occupation. Yet there were signs and hints. In a comprehensive interview for a Washington-based magazine on the Middle East in 1996, Sayyed Nasrallah pointed out that the Lebanese army had committed itself to deploy its forces in case of a withdrawal, and that a 'big problem' would occur if the resistance should opt

for the continuation of operations. ‘The Israelis know that, so why are they stuck?’, he questioned.

> Why do they insist on a commitment from us to stop the attacks? I do not say that we want to go on with the operations, but at the same time we cannot commit ourselves that we are going to stop the operations. We say that we have no business in the peace process and the guarantees. I tell you: my land is occupied, so get out. After you leave, you will hear from me.[37]

Yet, such logic was not enough to convince the Israeli military hierarchy to leave. The failure to see Hizballah ‘as anything else more than terrorists’, one observer points out, ‘or to look beyond the more extreme rhetoric at their emergence into the main steam of Lebanese politics produced erroneous intelligence assessments’.[38] The ‘otherness’ was too conditioned.

Before long, however, Israel needed no guarantees; its own losses and increasing public disquiet over the mounting casualty figures meant that the idea of a unilateral withdrawal entered the mainstream of political debate. In May 2000, and against the advice of his own generals, the former Israeli premier, Ehud Barak, finally withdrew unilaterally the IDF from South Lebanon. Hizballah had achieved its victory. Those who had long advocated a withdrawal argued that it would benefit Israel's regional position, not least depriving Syria's of a surrogate with which to extract Israeli concessions over the future of the *Jaulan* (Golan Heights).

For Hizballah, however, the withdrawal was a tactical stage in a conflict that had far from ended. Two years before the Israeli withdrawal, Hajj Mofak Gamal, at the time chief editor for Hizballah's weekly mouthpiece *Al-Ahd*, argued that Israel's looming defeat and unconditional withdrawal formed a tactical stage in a long-term strategy that concerned ‘the maintenance of the conflict’ with the Jewish state. ‘The Crusaders who once ruled this area were strong’, he noted, ‘they even ruled it for hundreds of years. However, the strategy of maintaining the conflict [by the local people] forced them to withdraw from here. We believe that in this perspective the 50 years Israel now is celebrating is not such a long time.’[39]

No doubt, its ensuing triumph of ousting the Israeli army from the south issued a message of hope to the Arab world, especially the Palestinians: Israel could be defeated. Resistance by any means, no negotiations, would bring the deprived Palestinians their rights. ‘People of Palestine, your destiny is in your own hands’, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah declared in a victorious speech in Bint Jbeil, a southern town, the day after the withdrawal. ‘The road for the Palestinians is through resistance, through “intifada” – not the false “intifada” of Oslo and compromise…we present to the Palestinian people the Lebanese tactic of not accepting anything but the total liberty of their land.’[40] Four months later, the second uprising erupted in the Occupied Territories.

A Victory for Pragmatism?

Over three years on and Hizballah still controls the border area but the stand-off with Israel remains largely peaceful. Meanwhile, Hizballah flags flying in Palestinian cities are messages of defiance, while the continued presence of Hizballah guerrillas in South Lebanon, readily visible to the public gaze, is seen as President Asad's way of telling Israel that no peace train will reach the end station without Syria on board. As an Israeli analyst concluded: ‘By astute manoeuvring among much larger forces, Hizballah has become the key to peace and tranquility in the Middle

East.’[41]

Yet, Hizballah remains careful not to push the limits too far. In a Lebanese daily, Hajj Hussein Khalil, political adviser to Sayyed Nasrallah, reiterated the secretary-general's earlier commitment that Hizballah's role was restricted to incite and encourage the Palestinians to struggle, but the Lebanese Islamists would not fight in their place. ‘The Palestinian cause exists only if the Palestinians defend it’, he remarked. He also argued that his movement would not agree to Palestinian operations being launched from Lebanese territory, and the party, he added, had ‘rapidly and discreetly regulated that problem in order to avoid such derailments’.[42]

Considering the presence of armed Palestinian groups throughout the refugee camps in the south, the movement has arguably stuck to that pledge, except perhaps for the clear ambiguity displayed by Hizballah at the height of the violence in the West Bank in April 2002, when Palestinians, with the apparent connivance of Hizballah, penetrated the Lebanese-Israeli border.

At the time, Sayyed Nasrallah conceded, proudly, that Hizballah had tried to smuggle arms to the West Bank through underground cells in Jordan. However, despite sporadic attacks around the area of the Shebaa farms, Hizballah has adopted a low profile throughout the Al-Aqsa intifada. The question is no doubt about balances of power; Hizballah still clings to the rationale of conducting the possible, postponing the improbable. Headless attacks against Israel would be mere physical and political suicide. In 1998, Dr Abdallah Mortada even conceded, ‘One can predict that for our generation, it will be difficult to liberate Palestine. Let us just leave this issue to future generations. One can say that we are pessimists on this point – at least for the time being.’[43]

Meanwhile, it continues the process of wider integration into Lebanese society. By toning down its more hardline Islamist ideals, Hizballah has attempted to present itself as a party of liberation and self-empowerment within the framework of Lebanese nationalism while claiming solidarity with the Palestinians, ideals that most, though by no means all, Lebanese can agree upon. In parliament and civil society, moreover, it forms alliances with a wide array of political players, from Christian groups to socialists and Communists, stressing common ground, showing the Lebanese that Islamism can be inclusive. In explaining its success in the municipal elections held in 2000, the movement not only rode the wave of populism surrounding its triumph in the south, but on social issues ‘completely avoided specific statements on services related to tourism like alcoholic beverages, gambling and nightclubs’, issues which according to Islam are considered ‘*Muhamarat*’ or forbidden.[44]

Its social welfare programs, involving schools, hospitals, clinics and sports clubs, constitute a continuing part of embedding its cause and credibility among its core constituency while, concurrently, keeping the party activists in constant touch with ordinary people.[45]

Hizballah's relation with the Lebanese state remains solid, although events post-September 11, have complicated the relationship. Under pressure from Washington, the Lebanese government came under pressure itself to impose severe restrictions on the activities of Hizballah in South Lebanon. Sayyed Nasrallah rejected any such moves, noting not the public approbation the party continues to enjoy in Lebanon but also asking if ‘the Lebanese government would become like a police force’ for American, and by extension Israeli, interests, which could ‘lead the country to civil war’.[46]

The movement remains confident that this will not happen, not least because of the

relationship it enjoys with Damascus and the belief that its Islamist credentials remain compatible with the national framework of the Lebanese state. Indeed, in the ongoing 'war against terrorism' the Lebanese government has rejected publicly the US classification of Hizballah as a 'terrorist organization'. Furthermore, the growing radicalism of some Sunni Muslim groups, inspired, it seems by a particularly austere interpretation of *Wahabbism* that has informed the beliefs of Al-Qaeda as well as the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan, remains inimical to the world-view of Hizballah. When Sunni Islamists in north Lebanon caused turmoil by assaulting the regime in December 1999, Hizballah was reported to have assisted the Lebanese army with intelligence in the ensuing battle.[47]

Concerning the September 11 attacks, Hizballah MP Muhammed Fneish, argued that 'no responsible political player could justify these attacks on any moral, religious nor political basis', and they did not 'advance any political cause', even though, he added, they may have given vent to public joy in the street.[48] But such malicious delight, he maintained, was something that Washington had accumulated because of its own arrogant foreign policies. However, Osama Bin Laden's call for a holy war against 'the Judeo-Christian alliance' worldwide – an Islamic counterpart to Huntington's vision of clashing civilizations – has done little to undermine Hizballah's attempts to embed itself in a society where power remains conditioned by religious affiliation. The movement's quarrel with the US is now more political than theological, even if, of course, its Islamist narrative cannot embrace openly Western ideals of secularism, individualism and materialism. Yet, that division ought to be bridged by dialogue, not bloodshed.[49]

Ironically, like numbers of Third World movements before, Hizballah twists alleged Western ideals against the self-proclaimed champions of these ideals, especially Western support for Israel. As Sayyed Fadlallah noted:

> A majority of Muslims and a minority of Christians and Jews lived in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s, under a British colonial power. Then the Jews arrived on a historical basis that they ruled Palestine 3,000 years before, and they expelled our Palestinian brothers who were living on that land. I ask the people of the West: does this logic represent the logic of civilization? How can one recognize this historical lie?[50]

By championing the rhetoric of the Palestinian cause, Hizballah gives voice to a solution that challenges the belief, widely held, that Israel is the only entrenched democracy in the region. Hajj Youssef Merhi maintained that democracy and peace with Israel, as an exclusively Jewish-Zionist enterprise, would remain contradictory, as no real referendum among Arabs would recognize the legitimacy of a wholly Jewish state. 'Peace' therefore, hinges upon continued Arab authoritarianism, entrenched in the division of quarrelling Arab states, each submissive to American interests.[51]

For his part, Sayyed Nasrallah argued in *Time Magazine* on the eve of the Israeli withdrawal, 'We are not saying that we want to throw the Jews in the sea. There are some Islamic scholars who gave a proposal: let the Palestinian people return to Palestine and let us have a referendum inside Palestine with the Muslims, Jews, and Christians. And then we will decide about the destiny of this land. This is called a democratic solution.'[52]

CONCLUSION

A more balanced study of Hizballah – which takes into account its history, cultural milieu, rationale, its self-cognition, in short, the dialogical discourse – offers a more accurate understanding of the movement, and one that challenges the styptic assumptions surrounding Hizballah. According to a long-time observer of Lebanon's political scene, Augustus R. Norton, Hizballah's experience displays the way 'political constraints and opportunities are; the desiderata of political behavior and [how] ideology takes a back seat'. He concluded that, 'The game of politics may erode ideals but the vast majority of Hizballah's followers want to be in the game.'[3]

Yet, it could be questioned whether Hizballah has deviated from its ideological course, or whether the movement has successfully grounded its basic, inclusive principles in a Lebanese reality that looks far different now compared to the time of the movement's emergence.

Against considerable odds Hizballah has managed to alter the regional equation of the Arab-Israeli conflict and in so doing, offer a paradigmatic model for the Palestinian uprising. It is questionable whether the Palestinian groups now engaged in violent acts against Israel have indeed drawn the appropriate lessons, not least the need to restrict their attacks to mainly military targets. However, it is noteworthy that the critiques offered from within Arab circles have been marked by opprobrium for the Palestinian militia attacks on Israeli civilians. This is in sharp contrast to Hizballah's concentration on attacking strictly military targets, save for retaliating against Israeli civilian areas if Israel and its allies transgressed the 'rules of combat' in the south. Palestinian analyst Abdeliabbar Adwan has argued that Palestinian militant factions have not been capable of working out any kind of corresponding deterrent, nor have they been able to develop appropriate defenses for their own camps and villages against Israeli incursions and bombardments.

In addition to the failure in articulating clear political objectives, he notes, the suicide operations of the Palestinian resistance groupings have accordingly been 'turned against them, their cause and their people, and to the advantage of Israeli propaganda'.[54] Yet, publicly at least, Hizballah remains united in its support for Palestinian tactics, including suicide-operations against Israeli civilians. Its spokesmen point out that an environment where no Israeli can feel safe is seriously damaging the Jewish state's urge for security and investments, something that will hamper Jewish immigration and push for emigration. For his part, Sayyed Fadlallah has noted that 'the aim is not to kill [Israeli] civilians but rather to kill the Israeli project of "Israeli security", whose logic is based upon the premise that the brutal repression and killing of Palestinians is a "regrettable outcome of war."' If so, he maintains, the same logic is applicable to 'the martyrdom operations of Palestine's mujahidin, even those that occur in civilian areas'.[55]

Nonetheless, Hizballah's unconditional support for the Al-Aqsa intifada concerns, no doubt, to keep the conflict alive with Israel, without stretching limits too far, merely preparing the region for the long hard battle to be endured. As with Winston Churchill, who in the summer of 1940 could only promise the British 'blood, sweat, and tears', Sayyed Nasrallah, on the third anniversary of the Israeli withdrawal, declared at a public festival in Baalbek that:

> What happened in Lebanon can happen again in Palestine, only we need time and the continuation of action and jihad (sacred war). Victory in Lebanon was not born after one, two or three years; rather it was the outcome of twenty years of continual jihad day and night; thousands of martyrs, tens of thousands of injuries, thousands of detainees, hundreds of thousands of displaced people, tens of thousands of destroyed houses, and the

consequences and sacrifices were enormous. In the end, victory arrived.[56]

Certainly, its triumph in South Lebanon has provided Hizballah with a credibility few political actors, either in Lebanon or beyond, have been able to achieve. Therefore, the current battle to be fought by the movement is very much a discursive one: to incite and encourage, giving moral support and guidance to those carrying the guns and the burdens of mental and physical strife. Indeed, the Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt recently stated that, 'The force of Hassan Nasrallah is in his political discourse. It is much greater than some katyuschas in the south. Numerous Hassan Nasrallah are needed in the Arab world. It is the only way to respond to America's lackeys, in the Arab debacle facing the American-Zionists.'[57]

The principles of this battle concern the essential pillars of Arab nationalism, self-empowerment, dignity, independence, socio-economic-betterment and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle which remain, now, as then, legitimate concerns.

On a macro-level, the movement's main contribution may have been to change the norms of the politics of the region. It could, for instance, be argued that Hizballah's success in South Lebanon made it impossible for Yasser Arafat to make any far-reaching concessions to Israel in the crucial Camp David negotiations in the summer of 2000, and the movement's continual steadfastness and persistence embarrass Arab regimes that are under steady public pressure for being too lenient and feeble towards Israel and the perceived American interests for regional hegemony.

On a micro-level, Hizballah's presence in the Lebanese parliament may not imply profound political implications but being there indicates the legitimacy the party enjoys in the country, a legitimacy that is further grounded by its social welfare activities in Lebanese civil society.

Thus, as Fawas Gerges points out, unlike the authoritarian Arab regimes who hijacked the popular call of Arab nationalist aspirations for their own domestic purposes, one major impact of Hizballah's triumph is the way in which the movement has managed to co-opt a rather weak state with a multi-faced society that came to embrace the idea of resistance against the occupation.[58] Whether that endeavor will last, or even to engross a wider regional struggle, remains to be seen. It should be clear, however, that thus far, Hizballah has demonstrated an ideological grounding and a political sophistication that neither military might nor simplistic stereotypes have been able to undermine.

NOTES

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7. *Middle East Quarterly* (Sept. 2001).
8. Brannan *et al*. (note 5) p.6.
9. Euben (note 4) pp.44–5.
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12. Conversation with Dr Abdallah Mortada, May 1996.
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21. Ibid. p. 183.
22. Ibid. p. 175.
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24. Interview with author, South Lebanon, May 1998.
25. Insight gained from conversations with UN officers in South Lebanon, May 1998.
26. Author's interview with Hajj Youssef Merhi, May 1996.
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28. Interview with Judith Harik Palmer, professor in political science, the American University of Beirut, May 1998.
29. Author's interview with Hassan Fadlallah, Beirut, Lebanon, June 1998.
30. Interview with author, Beirut, Lebanon, May 2002.
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32. Interview with Dr Abdallah Mortada May 1998.
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34. Interview with Dr Nabil Nairn, head of Hizballah's student organisation, Beirut, Lebanon, May 1998.
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36. 'Vredens duvor har en bitter sak. Fred och humanitet kraver att parter och deras beskyddare besinnar sig', *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 April 1996.
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45. See Anthony Shadid, *Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 2001) pp.111–14, 137–12.
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Terrorism, Liberation or Civil War? The Al-Aqsa Intifada

CLIVE JONES

Since the beginning of 2003, events in Israel and Palestine have been somewhat overshadowed by the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein. While Washington and London struggle to translate their military success into tangible political gains throughout Iraq, political progress appears to have been made between Israelis and Palestinians. The 'Road Map', with its reciprocal confidence-building measures outlined in three main stages, is designed to secure an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living in peace and security with Israel, by December 2005. Like the much-maligned Oslo process however, the 'conceptual' land on which the veracity of the map depends remains prone to political earthquakes. Moreover, as all good cartographers know, there is a distinction between true north and magnetic north. The extent to which either Israel or the Palestinians remain able to readjust their respective conceptual compasses – in short, to compromise – with each other, let alone their own constituencies, must remain the subject of much circumspection.

On 4 June 2003, the triumvirate of President Bush, Prime Minister Abu Mazan, and Prime Minister Sharon reaffirmed their commitment to the Road Map at the end of their summit meeting in Aqaba, Jordan. Yet for Sharon, the more immediate map shaping the political landscape was the one detailing the phased construction of Israel's security fence in and around the West Bank. Many Israelis welcome its construction. They look at the effectiveness of a similar construction around the Gaza Strip and note, approvingly, that only two suicide bombers, both holding British passports, have ever penetrated into Israel proper from an area noted for its support of radical Islamist groups.[1]

Moreover, the imposition unilaterally of the fence offers, de facto, a solution to a problem which, above all others, threatens the Jewish character of the state of Israel: demographics. While differences exist over exactly when the demographic curve will reach a critical point, most informed observers are in agreement that given the current disparity in birth rates between Israeli Jews and Palestinians (both within the pre-1967 border and in the Occupied Territories) by 2020 there will be a Palestinian majority in the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. In short, the two-state solution, even if imposed unilaterally, offers both short-term security and long-term viability to Israel as a Jewish state.[2]

Such a panacea provides little comfort to that group of Israelis whose ideological disposition remains mortgaged to retaining the integrity of *Eretz Yisrael*. Neither the Road Map nor the security fence, however many settlements it may encompass, offer sufficient recompense for the potential loss of an area deemed to be beyond the patrimony of secular authorities to dispense how and when political exigencies dictate. It is perhaps here that the threat of internecine violence is most apparent. While questions are raised, both in Israel and abroad, over the sincerity of government efforts to dismantle illegal outposts adjacent to existing settlements in the West Bank, the views of the more radical among the settlers brook no compromise. In the

aftermath of the Aqaba summit, attempts by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to remove such outposts – conducted in the full glare of the national and international media – did meet with resistance, albeit non-violent from settlers. Yet the concern remains over the wider potential of hardcore settlers to engage in acts of violence not only against Palestinians but against the state authorities. In the aftermath of the Aqaba summit, *Ihud ha'Rabbinim*, the Rabbinical Council for Judea and Samaria, issued an edict declaring that 'The decision to uproot Jews from their homes and land in outposts or settlements [is] a crime from a Jewish, national and moral standpoint.'[3]

Whether this represents a hardening of attitudes among settlers towards a prime minister regarded previously as a champion of Jewish settlement in the Occupied Territories remains to be seen. As Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger argue, the position of the settlers gives cause for both optimism and pessimism. Given the inexorable construction of the security fence, most of the large settlements adjacent to the old Green Line will be incorporated inside expanded Israeli borders. But for others, vigilantism remains a prerequisite if their vision of life in the cradle of Jewish civilisation is to remain viable, a position that puts them at odds not only with the government and the Palestinians in their midst, but also with many of their fellow Israelis. As Pedahzur and Perliger argue, a causal link exists between different types of vigilante act and the level of violence employed. Some settlers and their supporters have a proven track record in adopting extreme measures if their ideo-theological vision is threatened, either by Jew or Arab.

It is clearly the struggle over the future of the Occupied Territories in which the manifestations of the Al-Aqsa intifada as a civil war are most readily apparent. Control over the land and resources remains, as stated in the introduction, a contested issue, not least among the Palestinians themselves. Most remain sceptical of a 'Road Map' that has done little to curb Israel's unilateral land grab under the pretext of the 'security fence' or appear to temper Israel's preference for targeted assassinations against those deemed by Tel Aviv to be behind the worst atrocities visited upon Israel's streets. It was only with the failed attempt to kill Abdel-Aziz Rantisi, a prominent spokesperson for Hamas, in the Gaza Strip just one week after the Aqaba summit that Washington finally exerted enough pressure upon Israel to desist from such operations.[4]

Such pressure has, at the time of writing, not resulted in similar entreaties for Israel to halt the erection of its security fence. Israel perhaps could be forgiven if its construction followed directly the old Green Line, the pre-1967 boundary that demarcated Israel proper from the West Bank. But in its construction, the fence has begun to encompass Israeli settlements and in so doing, cut across swathes of Palestinian land, isolating many villages and farmers from their surrounding fields. Thus, close to the Palestinian town of Qalqilya, the fence leaves the contour of the old Green Line to embrace the Israeli settlements of Zufin, Alfe Menashe and Oranit. In so doing, it has isolated the Palestinian villages of Jayus, Ras Atiya, Daba and Ras Tireh from their agricultural livelihoods. The old Green Line was 224 miles in length but estimates as to the length of the security fence have suggested that it will be over 600 miles, indicating that the need to secure settlements inside Israel will mean a unilateral land grab from the Palestinians of anything up to ten per cent of the remaining West Bank.[5]

Whatever allowance is made for Israel's genuine concerns over security, such actions do little to endear Palestinians to the principles of the 'Road Map'. Under the provisions, the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, Abu Mazen, has pledged to confront individuals and organisations engaged in terror. The methods he has chosen to date, however, highlight the precarious balance

he has had to strike between maintaining internal political cohesion among the Palestinian people, while at the same time, convincing Washington and, by extension, Tel Aviv, that his Cabinet remains committed to playing its part in the peace process. It is his domestic constituency that posits the more immediate challenge. Faced with a ravaged infrastructure, few resources and the alleged machinations of Arafat, a man whose venality more than anyone else, has led the Palestinians to the present impasse, Mazen has little room for manoeuvre. Recognising the febrile nature of Palestinian politics, he has invested considerable time and effort in securing a *Hudna* – a ceasefire – among all Palestinian factions as a first step towards re-establishing a modicum of coherence among the Palestinian body politic.

Talks to secure a *Hudna* have since April 2003 been hosted by Egypt. Some success was achieved when, following consultations with emissaries representing imprisoned leader of the Fatah-based *Tanzim* militia, Marman Barghouti, it was agreed at the end of June that attacks against Israeli targets would cease, at least for the time being. The talks also included Fatah representatives Qaddoura Fares and Ahmed Ghuneim as well as representatives from Palestine Islamic Jihad and Hamas. No joint declaration condoning a *Hudna* was forthcoming however, allowing the various Palestinian factions to retain the freedom of action to engage once more in violence in response to any Israeli transgression, real or otherwise.[6]

Mazen's decision to engage in dialogue with the Palestinian factions is determined by the visceral need to prevent an internecine Palestinian conflict. He reportedly told the Reuters news agency that, 'We will exert every effort to avoid any confrontation with the people, because it could get to a civil war and finish off all our hopes.' On 22 July 2003, during the meeting with the secretary-general of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, Mazen was reported to have declared that cracking down on the radical Islamist groups was not an option. If they violated the ceasefire, the Palestine Authority (PA) would deal with infringements under existing Palestinian statutes. His Minister in Charge of Security Affairs, Muhammad Dahlan, concurred on this point, noting that any group that violates the current ceasefire would be dealt with in a court of law and not subject to more extreme extra-judicial measures.[7]

This emphasis on the rule of law is deliberate. It marks a clear point of departure with the rule of *Al-Rais*, Yasser Arafat, and is perhaps the most apposite example of a process of ongoing reform to the structure of the PA that was outlined by As'ad Ghanem and Aziz Khayed. Yet the extent to which Mazan can control 'the street' must remain the subject of concern. Certainly, opinion within Israel's intelligence establishment remains divided over the ability of Arafat to exert influence among the various Palestinian militias. When Israel was hit by a wave of suicide bombings in May 2003, *Aman* (Agaf Modi'in – Israeli military intelligence) saw the malign hand of Arafat pulling the strings of the various militia groups, an assessment not shared by their counterparts in the General Security Service (GSS or the *Shabbak*) who argue that Arafat's control over the streets is limited and that militia groups such as the *Tanzim* have been reduced to ad hoc groups with the 'dimensions of terror activity depend[ent] on local conditions'.[8] In short, emergent warlords, a facet of internecine conflict elsewhere, appear increasingly to hold the whip hand.

Whatever the truth, both intelligence organisations agree that the hold Abbas has on the street remains tenuous, and his approach towards the various Palestinian factions too hesitant and too reliant on the spirit of compromise. Such critiques are harsh, not least because in the West Bank, Israel's destruction of the PA security apparatus has left Mazan with little other than diplomatic

means with which to secure his agenda among the more recalcitrant of the Palestinian factions.

Given the inherent weakness of the PA political structures, and the asymmetric balance in both political and military capacities between the erstwhile protagonists, some have given serious considerations for the territory under the nominal control of the PA to be transferred to a United Nations-sponsored trusteeship. As with Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone-all seeking to rebuild infrastructures after bloody civil conflagrations, trusteeship it is argued would not only allow international aid to be directed towards reconstruction, but allow the practice of 'good governance' to take root.[9]

The intention may be good, but the history of third-party intervention in the Israel-Palestine conflict remains decidedly mixed. Karin Aggestam has highlighted the constructive work performed by the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) personnel in helping to ameliorate some of the worst excesses of inter-communal violence between Palestinians and Jewish settlers in Hebron, but their presence is one of sufferance, rather than ready acceptance of their role by the parties involved.

As Aggestam has argued, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Jewish settlers have often adopted a negative, indeed, actively hostile, approach to the TIPH. But the real threat presented by the TIPH is not really in what it does, but in what it presages: the precedence of broader third-party intervention in arbitrating over the division of land and resources. Such a position remains inimical to Israel's security interests and the ideological world-view of the inhabitants of settlements such as Kiryat Arba. Such internationalisation of 'inter communal relations' might also be detrimental to the interests of the more hardline Islamist groupings. Supplication to the munificence of the international community carries with it obligations towards Western standards of democratic governance that appear at odds with a political agenda determined by an adherence to more austere social and religious norms.

Moreover, third-party intervention would be predicated on implementation of a two-state solution, something that sits uneasily with normative assumptions of groups such as Hamas, who regard territorial compromise over any portion of Palestine – a *waqf* – as anathema to their Islamic mores. In turn, compromise with such organisations remains impossible for most Israelis, not least because such absolutism denies the legitimacy of a Jewish state on any portion of historic Palestine. The struggle over land and resources remains total, the ceasefires merely tactical. For the more hardline elements on both sides, the events of 1947 and 1948 have a resonance beyond the pages of history books. The past, in this case, is certainly not another country.

Beyond the confines of Israel and Palestine, the Al-Aqsa intifada has posed important, though hardly original, questions for surrounding states. Most vulnerable remains the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. As Joseph Nevo reminds us in his lucid piece, the regime under King Abduallah II has had the most to fear. Identity remains a contested issue within Jordan, and with Palestinian opinion inflamed by events in the West Bank and Gaza, pressure to adopt more populist policies, including breaking diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv, has increased. Equally, with its economy mired in recession, and the possibility of a mass influx of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories seeking refuge on the East Bank, the conditions for political instability appeared real enough.

Finally, Abduallah remained all too aware of the need to appease, as Joseph Nevo argued, his own Jordanian nationalists, uneasy that the climate of public sympathy for the Palestinians would

translate into political gains for pro-Palestinian groupings, including Islamist parties, at their expense. Suspension of parliamentary elections and the enactment of laws designed to curb opposition activity have, in the short term at least, given Abdullah a breathing space in which to reassess the balance of power within his kingdom.

Amman has been open in its support for the ‘Road Map’, and no doubt tangible progress on the ground will allow Abdullah to gainsay those in his kingdom who doubt its sagacity. But as with previous crises, the Al-Aqsa intifada has highlighted the transient nature of state loyalty in Jordan and while the kingdom may possess an innate resilience in times of political crises, this remains somewhat removed from a stability based upon the unfettered acceptance of an established, yet still evolving order.

Equally, the Al-Aqsa intifada has asked severe questions of Egypt. As Hasan Barari notes, popular opinion regards the conflict as a war of national liberation, rather than as a manifestation of internecine violence. While allowing popular feeling to express itself on the streets, Cairo has been careful to control the scope and scale of such demonstrations lest they undermine Mubarak's studied efforts to maintain a status quo that, in realist terms, places primacy upon the national interest. As such, the response of Arab states to the Al-Aqsa intifada has altogether been one of constructive ambiguity – on the one hand paying the usual lip service to the suffering of the Palestinians while on the other, ensuring the more prosaic concern of regime stability remains the deciding variable over policy options.

Maintenance of the status quo perhaps even extends to Hizballah. Given the often ill-informed discourse surrounding the movement, with the epithet ‘terrorism and terrorist’ applied irrespective of context, one would expect its ideological disposition to lend itself to active support for the more radical among the Palestinian militias. Its victory over the IDF in south Lebanon – the first time in its history that Israel has withdrawn from Arab territory without securing a prior agreement – gave the movement a prestige among Arabs throughout the region that few Arab states, let alone their leaders, have ever enjoyed. Moreover, the tactics employed by Hizballah appeared to offer a template for the Palestinians to achieve similar success. Certainly, the absence of a peace agreement with either the Lebanese government or Hizballah has provoked the argument, not least among Israel's General Staff that its unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon merely served *pour encourager les autres*.[10] Yet, if inspired by the martial prowess of Hizballah, Palestinian militia groups certainly drew the wrong lessons. Hizballah fought Israel within the rules of a game, agreed formally by Israel itself in the aftermath of Operation ‘Grapes of Wrath’ in April 1996.[11]

Moreover, Hizballah for the most part restricted itself to attacks on military targets in south Lebanon. Only when Israel was deemed to infringe the ‘rules of the game’ did it ever launch rocket salvoes at Israel's northern towns and villages. Even when it had the opportunity, Hizballah guerrillas never penetrated the border into Israel. But above all else, Israel never established civilian settlements in South Lebanon that would have mobilised greater political pressure in Israel for more proactive measures to be taken to ensure their protection. Such differences, in this instance, represent an intelligence failure on the part of the Palestinian leadership.

The very presence of Israel remains anathema to Hizballah and, as Mats Wärn notes in his conclusion, the movement's ‘success in south Lebanon made it impossible for Yasser Arafat to make any far reaching concessions to Israel in the Camp David negotiations in the summer of

2000’. But whatever the empathy for the Palestinian struggle, pragmatism now determines Hizballah approach to politics. It knows that perpetual revolution runs the risk of alienation from its core constituency, now enjoying three years of relative calm in South Lebanon. Indeed, in an ironic twist, Hizballah is perhaps now acting as Israel's gatekeeper. As Timor Goksel, a former senior advisor to UNIFIL, noted recently:

> Hizbollah is an integral part of the population [of south Lebanon]. Those serving on the border with Israel are members of the [Hizbollah] organisation; they are residents of the villages in the area. To the organisation's credit, it has an excellent intelligence system which is capable of preventing undesirables, such as members of the Palestinian organisations, from approaching the border and attacking Israel.[12]

The heated rhetoric aside, the policies adopted by Hizballah towards the Al-Aqsa intifada display the same degree of pragmatism as exercised in Cairo and Amman. In this regard, the violence has failed, from the Palestinian perspective, to promote either a regional or international dynamic that could reasonably be expected to promote the cause of Palestinian liberation beyond the point reached in September 2000. Indeed, if core attributes of a civil war are the struggle of parties for hegemony over the same land and resources, the outcome for the Palestinians to date has been one of unmitigated disaster. Despite the justified criticism Israel's use of force has elicited on the streets and capitals of the Arab world and Europe in particular, the close ties Tel Aviv maintains with Washington have allowed it to maintain a freedom of action that at times, appears to snub even the wishes of the White House. Thus, while President George W. Bush may lament Israel's continued construction of the security fence, Prime Minister Sharon feels little pressure to succumb to such entreaties. The primordial pursuit of security, the totem around which Israeli public life and debate has always been arranged, has given Sharon a popular legitimacy to pursue an option which, paradoxically, he himself is most likely not convinced of.

This edited collection does not claim that the Al-Aqsa intifada represents all facets that one would associate with a civil war. Rather, that it has produced manifestations, both of cause and effect that in a normative sense, one can associate with such a conflict. The conflict remains, as Israelis and Palestinians know only too well, resistant to exact definition. But the very fact that two communities have to be separated by the unilateral imposition of a new security border on at least part of the same land claimed by *some* members of their respective polities, has echoes of events in the self-same land nearly six decades ago. Only time will tell if the old aphorism that ‘good fences make good neighbours’ carries any weight in bringing about the final denouement of the tragedy that has been the Al-Aqsa intifada.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Yuval Elizur, ‘Israel Banks on a Fence’, *Foreign Affairs* 82/2 (March/April 2003) pp. 106–19.
2. Elizur (note 1) p. 106.
3. Justin Huggler, ‘Settlers Try to Stop Israeli Army Closing Five Outposts’, *The Independent*, 11 June 2003.
4. Justin Huggler and Sa'id Ghazali, ‘Bush Attacks Israel for Trying to Kill Hamas Chief’, *The Independent*, 11 June 2003.
5. See Edward R. F Sheehan, ‘The Map and the Fence’, *The New York Review of Books* L/11

(3 July 2003) p.8.

6. B. Tchernitzky, ‘The Domestic Palestinian Dispute over the *Hudna*’, MEMRI No. 144 (25 July 2003) at <www..memri.org>.
7. Ibid.
8. Amos Harel, ‘Shin Bet, Army in Dispute over Latest Terror Wave: Co-ordinated Plan or Just Bad Luck?’, *Ha'aretz*, 22 May 2003 (in Hebrew).
9. See Martin Indyk, ‘Trusteeship for Palestine?’, *Foreign Affairs* 82/3 (May/June 2003) pp.51–66.
10. Clive Jones, ‘One Size Fits All: Israel, Intelligence and the *Al-Aqsa* Intifada’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26/4 (July/Aug. 2003) p.277.
11. See Clive Jones, ‘Israeli Counter-Insurgency Strategy and the War in South Lebanon’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 8/3 (Winter 1997) pp.82–108.
12. Zvi Bar'el, ‘A Borderline Case’, *Ha'aretz*, 4 June 2003 (in Hebrew).

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Definitions of the *Al-Aqsa* intifada have ranged from being part of the global war on terrorism, an asymmetric inter-state war, to being part of the on-going Palestinian struggle for national liberation. All have validity as explanatory paradigms, but equally, none can capture fully the dynamics of this conflict.

By contrast, this volume seeks to explore whether the current violence, its origins and dynamics can best be understood as a manifestation of civil war. In so doing, it explores the following questions: how the use of violence by all parties has been conditioned and or constrained by the domestic factors pertaining to their societies; how external actors have dealt with the violence internally, and how, in turn, this has impacted on their relations with Israel and the Palestinians; and what does the conduct and scope of the *Al-Aqsa* intifada suggest about the broader issue of state boundaries and state legitimacy in the contemporary Middle East.

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