Public Opinion and Political Response in Palestine

Leadership, Campaigns and Elections since Arafat

ERIKA SCHWARZE

I.B.TAURIS

Erika Schwarze worked in Palestine throughout the 1990s, including managing civic education programmes in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for the German Friedrich-Ebert Foundation in the run-up to, and following, Palestine's first parliamentary elections in 1996. She holds a PhD in Middle East Politics from the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University and now works on indigenous environment programmes for the Australian government.

'This is a work of very high quality, both conceptually and in terms of its analytical insight. It addresses the underlying dynamics of Palestinian politics from a perspective that is well-grounded in experience of the region, while preserving the intellectual distance from immediate events that is necessary to achieve worthwhile insights into those dynamics.'

Robert Bowker, Adjunct Professor, Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University

'A brilliant and deeply informative analysis of an understudied yet crucial aspect of Palestinian politics: the responsiveness of the two main political parties – Fatah and Hamas – towards public opinion. Based on extensive interviews and rooted in a solid theoretical grounding, Schwarze's book provides a poignant account of why Fatah lost the 2006 elections, why Hamas won, and how subsequent sanctions and inter-Palestinian divisions changed the incentive structure for leadership responsiveness to public opinion for both parties.

Schwarze brings Palestinian politics into the realm of public opinion analysis and in so doing, extends public opinion analysis beyond the study of established democracies to that of "arrested democracies", thus making an important theoretical contribution.

This book is essential reading for policy makers and those interested in Palestinian politics, leadership responsiveness and public opinion analysis.'

Jeroen Gunning, Professor of Middle Eastern Politics and Conflict Studies, Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, King's College London

'Schwarze's book is the first of its kind to provide a comprehensive analysis of public opinion and political response to it in Palestine. It is original and innovative, with unsettling conclusions. It provides very valuable insights into the working of Palestinian society and politics, and the difficulties that have beset the Palestinian Authority in terms of making itself organically relevant to the Palestinian people's demands and aspirations. It should be of serious interest to a range of readers, from policy makers and analysts to all those who are focused on what the future may hold for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.'

Amin Saikal, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University

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LONDON · NEW YORK

For Damian,
and for my boys Johannes and Lucah
who shared this journey with curiosity and courage

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CONTENTS

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration of Arabic terms in this book is intended to balance the interests of those who read Arabic with those who do not. Therefore, the only diacritics used are those for the Arabic letters *‘Ayn* and *Hamza*, indicated by single quotation marks (‘ or ’) unless commonly used without diacritics. For widely known Arabic names, such as Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas or Gaza, the most common spelling is used. For uncommon names or translations, the more correct spelling is used, unless the persons themselves have used a different transliteration (for example leaving out the *Al-* prefix in the spelling of their surname), in which case their own spelling is adopted.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Alpha:	Alpha International for Research, Polling and Informatics
AWRAD:	Arab World for Research and Development
DCAF:	Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DFLP:	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EU:	European Union
Fatah:	Palestinian National Liberation Movement
FAFO:	FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies
FCC:	Fatah Central Committee
Fida:	Palestinian Democratic Movement
FRC:	Fatah Revolutionary Council
Hamas:	Islamic Resistance Movement
IDF:	Israeli Defence Forces
JMCC:	Jerusalem Media and Communication Center
NEC:	Near East Consulting
NUG:	National Unity Government (2007)
OPT:	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA:	Palestinian Authority
PCPO:	Palestine Center for Public Opinion
PFLP:	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLC:	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO:	Palestine Liberation Organization
PPP:	The Palestinian People's Party
PSR:	Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (also PCPSR)
shari'a:	Islamic Law
Shura:	Consultation:
UNLU:	United National Leadership of the Uprising (1987–93)
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development

PREFACE

The 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, the first to be contested by both major Palestinian political movements, Fatah and Hamas,[1] provided the opportunity for the parties to demonstrate their willingness and ability to directly respond to public preferences – through election manifestos, campaign strategies and candidate selection and through individual campaign efforts. A maturing polling sector was in place to provide relevant data and analysis, free of charge as well as through commissioned polls, to anyone interested. Other means of assessing public opinion were flourishing in a society in which both major movements maintain a grassroots presence across all sectors of society and in which political debate is a part of everyday life.

However, Fatah failed spectacularly to capture public sentiment and translate it into a coherent election strategy. Despite its substantial history of election participation, long-standing experience in popular mobilization and a stated secular democratic outlook, Fatah campaigned with little reference to the topics that were of most concern to the public. It neglected poll analysis on desired candidates and their qualities, instead selecting candidates that even party members would not vote for, and not supporting those candidates who wanted to be responsive to constituents' wishes. Fatah was substantially unwilling and unable to demonstrate responsiveness – neglecting the electoral imperative for responsive conduct – and lost out. In stark contrast, analysis of Hamas' West Bank election campaign reveals that the movement had strategically decided on a two-way communication process with the public, analysing public opinion and publicizing its incorporation in Hamas' election programme. This strategy, developed by the movement's West Bank leadership, utilized responsiveness as a key objective and as an effective mobilizational tool. The movement made use of a broad range of methods to assess public opinion, including developing its own alternative assessment mechanisms – and won.

In the events that unfolded following Fatah's election defeat, the wishes, priorities, needs and aspirations of the Palestinian public have been relegated to a position of side-event to the continuing Fatah–Hamas conflict. Demands and hopes for a resumption of the fragile democratic process through a return to regular elections faded away with their indefinite postponement. Instead, Palestinians saw the establishment of two separate Palestinian political entities following violent inter-Palestinian conflict in 2007, with Hamas assuming full control in the Gaza Strip and Fatah ousting the Hamas government from governance in the West Bank and establishing a de facto authority by presidential decree. The split resulted in the shrinking of the civic and political sphere with – on both sides – restrictions of political activity, harassment and reciprocal arrests. Gazans suffered particularly from near-total isolation resulting from Israel's continuing economic blockade, the boycott of Hamas by Western governments, and more recently the end of trade with Egypt through the tunnels which had provided an economic lifeline for the Strip. Three Gaza–Israel wars, causing unprecedented destruction of Gaza's infrastructure, loss of life and physical and mental trauma, have further amplified the impact of the Strip's isolation.

Meanwhile, the hopes of West Bankers for the economic miracle being chased by the West Bank appointed Palestinian Authority (PA) were unrealized despite the best efforts of the government and international donors, and President Mahmoud Abbas' pursuit of negotiations with Israel failed to yield any result other than continuous expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.

Since the violent 2007 split, the Palestinian public have demanded the two sides reconcile. Numerous attempts have been made and several agreements signed, the latest, signed in April 2014, is still to be fully implemented. Fresh elections, a unity government, and the protection of political freedoms are among the demands overwhelmingly supported by the Palestinian public in both the West Bank and Gaza. The indifference to this almost universally supported demand for reconciliation is considered a national disgrace, an incomprehensible neglect of broader national aspirations; it has weakened trust in leaders and undermined perceptions of their legitimacy.

The lack of responsiveness has clear consequences that manifest in a range of ways, from election outcomes to leadership and legitimacy crisis. The underlying causes of lack of responsiveness are less obvious; they are multi-faceted, diverse and complex. They relate to both willingness and ability of leaders to prioritize public opinion within an environment in which incentives for responsiveness are competing with pressures against responsiveness. This book analyses Fatah's lack of responsiveness in the critical period 2005–9 (and Hamas' strategic use of responsiveness to secure electoral advantage) using responsiveness as an analytical model, a lens through which to view and better understand leadership conduct.

Since 2009, a number of domestic and regional developments have occurred that are likely to have impacted on the balance of incentives and disincentives for responsiveness as identified in this study to the year 2009. Regional challenges, in particular the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; the war in Syria; changing regional alliances; increased economic, political and geographic isolation; and three Gaza wars are likely to have affected the extent to which Hamas is both willing and able to respond to public opinion. Similarly, the failure of negotiations with Israel, new internal leadership challenges, the limitations of the PA state-building project and gradually changing international policy regarding reconciliation are likely to have affected Fatah's willingness and ability to respond to public opinion.

While these subsequent developments and their impact on leadership conduct are not part of this study, the research offers an analytical approach to their study. The postscript offers a discussion of the impact of these later developments on leadership conduct, using the 2014 Reconciliation Agreement as an example to illustrate the use of the analytical model in examining a changing incentive structure for responsiveness.

In light of the renewed push in 2014 for Fatah and Hamas to reconcile, this book aims to contribute to the evaluation of the causes and consequences of diminished leadership responsiveness. If and when public demands for reconciliation are acted upon in full, fresh elections will provide a new opportunity to revive the democratic process in Palestine, end Gaza's isolation, unite all aspects of governance and provide legitimacy for a newly elected leadership. The case study of both movements' 2006 electoral conduct provided insight into the opportunities arising from responsive conduct, and outlined necessary preconditions for its effective use. For Fatah, the incentives for responsive conduct were found to be outweighed ultimately by even stronger pressures acting as disincentives to responsiveness, identifying

fragmentation, legitimacy issues, and international donor conditionality as well as doubts over the commitment to elections as key disincentives. This led to deprioritization of responsive conduct in campaigning, candidate selection and political programme design. The converse was true for Hamas, where the case study of alternative mechanisms for assessing and acting on pre-election public opinion, limited to a case study of Hamas' West Bank campaign, nevertheless provides new and poignant insights into the strategic use of responsiveness as an effective mechanism for mobilization and – ultimately – electoral success.

This book aims to aid further understanding of the underlying reasons for the varying levels of responsiveness and the consequences of its neglect. The approach of using responsiveness as a lens to highlight critical elements of the relationship between leadership crisis and responsiveness offers new insights into opportunities and risks faced by Palestinian political parties and their leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Responsiveness to the will of the people lies at the heart of the democratic ideal. In a democracy, public opinion is meant to matter. The establishment of democratic institutions and processes in Palestine, however incomplete and flawed in their arrested development, raised expectations that public demands and preferences would be of increasing importance to Palestinian leadership. After all, leaders who wanted to be (re-) elected to office would need to show responsiveness to underline their claims to representing their constituents.

However, from the early years following the 1993 Declaration of Principles (Oslo Accords) and its implementation through the 1994 Gaza–Jericho Agreement and the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (hereafter referred to jointly as the Oslo process, or just as Oslo), there was increasing discontent with the lack of responsiveness by Fatah's leadership. Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Nabil Amro (Fatah), who resigned as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs at the height of pressure to reform the Palestinian Authority (PA), Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in February 2002, expressed his disappointment in an open letter to President Yasser Arafat, stating:

> We have neglected the central responsibility that attached to our sudden transformation from a revolutionary movement's culture, awareness and institutions into this new reality: *the challenge to swim with the Palestinian masses,* [emphasis added] particularly after spending so many years far from our home shores (Amro 2002:n.p.).

The suggested lack of responsiveness to public opinion among Fatah's leadership appeared to contradict the movement's historic role. As a national liberation movement, Fatah's political vision and programme had depended on its ability to mobilize the public for popular resistance,[1] and legitimacy was closely linked to the movement's ability to represent the aspirations of the Palestinian people. True, the process of transition from a revolutionary movement to governing party, and the merging of an exile-based and a local leadership, may have contributed to the distancing between elites and the public. Parsons described a 'popular alienation from the PA' in the years following Oslo, a development that was compounded by the growing disparity between 'the reconstituted elite and those left out of it', fuelled by perceptions of 'conspicuous consumption' (Parsons 2005:49).

Nevertheless, a lack of leadership responsiveness was not a foregone conclusion in this transition. The introduction and codification in law of elections, and the very recent experience of a more responsive leadership style practised by the clandestine leadership of the first Intifada (United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), 1987–93), had created a precedent for, and vivid memory of, responsive leadership conduct. Furthermore, some of the practices of representation and elections that governed the PLO[2] provided grounds for the expectation that, without the limitations of clandestine organization and with the return of many of its leaders to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, responsiveness to public opinion would be a feature of

governance in the newly formed PA. After all, 'both competition and participation, key principles in the notion of democracy, […] have historical resonance' in the Palestinian struggle (Lindholm Schulz 2002:25).

However, following the death of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in 2004, neither his successor Mahmoud Abbas, nor other members of Fatah's historic leadership, were seen to be responsive to public opinion in their policy and decision making. Instead, Fatah's leadership entered a serious and sustained crisis that threatened both the movement as a whole and the survival of its political elite. The crisis disabled the movement to such an extent that it lost power in the 2006 PLC elections and was subsequently ousted by its rival Hamas from control of the Gaza Strip. Some of the causes and consequences of Fatah's leadership crisis are well understood, both in academic analysis and by those directly involved. However, one aspect of this crisis, namely the role of responsiveness to public opinion in contributing to and perpetuating leadership crisis, has received little attention in the literature. The vulnerability of the relationship between Fatah's leadership and the public is readily acknowledged by many of Fatah's cadres, and is referred to frequently in informal public debate, though it has, not surprisingly, generally been rejected by the movement's top leaders. As an anonymous Fatah PLC member suggested:

> The ruling party does not pay attention [to public opinion]. The popularity of the party that took the Authority and its position in society is diminishing, and instead other factions and organisations appear, who have a stronger relationship with the people and who can show that their programme and their understanding respond to public opinion. I think that the reason for the quick ascension of Hamas is the absence of Fatah's responsiveness to Palestinian public opinion. [The public] had realized, prior to the elections, that the policy of negotiations had brought no results. And Hamas suggested an alternative, resistance to occupation. So people wondered 'why should I vote for a party whose policies have brought me not one thing on the ground?' (Anon 2009i).

Analyst Omar Karmi referred to the weakness of the relationship between the public and Fatah's leadership when noting:

> Ordinary Palestinians, as well as the political factions, feel they have little influence on the Palestinian leadership's decisions. The Palestinian polity is broken […]. 'There is a real leadership crisis in the Palestinian arena', said Diana Buttu, a Palestinian analyst and a former legal adviser to the PLO, adding that it 'is not responsive to the people it represents or even the factions it represents' (Karmi 2010:n.p.).

The relationship between responsiveness and leadership crisis has remained little understood, and no in-depth examination of its components has been conducted. This book aims to fill this gap. It examines the relationship between Fatah's responsiveness to public opinion and its post-Arafat leadership crisis by using responsiveness as an analytical tool, a lens that highlights relationship-related aspects of this crisis. It explores both causes and consequences of low levels of responsiveness to public opinion in Fatah's leadership conduct, and suggests an approach to their study which recognizes the multitude of influences on Fatah's willingness and ability to respond.

This book is structured around two main questions: What were the reasons for low levels of responsiveness of Fatah's leadership to public opinion? And what impact did low levels of responsiveness have on the development, perpetuation and prospects of leadership crisis? An analysis of the impact of responsiveness – or lack thereof – during the pre-election conduct of Fatah and Hamas provides a meaningful example of the power of responsiveness in providing electoral advantage to those leaders willing and able to utilize it.

Definitions

Responsiveness

Responsiveness to public opinion in established Western democracies has come to be treated as synonymous with opinion–policy congruence, a term used to describe the relationship between polled public opinion and decision making that relies primarily on quantitative data such as statistics on representatives' voting behaviour. High congruence is interpreted as evidence of representation, and low congruence as evidence of its absence (Eulau and Karps 1977:235). The unavailability of a sufficient quality and quantity of decision making data (for example from parliamentary records) in the Palestinian context does not preclude the study of responsiveness per se, nor does it take away from the benefits of such analysis in future. When defined more broadly in its original meaning of 'responding readily and positively' (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press 2011), analysis of responsiveness can highlight aspects of the relationship between 'governing' and 'governed' even where democratic process is not firmly established, because leaders 'must concern themselves with public opinion, regardless of the level of democracy' (Key 1961:412). Democracy theories view elections as facilitating responsiveness of leaders and political parties since leaders want to be re-elected.[3] This link is termed the 'electoral imperative'. The view that 'democratic institutions make government responsive to the electorate' is widely accepted (Burstein 1998:31). Interest organizations, a legislative framework and organizational support structures, along with a multitude of other factors, are expected to facilitate the translation of public opinion into policy (Burstein 1998:29).

However, responsiveness is not necessarily a function of electoral processes and democratic institutions alone (Pollock 1992:8). Even within a pre-democratic context, expectations for responsiveness are raised and may become drivers in the process of transition to democracy. Geer suggested that leaders need to be attentive to public opinion, regardless of 'whether we are talking about Machiavelli's prince, Britain's kings, or democratically elected public officials' (Geer 1996:3). Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson proposed a definition of responsiveness that outlined its basic function:

> We propose that public opinion moves meaningfully over time, that government officials sense this movement, and that […] those officials alter their behaviour in response to the sensed movement. This is dynamic representation, a simple idea and an old one. Public sentiment shifts. Political actors sense the shift. And then they alter their policy behaviour at the margin (Stimson et al. 1995:543).

When applying a wider definition of responsiveness, qualitative data can be used to capture the

relationship between public opinion and political decision making, reducing the reliance on quantitative data. Adoption of a wider definition of responsiveness then enables the assessment of various levels of responsiveness beyond merely the voting behaviour of elected representatives. A wider definition also allows capturing the nature of the leadership–public relationship in the context of less formalized decision making. In an approach which lends itself rather well to the specific political and cultural environment of Palestine, Eulau and Karps (1977) criticized the reduction of the representative relationship to representatives' voting behaviour. The authors suggested a more comprehensive understanding of the concept, proposing that responsiveness be viewed as a 'complex, compositional phenomenon that entails a variety of possible targets in the relationship between representatives and represented' (Eulau and Karps 1977:241). Four components of representation were defined, each providing a different mode for the expression of responsiveness: policy responsiveness, service responsiveness, allocation responsiveness and symbolic responsiveness:

Policy responsiveness was defined as the translation of public opinion into policy; s*ervice responsiveness* as describing 'the advantages and benefits which the representative is able to obtain for particular constituents'; a*llocation responsiveness* as 'legislative allocation of public projects (that) involve advantages and benefits presumably accruing to a representative's district as a whole'; and *symbolic responsiveness* as describing a relationship 'built on trust and confidence expressed in the support that the represented give to the representative and to which he responds by symbolic, significant gestures, in order to, in turn, generate and maintain continuing support' (Eulau and Karps 1977:242–45). This widened definition of responsiveness, general enough to capture responsiveness in a range of different political and cultural contexts, is well suited to assist in recognizing the diversity of expressions of responsiveness within the Palestinian context, and will be of particular interest in the examination of leadership styles in Chapter Five.

In addition, and specifically within the context of continuing occupation and absence of a state,[4] a broadened definition of responsiveness must be able to take into account the impact of externally imposed constraints on the *ability* of leaders to respond to public opinion. It is therefore paramount for this research to distinguish between willingness and ability of leaders to respond to public opinion.

As such, the term responsiveness is used as a concept that enables consideration of:

- various levels of attentiveness to public opinion and levels of commitment to its assessment, building on the idea of dynamic representation (Stimson et al. 1995);
- a range of expressions of responsiveness, including both substantive policy responsiveness as well as symbolic, service and distributive responsiveness (Eulau and Karps 1977); and
- both willingness and ability to respond to opinion within the constraint of a political environment of arrested non-state democratization.

Public opinion and its assessment

Scholars of survey research have argued that the emergence of polls in the early twentieth century introduced a new element to the relationship between the elected and their electors, a relationship designed to translate the wishes of the public into policy and that is therefore at the heart of democratic governance (Geer 1996:xiii). The information from polls was seen to provide

politicians with a mandate to follow public opinion.[5] Indeed, proponents of this argument have pointed to polling as making an important contribution to representation, viewing it as improving the quality and quantity of information as well as facilitating greater equality of information. As Geer suggested, 'political actors are more likely to respond to public opinion when they are confident they know what it is […]. Well-informed politicians behave differently than their less well-informed counterparts – even when their motivations are the same' (Geer 1996:2).

The relatively recent introduction of polling in Palestine in 1993 has meant that polling is still in the early stages of its evolution, with pollsters continuing to build their expertise and experience for the provision of qualitative poll data. This initial lack of experience is likely to blame for the misprediction of the 2006 PLC election outcomes, manifested in an at least temporary setback for trust in polling. At the same time, leaders, the media and the public at large have required time to gain experience with the new instrument of polling, only slowly developing confidence and increased proficiency in the use of poll data.

And even within the context of established Western democracies, the conception and assessment of public opinion, and the synonymous use of the term public opinion as meaning polled public opinion, has not been without its critics. Criticism has centred on issues such as the ability of polls to capture contemplated, rather than 'off the cuff' opinion (Althaus 2003; Stimson 2004:15ff.), question wording, and the use of polls for manipulative purposes. The convergence between polled and other expressions of public opinion is also seen to depend on the presence of a well-established polling sector and the public's routinized awareness of poll data.

Western research has pointed to a historical learning curve regarding the use of polls, pointing out the increasing use of polling for manipulative purposes by politicians (Crespi 1989:46), and the institutionalization of polling as a resource by politicians. For example, Shapiro and Jacobs wrote of the well-developed appreciation of polling by the Reagan administration:

> The reason the White House devoted the time and money to commissioning and analysing public opinion research was that, according to Wirthlin, the public's evaluations and support represented the President's 'most valuable of all political resources' (Shapiro and Jacobs 2002:196 fn. 4).

A broadened definition of public opinion – including polls and other expressions, as used here, enabled consideration of a broad range of views and some controversy among interview respondents regarding the nature of public opinion and its assessment. Palestinian leaders, advisors, movement members, academics, pollsters and social activists saw public opinion revealed 'in the face of my mother', in telephone conversations with relatives in Gaza, in the size of a crowd at a political rally, the size of celebrations for a prisoner release or in public opinion polls. Trust in the interpretation of public opinion in polls ranged from selective rejection of polls to a firm belief in their ability to capture public preferences. Public opinion was at once considered powerful enough to change leadership behaviour and decried as totally impotent to affect decision making.

Rather than preferencing one particular definition over another, the research acknowledges the range of views, focussing instead on exploring how leadership responds to what they perceive to be public opinion. Similarly, rather than attempting to determine how best to assess such opinion accurately, the focus here is on enquiring into the willingness and seriousness of leaders to assess public opinion, and the relative importance of such an assessment in terms of

dedication of time and resources towards this process.

Such learning opportunities have only just begun in Palestine. At the same time, other ways of assessing public opinion have continued to be used as alternative, if not preferred, methods of assessment.

In addition, the comparatively small geographic and population size in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT – the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East-Jerusalem) and its highly politicized population have enabled alternative opinion-assessment methods to be effective, relying on both locally held elections and a public show of support/opposition to reflect public sentiment. Irregularly held student council, trade union and professional association elections provided a measure of factional support prior to the first Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 1996, while the number of supporters that political factions were able to mobilize for attendance at rallies and demonstrations provided additional indications of such support. Claims by political factions to represent sizeable constituencies were often based on the number, strength and achievements of faction-related organizations (NGOs, youth organizations and others) in the public sphere, including the size and effectiveness of factional military capacity. Attendance at cross-factional public occasions such as funerals, prisoner releases or protests provided further opportunities for assessment of public opinion regarding specific issues. The relative freedom of the Palestinian press prior to the 2007 violence between Fatah and Hamas that led to Hamas taking full control of the Gaza Strip, and Fatah vice versa in the West Bank, had served to confirm public sentiment and preferences.

In addition, the relative proximity of Palestinian political life inside the OPT, its vibrancy and pervasiveness in daily life, had enabled assessment of public opinion through the observation of routine political debate in a multitude of circles (students, refugee camp committees, graffiti, professional associations, and extended families) and within the media. Fatah in particular, a movement that attracted supporters from a wide range of backgrounds, had the opportunity to assess a reasonably representative spectrum of the public simply by canvassing its own supporter base. The physical proximity of political and communal life, illustrated for example by local political leaders living in crowded refugee camps among extended families often comprised of members of diverse political backgrounds, also provided opportunities for opinion assessment. This proximity also provided opportunities for more formal assessment of public opinion, although, as will be shown in Chapters One and Two, only one of the two main political parties – Hamas – seized this opportunity. Hamas' processes of consultation and wider opinion assessment, exemplified by house-to-house visits assessing people's preferences, provided the basis for the successful political strategy it employed in preparation for the 2006 PLC elections.

While the size and proximity of political and community life in the OPT provided opportunities for public opinion assessment, the opposite was true with regard to the wider Palestinian community in exile. And even within the OPT, Israeli-imposed restriction of movement between Palestinian population centres limited some of the opportunities that the small size and proximity of the Palestinian body politic provided at a local level, in particular between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Exile and movement restriction also affected the development of methods of assessment beyond the immediate environment in which leaders were able to move. This created a need for assessment methods that were able to transcend these barriers. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven, polled public opinion, when introduced in the early 1990s, offered the opportunity for politicians to supplement and extend previously used methods of assessment.

Within this context, the term public opinion as used in this research refers to a broad definition of opinion that is assessed both through polls and through other means, unless specifically indicated.

Leadership and leadership crisis

The various levels and groups within Fatah's leadership are examined with a focus on the role that responsiveness plays within their decision making. The term 'leadership', when not qualified further, refers to senior to mid-level leadership of Fatah inside the OPT. The term historic leadership is used to describe those leaders who, as members of Fatah's pre-2009 executive bodies, and specifically its Central Committee (FCC), have occupied positions of political and economic power over decades. Their historic role in the movement – as founding members of Fatah, previous military leaders or high executives within the movement – led to them being regarded as Fatah's 'establishment', a term used by Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007:14) to denote an affinity of interest between the members of this group, as opposed to other groups within Fatah. Shikaki (2002) has characterized this group as the 'old guard' – a term which has been widely adopted, including in the analysis by the US administration (Pina 2006:1).

Shikaki described the 'old guard' as consisting of members of the formerly exiled historic leadership who dominated the PLO and Fatah bureaucracy in exile and who came to dominate the PA after their return. Few were under the age of 50, and they included key leaders such as Mahmoud Abbas, Ahmed Qurie and Nabil Shaʿath who dominated Fatah's governing bodies (the Central Committee and the Revolutionary Council pre-2009). Formally, their membership in the FCC was based on election by Fatah's General Assembly which, prior to 2009, had last been convened in 1989. In addition, a small number of members were elected by sitting FCC members. Their electoral legitimacy was augmented by the role that each had played individually in the movement, by their struggle and/or military history and, as Palestinian analyst Mahdi Abdel Hadi suggested, their affinity to Yasser Arafat (Abdel Hadi 2009). In the absence of elections, their positions had become immune to leadership change except by death, though their role in positions within the PA had been reduced following Arafat's death when Abbas began to prioritize non-establishment figures over historic leaders in PA cabinets since 2005.[6] Shikaki contrasted this group with the 'young guard', a term used to describe those, primarily local, leaders the characteristics of whom will be described in more detail in Chapter Three.

The distinction between these groups of leaders is not always clear cut, and partially overlaps. Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007:14) suggested that 'affinity of interest' rather than 'generational cohort' may offer more insightful analysis of Fatah's internal division. Their distinction is useful with regard to evaluating different levels of responsiveness in relation to the mode of legitimation on which each group relies, including their ability to rely on mobilization as a way of legitimation, as will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

The term *leadership crisis* is generally defined as a period of intense difficulty faced by leadership, requiring difficult decisions to be made.[7] Indeed, Fatah's leadership crisis may be more accurately described as a series of crises at different levels of leadership. Frequenty, the description of a crisis of leadership legitimacy (Shikaki 2009) refers specifically to the pre-2009 persistence of Fatah's historic leaders in positions of power beyond the arguable expiration of their mandate in the absence of renewal of legitimation by other means. The severity of this crisis has been illustrated by the disdain, expressed by members of Fatah and the general public alike,

for the movement's historic leadership, which was further exacerbated by widely held perceptions of leadership incompetence and corruption.

The crisis of Fatah-internal cohesion, on the other hand, encompassed the movement as a whole. It was manifested in the degree of internal fragmentation and animosity which disabled the functioning of the organization and was seen to have contributed to the movement's electoral defeat. The impact of internal fragmentation on leadership responsiveness will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Equally, a crisis of performance affected the movement as a whole. Neither of the objectives of Fatah's strategy of pursuing negotiations with Israel materialized, leading to the public's hope for an end to the occupation, progress towards the establishment of a state, economic and political self-determination and security, freedom and mobility remaining unfulfilled. Furthermore, failures in domestic governance fuelled widely-held perceptions of corruption and lack of reform, seen, perhaps, as the single most important contributor to Fatah's electoral defeat. In the words of Shikaki: 'Plagued by accusations of corruption, incompetence and mismanagement, the older leadership of Fatah took the movement from one failure to another' (Shikaki 2009:1).

Other causes of leadership crisis have been noted, including authoritarian leadership style and structures,[8] the difficult process of transition from liberation movement to governing party (Sayigh 1997a), and the overall 'crisis of confidence about the movement's role and identity, […] institutional decay, inability to rejuvenate and loss of popular confidence' (International Crisis Group 2009a:4). The causes of most of these aspects of crisis pre-dated Abbas' presidency. He inherited a system in which 'the intifada left Arafat and the returnees in charge of Fatah, but a Fatah unreformed at its highest levels, weakened by loss of personnel, and fragmented by closure' (Parsons 2005:48). Events and new power constellations post-Arafat contributed to the intensification of crisis and, although sustained, appeared to have peaked a number of times during the period under review. These crises brought about significant turning points in the political fortunes of Fatah, namely its 2006 election defeat and its loss of control in Gaza in 2007.

In their accumulation, these crises threatened the political, and perhaps at times even physical, survival of the historic leadership. The extent of discontent with Fatah's leaders was borne out in the outcome of FCC elections during the 2009 Sixth General Conference when only four of the 18 elected members of the FCC retained their seats in elections, which had long been in anticipation of such a fate. As for the President, his survival, too, appeared at times to be under threat. At the height of the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict, while pictures of dying children dominated the Palestinian media, a presidential spokesman blamed Hamas for bringing war upon the people of Gaza. Following a public outcry, in the days after the statement the presidential complex in Ramallah (which also accommodated a range of other governmental offices) was emptied of all personnel for a day, apart from presidential staff because of apparent fears for the life of the President.[9] Similarly, Shikaki noted that in the controversy surrounding the push for holding Fatah's Sixth General Conference in 2009, 'Abbas knew he needed a compromise or face[d] a coup' (Shikaki 2009:1). Abbas' unilateral decisions regarding the location and timing of the Fatah General Conference, followed by Abbas' appointment of a new cabinet in 2009, prompted an anonymous Fatah source, quoted in an *Al-Quds* newspaper article, to make a little-veiled threat, calling Abbas' decision 'the second bullet, that precedes the bullet of no return' (AlQuds 2009).

Overall, Fatah's leadership crisis prior to the election of a new FCC had reached a climax: 'At a time when the Palestinian people desperately need leaders who can make big and wise decisions, it may be hard for Fatah's leaders to make any decisions at all' (Cobban 2009:n.p.). Following the conference, optimistic commentators pointed to the potential for positive change in the fortunes of Fatah's leadership effectiveness and cohesion as a result of the conference (Shikaki 2009), an optimism merited at the time by the courage with which Abbas pursued the holding of the conference against all odds, though others describe an ongoing, and perhaps intensified leadership crisis 'extend[ing] to persons, institutions, and parties, as well as a lack of strategy or vision', and deep crisis of legitimacy (Elgindy 2013:n.p.).

Arrested non-state democratization and the electoral imperative

In established democracies, 'democratic theory provides a coherent explanation of how the institutions and organizations of democratic politics link the public and the government' (Burstein 1998:51), primarily via the institutionalization of elections. However, when, as in the period under review, fundamental preconditions of democratic governance are not firmly institutionalized, representation may take different forms, using different mechanisms in representing constituents, and affecting leadership conduct in important ways.

The limited evidence on responsiveness in transitioning or authoritarian regimes suggests that elections are an important but not the only incentive for responsiveness in decision making. The fact that private polls were conducted or consulted by some authoritarian leaders suggested that regimes cared about public opinion (Pollock 1992:8), even if only to gain information on how best to suppress opposing views.[10] When authoritarian regimes considered democratization of the political system, the information from polls enabled leaders to gauge the sustainability of their current position and encouraged them to either respond positively to public demands, or to suppress demands.[11] Few studies of the opinion–policy link in pre-democratic and transition contexts have illustrated the benefits of polling conducted by national oppositions and civil society.[12] Puryear's (1994) study of the role of polling in bringing about the end of Augusto Pinochet's rule in Chile in the 1988 referendum demonstrated the power of the instrument as a tool to guide opposition strategy.

The term *arrested non-state democratization* is used to describe the stagnation and selective reversal of the processes of democratization, while reminding the reader of the pervasive influence of the absence of a state and the accompanying lack of sovereignty under occupation which have constrained leadership in their ability to respond to public opinion. Use of the term recognizes that a process of democratization had indeed begun but was subsequently suspended. Provision for elections along with the establishment of a democratic system of institutions, rights and freedoms were made pursuant to the 1995 Israeli–Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A four-yearly election cycle was codified in the 1996 Election Law and confirmed in the 2002 Palestinian Basic Law. Failure of de-facto institutionalization of regular election schedules is seen as a key aspect of the suspension of democratic process. A focus on elections as a defining moment in the process of democratization is well accepted. Huntington defined a political system 'as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote' (Huntington 1991:7). Similarly, Dahl's (1998:221) criteria for democracy rate those related

to the holding and conduct of elections as priorities.

In the OPT, the first national parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 1996. Subsequent elections, due in 2000, were postponed. Presidential elections were eventually held in 2005 following the death of Yasser Arafat. Parliamentary elections were held with a six-year delay in 2006. Following the 2007 Gaza–West Bank split, all subsequent elections, including those for President (due 2009 or 2010) and Legislative Council (due in 2010) were postponed indefinitely. Municipal elections, due to be held in 2004 as per the 1996 Local Councils Elections Law, were postponed repeatedly before eventually being held partially in 2004–5, with subsequent rounds of municipal elections, due in 2007, being repeatedly postponed and eventually only partially held after long delays.[13]

This failure of a firm institutionalization of electoral schedules has weakened the primary in-built incentive for responsiveness: the need to show responsiveness to be re-elected. Downs has defined this logic as the electoral imperative. He explained that 'in a democratic or democratizing system of government political elites tend to act upon [public preferences] in order to establish and preserve their legitimacy' (Downs 1957:53). This logic is based on the presumption of a rational politician (Geer 1996:90) who seeks to be re-elected and who responds to public opinion in order to do so. 'The imperative of political survival under conditions of electoral competition forces political elites to justify their existence in the public eye – to find a source of legitimacy' (Kozhemiakin 1997:53). The wish to be re-elected requires politicians to be able to discern public preferences. At the same time, this logic also relies on the public's attentiveness to policies and behaviour (Erikson et al. 2002:78). Furthermore, a number of other conditions are thought to be prerequisites for the effective functioning of the electoral imperative, amongst them a competitive electoral playing field and the functioning of the rule of law to protect rights, equality and accountability (O'Donnell 2004:32).[14]

In addition, a number of other indicators for the suspension of democratization affected the incentives structure for responsiveness in Palestine. The suspension of some political rights and freedoms is likely to have affected the ability of the opposition (namely Hamas) to assess public opinion post-2007. A return to rule by presidential decree (Duss 2010:n.p.) and the dysfunction of the PLC post-2006 reduced incentives for responsiveness by narrowing the circle of decision makers. On the other hand, a number of processes supporting democratization have continued to play this role. Strong civil society has long been regarded as a precondition for democratization. While procedural concepts of democracy emphasize formal arrangements such as elections, participatory conceptions of democracy 'emphasize the deliberative nature of public policy, in which the formulation and implementation of public policy is subject to debate and contestation among key stakeholders'.[15] In particular, the role of civil society's polling organizations in creating pressures for responsiveness is considered here and I discuss whether polling organizations did indeed contribute to producing, as Verba suggested, 'just what democracy is supposed to produce – equal representation' (Verba 1996:3). The research also recognizes the effect of expectations raised by the initial establishment of democratic processes and institutions, and considers their impact on the incentive structure for responsiveness, specifically with regard to the transformation of publicly accepted bases of the legitimation of power. As one of the overarching issues affecting the incentive structure for responsiveness, the role of civil society will be outlined in Chapter Three.

Reference to the *non-state* context of arrested democratization as an overarching constraint to

political development in Palestine reminds the reader that the process of democratization and its suspension have taken place within a context of continuing occupation. This context has confined the parameters within which Palestinian leadership operate, restricting access to land and resources while severely truncating the areas in which the PA can exercise its limited authority. Although the political organization of Palestinian institutions such as the PLO (and the PA) have displayed some of the characteristics of state (Sayigh 1997b:viii–xii), policy and decision making has nevertheless been fundamentally constrained. In addition, the PA's relationship with international donors has been substantially defined by fiscal and political dependence. As US analyst Nathan Brown noted, the PA is 'neither Palestinian nor an authority. It is an internationally-sponsored and partly internationally-financed protectorate administering some Palestinian towns and cities in the West Bank' (Brown 2009c:n.p.). These constraints have not only affected the ability of leadership to act, but also their ability to respond to their public.

Conceptual framework

The incentive structure model as an analytical approach

Political leaderships act within a complex set of constraints and opportunities that are created by historical events, relationships and socio-political and cultural realities. It is an environment that is dynamic and varies in robustness, depending on an ever-changing set of circumstances, both external and internal. A research approach that aims to examine the determinants of leadership responsiveness to public opinion must therefore have the capacity to capture the diverse range of influences that affect the willingness and ability of leadership to consider public opinion in decision making. It must also have the capacity to take into account the dynamics of change that occur as political events unfold. To do so, this research has developed a framework for analysis that, rather than focussing on specific leadership characteristics, views leadership behaviour as subject to a range of push-and-pull factors that either encourage or discourage responsiveness to public opinion. In what is termed the 'incentive structure for responsiveness', pressures/incentives for responsiveness compete with obstacles/disincentives. The ensuing balance of incentives versus disincentives is changeable, dynamic and issue-specific. For example, structural/institutional factors such as the degree of institutionalization of elections and other institutional mechanisms for participation and consultation act as incentives for responsiveness, whereas indefinite postponement of elections acts as a disincentive. Similarly, a cohesive and representative party structure may act as an incentive for responsiveness, enabling the assessment and translation of public opinion into policy; fragmentation and lack of mobilizational capacity, however, may prevent communication with the public, and therefore act as disincentive.

Certain types of pressures for responsiveness are related to the specific social and political context, such as the effectiveness and role of civil society. However, their dependence or subjugation to other interests may allow disincentives to dominate. Incentives may be a result of specific socio-political or historical experience. For example, where responsiveness and consultation have been experienced as enhancing legitimacy and authority, incentives for responsiveness are strengthened. Conversely, an absence of such experience or a weakness of organization-internal learning capacity could undermine this incentive. Similarly, changing

perceptions of what constitutes legitimate authority – the specific state of thinking about legitimacy in place and time – could either create or weaken incentives. Political circumstances, the prevalence of specific leadership styles, characteristics such as authoritarianism and clientelism, or the presence or absence of charisma, could either support or prevent pressure for responsiveness from asserting themselves. Perhaps most importantly within the Palestinian context, dependence on conditional political and financial support from external actors may create either incentives or disincentives. And lastly, the availability and effectiveness of tools that could facilitate the assessment of public opinion, for example through polls or other opinion assessment methods, could impact the incentive structure for responsiveness.

By identifying the factors that create a specific balance in place and time, this research outlines an approach that enables a better understanding of the role of responsiveness and its consequences for leadership. This approach distinguishes between willingness and ability of leadership to show responsiveness, specifically with regard to decision making under conditions of arrested non-state democratization. It illuminates the functioning of the political system in general, and thereby aims to highlight the interconnectedness of the causes and consequences of leadership crisis.

Western-based research on responsiveness provided some guidance for the study of responsiveness in radically different environments. However, there are clear differences that require recognition. Not only does the study of the role of responsiveness in the context of arrested non-state democratization require different methods; it also poses a different set of questions.

Whereas the study of responsiveness in Western democracies aims to provide answers to questions about mechanisms and the extent of democratic representation, the objective here is to highlight areas of breakdown of non-state–society relations that impact leadership's ability to govern. Whereas Western research takes for granted the presence of the electoral imperative as a primary incentive for re-election-seeking politicians, research in the context of arrested democratization cannot assume that the electoral imperative is either present, or that it affects responsiveness in similar ways. This provides opportunities for a fresh look at the nature of the electoral imperative – why, how and under what circumstances it creates pressures for responsiveness. These differences require the adoption of the aforementioned multi-dimensional and dynamic framework of analysis.

Equally, whereas electoral legitimacy is a central aspect of leadership legitimacy in Western democracies, non-elected or 'expired' leaders seek alternative means of confirming their legitimacy. An unresolved state of thinking in society about what constitutes legitimate bases of authority may create pressures for renewal of the sources of legitimacy but it may also relieve such pressures by giving leaders the opportunity to rely on arguably expired legitimacy, as long as alternative sources of legitimation appear to remain unavailable.

Furthermore, whereas in Western democracies the *ability* to respond to public opinion is primarily a function of leadership's *willingness* to respond, the restrictive impact of continuing occupation and donor dependency on decision making in Palestine created an environment in which willingness and ability to respond to public opinion may need to be considered separately. An approach that distinguishes between willingness and ability therefore provides an opportunity to consider the impact of external factors on the incentive structure for responsiveness.

Methodology

Whereas Western research relies primarily on a combination of readily available quantitative data on both decision making processes and polls, a dearth of quantitative data in the Palestinian polity, specifically on decision making processes, directs this research to adopt a qualitative approach, using quantitative data where available. When discussing specific issues in public opinion, the poll data were used, the majority of which has been considered to be of good overall reliability and professionalism (Pollock 2008:45). An important caveat with regard to the use of poll data in assessing responsiveness to public opinion concerns the question of its acceptance by leaders as a reliable source of information. A discussion of how levels of confidence in polls affect the willingness of leadership to use such data forms part of the analysis in Chapter Six.

Data on the second relevant area of analysis – the area of decision-making processes and leadership's consideration of public opinion within these processes – relied primarily on qualitative data based on personal interviews,[16] as well as on existing research. The primary reliance on qualitative data on decision making processes was necessary specifically with regard to the period under consideration. The narrowing of formal decision making as a result of the dysfunction of formal democratic separation of power, namely the elimination of the role of the Legislative Council, and the return to rule by presidential decree, rendered systematic quantitative data collection on decision-making processes impracticable.

Limitations in focus and time frame

The research focused on the examination of the post-Arafat period, beginning with the election of Mahmoud Abbas as President of the PA in January 2005, and ending with the convention of Fatah's General Conference in August 2009. Due to Israeli travel restrictions for Gaza, the discussion of Hamas' pre-election conduct relates specifically to the movement's conduct in the West Bank, as indicated by West Bank interview respondents who noted that not only was it not their place to speak on behalf of the Gaza leadership, but that they were not fully aware of detailed campaign arrangements in Gaza (Abdel Raziq 2008). As such, it is noted strongly that specifically with regard to the information on Hamas' election campaign activities and preparations contained in Chapter Two, these reflect only Hamas' West Bank pre-election conduct.

Chapter outline

The outline of this book moves from the specific to the more general. It begins with a 'puzzle', the study of two very different election campaigns, one run by Fatah, one by Hamas, to then shine a light on the context and underlying reasons for Fatah's surprisingly blatant neglect of public opinion prior to and following its election defeat in 2006.

Chapters One and Two present a comparative study of responsiveness in the pre-election conduct of the two main protagonists, Fatah and Hamas. They explore willingness and ability to show responsiveness by looking at: (a) the role of responsiveness in the political culture, ideology and experience of the movements, (b) the willingness and technical ability to assess public opinion in order to inform responsiveness, and (c) the extent of prioritization of

responsive conduct in election programmes and campaign activities. Each case interprets the specific examples of pre-election conduct within the context of the incentive structure as developed in the subsequent chapters. The comparative aspect of the case studies enables a number of conclusions to be drawn regarding the relationship between responsiveness and electoral advantage.

Chapter Three outlines three variables that have an overarching impact on the ability and willingness of the Fatah leadership to show responsiveness. First, it outlines the impact of the need for external financial and political support. This section examines the effect of the so-called 'peace rent' (the dependence of the PA on donor funds to support the implementation of the Oslo framework), and of the conditionality of external political support for Fatah's leadership, on incentives for responsiveness. Secondly, the chapter outlines the impact of Fatah-internal fragmentation on responsiveness in decision making, looking at how fragmentation affected the organizational and mobilizational capacity of Fatah in its roles as quasi-state agency and as a political movement. Thirdly, it considers the role of civil society in creating pressures for responsiveness.

Chapter Four explores the relationship between responsiveness and legitimation in the context of arrested democratization. In light of the limited institutionalization of elections, the analysis looks at the critical role of responsiveness in affecting Fatah's ability to confirm its legitimacy through alternative means. It suggests that an incomplete shift to electoral legitimation created the need for a supplementary legitimation strategy. However, at a time when Fatah's political strategy was directed towards negotiations with Israel, one such alternative, public mobilization, had become problematic from a leadership perspective. Faced with an inability to pursue either electoral or mobilizational legitimation strategies, incentives for responsiveness inherent in these modes of legitimation were reduced. Instead, the prevailing state of indecision in the public's thinking about legitimate bases of authority allowed leadership to justify continued reliance on arguably expired bases of legitimacy.

Against this background, **Chapter Five** discusses how leadership and decision making characteristics affected levels of responsiveness. Focusing on the apparent low priority accorded to responsiveness during the presidency of Mahmoud Abbas from 2005 to 2009, the chapter discusses some of the complexities of the interconnectedness of leadership style, responsiveness, fragmentation and leadership crisis. Suggesting a characterization of Abbas' leadership as leadership by default, the chapter examines how default conditions created both incentives and disincentives for responsiveness.

Chapters Six and Seven focus on polling as a new and potentially powerful tool enabling leaders to assess and respond to public opinion while also informing the public about itself. Chapter Six outlines the experience of polling in Palestine and specifically examines its reception by leadership. Chapter Seven looks at a number of concrete examples of poll use by Fatah's leadership and discusses what they reveal about attitudes towards responsiveness to public opinion as a tool in policy and decision making. Both chapters provide insights into the underlying questions of the *ability* of leadership to respond to public opinion (in terms of availability of public opinion information) and their *willingness* to show responsiveness (in terms of attitudes towards the public, and attitudes towards polls as an appropriate aid in decision making).

The Conclusion provides a brief summary of findings, formulates lessons and suggests areas

for their application, both by Palestinian leadership and by international actors.

The Postscript and Outlook returns to these findings from a 2014 perspective, outlining more recent developments that have affected the incentive structure for responsiveness. Using the 2014 signing of the Reconciliation Agreement between Fatah and Hamas as an illustration, it discusses the developments since 2009 that have affected leaders' willingness and ability to respond to the overwhelming public demand for reconciliation. Finally, the outlook describes some of the opportunities and challenges that polling presents for the political process in Palestine.

CHAPTER 1

RESPONSIVENESS IN THE 2006 PLC ELECTIONS – FATAH

Responsiveness as a factor in Fatah's electoral defeat

The 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, the first national elections in which both Fatah and Hamas fielded candidates, resulted in a resounding victory for Hamas. Winning 74 out of the 132 seats (compared to Fatah's 45), Fatah's defeat, though not entirely unexpected, still came as a shock to many, in particular Fatah's own cadres and leadership. A plethora of interpretations of Fatah's electoral defeat have been advanced. A prominent argument contended that the electoral system had exacerbated the negative impact of Fatah's lack of internal discipline: the large number of Fatah members who ran as independents effectively split Fatah's vote, thereby turning an only slight plurality of pro-Hamas votes into a landslide victory for the movement (Blanc 2006b:7).[1] While not sufficient to reverse the overall election outcome (as commonly believed by a number of Fatah interview respondents), re-calculation of results under a hypothetical fully proportional system revealed near-equal polarization of the Palestinian electorate between the two movements.[2] Fatah's election defeat was not a sign of complete abandonment of the movement by the electorate, nor did it signify the complete loss of trust in Fatah's programme or candidates. However, the results did indeed expose a significant shift, though not one supported by actual percentages of votes lost.

Rather, Fatah's defeat signified the official acknowledgement of a bipolar political landscape,[3] one that had developed over the decade following the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords.[4] The significance of Fatah's election defeat lay in its potential impact on the very bases of Fatah's domination of the Palestinian political system, and as such had the potential to undermine or at the very least to substantially weaken the bases on which this domination was founded: Fatah's claim to representation of the Palestinian cause; Fatah's domination of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as against Hamas' exclusion from this body; Fatah's ownership of the negotiations process, in which Hamas does not feature; and Fatah's domination of the Palestinian Authority, in which positions of authority and access to resources have been dominated by the movement to the exclusion of Hamas. It is in consideration of this 'challenge to Fatah's hegemony' (Hilal 2006:6) that the impact of Fatah's electoral defeat is appropriately assessed.

A second argument in the analysis of Fatah's electoral defeat focused on the vote against Fatah as a protest vote, as punishment for the lack of progress in all key policy areas. A common view expressed by Fatah supporters held that, had the public been able to foresee the consequences of their votes (that is, bringing Hamas to power), they would have voted differently. However, this suggestion is contradicted by a February 2006 Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) poll that showed the high level of public satisfaction with the outcome of the elections results (JMCC 2006:Q.5). The argument of a protest vote, as opposed to increased alignment of the public with Hamas' ideological framework, was supported by poll findings indicating that a plurality of the public continued to support the general pillars of Fatah's political programme, specifically regarding negotiations with Israel based on a two-state solution. However, a Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) exit poll (PSR 2006) indicated that only 30 per cent of Hamas voters opposed the peace process, as compared to 40 per cent of Hamas voters who supported it. Similar support for a continuation of the peace process after the elections was apparent in a JMCC poll (JMCC 2006), although data indicated that the election outcomes did indeed come as a surprise to the majority of respondents.

Undoubtedly, Fatah's inability to achieve political and economic progress after over a decade of negotiations with Israel undermined the movement's ability to use this area of Fatah's policy focus as a political campaign tool in its favour. However, the increasing prevalence of issues such as corruption, lawlessness and economic deterioration in the public mind during 2005 contributed substantially to Fatah's inability to gain public support, with Fatah seen as the main target for blame (Baumgarten 2006b; Beck 2007; Shikaki 2006b). As such, the vote for Hamas could be interpreted less as a protest vote against Fatah's negotiations strategy (the failure of which was attributed primarily to Israel), but as a protest vote against Fatah's role in creating the problems of governance that were of public concern. The increasing prevalence of these concerns, for which blame could not be shifted easily, was evident in the number of votes cast for Hamas by voters with no prior affiliation with Hamas, such as for example Christians and even Fatah's own members.[5] Baumgarten pointed out additional factors neglected by other analysts: firstly, the natural desire for change after years of Fatah rule; secondly, a preference for 'a party-like organization with team leadership and an established and well-functioning party-structure [author's translation]', with Hamas' conduct and organization contrasting favourably with Fatah's leadership style, viewed increasingly by Palestinians as a failed model of leadership (Baumgarten 2006b:41, 43–4).

A third argument for Fatah's defeat was the lack of Fatah-internal discipline, manifested in the formation and subsequent withdrawal of Marwan Barghouthi's *Future* list, as a major contributor to the movement's defeat. The reason for the creation of this list had been the failure of the Fatah internal candidate selection process, which had resulted in candidate selection primarily through appointment rather than through primaries (International Crisis Group 2009a:3). This prompted some local leaders, endorsed by Fatah's grassroots but neglected in the selection process, to form their own *Future* list. Subsequent withdrawal of the list and integration of some, but not all, as official candidates, led to further wrangling, the result of which was the candidature of large numbers of Fatah members as independents. This apparent lack of discipline displayed for all to see Fatah's inability to put national interest before personal interest and advantage. Lack of cohesion and then movement-internal chaos directly affected Fatah's electability.

The impact of campaign design, campaign messages, and campaign conduct on electoral

outcomes has not received similar attention. A number of analysts and journalists have noted the professionalism of Hamas' electoral campaign as a factor contributing to electoral outcomes (Baumgarten 2006b; Usher 2006a), while little has been written about Fatah's campaign conduct.[6]

A number of questions guide the structure of analysis applied in this chapter: first, what issues affected Fatah's political will to respond?; secondly, did Fatah have the experience, expertise and technical ability to assess and interpret public opinion? And finally, did Fatah possess the experience and mechanisms to translate its assessment of public opinion into pre-election conduct?

Preconditions for the electoral imperative

The willingness to show responsiveness

The prospect of parliamentary elections in 2005–6 created opportunities for a more responsive approach to policy and decision making than had previously been observed within Fatah. The decision of Hamas to contest the elections created the opportunity for a real electoral contest. The strong showing of Hamas in the 2004–5 municipal elections supported this prospect. With serious competition and a range of important topics on the public agenda, elections could reasonably be expected to create strong incentives for responsiveness under the logic of the electoral imperative.

An illustration of the degree of recognition of the electoral imperative for responsiveness by Fatah's legislators was the appointment of a new technocrat cabinet in February 2005. The cabinet list initially proposed by Prime Minister Qurie contained mainly old-guard leaders. It was rejected by Fatah legislators and was subsequently replaced by a list containing professionals and new faces, in an attempt, according to legislator Hatim Abdul Qader, to send a message to the Palestinian people that there was a real change on the ground (Cowell 2005:n.p.). 'It shows the insistence of the legislative council to continue with policies of reform and change in order to avoid reform being a slogan without content' (Abdul Qader, cited in Cowell 2005:n.p.) Designed to govern for only 100 days until elections, originally scheduled for 17 July 2005, the new cabinet set to work on a specific reform agenda. Its Minister for Telecommunications Sabri Saidam recalled:

> [Our] strategy was based on [the idea] that there is a new era in Fatah, that focus should be on the three slogans of the presidential campaign [elected in January of the same year], [of] Abu Mazen leading a breakthrough in the peace process, that reform is taking place and that Fatah is adamant to see things done. We were called a technocrat government, part of reform. We were working hard to support his [election] manifesto through the introduction of a reform strategy. We were told that we would be serving for a 100 days in office […]. We had put together a 100-day plan of reform, including several projects on the grassroots level ranging from infrastructure to telecom, with an emphasis on development and not relief. We were trying to adopt a development-driven agenda (Saidam 2010).

However, the functioning of the electoral imperative in creating a high-incentive environment for responsiveness relies on a number of assumptions. If these assumptions are not in place, disincentives to responsiveness arise in their stead. The first assumption relates to the prior existence of an organizational political culture that has provided opportunities for organizational learning about the benefits of responsiveness in decision making, in particular as it relates to legitimacy, mobilizational capacity, and the maintenance of leadership position (Disincentive 1). Secondly, it relies on the assumption of a belief that elections are indeed going to take place (Disincentive 2). And thirdly, it relies on the assumption that contestants believe that electoral defeat is indeed a conceivable outcome (Disincentive 3).

The extent to which these preconditions for the electoral imperative are met determines the effectiveness of elections as an incentive for responsiveness. In other words, it directly affects the willingness of leadership to respond, a prerequisite for the application of appropriate mechanisms and resources to do so. A United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assessment of political parties in Palestine commented directly on the importance of leadership *willingness*, as opposed to their *ability*, to respond to public opinion:

> There has to be broad agreement among the parties' leaders that the parties' initial or continued success is dependent on the informed will of the voter. Intent and willingness to build democratic political structures is far more important than the ability to do so. The necessary skills and resources can be learned and obtained but the ideals required for genuine participatory party governance require belief. By definition this dictates that the first step in such a party support programme [as proposed by USAID] requires identification of a democratic leadership cadre (USAID 2006:9).

Disincentive 1: Responsiveness in Fatah's internal political culture

Two main factors appeared to have negatively affected Fatah's ability to acquire and maintain institutional learning about the electoral advantage gained from responsiveness: the movement's unchallenged domination of the domestic political process throughout the history of occupation, and Fatah's hierarchical internal structure. As elaborated in Chapter Two, responsiveness to public opinion was an integral part of Hamas' political thought and practice. Rooted in the movement's political philosophy, responsiveness was seen as a religious imperative. It had been experienced by leadership as positively affecting legitimacy and internal cohesion, and as providing electoral advantage, both internally and in local-level contests. In addition, the movement's rationale for entering elections in 2006 (based on the specific imperative of being able to act as blocking minority) had given a degree of urgency to demonstrating responsiveness in these elections.

In contrast, the history of the Fatah movement had not provided its leadership with consistent opportunities to experience the benefits of responsiveness for legitimacy, internal cohesion and electoral advantage. Political will and ability to respond to public opinion, both preconditions for a responsive approach, had been limited at the organization level. While Fatah's formal commitment to democratic process[7] had been evident in its avoidance of outright domination of organizations such as the PLO,[8] 'the limitations imposed by obstructed access to constituencies as well as the lack of territory had rendered democratic processes troublesome' (Lindholm Schulz 2002:24). A liberation-first[9] approach conveniently subordinated democratic process to

political necessity under adverse conditions of occupation, postponing, wherever necessary, the establishment of representative internal political processes.[10] As Lindholm Schulz argues, 'intense political debates and the existence of several ideological movements', provided evidence of a general, if conditional, commitment to democratic process, while leaving questions of internal structure and internal governance for an indeterminate later stage (Lindholm Schulz 2002:24).

Neither the PLO's legitimacy, nor its internal cohesion or system of representation depended primarily on the movement's adherence to democratic process. As the movement responded to a multitude of requirements arising from its expanding activities with an increasingly complex system of governance, Fatah relied on patronage, charismatic leadership, autocratic structures and monopolization of power, rather than elections, good governance, accountability or consultation. Elections could be postponed, and representation determined without recourse to formal democratic process. The concept of participation that arose under these specific conditions could be compared to that prevalent in other anti-colonial movements, where participation carried the meaning of 'demographic comprehensiveness rather than individual involvement' and where evolving concepts of democracy were of,

> an abstract, aggregate sort […]. Democracy was seen as an ideal writ large, as a macro symbol of grand historical processes. It became the password for the enfranchisement of broad social communities. […] Representation [of democracy] was primarily psychological and rhetorical, future-oriented and, above all, outward-oriented (Chazan 1993:75–76).

The regular neglect by Fatah's executive leadership of democratic process, and in particular internal electoral processes, was seen as justified under practical and security considerations. However, this neglect denied Fatah's external leadership the opportunity to experience the benefits and advantages of responsiveness, depriving them of a source of motivation for responsiveness as well as of accumulating necessary expertise in their application in the policy environment at the internal and national level. An independent PA minister expressed the impact of this lack of experience by saying: 'Someone who has never practiced democracy, neither in his institution nor in his home, he can't really cooperate or be responsive to democratization' (quoted in Lindholm Schulz 2002:33). Another PLC member noted: 'There is a mentality, a military mentality. According to their previous, secret experience, they didn't believe in NGOs or in public opinion. They depend on slogans, sometimes on secret agreements; they have no experience in implementing laws and respect laws' (quoted in Lindholm Schulz 2002:33).

Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Four, for those leaders who had long lost popular support and remained in positions of power within Fatah and the PLO, it became imperative to work *against* the popular demand for elections in order to protect their positions and privileges. The Fatah leadership's lack of experience of the potentially legitimizing and unifying effect of responsiveness, and their lack of electoral experience overall, meant that an important incentive for responsiveness was removed. This was compounded by the weakened links between Fatah's grassroots cadres and its higher leadership. Consultation was not perceived as obligatory. Indeed, lower and mid-level local Fatah cadres had complained bitterly, not only about the lack of consultation, specifically post-Arafat, but even the lack of information on leadership decisions reaching them in the first place (Anon 2009f).

Fatah's younger leaders, specifically those who had experienced the effects of responsiveness first hand during their participation in student council and local institution elections, were therefore more likely to stress the importance of responsiveness in elections. To them 'both competition and participation, key principles in the notion of democracy, therefore have historical resonance' (Lindholm Schulz 2002:25). However, their marginalization from senior leadership levels, and the continued deprioritization of elections as the means for the transfer of power, prevented their learning from being shared organization-wide. Even for those Fatah leaders who had participated in the 1996 parliamentary elections, the experience may have provided them with a false sense of security: in the context of Hamas' election boycott at the time and the prevalence of an optimistic and favourable political environment post-Oslo, Fatah's success had quite rightly been taken for granted. The subsequent six-year delay in holding PLC elections had allowed for any lessons about the electoral imperative of responsiveness to slip, preventing their use in 2006.

The lack of prioritization of responsiveness in Fatah's experience as a movement contrasted with the consideration of responsiveness as imperative in Hamas' political thought and experience. For Fatah's historic leadership as represented in its top governing bodies, the willingness to use responsiveness as an important consideration in defining the relationship between government and society was at best of secondary importance, and was only conditionally supported by ideological commitment.

Disincentive 2: Conditionality of the commitment to holding elections

Fatah had been strongly divided over holding the 2006 elections. The strong showing of Hamas in the 2004–5 municipal elections had highlighted Fatah's internal problems when compared to Hamas' efficiency and professionalism in electoral conduct. For his own reasons, Mahmoud Abbas had not been deterred by these signs and insisted on elections as a much needed avenue to provide legitimacy for Fatah's continuation in power as well as to respond to US pressure. Rabbani argued that Abbas' insistence on holding elections was motivated by his hope that an electoral mandate for a more reform-oriented leadership would minimize the power of the old Fatah Central Committee (FCC) and would eventually result in their removal of the FCC leaders in the long-delayed General Conference. Elections would enable Abbas to work towards removing his political rivals without having to 'do the dirty work himself' (Rabbani 2006:n.p.). Indeed, as mentioned already, opposition to the holding of elections was prevalent among FCC members who feared just such a scenario.

The very real possibility of further postponement of elections, specifically after the postponement of the original July 2005 date, affected Fatah's preparedness for elections, both at the organizational level and at the level of individual candidates. Sabri Saidam described the impact on the overall organizational level:

> Fatah had pushed extensively for delaying elections; the President felt that his moral responsibility and obligation pushed him to uphold the promise of elections. He felt it was part of credibility; Fatah felt this was part of its future disaster. The two clashed, and Abu Mazen put his foot down and decided to hold the elections. Fatah then found itself in the dying moments having to go and run a campaign, now that it had not been

successful to put pressure to delay elections (Saidam 2010).

Mohammad Ishtayyeh, who had managed Abbas' presidential campaign and who referred to himself as part of Abbas' 'inner circle' of advisers, referred to the lack of preparedness for elections and its impact on Fatah's campaign when noting: 'I totally refused to intervene [in the PLC elections] until [Nabil Sha'ath, the PLC election campaign manager] called me in the last seven days and asked me to help, [but] it was already too late' (Ishtayyeh 2008).

When Fatah's campaign kicked off a few days past the official campaign period, its campaign machinery, haphazardly put together, struggled to cope with the organizational demands of the campaign, let alone assessing and responding to public opinion in a strategic manner. Sabri Saidam explained the lack of preparedness further:

> It was last minute, [there were] conflicting feelings, [the] media [campaign] machine was not as efficient as it should have been, and remember that this [campaign machine] had been assembled last minute, so it couldn't have been as efficient as one would have expected, and couldn't [develop] the momentum that one would have expected (Saidam 2010).

Internal Fatah analysis[11] reportedly concluded that the insistence of Fatah to postpone elections, and the insistence of the President to go ahead with them, left Fatah no time to prepare, and as such adversely impacted on Fatah's electoral performance (Saidam 2010).

Aside from impacting organizational preparedness, the very idea that elections may once again be postponed must be assumed to have weakened incentives for responsiveness, in particular for those determined and convinced that elections would not take place.

Disincentive 3: The invincibility conundrum

An electoral imperative for responsiveness is predicated upon an understanding among leaders that they may indeed be defeated in elections. However, as noted above, rotation of power and position had not been a decisive factor in determining leadership roles in Fatah's historical experience. Even though municipal losses in 2004–5 and previous losses in other institution-specific elections had demonstrated that Fatah was not immune to electoral challenges, such experience had affected Fatah's local and often younger leadership more acutely than its traditional leadership. In their specific leadership experience in exile, few leaders had ever lost power due to public pressure, loss of popularity, or elections. On the contrary, movement-internal experience had repeatedly taught leaders that they could retain considerable power and privilege even if leaders did not succeed in the occasional elections. This lesson had only just recently been re-confirmed when leaders who had not succeeded, or had not even bothered to stand in Fatah's pre-election primaries, still retained top positions on Fatah's national list and as district candidates.

In addition, analyst Khalil Shikaki suggested that Fatah's ability to remain reasonably successful in municipal elections held in 2004–5 contributed to Fatah's complacency regarding the possibility of electoral defeat in 2006:

> That Fatah decisively won the presidential elections and the popular vote in all rounds

> of local elections except the last one […] encouraged negligence and sloppiness in Fatah's performance throughout 2005 […] [Fatah] did not view the prevailing divisions and fragmentation within the movement as posing a serious impediment to its ability to win future elections (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:134).

In a bizarre twist of fate, polling may indeed have contributed to the complacency towards public opinion. The misguided poll predictions of a Fatah victory, in spite of indications that the race would be close, supported the sense of invincibility that many felt. If anything, poll results were questioned as to their accuracy in predicting an only narrow Fatah victory. Saidam noted:

> I think Palestinian [polling] NGOs bear a huge responsibility in affecting Fatah's performance [pre-elections]. [Polling institutes] have, through their lack of experience, funding, internal competition and lack of time, misled Fatah so tremendously that Fatah felt that even the corrupt names that were put [on its list] are still winning support and that it is maintaining a lead (Saidam 2010).

The director of the Palestinian Monetary Authority, Jihad Wazir, recalled: 'People [winning] was taken for granted. Polls might have had a role in this**,** because polling gave Fatah the impression that they will win. So they did not work as hard as they should and did not assimilate the information' (Wazir 2009). Using poll results as a 'pick and choose' menu of public opinion, horse-race polling data provided some comfort, while specific information on public preferences was viewed with scepticism. Abbas himself was reported to have displayed such an attitude towards polls (Anon 2008f). His confidence in Fatah's invincibility was perhaps illustrated by his interest in bringing Hamas into the elections:

> [Abbas said:] 'Let's bring them, they will take 20–30 percent, that's fine, let them, they will be in the opposition, they can work in charity and that's it. We have only one authority'. This was his plan, but it didn't work. He was confident. He was convincing us about this. He was confident that he will be able to make it (Anon 2008f).

Abbas' determination to hold elections was seen by his former campaign manager Mohammad Ishtayyeh as 'a very clear case where opinion polls actually misled the decision maker. He was misled by the opinion polls' (Ishtayyeh 2008). Others within Fatah were similarly unwilling to recognize the possibility of electoral defeat. Near East Consulting (NEC) director Jamil Rabah recalled his encounter with a group of Fatah leaders:

> I personally used to tell people from Fatah: 'I think you are going to lose'. They did not believe it […]. They used to say: 'No, you are wrong'. All the analysis showed that they are winning. I showed the results [of NEC polls, commissioned by a non-Fatah candidate, indicating the possibility of a Fatah defeat] to some people from Fatah and I can tell you, I did not get a good reaction! (Rabah 2008)

The evidence regarding the extent of belief in Fatah's invincibility was somewhat contradictory. Perceptions could have changed as elections drew nearer and as respondents reported their views with the benefit of hindsight. As the election date approached, initial confidence appeared to be eroded, in particular once campaigning had commenced and candidates were confronted with a sceptical and critical public in their face-to-face campaign encounters. The widespread support

for election postponement among Abbas' inner circle and among many of Fatah's grassroots leaders may also have been indicative of a growing sense of threat to Fatah's monopoly on power. Indeed, Nabil Sha'ath, who was both a candidate and in charge of the election campaign, was one of those trying to convince the President to postpone elections (Sha'ban 2008).

As such, the combination of lack of previous exposure to the benefits of responsiveness in an electoral context, the perception that elections may not take place after all, and the (initial) sense that loss of power was inconceivable, all combined to undermine the willingness of Fatah to prioritize public concerns in the planning and implementation of its election campaign. By weakening the attitudinal or *willingness* aspect of responsiveness, these factors, in combination, undermined the assumption of a high-incentive environment for responsiveness during elections. At an individual level, prior experience of the imperative nature of responsiveness prompted many individual candidates to prioritize responding to public concerns. However, at the movement-wide level, the need to respond to public concerns was treated as merely one of the many demands plaguing the fragmented and dishevelled Fatah leadership.

The ability to respond to public opinion

Compounding the organizational complacency was a lack of suitable experience in how to translate public opinion into policy and decision making, even where individuals recognized the need to do so. The three disincentives discussed above specifically related to the limited *willingness* of Fatah's leadership to prioritize responsiveness. *Ability* to show responsiveness in the pre-election context was a matter of both technical ability to assess public opinion, and the ability to translate findings into declared policy or strategy prior to elections.

As discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, by 2006 civil society polling organizations had created a potentially powerful instrument for parties and candidates to assess public opinion. Polls offered a wealth of data including campaign-relevant information such as the increasing focus on corruption and lawlessness as an issue of public concern; and the preferred candidate characteristics as clean, incorruptible, educated and with a history of service to the public. Pollsters had expressed their willingness to provide commissioned services to any of the political parties, including Hamas. However, as mentioned earlier, poll scepticism among leaders often resulted in a pick-and-choose attitude regarding favourable data.

In contrast to Hamas, Fatah did not have in place a structured method of community-based public opinion assessment similar to Hamas' house-to-house consultations.[12] Public opinion polls provided the only structured method of assessment prior to elections, complemented by confidently expressed reliance on intuitive understanding of the public by candidates and senior party leaders. In theory, Fatah's leadership could also have resorted to a more narrow assessment of opinion by canvassing its own constituencies through its grassroots cadres. However, routine lack of consultation with local leadership cadres had attracted bitter complaints by these leaders. Lack of consultative experience deprived the movement of a ready tool for Fatah internal consultation, adding to its organizational weakness.

The suggestion that mechanisms for public and internal opinion assessment were poorly developed was also expressed in a pre-election USAID political party assessment report. Focusing on secular parties and specifically Fatah, the report stated:

> The parties do not fully understand what their current and future supporters consider

> important or what it is these supporters expect from their association with a party. Existing party structures do afford opportunities for individual conversations and informal small group discussions and the parties do have occasional access to opinion research; it is nevertheless true that the parties do not have active organisational tools to engage their supporters. Even if the parties are correctly gauging their supporters' views, in the absence of organized efforts to engage their constituents the parties face the real risk that they will misjudge what their supporters expect and perhaps more crucially their supporters will not feel invested in the process or in the party (USAID 2006:9).

In response to their findings, the USAID assessment recommended the funding of tools such as study circles and appreciative inquiry to ensure that 'party programmes and policies reflect constituents' views as verified by opinion research' (USAID 2006:9). Evidence presented here suggested that Fatah's responsiveness to poll data varied by type of information sought. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), a PA agency answerable to the President, was asked by the President to conduct at least one pre-election poll (Sha'ban 2008). Polls by other institutions were also consulted (Saidam 2010). These polls explored topics of public preference and concern as well as levels of support for specific candidates. According to Sabri Saidam, 'polling was conducted in choosing the issues of concern, and that was respected. Polling was conducted to choose the candidates, but that was not respected' (Saidam 2010). The then director of the PCBS, Hassan Abu Libdeh confirmed this information:

> The polls [were] used very well to tailor some programmes. I conducted a lot of polls (2006 and 1996) – my work wasn't on [the assessment of] popularity […], I personally worked on 'what kind of issues might be touching the nerve, how should issues be presented to be more effective' – on presentation. [However,] polls did not influence the decision-making in Fatah in putting this person first or this person second. This was totally independent (Abu Libdeh 2008).

A senior Fatah leader and PA official involved in the campaign pointed to the largely symbolic – as opposed to a substantive – use of pre-election poll data:

> Polling was very important and influential on the eve of elections. Candidates and political parties were very much concerned with looking at public perceptions to be elected. [They were] very concerned not to look at their popularity only, but to adapt messages to [what] they felt the public wanted to hear from them. [Polling was] very important in a *descriptive sense* [speaker's emphasis]. 'As a candidate, I am trying to let you know about me what you [would] like to know about me. But I don't change my views, my attitudes.' This is why sometimes [candidates] appeared as less credible […]. Polls were used for the purposes of identifying issues, to adjust the rhetoric [in order] to be more popular, but [there was] no intention to formulate more popular policy (Anon 2008f).

Fatah's reluctance to use polls for systematic opinion assessment meant that those leaders sceptical of polls were relying exclusively on their own ability and that of their advisors to assess public opinion. Those that trusted polls and were willing to utilize them in preparation for elections remained up against an organizational political culture that had rarely used or tested

polling as an information source contributing to, and informing, programme and policy. Without the organizational know-how to turn data into electorally relevant policy and strategy, polls were under-utilized as an information source, despite their availability and the apparent eagerness of the polling industry to provide data and interpret results. For example, individual candidates, lacking experience in interpreting public electoral behaviour were unable to turn data on the undecided voters into useable information for their campaigns. Fatah district candidate and 'young guard' leader Qaddura Faris recalled:

> [Polls] told us we will win. We believed that the mentality of the Palestinians is not like [other] democracies or communities, where [opinion] might change because [the public] accepts this slogan or that message. [We thought that those] who are Fatah will vote Fatah, [those who are] Hamas will vote Hamas. We ignored those who didn't belong to either Fatah or Hamas (Faris 2010).

Responsiveness in Fatah's election programme and campaign conduct

A responsive approach to programme and campaign design would have necessitated addressing the main topics of public concern and public preferences as they had emerged in the year prior to elections. These had been clearly identified by polls and observers alike. Fatah's senior leadership was aware of these perceptions, either through polls directly or through media coverage of poll results. Hamas, capitalizing upon the communications advantage that these issues provided for a party with a clean reputation and untried in national governance, had made these public concerns central to their programme and campaign. Conversely, these topics presented Fatah with a communications dilemma. Being held responsible by the public for having played a central part in the creation of these problems meant that addressing those during an election campaign would require the movement to convince the public of Fatah's commitment and ability to reform.

Fatah had to make a choice from a number of options as to how it would address these concerns in its programme and campaign: if responding directly to public opinion, Fatah could try and address public concerns explicitly and aim to build a case for a believable new strategy of reform and change.[13] Alternatively, Fatah could opt to ignore public opinion and present a programme focused on areas in which it felt it had a comparative advantage, in the hope that the campaign would be able to divert public attention away from less favourable issues, and towards Fatah's topics of choice. Or, Fatah could challenge the validity of these perceptions head-on, either as never having been true or as no longer true after a year of new governance under Abbas' leadership and, more recently, a reform-oriented technocrat government. Responsiveness to public priorities could be expressed in process (consultation on election programme), in substance (policy commitment regarding these topics in programme and campaign), and in conduct during campaigning, for example in the extent to which candidates responded to public concerns during campaign activities.

When discussing the contents of Fatah's election programme, respondents generally referred to Fatah's aims as outlined in the President's election programme from a year earlier, although a 2006 election programme was available.[14] The general content of Fatah's electoral positions appeared to be understood by Fatah's cadres. Individual candidates generally defined their

individual policy positions on their own. The commissioning of polls was evidence of a desire to assess public opinion in preparation for Fatah's election positions, although prevailing poll scepticism may have diluted reliance and trust in findings.

Accounts of the extent of Fatah internal consultation on programme design varied. Some suggested that party grassroots were involved in discussions and that subsequent programme positions were reviewed accordingly (Saidam 2010). However, a number of informants described a top-down process involving only a handful of senior Fatah leaders, among them President Abbas, Nabil Sha'ath and one or two others (Anon 2010a). Faris suggested that decisions were made centrally, rather than through consultation, and that the process was individual, rather than institution based (Faris 2010). An anonymous senior Fatah leader and PA official agreed when asked whether there was any wider internal consultation for the design of the election programme: 'I would say no, not at all. Fatah is not a party, [it's] a tribe' (Anon 2010a).

Modelled on the presidential election programme, the programme revealed a clear intention of addressing areas of public concern. The three programme priorities were defined by Saidam as:

- Security (addressing the 'lawlessness' concern);
- Reform (addressing the corruption concern); and
- Development (addressing the concerns over economic development/poverty) (Saidam 2010).

Saidam explained Fatah's thinking behind addressing these topics:

> The argument was to be hopeful and to focus on the future, that reform was taking shape and that Fatah was [maintaining] its […] support for the two-state solution and the entire peace process […] saying that now there is a new leadership in Fatah, that time should be allowed, that things cannot be detangled within a year, that we should focus on the future and that Abu Mazen is a man for decentralized rule; and that he is for democracy and that calling for PLC elections was evidence that he is a man who believes in democracy. And that Fatah's manifesto focused on the two-state solution and the need to support the transition to Palestinian statehood, and that time should be given to focus on development leading to laying the foundations for a state (Saidam 2010).

The programme positions of Fatah and Hamas where not dissimilar in topic choice, each clearly responding to priority public concerns and emphasizing the need for change and reform, credibility and competence. In addressing these topics, both parties recognized that the public clearly regarded these as equally, if not more important than ideological topics of an Islamic state or the peace process. Whereas Hamas deemphasized the ideological topics in its campaigning, Fatah continued to focus on its role in the peace process and its historic achievements. Fatah also addressed the difficult issues of corruption and lawlessness, but naturally deemphasized these issues, although its candidates had no choice but to respond to them in face-to-face encounters with the electorate.

As a campaign topic, reference to the peace process created a dilemma for Fatah. While the movement had staked its political capital on a peace process that was meant to bring about a Palestinian state, it was clear for all to see that the strategy had failed to bring about any tangible

results to date. With no hope-inducing peace process to point to, Fatah was deprived of a campaign focus that might draw public attention away from other areas of public concern. Caught between its national ideals and public concerns over its conduct, Fatah's campaign 'vacillated between trying to run on its record and apologizing for its mistakes, and neither effort proved particularly convincing' (Brown 2006:2).

The official campaign was kicked off by campaign manager Nabil Sha'ath at the gravesite of Yasser Arafat. Sha'ath promised to 'finish the occupation and the wall and the settlements and establish a Palestinian state in a peaceful resolution to the situation in our region [and implementation of a] programme to stop the corruption and establish the new foundations for a Palestinian state' (BBC 2006a). Fatah's historic role in the struggle, and the sacrifice of its martyrs, including Yasser Arafat, were used in the campaign to engage its audiences emotionally. Fatah's main campaign slogan of 'Guardian of the National Project' reflected its broad ideological focus, aimed at directing the public's attention towards Fatah's historic role in the Palestinian struggle and away from the negative perceptions of Fatah's more recent performance in governance.

According to Fatah's Ramallah district candidate Qaddura Faris, the campaign focused primarily on 'the history of the Fatah movement, the experience of Fatah in positions of decision making, [as the movement that] led the revolution and built the institutions of authority. [The campaign] was more about the […] history than about the future' (Faris 2010). While Fatah's glorious military past and continued military prowess were celebrated with slogans such as 'Only the Shoulders of the Fighters Can Raise the Torches of Freedom' (Erlanger 2006:n.p.), other slogans clearly addressed public concerns by recognizing past failures, pleading with the electorate to 'Give Us A Second Chance' (Silverman 2006a:n.p.) and – in direct response to corruption allegations – promising 'An Answer to Every Question' (Bicakci 2007:73). Some slogans claimed responsibility for specific achievements, such as the claim: 'The First to Launch the Bullet and to Resist the Occupation', and 'The First to Launch Democracy' (BBC 2006b:n.p.) while others simply claimed that 'A Bright Future Lies Ahead with Fatah' (Silverman 2006a:n.p.). Former Head of Preventative Security from Gaza, Mohammad Dahlan, who campaigned at Arafat's home in Gaza in front of a giant banner featuring rockets, explosions and masked men with guns, reminded his audience that long before they had heard of Hamas, Arafat had been shooting at Israelis (McGreal 2006:n.p.). Comments on Hamas focused primarily on the inexperience of the movement in public office, reflected in comments such as those made by veteran Fatah leader Nabil Sha'ath: 'Hamas does not have a programme. It doesn't even have a clue of what it takes to get foreign aid, what it takes to get Palestinian private investment' (Sha'ath, quoted in PBS 2006:n.p.).

The impact of internal fragmentation on campaign responsiveness

Fatah's pre-election conduct reflected the diversity as well as the fragmentation of the movement overall, to the detriment of presenting a unified, effective and responsive election strategy. Going into elections bitterly divided over a range of issues – including the very idea of holding elections – robbed the movement of its ability to pull together for the purpose of running an effective campaign. Internal fighting, particularly between Fatah's traditional leadership as represented in its Central Committee, and a diverse range of other leadership aspirants, had intensified in the year prior to elections.[15] Internal fragmentation and lack of commitment to the

timing of elections made it difficult to achieve even minimal agreement on major campaign issues. One analyst made the link between fragmentation and political programming explicit: 'Other Fatah Central Committee members have publicly criticized holding elections at this juncture. Without the backing of the key decision-making apparatus within Fatah, the party is left unable to develop a clear platform or a national electoral strategy, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has not assumed such a role' (Yaghi 2006:3).

Even the main slogan, 'Guardian of the National Project' was, perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, criticized by leading figures within Fatah as 'wrongly emphasis[ing] past glories, instead of addressing the real problems Palestinians face today' (Fatah spokesman Abdel Rahim Al-Ahmad, quoted in Seitz 2006:n.p.). According to Ishtayyeh, many within Fatah clearly recognized that its 18-year pursuit of a negotiations strategy with Israel had failed to bring about outcomes that met, or even approximated, public expectations (Ishtayyeh 2008). With no progress towards a negotiated settlement at the time of elections, and an Israeli refusal of even token signs of progress, Fatah's campaign messages on wider political issues such as peace and independence failed even to convince its own leaders, many of whom opposed elections in recognition of this conundrum.

Saidam's cautious assessment appeared to confirm this view: Referring to the three main pillars of the programme (security, reform and development), he conceded: '[The political programme priorities] took a bit of heat because party members were feeling that none of the above had been accommodated over the year and that more work needed to be done' (Saidam 2010). The difficulty of reaching internal consensus on anything, including an election strategy, was symptomatic of Fatah's overall state of fragmentation and stagnation. Agha and Malley observed:

> Fatah, long the heart of the national movement, is deeply divided, rudderless, and bereft of any clear political programme, prey to competing claims to privilege and power […] there is insufficient consensus [in the Palestinian National Movement] over fateful issues, but also over where decisions should be made, by whom, and how (Agha and Malley 2007:1–2).

As a result of this state of confusion, many within Fatah felt that no discernible election strategy existed. As Jihad Wazir observed:

> My impression is that there was no […] organised process, it was a haphazard, eclectic, disorganised one. […] a real electoral machine would [have] take[n] these inputs and analysed them and then looked at [party-internal] interest and then decided where to go. [But] that assumption is not really there. Because Fatah [was] in a dysfunctional state. [The failure of] the internal elections [had] really disrupted its capability to act as a coherent body, […] and the way [primaries] were managed left a bitter taste that impacted the real elections (Wazir 2009).

At the level of campaign organization, the differences became painfully obvious as the campaigns unfolded. Fatah's campaign activities were characterized by an absence of leadership, organization and discipline.[16] In the view of Sabri Saidam 'the entire campaign was not effective, was not powerful, ran low on cash and did not have a clear strategy on how to distribute and communicate with localities' (Saidam 2010). While candidates from both parties

conducted activities such as house visits and neighbourhood festivals aimed at increasing public exposure, Hamas' conduct of such activities was implemented in a highly organized and strategic manner, ensuring information could flow between grassroots and leadership in either direction.

Some campaign uniformity was achieved by Fatah candidates using the campaign slogans, colours and props available from the campaign offices. At the same time, individually and in district groups, candidates designed their own campaign posters with messages which they felt were better suited to address public concerns than the centrally devised campaign messages. Fatah candidate Qaddura Faris explained: 'I made a poster with the slogan "Clean Hands". I knew this was an important topic in public opinion. But it wasn't the general slogan of Fatah' (Faris 2010). An anonymous Fatah candidate contrasted the two approaches:

> There was no campaign in the sense of the word. The people who organised the campaign say that campaign means printing posters and printing the content and distributing it, and paying money for the cost of transportation, communication and cost of printed materials, more than in terms of a plan for a campaign. Hamas? They had planning. They acted like a military. They had unified posters, one logo, […] on the day of elections they had teams working like an army, they distributed their representatives around the ballot boxes, distributed the content of the campaign early, each of them knew where to stand, what to do, they provided them with transportation during the day, food, [they] communicated and cooperated in a centralized way, just like an army. That helped because no less than 15 percent of voters [decided only] on the day of elections (Anon 2010b).

Fatah's ability to mobilize volunteers was dependent on the initiative of individual candidates, some more active than others. This affected the comprehensiveness of public exposure for Fatah candidates. There was no defined strategy for contacting specific target groups such as female voters (who were effectively reached by Hamas through the house-to-house visits by female volunteers), or for addressing non-committed voters. 'We ignored those who don't belong to either Fatah or Hamas, the [ordinary] people. We didn't know how to deal with them' (Faris 2010). Where Hamas used campaign initiatives such as face-to-face meetings or technology in a uniform and systematic manner, Fatah's use of similar initiatives[17] was sporadic, reliant on personal initiative and therefore less effective in reaching a maximum audience. Faris observed: 'There wasn't a real campaign. There was a big office, and people went there, to get posters, etc., flags. In Ramallah I made my own posters; we made one shared poster between the five of us. For the rest of the posters, each did it the way they wanted' (Faris 2010).

Additional damage was inflicted by the lack of cooperation between candidates, culminating not infrequently in open competition between even those standing in the same district. In Nablus, rivalry between Fatah's official candidate Ghassan Shaqa'a and a Fatah independent candidate led to the killing of one of Shaqaa's pistol-carrying campaign staffers over the removal of campaign posters (Usher 2006b:n.p.). In Hebron, two Fatah candidates, both from Dura village in the Hebron district, were discouraging their audiences to vote for the other, while in another district, despite attempts at maintaining a sense of public cooperation among Fatah candidates, members of the audience at campaign gatherings were set-up by fellow candidates to ask their colleagues difficult questions (Anon 2010b).

A lack of commitment and perhaps a sense of complacency were cited as responsible for a

less than committed campaign effort by some candidates in the absence of strong direction by leadership:

> Those on the national list who were in a good position, [in the] first 30 places, they didn't care, they didn't do a lot, they thought they will win and didn't act enough. [It was] selfish thinking. They don't care about [anyone but] themselves. And if they were in a lower [list] position, and were not 100 percent sure that they will win, [then they saw] no need to participate in all of the activities, [no need] to be in a hurry or emergency (Anon 2010b).

While Fatah's campaign succeeded in presenting a recognizable image in terms of its trademark black and white *kuffiyeh* (headscarf, as worn by Arafat) and yellow flags with sunflower emblem (to symbolize Fatah's bright future), distribution of these props was less than optimal. According to an anonymous senior Fatah leader and PA official, an internal evaluation report on the elections found that 'only 25 per cent of the publicity tools – one million hats, T-shirts, flags, posters – were distributed, […] the rest is in stock, it was not distributed' (Anon 2008f). The source cited among reasons for the bottlenecks the desire of so-called volunteers to be paid for their services.

> People wanted to get money; the money was not there right on time […] because of lack of management […]. At the local level they felt they didn't receive the money they should have received; therefore, many of them did not work. It was discovered that a number of people appointed by Fatah were working for Hamas (Anon 2008f).

While this impacted on the effectiveness of campaigns of some candidates, other candidates with independent financial resources were able to distribute their own campaign incentives. For example, one of the few successful Fatah district candidates in the Gaza Strip, Fatah strongman Mohammad Dahlan, distributed new copies of the Qur'an to all households in his district of Khan Younis.

Fatah's pre-election conduct seemed at times to confirm public opinion in a way that no political rhetoric could counter. As Brown observed: 'Fatah's disarray was not merely unseemly; it was threatening. In the weeks before the voting, Fatah gangs engaged in kidnappings, violent attacks on government offices, and even attacks on each other. In such an atmosphere, a vote for Hamas was a vote against domestic chaos and violence' (Brown 2006:2).

Fatah's inability to pull together as a movement provided Hamas with a natural platform to campaign on issues such as lawlessness: 'What kind of Authority is unable to protect a crossing or an election centre?' taunted senior Hamas leader and candidate Sa'id Siyam (quoted in Silverman 2006b:n.p.), following the burning down of a Central Election Commission's office by dissatisfied Gazan Fatah youth. Fatah's own conduct ensured that 'security was the issue on the forefront of Gazans' minds as they headed to the polls. Judging from the lawlessness and chaos plaguing the streets, voters decided Fatah did not deserve 'a second chance' [as a campaign slogan had pleaded], and that Hamas was perhaps better equipped to run the security services than Fatah' (Silverman 2006c:n.p.). Moreover, just as had been the case with the financial reforms that had slowly begun to take shape, Abbas' initial steps of tacking lawlessness, starting with disarming Fatah's local armed gangs, had not yet progressed sufficiently to be evident to the public at large.

The combination of lack of preparedness and limited willingness to prioritize public opinion resulted in a campaign that clearly lacked commitment to, and understanding of, the public as the final arbiter in an electoral contest. The overall frustration with organizational complacency when dealing with public perceptions of Fatah was expressed by a Fatah leader in his comparison between Fatah and Hamas:

> I do believe that Hamas care much more for public opinion than Fatah. For example: Media [is important] for Hamas, [they] make top efforts […], have a lot of money, [conduct] public activities. They bring engineers to the place where they decide to have [their public meetings], and bring media. [They care about] the pictures, they care about the messages, they care about everything. Here in Fatah? Chaos! [We] only bring the people, we don't care about which pictures we will send to the media to [give the] impression that we have a lot of people. Everything we don't care about, because there is a vacuum of leadership. In Hamas, the leadership is less selfish, not corrupt, much younger. They deal with the information revolution; they bring the professionals to care about their website, their satellite (Anon 2008g).

External factors and campaign responsiveness

In addition to these movement-internal factors, Fatah was also affected by obstacles that lay beyond its control and which impacted on the movement's ability to demonstrate responsiveness more effectively. Having invested in nearly two decades of relationship-building and negotiations with Israel, Fatah's leadership had hoped and expected that Israel would like to see it, rather than Hamas, rule the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Pursuant to this logic, Fatah's leadership had expected Israel to facilitate some – any – type of cooperation or sign of progress, for example an easing of movement restrictions, which Fatah could have pointed to as signs of progress, evidence that the strategy had yielded results and was worth pursuing further. The President's then-chief of staff, Rafiq Husseini, explained this expectation:

> We never talked about this, but you would expect that the Israelis will sit down and say, 'well, there is an election in Palestine, who do you want to win, do you want the moderates to win or the extremists? And if we want the moderates to win, what do we do to help them win? They are talking about prisoners, let's release a thousand; they are talking about checkpoints, let's remove 200; they are talking about settlements; let's say we are going to freeze the settlements – to positively affect the results' (Husseini 2009).

The blatant absence of any such gesture, and indeed the bypassing of Abbas in the 2005 withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, deprived Fatah of the ability to use the peace process in order to divert attention away from other areas of public concern, and towards areas of potential Fatah strength. Where the 1996 election campaign had been able to capitalize on symbolic issues such as Jerusalem, independence and statehood, by 2006, the lack of progress on all fronts required the political contestants to address a far less inspiring set of domestic issues in order to be seen as responsive. Even hastily assembled attempts to prop up Fatah's campaign with evidence of progress through the injection of project-specific US funding in the month prior to elections[18] only served to backfire on the movement when the funding sources and its intentions were revealed in an article in *The Washington Post* (Wilson and Kessler 2006). While

Fatah's choice of election topics had addressed public concerns formally, the campaign's focus on positive, but aloof messages of optimism did not correspond to people's daily realities. This left candidates with an uphill struggle, requiring them, with varying degrees of success, to battle unsupported on issues such as corruption and lawlessness.

Responsiveness and the corruption dilemma

Although the topic of corruption[19] had come to dominate the list of Palestinian concerns during 2005, it had been a cause of public dissatisfaction over the preceding decade. Opinion polls had tracked corruption perceptions since 1996, recording fluctuating but in tendency increasing public concern which culminated in the finding in 2005 that 86.9 per cent of respondents answered *yes* to the question 'Do you think that there is corruption in the PA institutions' (PSR 2005a). The 'ability of the list to fight corruption and implement reform measures' was the most determinative factor in the respondent's choice of candidate list (23.5 per cent), more important than party political affiliation (18.9 per cent) and the ability of the list to improve economic conditions (14.7 per cent) (PSR 2005a).

Since the establishment of the PA, Fatah reformists had been at the forefront of bringing the topic to public and international attention. For example, a 1997 PLC Special Committee report prompted Yasser Arafat's 2002 acknowledgement of responsibility and resulted in a cabinet reshuffle and launch of the *One Hundred Day Programme of Reform* (Parsons 2005: Ch. 5). In 2002, 13 Fatah members signed an open letter to Arafat demanding reform (Klein 2003b), and a 2004 mass resignation of Fatah members cited the failure to address corruption as their main grievance (Amr 2004:n.p.). A number of PLC investigations into specific corruption allegations, as well as Mahmoud Abbas' own reform and anti-corruption agenda (Tamimi 2007:209) all acknowledged and responded to the issue from inside Fatah.[20] Over the decade prior to the 2006 elections, and in particular throughout the multi-election year of 2005, it must be assumed that 'Abu Mazen and Fatah were fully aware of the problems related to corruption – not as a factor in the outcome of elections, but as a matter of policy' (Shikaki 2008). In fact, it is hard to imagine that the focus on the corruption issue during municipal elections would not have provided the Fatah leadership with a good understanding of the status of corruption as a decisive factor for electoral outcomes. This should have created a clear incentive for leaders to respond to this specific public concern with urgency and focus for its 2006 election programme and campaign.

This section does not review in detail evidence on the accuracy of corruption allegations, or trace the history of corruption allegations and the struggle for reform, as these are presented in literature elsewhere (Denoeux 2005; International Crisis Group 2002; Klein 2003b; Sayigh 2006). Instead, this section looks specifically at leadership responses to public *perceptions* of corruption in pre-election conduct. In theory, what could responsiveness to the issue have looked like? For example, the political programme and campaign might have addressed public concerns about corruption directly, acknowledging mistakes and presenting a clear programme of reform; candidate selection processes could have excluded candidates without a clean record, focusing on candidates who possessed the professional and personal characteristics and abilities to implement an anti-corruption programme; or the validity and extent of public perceptions could have been challenged with facts and figures. And conversely what would lack of responsiveness have looked like in theory? Not responding to the issue could have meant either an outright

dismissal of public perceptions without persuasive counter-arguments, or rhetorical acknowledgement of perceptions and promises of reform without evidence of plans for implementing these promises. Candidates might have displayed corrupt conduct in their campaign, while 'incorruptible' candidates might have been ignored during candidate selection.

The difficulty that addressing the issue of corruption posed for Fatah in its election campaign can hardly be overstated. For Hamas, corruption was 'an effective vote winner' because of the movement's 'perceived political will and capacity to tackle' the problem (Denoeux 2005:124). The increasing domination of this concern in the public mind demanded a response from politicians, both in terms of prioritization of the issue as a policy matter[21] and as a criterion in candidate selection. While local government elections during the year had illustrated the prevalence of the topic overall, only in the last round of municipal elections did the topic's prevalence directly contribute to Fatah's outright electoral defeat. Fatah was blamed for being the main beneficiary and perpetrator of corrupt practices of various types, specifically through the 'perceived pervasiveness of nepotism and cronyism in government-related hiring' (Denoeux 2005:121). This made addressing the issue of corruption particularly difficult for those already in positions of power or influence.

Not unsurprisingly, Fatah's campaign deemphasized corruption as a major topic. The campaign also appeared to neglect the topic as a communications challenge, providing individual candidates with little guidance on how to address the issue.

> [The fight against corruption] was not the general logo for Fatah, it might be okay for some candidates but not for Fatah, because the main logo for Fatah was the 'Guardian of the National Project'. This is a political logo, [emphasizing] state and independence. Each candidate [addressed corruption] in his own way. We didn't adopt [fighting corruption] as our logo because we knew that people will ask about this issue [anyway]. So we were not proactive in presenting the issue, instead we answered questions asked by people (Faris 2010).

Individual candidates or groups of candidates addressed the topic and designed their own posters (such as the Ramallah candidates' 'Clean Hand' poster), based on their own, rather than overall campaign strategy. When on the campaign trail, candidates could not escape the topic and addressed it in whichever way they felt fit.

> I was aware that this was a very important issue for the public opinion. If it was not for Fatah's members, the corruption issues would never have been revealed. We discussed this publicly and we explained that we will solve these problems in the future. So we admitted [mistakes] and at the same time we promised that we would solve this issue in the future (Faris 2010).

A number of factors limited the effectiveness of such responses to corruption perceptions in the programme and campaign. While there had been a number of reform initiatives over the past decade, any progress, for example in the areas of establishing governing structures and legal frameworks, had, according to Sayigh, 'been balanced, and in certain respects undermined or even reversed, by negative trends' (Sayigh 2006:79). For example, the 2005 technocrat government under Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie was working to implement the reform strategy outlined in the 2005 presidential election programme (Saidam 2010). However, despite progress

in the areas of fiscal management and judicial appointments, Sayigh concluded that 'the Qurie government failed visibly to address key public concerns relating to corruption and lawlessness, and generally adopted an attitude ranging from neglect to obstruction towards other areas of institutional and policy reform' (Sayigh 2006:79). Notably, both Sayigh's and Shamir and Shikaki's research specifically referred to the failure of responding to public opinion on corruption in the year preceding elections. Acknowledging that some progress was made, Shamir and Shikaki argued:

> Fatah failed to take notice of public demand regarding the need to deal with corruption within its ranks. Throughout 2005 Fatah believed that with Mahmoud Abbas heading the PA, the peace process would soon resume, restoring public confidence in diplomacy, and that the public would then continue to look to Fatah to lead the process of peace-making and drop its anti-corruption demands (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:134).

Sayigh suggested that 'the proximate factors were the stubborn refusal of the preceding government, headed by Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie, to acknowledge fully, let alone seriously address, the need to combat corruption and implement reforms' (Sayigh 2006:7). Coexistence of the implementation of a reform agenda alongside a perceived continuing lack of responsiveness on the issue (as indicated in polls and by analysts) indicated either a lack of commitment to the reforms in terms of resource allocation and prioritization, or a failure of leadership to communicate its responses to the public effectively.

A widely held belief within Fatah that corruption charges had been exaggerated for ulterior motives might have been a key factor in reducing leadership's willingness to respond to public perceptions on corruption. Whereas the existence of some forms of corruption was readily accepted within Fatah, the continued prevalence and extent of the problem was disputed by many. For example, Mohammad Ishtayyeh argued that corruption perceptions had been subject to manipulation by Israel in an ongoing strategy aimed at discrediting the Palestinian leadership before the international community. While not denying the existence of corrupt practices, Ishtayyeh asserted that the issue of corruption:

> has been very exaggerated in the international media […] in a serious case of image destruction, image assassination of the Palestinian people […]. Netanyahu budgeted money for character assassination of the Palestinian authority, [claiming that it] does not deserve to be an independent Palestinian state. Israeli media inserted stories of corruption into the media daily, and before every single donor meeting Israeli media leaked stories. People started to believe [this], because they cannot see the [donor] money [which is paid as salaries]. Israeli media have fully focused on corruption cases, these media goes to the Palestinian people, then someone does an opinion poll, […] and you get the impression that we are sinking in corruption […] rather than individual cases (Ishtayyeh 2008).

The view of an exaggerated corruption perception is widely shared. NEC pollster Jamil Rabah concurred, suggesting that 'pollsters had a major role in exaggerating the corruption issue' (Rabah 2008). In his view, polls strengthened a popular view that was not correct, and then filtered this view to journalists, creating impact internationally. Independent political scientist and 2009 Minister of Planning Ali Jarbawi argued that polls were 'injected into this culture […] to make the point [about the need for reform] which then justified outside pressure' (Jarbawi

2008). Arafat, Jarbawi suggests, responded to outside pressure, not to public perceptions on corruption. Whether or not corruption was indeed 'bigger in the public mind than in reality' (Abdallah 2007:n.p.) cannot readily be determined. However, the effect of the theory on responsiveness was convincingly argued by Shikaki who suggested that

> regardless of its accuracy, the 'exaggeration theory' negatively affected leadership's willingness to respond to a clear and prevailing public concern, and as such become a disincentive to responsiveness. Not responding to 'inaccurate' public perceptions arguably allowed leaders to prioritize responding to 'higher demands' such as the peace process or economic development (Shikaki 2008).

Shikaki explained the lack of responsiveness to the corruption issue prior to elections by noting that:

> Fatah, Abu Mazen, everyone was aware of corruption. But actually fighting corruption would have meant paying a cost somewhere else and they decided to ignore it […]. My interpretation is: 'high politics'. Corruption was not perceived as high politics [such as electoral outcomes, negotiations, support of suicide attacks] (Shikaki 2008).

As noted earlier, the functioning of the electoral imperative depends on prior experience of the electoral consequences of responsive policy and conduct. Once the link between responsiveness and electoral consequences has been recognized, leaders are then motivated to respond, even if addressing public concerns takes the form of persuading the public of the incorrectness of their perceptions. In 2006, this link was not recognized sufficiently. Perhaps Fatah's leadership had not had the time and opportunity or lacked the expertise and resources to apply a lesson that had only been learnt in the final months prior to the PLC elections, when Fatah began to experience electoral consequences in municipal elections over the issue of corruption. Perhaps the insecurity over elections taking place in the first place prevented sufficient time for learning on this issue. As it was, the 'exaggeration theory' created a trap for leaders who, rightly or wrongly, believed that inaccurate public perceptions did not require a response.

The 'exaggeration theory' offers only one possible explanation why commitment towards addressing corruption as a priority concern may have been limited. Other factors may have been the lack of consensus internally on how to respond, due to fragmentation, and the political cost of removing privileges in the context of fragile leadership. In spite of Fatah's programme committing the movement to a process of reform, the impression of a lack of substance affected the credibility of the stated reform aims. As a senior Fatah leader and PA official recalled: 'They talk about [reform] without having a real programme. They [said]: "We will fight corruption, we will support good governance" etc., but [without] a specific idea on how to do this. The only one who had a programme was [Third Way candidate] Salam Fayyad' (Anon 2010a).

In addition, Fatah's campaign was unable to communicate effectively any progress that had been achieved in implementing reform. This was perhaps a reflection of general lack of well-functioning communication and consultation mechanisms between Fatah's leadership, distracted by their own internal crises, and the public at large. The problem was compounded by a president who was not a natural communicator, but who believed that deeds would speak for themselves. With little publicly visible evidence that a page had been turned in Fatah's conduct in office, the movement's ability to address the problem credibly in its election campaign was severely

undermined.[22] While pointing to sectoral achievements, Sabri Saidam conceded: 'A year's time in terms of media campaigning is not enough to avert what had accumulated over ten years. So no matter what had been done, regardless of [the fact that] we had moved closer to reform, [it] wasn't enough, not enough to cleanse' (Saidam 2010).

Ramallah candidate Faris recalled his experience with this communications dilemma:

> The question is: how many people believed our messages, accept[ed] our messages, […] were we convincing or not? Some people believe you personally, but don't believe the organisation […]. Even if the polls say that change and reform are public requests, we still couldn't use it because people will not believe us if we come and talk about change and reform. It is suitable for Hamas, because they are participating for the first time and they are more direct and more clean and people haven't tried them before. This slogan will work [for them]. But for Fatah, it will not work. It will not help (Faris 2010).

Even candidates with a record of demanding reform in the previous Legislative Council were unable to point to real breakthroughs as a result of their efforts. Indeed, public evaluation of the work of the previous PLC had been damning, perceiving it as having failed to prevent corruption in the PA (Shuaibi 2004:n.p.). In desperation, some Fatah candidates resorted to suggesting that Hamas itself was corrupt, accusing the movement of a lack of transparency in revealing the sources of its campaign funding. In light of Fatah's communications dilemma, some Fatah candidates resorted to a strategy of distinguishing themselves from Fatah as a movement, and from other Fatah candidates. NEC director Rabah recalled:

> They did not ignore [the issue of corruption], but never believed it. Everyone from Fatah, whether they are leaders or not, [thought]: 'It is the other one who is corrupt. I am not corrupt, I am clean'. […] everyone blamed the other for corruption. Fatah failed to defend itself in its campaign [on the perception] that it was not corrupt. They took it at face value and neglected the issue, thinking they are [personally] immune from it (Rabah 2010).

Successful Fatah district candidates for Mohammad Dahlan told rallies across the Gaza Strip that things would change, that Fatah was reforming, that the corrupt old guard (with whom Dahlan had been popularly associated for the past decade) was on its way out (McGreal 2006:n.p.). Rather than challenge perceptions of the movement as corrupt, these strategies served to further confirm such perceptions. Further undermining Fatah's efforts to present a credible anti-corruption and reform agenda was the obvious use of government resources in Fatah's campaign, providing a subtext to its campaign rhetoric the irony of which was not lost on the public.[23]

Whereas both programme and individual campaigns illustrated a degree of acknowledgement of the need to respond to public opinion, in candidate selection, responsiveness to public opinion was disregarded entirely. The selection process, characterized by lack of transparency, nepotism and chaos, cemented an image of Fatah as a movement so fragmented that it could not even respond to the wishes of its own membership, let alone respond to public preferences. By disregarding 'incorruptibility' as a criterion in candidate selection, and by displaying a lack of ability to maintain internal peace, discipline and control in the selection process, Fatah demonstrated its inability to respond to the two top public concerns, corruption and lawlessness.

Hamas' candidate selection process had ensured that the characteristics of its candidates (clean image, education, personal struggle and service history) were in line with public preferences, and that the movement's cadres were motivated to work as volunteers for candidates in whose selection they been consulted. In Fatah's candidate selection process, although polls had been commissioned,[24] their results were not utilized consistently. Popular potential candidates had been keen to use poll data to support their claims for nomination. Talking specifically about Ramallah district poll results, 'young guard' leader Qaddura Faris recalled a conversation with Mahmoud Abbas following poll results which confirmed his popularity as only second to Marwan Barghouthi, in turn confirming the results from primaries. Asking to be nominated by Fatah, Faris recalled:

> [Abu Mazen] told me 'No'. 'Why?' I said I was the second in the primaries. He said the primaries were chaos. I said I was the second in the three polls. He said I don't believe in the polls, that '*Al Istitla'at fiha hawwa'* [meaning roughly: polls are nothing but hot air]. He told me the centres that make these polls they want these results […]. He didn't accept because he received pressure from the typical, the primitive leadership. Because they wanted to put some of their cadres, some they are close to, after them (Faris 2008). [Faris was eventually listed as Fatah's district candidate and received more votes than any other Fatah candidates in the Ramallah district, but lost his seat to Hamas' clean-sweep of the district].

The selective neglect of poll data rendered this potentially useful information insignificant in the face of other considerations such as the need to appease competing centres of power, patronage and the need to build and maintain alliances at times of severe leadership crisis. Fatah's list was drawn up by Mahmoud Abbas and the members of Fatah's Central Committee (Saidam 2010). It included candidates whose names had been tainted with allegations of corruption, including some who had been specifically singled out for their involvement in corruption. A high-level Fatah informant suggested that 'If you look at the list, most of them on the list were accused of corruption. Nabil Amer, accused of corruption, Mohammad Dahlan was accused, Abu Ala [Ahmed Qurie], many of them who ended up on the list were accused of corruption' (Anon 2010a). Another example was Nabil Sha'ath, fourth on Fatah's national list, former Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and in charge of the 2006 election campaign. His resignation had been a specific demand in the PLC's 1997 Special Committee report on corruption in regard to the use of government money for personal purposes (Abu Issa 2004:n.p.).

An influential independent analyst and political adviser summarized the reasons for Fatah's inability to concede to public demands for untainted candidates:

> There is a power struggle. Fatah is composed of so many powers, and they could not neglect one over the other. [With] Abu Mazen coming to power, [someone] who doesn't have that power behind him like Arafat, it opened up the room for an [attitude of]: 'Okay *yalla,* we will put two of these to please these and two of those to please those'. It was a matter of pleasing people. There were people who did voice the point [about keeping people tainted with corruption off the lists]. I heard it from a number of people, but [they] did not and could not [act] because firstly they would create enemies and secondly they would antagonize the President and others. So, while they were saying these things behind closed doors, it did not come out in public because [saying

> it publicly] would stain them as de-unifying the movement, fragmenting the movement. It would be taken differently, it would split the organisation, it would play into the hands of Hamas. While they are pluralistic, they don't have a system to bring their plurality into proper action. That's the problem (Anon 2010c).

Saidam agreed that pressure and fears of further splitting the movement resulted in unsatisfactory candidate choices:

> I think we made the wrong decision when opting to maintain Fatah's unity by choosing those who should not have been chosen. And I think that the Palestinian leadership was mistaken in choosing corrupt names, [those] tainted with corruption, [who were] not accepted by the people, and seen to be part of [the creation of] the misery that people were in (Saidam 2010).

Equally, if not more damaging to electoral prospects, was the neglect of Fatah internal primaries in candidate selection. Increasing pressures from Fatah's lower ranks had forced the movement's leadership into accepting the primaries, against the resistance from FCC members. Members feared and expected that the results from primaries would strengthen the position of a new generation within Fatah, as indeed they did, with 'young guard' members winning most of the top slots (Yaghi and Fishman 2005:n.p.). They also feared that primaries would expose the lack of internal support for Fatah's historic leadership as represented in its main governing bodies. As a result, primaries became a battle ground between the various interest groups within Fatah, with the historic leadership using their patronage relations with elements from within Fatah's various armed groups to disrupt the process, at times violently. The process publicly exposed the chaos within Fatah (Fishman and Yaghi 2006) and led to discontinuation of primaries and selective annulling of results (Usher 2006c:25; Yaghi and Fishman 2005:n.p.). In the absence of a clear prior commitment by the FCC to respecting the outcomes of the results,[25] in those cases where primaries were held successfully, outcomes were still largely ignored in the selection process. Instead, Abbas presented a list of candidates that 'satisfied few and alienated many' (Usher 2006a:n.p.), and which awarded top spots to leaders who had been unsuccessful, or had not even participated in primaries.

The effect on Fatah's electability was highly damaging. The process once again exposed the dire state of Fatah's organizational capacity, unable even to keep the peace within its own ranks. It also highlighted the contrast with Hamas' pre-election conduct:

> Hamas has shown political shrewdness and a commitment to the democratic process, exhibited by their well organized primaries and effective methods of campaigning, making use of popular media channels to inform the public about their candidates and the newly adopted proportional representation voting system. Meanwhile, Al-Aqsa militants stormed Central Elections Commissions offices in Gaza and the West Bank to express their angst over Fatah's arbitrary selection of their candidate (Amayreh and Silverman 2006:n.p.).

Fatah's conduct also 'demonstrated to voters that despite the efforts of the "young guard", Fatah remained a corrupt organization more concerned with retaining power than imposing reform' (Fishman and Yaghi 2006:n.p.). As it turned out, the failure of primaries also led to the creation of the second Fatah list by those disenchanted with the process and who had missed out on

nomination, a move that threatened to split the vote and the movement. According to Faris, the formation of the *Future* list was 'a reaction to the ignoring of the polls and the primaries. It was not a strategic decision for us; we wanted to pressure the leadership' (Faris 2008). Similarly, Saidam explained the dilemma:

> When Fatah decided to ignore [primary results] and the President sat down with the Central Committee to choose the names, Fatah had been broken in half. Fatah had produced two lists, so there was the big fear of 'do we win the elections and lose the party or do we lose the elections and win the party or do we win the party and win the elections'? I think we have made a grave mistake (Saidam 2010).

Under intense pressure, the *Future* list was withdrawn and a compromise list was drawn up which put Barghouthi at the top of Fatah's list, but disregarded most of his followers. Large numbers of would-be Fatah candidates who missed out on being nominated in the final list stood as independent candidates, effectively splitting the Fatah vote. Usher reported that a week prior to elections there were '120 "independent" Fatah candidates standing against 130 official candidates, with most of the independents running in protest at the way the official list was drawn up' (Usher 2006a:n.p.). A brief re-opening of candidate registration allowed Fatah to induce some independent candidates to withdraw their candidacy 'less by organisational order than by promises of jobs, money and land', bringing their number down to about 74 (Usher 2006a:n.p.). The complete lack of discipline further undermined the image of Fatah as a movement ready to reform itself.[26]

The neglect of Fatah internal opinion as expressed in its top-down candidate selection also affected Fatah's ability to mobilize quality support for its campaign from local cadres. Their disillusionment with the movement affected Fatah candidates' ability to draw on a committed volunteer force, and to mobilize Fatah's core voters.[27] Even though, according to journalist Erica Silverman (2006b:n.p.), an estimated 50,000–60,000 volunteers had received training from the US National Democratic Institute in lobbying and campaign management and were ready to be deployed, a number of Fatah sources point to the problems mobilizing a committed volunteer force due to the limited engagement of local cadres in the process of candidate selection. Whereas Hamas candidates were able to mobilize strong support from their grassroots cadres, Fatah-imposed candidates could not always rely on volunteers committed to Fatah's programme, but were left to mobilize support from family and individuals who sought personal advantage from helping a specific candidate into a position of power. Equally, the nomination of candidates tainted by corruption allegations affected their ability to mobilize campaign volunteers, as a Fatah candidate suggested:

> It didn't help Fatah cadres. They have to believe that this is a suitable candidate [in order] to work with him, act for him. [Nevertheless], usually you can find people to work with you. Not for payment, not exactly. Some cadres have an interest to have this person in the PLC, and they will act for him, for themselves. Some believe in Fatah, they want Fatah to win. They are working with all the Fatah candidates. Some worked with friends, not exactly members in Fatah, [or] from the same family, the same area. They think that it is in their interest to help you get into the PLC. [They relied] not only [on] volunteers from the movement – some from the movement, some volunteers (Anon 2010b).

Referring to the June 2007 Fatah–Hamas clashes in Gaza, journalist Khalid Amayreh pointed to the link between commitment and mobilizational capacity: 'A Hamas fighter does not fight for Haniyeh or even for Hamas, he fights for Islam. But a Fatah fighter, he does it for money, for the leader, and for the movement to a lesser extent. That's really why Fatah collapsed' (Amayreh 2009b). Fatah's reduced mobilizational capacity had flow-on effects for campaign effectiveness, and was seen as one of the reasons for reduced outreach and the less than optimal distribution of campaign props mentioned before.

A number of notable exceptions to the prevailing chaos in selection processes provide insight into the 'what could have been', had a more responsive process been followed. Rafah district was one of only two places in which Fatah swept seats for the Legislative Council. Here, primaries had been conducted successfully, and results had been respected in district nominations. Journalist Charmaine Seitz reported that:

> a leader in Rafah, who declined to give his name to avoid tensions with the national leadership, ascribes Fatah's success there to a process of consultation that led to successful primaries, and then active general campaigning for all Fatah candidates. He contrasts this with conditions in Gaza City, where all eight candidates were handpicked (Seitz 2006).[28]

The lack of willingness to respond to public opinion was seen by former Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Nasser Al-Qidweh as a question of respecting the principle of electability: 'If you are going to elections, [you need to] consider electability, and you have to put [electable candidates] in front. Electability was not accepted. It was like gambling with the whole ship [based on] my own personal interest. It was so messy' (Al-Qidweh 2009).

The findings from this chapter highlight the evolutionary nature of responsiveness, and the need for learning processes to take hold. They also point to the opportunities that the 2006 experience provided for Palestinian leadership. Indeed, the evident diversity of experience within the movement, specifically the electoral experience of local cadres, illustrates the range of attitudes towards responsiveness that can be found within the organization and suggests that the inevitable lessons will be learned and, in time, heeded by those who aim to fulfil their political ambitions through electoral means.

The analysis of Fatah's pre-election conduct presented in this chapter showed that just as the movement's *willingness* to prioritize responsiveness was weakened, the *ability* to respond to public priorities in Fatah's pre-election conduct was constrained. The analysis also illustrated that at an individual and at times even at an organizational level, responsiveness was considered important. This was the case more so in programme announcements and campaigning than in candidate selection. However, as a result of both limited willingness to prioritize responsiveness, and limited know-how in dealing with public concerns in a responsive manner, the consideration of public concerns entered campaign planning in a haphazard way. It lacked the type of strategic direction, application of resources, and political will evident in Hamas' approach to responsiveness. While more responsiveness in the pre-election period may have benefited Fatah, public recognition of a consultative leadership style would have required such practice to be evident in Fatah's general conduct, not only during elections. In addition, it is fair to say that, as pointed out by Saidam, Fatah's chances of success were always going to be negatively affected by the movement's inability to show results on the ground for its embrace of Oslo. As Saidam

suggested:

> Imagine we go to the next elections with trillions of dollars, imagine we have a huge army of volunteers, imagine we have the best material and the best national experts to guide us, yet the peace process is continuing to die, more checkpoints, the wall continues to snake its way, more settlements, total Israeli negligence to whatever Palestinians aspirations, I think it will be a hard fight. So, if the meat that we need to sell in elections is not there, it will bring us down tremendously (Saidam 2010).

Fatah's neglect to prioritize responsiveness as a strategic opinion, specifically in areas as important as candidate selection, illustrated the overwhelming strength of disincentives to responsiveness. The spill-over of its own fragmentation crisis into the Palestinian street in the run up to elections strongly confirmed the most prevalent public concerns about the movement. As elections drew nearer, the very topics that had haunted Fatah, namely corruption and lawlessness, were becoming increasingly salient in voter's minds. Fatah was unable to address these issues in a way that could either have satisfied public concern, or could have diverted attention away from them. Instead, it appeared that Fatah neglected responsiveness to those issues that everyone else had recognized as of prime concern, including analysts, pollsters, Fatah's political competitors and the general public. PSR director Shikaki arrived at a similar conclusion, based on his analysis of polls and observation of leadership reaction:

> The need to be re-elected should motivate the elected representatives to be attentive to public opinion. However, as we have demonstrated, the Fatah leadership did not seem to have internalised this feature of elections – either for lack of ability or lack of will. As a result of the long-time uncertainties about the balance of power, and from its position of long-term dominance, it neglected the need to take into account its electorate's preferences. It did not correctly assess the changing public agenda and the growing criticism of its failure in state and good governance building, and was ousted from power in the January 2006 parliamentary elections (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:150).

The 2006 elections provided opportunities for learning about the role of responsiveness in leadership crisis. Some recognized the importance of this link. As an anonymous Fatah leader suggested:

> Hamas cares much more than Fatah about public opinion. They won the elections, they won public opinion first. Their narrative had been accepted by community, as a result of this they won the elections and they succeeded to have the coup in Gaza. This means that it is important […]. [Here in Fatah], everything we don't care about, because there is a vacuum of leadership (Anon 2009i).

Whether or not such learning can help the movement as a whole to approach decision making in future in a strategically responsive manner depends on both opportunities for movement-internal learning (hindered, in the past, by fragmentation) and for a similar process of learning to take place among those international actors whose requirements for responsiveness to *their* demands contributed to an incentive structure tipped against responsiveness to domestic opinion.

CHAPTER 2

RESPONSIVENESS IN THE 2006 PLC ELECTIONS – HAMAS

Responsiveness in Hamas' political thought and practice

Hamas' 2006 election victory was widely regarded as a public vote of no-confidence in Fatah regarding a range of policy failures and the movement's inability to stamp out corruption in its ranks (Baumgarten 2006b; Beck 2006; Shikaki 2006b). It was also seen as the result of Fatah's inability to close ranks and agree on a limited number of candidates, fragmenting its support base and thereby giving Hamas an electoral advantage (Usher 2006a). However, other smaller parties who might have benefited similarly from a protest vote against Fatah were unable to capitalize on Fatah's weaknesses. This points to the innate strength of Hamas' position within this – and indeed previous – electoral contests. The professionalism with which Hamas conducted its election campaign was recognized as a factor in its success (International Crisis Group 2006b). However, the wearing of uniform green caps and the use of SMS messages, effective as they may have been as campaign tools, would not have been sufficient without the ability of the movement to craft campaign messages that corresponded with public preferences.

The evidence presented here suggests that a key factor in Hamas' electoral success was an aspect of its conduct that has received little attention in the analysis thus far: the movement's willingness and ability to assess public opinion correctly and to be guided by this assessment in the subsequent planning and implementation of the movement's election programme and campaign.

The interviews I conducted with those involved in Hamas' West Bank election campaign provide a window into the development of a strategy which saw responsiveness to public opinion used as a key principle guiding the movement's pre-election conduct, providing it with an important electoral advantage. This chapter examines the use and significance of responsiveness in Hamas' pre-election conduct. It looks at both the ideological foundations for leadership's *willingness* to prioritize responsiveness to public opinion, and the movement's experience with consultative processes which provided it with the *ability* to do so.

Research conducted over the past decade has provided a more detailed picture of the evolution, foundations and conduct guiding the Islamic Resistance Movement in which consultation in decision making is recognized as an important and distinctive feature of Hamas'

political thought and conduct, founded on the movement's political and religious ideals and playing an important role in the movement's internal decision-making processes (Baumgarten 2006a; Gunning 2007; Hroub 2006; Levitt 2006; Mishal and Sela 2006; Tamimi 2007).

The analysis presented here suggests that Hamas' ability to demonstrate, in programme and conduct, that it was responsive to the preferences and needs of the public, played an important role in its ability to capitalize on public dissatisfaction with Fatah. The movement was able to rely on its experience in internal consultative decision making and use it to its advantage when applying tried and trusted methods of public opinion assessment at the national level.

Fatah, on the other hand, was unable to rely on its own experience of responsiveness to public opinion. Inexperienced in making effective use of little tried and only conditionally trusted tools of public opinion assessment available through polls and grassroots contact, the movement failed to convince the electorate of its programme. Hamas' demonstrated ability to rely on public opinion assessment to inform its pre-election planning and campaign conduct contrasted sharply with Fatah's inability to respond to public opinion during the crucial pre-election phase. This finding highlights the opportunities that responsiveness provides, even where responsiveness takes the shape of procedural or symbolic, rather than substantive responses.

This chapter initially outlines those aspects of Hamas' political thought that relate specifically to the movement's willingness to show responsiveness to internal opinion. It then discusses the mechanisms used to implement these processes internally. The background presented here draws primarily on existing literature on Hamas' political thought and evolution, specifically using the in-depth analysis presented by Gunning (2007). The chapter then examines Hamas' political conduct in the run-up to the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, using the incentive structure model to bring together ideological, historical, societal and current political factors to illustrate the make-up of a pro-responsive environment at the time. The chapter draws on literature as well as interviews, and discusses the application of Hamas-internal consultative decision making and opinion assessment processes at the national level. The description and analysis of Hamas' pre-2006 election conduct draws substantially on interviews, conducted in 2008 and 2009 with Hamas West Bank-based representatives who were involved in the elections, either as candidates, campaigners, or managers. The findings provide new information on Hamas' West Bank conduct which demonstrates the use of responsiveness as a critical and guiding principle during this period. Finally, the question of responsiveness in Hamas' post-election governing practice during the short period of its national governance is discussed with reference to variables that influenced the incentive structure for responsiveness pre- and post-elections.

Internal practices of consultation and their manifestation in decision making

The first detailed external study of Hamas' practice of internal consultation on questions of strategic importance to the movement was presented in Mishal and Sela's study *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (2000). Using internal Hamas documents captured by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) during the 1990s, the authors described a process of movement-internal consultation that was both in-depth and wide-ranging, providing Hamas' internal constituencies with opportunities to contribute to the movement's decision-making processes. The documents uncovered by Mishal and Sela also indicated the movement's interest in public

opinion assessment over and above its own constituencies. An internal Hamas consultation document on the question of participation in the 1996 parliamentary elections gave insight into the pragmatic approach and comprehensive nature of internal consultations. In the document, those consulted were asked explicitly to consider 'the people's expectations and wishes' and 'the proportion of popular support for any alternative that the movement might choose' (consultation document quoted in Mishal and Sela 2006:129).

Jeroen Gunning's subsequent in-depth study *Hamas in Politics* (2007) provided further insight into the evolution and theoretical foundations of Hamas' political thought and practice. Gunning's study was particularly influential for this research as it provided analysis of the philosophical, religious and practical bases that underpin the role of consultation and responsiveness in Hamas' decision making processes. Gunning's analysis, based on extensive interviews with Hamas leadership and cadres, presented Hamas cadres' own interpretations of the political and religious theory that influenced them, and as such contributed to a better understanding of the theoretical foundations of the movement's approaches to decision making. Gunning's analysis of the ideological foundations underpinning Hamas' conduct in relation to responsive decision making concurred with this study's findings of Hamas' strategic prioritization of responsiveness in its 2006 election campaign.

Gunning's study outlined some of the fundamental movement-internal positions that are key to understanding the centrality of consultation in Hamas' internal decision making and in its vision of an Islamic state, including the movement's conception of political representation. Political leaders were seen to derive their legitimacy from representation of the community and the collective will (Gunning 2007:102), rather than from religious knowledge or divine delegation. The latter played a role, but in specific areas, and with distinct roles. In principle, representation was achieved through general and regular elections. Hamas leader Isma'il Abu Shannab, assassinated by the IDF in 2003 elaborated on conception:

> In the Islamic system, the Head of State [*al-khalifah*] represents the nation, not God. The community does not choose al-khalifah except to be their representative [*na'ib*]; so he does not derive his authority except from representing the community which has […] the right to watch him and forbid him from getting beyond the borders of his brief (Abu Shannab, interviewed in 1998 by Gunning 2007:67).

It is this understanding of representation which formed the basis of Hamas' practice of consultation and consultative decision making. Because leaders were seen as representing the public, they were under obligation to reflect the outcomes of consultative processes in their decision making, taking place within the general framework of shari'a law. As a consequence, the opinion of the many was seen as more authoritative than the opinion of individual leaders (Gunning 2007:100) whose contrary opinions could be overruled by the outcome of consultation in all those areas *not* specifically regulated by shari'a law.[1] Senior Hamas leader Isma'il Abu Shannab explained: 'The group decision is better than the individual decision, even if the individual is right' (Abu Shanab, interviewed by Gunning 2007:101). As a result, in those areas of life not specifically regulated by shari'a law, consultation and responsiveness to consultation were seen as integral to the decision making process, and constituted the bases of acceptable leadership conduct. As such, the requirement for consultation was an explicit and intrinsic part of Hamas' political thought underpinning accepted and expected practice. Leadership compliance with the requirement for consultation provided and strengthened the mandate for decision

making. Furthermore, the practice created an additional benefit for the movement: 'Consultation also serves the very pragmatic purpose of maintaining unity in an increasingly heterogeneous organization, and augmenting the loyalty among ordinary members to the ultimate compromise' (Gunning 2007:121).

Movement cohesion and leadership legitimacy constituted incentives for responsive decision-making practice. Because political authority was based on internal elections, leaders were able to directly experience the consequences of neglected responsiveness. However, in the reality of political decision making, the practice, and indeed the institutionalization of a consultative process, was affected by limitations of practicality and security. The time-consuming system lent itself more to use on decisions of a strategic, non-emergency nature, such as the consideration of election participation, negotiations and even long-term ceasefires, which normally allowed the movement to take the time necessary for the process to run its course (Abdel Raziq 2008). Consultation processes faced specific obstacles under conditions that required secrecy, affecting both the ability to consult widely and oversight of the process by stakeholders who were unable to verify that their opinions had been accurately reflected in the final decision (Gunning 2007:133ff.). However, at least in theory, the representative nature of leadership by design required their prioritization of responsiveness in decision making. This, Gunning suggested, created the basis for the legitimacy, the mandate and the enforceability of internally made decisions (Gunning 2007:101–4). The movement's commitment to a process that was both cumbersome and created real risks for those involved, along with the investment of time, resources, effort and expertise in the development of mechanisms for assessment, collation and translation of constituent opinion into policy, attested to the importance that was accorded to responsiveness within Hamas' thought and practice.

The role of the Shura *Council*

According to Gunning's analysis of Hamas' vision of an Islamic state and in its own internal practice, *Shura* ('Consultative') Councils[2] were central in facilitating leaders' obligation to consult. *Shura* Councils were made up of elected members whose role it was to elect the movement's leadership and provide advice to leaders on the basis of assessment of *Shura* council members' deliberation. In turn, these deliberations were based on wider consultations with the supporter base. Wider consultations included, but were not exclusively based on, the consideration of learned opinion of religious scholars, whose opinion could be considered more authoritative on certain subjects (Gunning 2007:101). In an Islamic state as envisaged by Hamas, the *Shura* Council would take the role of an elected parliament, subject to checks and balances, including regular elections. It would be subject to accountability and judicial review of its members (Gunning 2007:58). Membership in Hamas' *Shura* Councils was not made public due to security concerns.[3] The councils functioned as advisory bodies to the leadership and reflected the diversity of opinion across Hamas' constituencies and beyond. Gunning described the role of regional *Shura* Councils which represented the geographic areas and elected the National *Shura* Council with responsibility to elect the Political Bureau (Gunning 2007:99). As such, *Shura* council members derived authority from elections and 'represent (both symbolically and physically) the different regions and interest groups within Hamas, from affiliated charities and elected officials to the Qassam Brigades' (Gunning 2007:101).

Diversity – within the confines of an acceptance of shari'a prescribed boundaries – was an important aspect of Council deliberations. The ability of Hamas' consultative system to capture the movement's internal diversity was supported in interview with Hamas leader Omar Abdel

Raziq who noted:

> We have […] a mechanism to take decisions, taking as many [views] as we can from diversified opinions, not [only] geographically, but [from] different professionals. We also differ politically, [but] ideology is different from politics. As long as it is acceptable ideologically, we [can] differ politically. So we [consider] many political opinions before we take a decision. That's not to say that we are taking the opinion of the whole public into account. No, we cannot. We are not able to do that now. I don't know if in Gaza they look for that, now that they are able to do this (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Referring to the make-up of modern party structures that represent supporter opinion through representatives within the party hierarchy, Abdel Raziq explained:

> We have something similar to [a party structure] without the definition of such bodies, because [the] security situation […] prevents you from defining such bodies and making public appearances. But we know for example [that] we have such committees in the engineering profession, working on the same ideology, the same political stance. Especially when the elections are held among engineers […] we have our individuals and groups there; and [among] doctors, lawyers, the professional unions. We also have representatives at the geographical level. So [rather than] the *Shura* [being] a council of 20, 25, 30 people saying or giving their opinion on issues – because we have not been able to do that – we […] probably take the opinion of 400, rather than 40, on the West Bank level (Abdel Raziq 2008).

A number of studies have documented Hamas' internal consultation processes, a 'system of consultation and opinion sharing based on committees that represent a spectrum of figures and groups' and had the ability to create 'a broad basis for consensus and [which] has strengthened internal unity. This system also minimized the potential for deadlocked disagreements and conflicts of interest' (Mishal and Sela 2006:xxv). The disadvantages of the system, as noted by Mishal and Sela, were that:

> the existence of a decentralised, splintered, and slow-moving organisational framework also creates high costs. Hamas as a ruling party might face difficulties reconciling its voluntary, network-based decision-making process with the governmental structure, especially in regard to key domestic, regional, and international issues (Mishal and Sela 2006:xxv).

Mishal and Sela (2006) describe the elevated position of the *Shura* Council. According to Hamas' Damascus-based political bureau chief Khalid Mish'al, policies were 'made from below' through a hierarchy of committees (Mish'al, quoted in Gunning 2007:100). Although authority was formally based on elections, it was circumscribed by the *Shura* Council's decisions as the higher authority. The assassinated senior Hamas leader Al-Rantisi explained: 'If the *Shura* Council says that Hamas should do something, then we, as leaders here, and Khalid Mish'al [abroad] will say what the *Shura* [Council] said […]. So the last word will be for the *Shura* [Council], not for Khalid Mish'al or Shaykh Ahmad Yassin' (Al-Rantisi, quoted in Gunning 2007:100).

While not all consultations involved assessment of the opinions of Hamas' constituents, Gunning's (2007:101) research found that decisions were considered more authoritative if wider consultation had taken place. Wider consultations were conducted specifically on issues of strategic and long-term policy importance, such as the question of participation in elections, the extension of ceasefires with Israel (Gunning 2007:156), participation in the Palestinian Authority (Mishal and Sela 2006:xxv) or consultations on the extension of the 2008 ceasefire (Anon 2009e). According to Khalid Mish'al, the more important and consequential a decision, the greater the need for as wide consultation as possible, 'so that we undertake proper decisions that are as close to right as possible […] and that express the opinion of the base in Hamas' (Mish'al, quoted in Gunning 2007:121). Referring to the consultation process that led to the movement's participation in the 2006 elections, Mish'al explained:

> Our decision was the product of intensive discussion and study by the movement and its institutions, which took more than four months to conclude. It was a calculated decision taken by a clear majority with the movement's institutions rather than an impulsive or individualistic decision (Mish'al, interviewed by Rabbani 2008b:69).

From internal consultation to responding to general public opinion

The Hamas model of authority and mandate as 'delegated capital' based on elections and the collective nature of decision making (Gunning 2007:102ff.) were replicated at other levels of Hamas' political and social organization. Some of Hamas' internal consultation processes, even prior to its participation in national elections, appeared to be designed to assess public preferences over and beyond movement-internal opinion. However, the question of representation of the public at large became acute only when Hamas decided to compete in the 2006 PLC elections. The prospect of victory in these elections created – at least in theory – an obligation of responsiveness to a broader constituency. An electoral mandate from the public at large required extension of Hamas' internal practices of consultation, as long as the mandate could be exercised within the interpretive authority of a worldly political authority and did not directly contradict Islamic rules. Much has been written about the interpretative authority of political leadership. Hamas leader Omar Abdel Raziq interpreted the question of a contradiction between Hamas' religious ideology and public opinion in an interview with the author as follows:

> I believe the movement is flexible enough to change position, unless it is in opposition to the Koran, the solid Islamic position. For example, suppose that all the public is against polygamy. Seventy percent [are] against and want some resolution in the PLC that prevents it. We are not going to accept that, because it's a solid issue, not a debated issue in the Islamic teachings. [It is] very clear, up to four [wives] are allowed, that's it. But if, for example, our position is that there should not be any limit on marriage age, for females or males, and the public started talking about the negative aspects of especially females getting married early, losing education […] and there is a majority that says [they] prefer limiting or putting a minimum age on female marriage, I believe we have enough flexibility to change our position into accepting a limit, a minimum [age] (Abdel Raziq 2008).

The suggestion of an obligation for consultation and responsiveness in decision making beyond

Hamas' internal practice was supported by Gunning's findings regarding the movement's understanding of the role of decision making in an Islamic state. In an interview with Gunning, Hamas leaders expressed the view that the need for consultation is a general obligation, applicable to the wider public as well as to internal constituency – within the confines of shari'a law. Indeed, consultation was considered the appropriate tool in the building of an Islamic state which, according to Gunning, was viewed by Hamas' leaders as emerging 'out of a long process of preparation and consultation involving the entire citizenry' (Gunning 2007:90). Moreover, consultative practice was held to be one of the conditions of legitimate authority, central to the idea of an Islamic state, to the extent that Hamas 'often calls its version of an Islamic state a "*Shura* democracy"' (Abu Shannab, interviewed in Gunning 2007:59). Underlying this conviction was the view that the common people are imbued with a *right*, rather than a *gift*, to be represented.[4] The legislative process was seen to be the domain of representatives, as opposed to religious experts (Gunning 2007:69).[5] Decision making in an Islamic state was modelled 'on the jurisprudential principle of *ijma* (consensus) and the Prophet's promise that "my community shall never agree on an error"' (Gunning 2007:81). According to Klein, this interpretation found expression in the stance taken by Hamas on issues that enjoyed majority public support, even when opposed by the movement's internal views:

> The voice of the masses, in [Hamas'] view is the expression of God's will. Therefore, Hamas accepted the authority of the Palestinian Authority when it was founded in 1994, even though, in Hamas' view it was born of the sin of the Oslo Accords. Hamas submitted to the Palestinian Authority because of the public's support of the latter and in obedience to its taboo against civil war (Klein 2007:444).

However, the masses, seen as one of the two sources of authority, were not considered infallible, and could be subject to manipulation, ignorance or arrogance (Gunning 2007:74). The dual contract of divine and representative authority was therefore understood to guard against these dangers. Overall, however, the elevated role accorded to the public in Hamas' political thought was seen to set Hamas apart from other interpretations of the role of the public in the Islamic state, some of which accord religious authority priority over representative authority (Gunning 2007:81).

For the period under consideration here, how and to what extent Hamas as government might have been able to translate its political thought on responsive decision making into policy and practice cannot be assessed.[6] A later section and the postscript make a number of limited observations on Hamas' conduct *vis-à-vis* consultative decision making in governance. As a starting point for future analysis, this study can offer some insight into Hamas' views regarding responsiveness to wider public opinion as they were expressed at a time when the movement first considered a formal representative role through its participation in national parliamentary elections.

Both willingness and ability to consider broader public opinion are examined, asking: (a) Did Hamas' West Bank campaign display the intention to prioritize assessment of public opinion and to respond to it in its pre-election conduct?, and (b) Did the movement have the tools and mechanism to assess overall public opinion and respond to it?

Political will and suitable methods

As elections are expected to encourage responsive conduct among contestants, Hamas' pre-election conduct offered an opportunity to study the movement's conduct as would-be representative of the wider Palestinian public,[7] in an environment in which both the electoral imperative and the movement-internal prioritization of consultative decision making were presenting strong incentives for responsiveness.

Over the preceding years, Hamas had become increasingly successful in addressing audiences beyond its core supporter group. A West Bank Hamas insider explained: 'Hamas' audience is not always Hamas supporters. It's the general public. Not only Hamas supporters come to the mosque on Friday. Everybody does, but they [Hamas] have the podium, they have the microphones, they influence people' (Anon 2009e). In Hamas' interactions with the public at large, mosques fulfilled a dual function: on the one hand, they were places where Hamas could exert influence by communicating its messages to a wider public in relative safety.[8] At the same time, mosques provided a place and forum in which two-way communication could take place which facilitated Hamas' assessment of public opinion beyond its own constituencies. Political scientist Ra'ed Na'erat explained:

> The mosque is not only the Friday prayer, that is […] one-sided, where [the] leaders of the prayer speaks; sometimes you have these circles, these meetings […] after the prayer, [where] one person starts to explain something about the general situation and gets questions and interactions. Not necessarily all the people in the mosque are supporters of Hamas, although probably a considerable number are, but they are [also] the general public and [Hamas] gets some feedback and interaction (Na'erat 2008).

Hroub commented on the broadening of Hamas' self-perception as a national movement, noting a transition towards viewing the wider Palestinian community as the movement's potential constituency:

> Hamas' political importance stems from the public support it has amassed in excess of its potential membership base and outside its institutional structure. Its grassroots support goes beyond the deeply religious or those who subscribe to its doctrinal position and ideology. [Hamas] 'turned into a large movement with multiple roles, and it relies on the support and sympathy of the average Palestinian' (former head of Israeli secret police, Yaacov Biri, quoted in Hroub 2000:2).

The movement's interest in assessing wider public opinion and developing mechanisms for doing so were reflective of this transition. In its consultations on the question of participation in the 1996 elections, a letter to those consulted specified: 'We must also consider the people's expectations and wishes, the economic and security pressures [they suffer], and the assumption that they would support the [peaceful] solution once some gains in these areas had been achieved' (Mishal and Sela 2006:129). The persons consulted were asked to specifically consider 'the proportion of popular support for any alternative that the movement might choose' (Mishal and Sela 2006:129).

Abdel Raziq explained how members of *Shura* councils and other consultative bodies were explicitly asked to provide an objective assessment of public opinion as found within their environment, rather than express their own opinion:

> We always ask them about (dissent). We usually want true reflection. Whether we declare that or not, this is not the purpose. It is not the purpose to say 'Hey we have 60 or 70 percent of the public'. The purpose is usually, […] 'What is the position on this issue that will be most acceptable to the public?' So, those representatives […] who are asked for opinion are supposed to reflect not their own personal opinion, [but the opinions of] their region, surroundings or professions, and people in their areas [about] what they are feeling (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Other interviews with persons close to Hamas confirmed this approach: not only were those consulted (ostensibly members of the *Shura* Councils at various levels) asked to reflect the opinions of the wider community, but experts from a broad range of fields who were not members of Hamas but who may have sympathized with the movement's aims were included in consultations. One such expert confirmed the request for 'objective' assessment of wider public opinion: 'I think this is true and I personally was aware of this, and may have been involved to some extent. Hamas did not consult only with members, but with people, society, professors, and intellectuals, regardless of whether they were Hamas or not. [On this occasion], they consulted probably 1,000 people' (Anon 2009e).

The approach described above was consistent with the approach taken in the 1996 Hamas consultation document on participation in the 1996 PLC elections, during which members were asked to 'consult with knowledgeable people in your area' in order to 'reach a decision acceptable to the widest possible basis of our ranks' (Mishal and Sela 2006:123). Little information was available publicly on the detail of conducting these consultations prior to the 2006 elections. The 1996 consultation document specifically asked for 'elaborated rather than summarized opinion' to be returned within a defined time frame (Mishal and Sela 2006:123). However, the document did not reveal how these opinions were then collated and by whom. The anonymous non-Hamas expert interviewed by the author, who was consulted by Hamas in various consultation rounds, related: 'For example, someone will come to my place here and we chat and maybe I write a paper without any signature or anything […] on a specific question' (Anon 2009e).

The pre-2006 process of expanding these methods to enable assessment of general public opinion in preparation for Hamas' election campaign forced the movement to work more publicly than it had previously, exposing some of the technical and methodological details of the consultation processes described below. These consultation processes were complemented by assessment of public opinion through polls, although, as the interview respondent explained, '[the choice between polls and Hamas' consultation methods] is like choosing between an ostensibly scientific means of public opinion and a tried and trusted means of doing so. People will choose the often tried and proven and reliable means. Hamas would opt for the tried and reliable' (Anon 2009e). The commitment to a very time and resource-intensive consultation process illustrated the value that was accorded to responsive decision making. Abdel Raziq explained both value and implications of this cumbersome process:

> I don't think it's comprehensible to any regular manager. The decision that needs an hour to be taken takes a week. This is a big problem. [For urgent decisions] there is a mechanism for emergencies. That's why you have the top-level leadership. But for strategies, it's different to day-to-day management. [With] strategies, we take our time. And we allow the process to take its way (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Assessing public support

The ability to assess its own public support was important to Hamas for a number of reasons. Firstly, it supported the movement's claims to represent the public, and could be used to define the size of the representation sought – for example when negotiating its claim to future representation in the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Public support assessment could more generally be used to underline the movement's legitimacy and that of its policies. It also served to build confidence for mobilization and political action. Accurate assessment of public support became an essential requirement for Hamas in the context of the movement's considerations regarding participation in national elections. Indeed, it is suggested here that the ability to project public electoral support to a reasonably accurate level was determinative of the movement's decision to participate in the 2006 PLC elections. Hamas leaders were acutely aware of poll results on public support for their movement, though trust in poll data was conditional. The movement's ability to rely on its own alternative public opinion assessment methods minimized its reliance on poll results. Through its alternative means, leaders looked for indicators of trends, rather than specific levels of support (Abdel Raziq 2008). The consultation document on participation in the 1996 elections reproduced by Mishal and Sela cited the expected support for Hamas (estimated at one-third of the overall vote) as an important consideration in relation to the movement's aim to 'achieve a significant [political] presence, which would secure the movement's power and political weight' (Mishal and Sela 2006:129).

When considering participation in the 2006 elections, Abdel Raziq confirmed a similar rationale:

> We had our own analysis. We thought we would get 45–47 percent. We did not think we will cross the 50 percent level. But we thought with other factions, PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] and Mubadera, and other independents, even in Fatah, we can [be] a blocking front. The third was guaranteed, so they cannot force laws on us automatically, except with the agreement of Abu Mazen as President […]. We thought we can have a blocking minority, which means that we will not allow passing […] laws that makes resistance illegal or criminal. We will not allow passing any political agreement that will give up something in the Jerusalem issue, return of refugees and borders issue. That was the main [consideration] for us when we went into elections (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Asked whether Hamas would have participated if the anticipated support had been less than 30 per cent, Abdel Raziq conceded that 'we would probably not have run in the elections' (Abdel Raziq 2008). Hamas' rationale for election participation, premised on the need to secure, at the very minimum, a blocking minority, created a very strong incentive – indeed an imperative – for the movement to do well in elections. Developing reliable methods for assessment of public support was seen as integral to achieving this objective. Abdel Raziq suggested that the size of public attendance at meetings and gatherings constituted one such indicator of public support:

> We usually use other ways [than polls] to test popularity, especially within the Islamic movement. We use gatherings, public gatherings. For example, if we have a certain anniversary, such as the day of the martyrs or the day when the movement started or when [Ahmad] Yassin was killed or when Jamal Mansour in Nablus was killed […].

> We use these anniversaries to judge. For example, if you compare, the [size of the] campaign meetings for the Islamic student block with the Fatah block during the elections in An-Najjah or Birzeit University, you can usually tell popularity, that's as close as we can get to polling […]. There you can feel your weight. But not everyone who comes to such gatherings is Hamas and not everyone is a supporter, so you might have Fatah followers coming just to have a look. But we usually are able to gather a large group of people. That gives you an insight into what levels you are [at], not accurate, but the direction. For example, at one point we were able to gather 50,000 in Nablus. There [has never been a] time when the Palestinian Authority or Fatah was able to gather 50,000 [people]. We used to gather people in open areas, while Fatah used to gather people in closed halls, so this gives you some comparison. We usually compare to Fatah. When we were only in dispute with the occupation, not with Fatah, we were allowed to do our activities, [and the size of our support] was very clear (Abdel Raziq 2008).

The experience of public support assessment gained at a local level was used to develop mechanisms for assessment of support at a national level. Former Minister for Planning in the 2006 government and An-Najjah University lecturer Samir Abu 'Eisheh explained how the Islamic Block at An-Najjah had been able to accurately predict election outcomes prior to student council elections:

> They were [able to] announce, not to [the] public, but internally, [that] 'We […] expect to win 42 seats out of 80'. They were getting these [results], not from polls, but from their contacts. They do their homework and try to see: 'There are 12,000 people [at An-Najjah University], divided into segments, colleges, levels, and they have their own people in each year, in each faculty, each level. We have ten supporters here, seven there, [there are] independents [that] we have to work on'. Then they collect these figures and get [results] (Abu 'Eisheh 2009).

These methods depended on a degree of freedom and on the ability of informants to assess their surroundings objectively. Following a ban on Hamas political gatherings in the West Bank in 2007, the movement was no longer able to rely on public shows of support, and depended more on polls and other means to assess its strength. However, at the time of elections, Hamas appeared to have in place two important preconditions to facilitating responsiveness to public opinion: the political will to respond to public opinion, founded on the movement's understanding of a contractual relationship between elected leadership and the public, and methods to assess public opinion that had been successfully tested in internal consultations and in local-level elections. The 2006 elections provided the movement with its first opportunity to apply both political will and methods towards responding to public opinion at the national level, with the stakes for success set at securing the level of support necessary to maintain a blocking minority in the PLC. With this strong incentive structure in place, Hamas set about putting its experience of responsiveness to the test.

The integration of responsiveness in campaign and programme

Even within this high incentive environment, responsiveness to public opinion was not a

foregone conclusion in leadership behaviour. Responsiveness still required the explicit political will by leaders to dedicate time and resources towards the process of assessing public opinion and creating mechanisms to translate findings into responses. In theory, disincentives to responsiveness could have arisen from public priorities that clearly contradicted Hamas' ideological positions. Under the circumstances, Hamas might have felt compelled to preference the views of its core constituencies over public opinion. Hamas' leadership might also have been compelled to act on external pressures in order to ensure continued external funding. Had there been issues of public interest that directly contradicted shari'a law, leaders might have felt the need to prioritize religious verdict over public preferences.

However, within the context of the 2006 elections, Hamas' leadership dealt with such areas of tension by adopting pragmatic and flexible positions. According to the poll analysis of NEC director Jamil Rabah, the increasing religiosity within Palestinian society over the previous decade had brought the movement and the public closer in outlook (Rabah 2008). Where fundamental principles of shari'a law were concerned, there had been little dispute between society at large and Hamas' core beliefs. At the same time, in areas where society had taken more liberal views than Hamas, for example on issues related to a preferable solution to the conflict with Israel, Hamas had shown willingness to move in the direction of general public opinion.

Lastly, Hamas might have viewed the security risk inherent in large-scale public opinion assessment as prohibitive, and might have de-prioritized the assessment of public opinion in light of the safety of its members. The fact that the movement opted for broad-scale assessment may nevertheless have been influenced by the calculations that Hamas' anticipated substantial presence in the future PLC and even in government would provide its members with a level of protection under the law.

Having decided to prioritize responsiveness, the question remained: Would the movement's tried and trusted methods of consultation and responsiveness pass the test of accurately reflecting general public opinion? Would the decision-making process be able to respond to much wider and perhaps more diverse public opinion? Municipal and other associational elections had provided the movement with limited opportunity to test the transferability of the internal consultation mechanism to this enlarged political context.

Municipal election campaigns and municipal governance had provided opportunities to respond directly to local demands, providing practical solutions and demonstrating achievements which had enhanced the movement's reputation in local governance (Gunning 2007:153). However, national elections provided greater challenges, particularly in terms of the risks related to exposure of the movement's clandestine internal consultation processes. The movement's understanding of the electoral advantage that may be gained from capitalizing on responsiveness to public opinion was demonstrated in a number of ways in the 2005–6 pre-election period: first, in Hamas' explicit election promises regarding a participatory leadership style; secondly in the substance of its programme, choice of candidates, and campaign slogans which reflected public priorities; and thirdly in the methods used to ascertain public opinion, which also served to demonstrate the movement's commitment to taking public opinion seriously.

'Participation in decision making' as an election promise

The political will to implement a campaign that took responsiveness seriously was based on

Hamas' extensive internal experience in consultation as rooted in the movement's political thought. Hamas' election slogan of 'Partners in Blood, Partners in Decision Making' (*Daily Star* 2005), the promise in its election manifesto of 'sharing in the process of decision making' (cited in Tamimi 2007:279), and the plan to 'reinforce democracy and *Shura* in the various fields and achieve effective participation' (Tamimi 2007:280), articulated this commitment. These slogans also capitalized on widespread public disappointment with being left out of decision making processes by Fatah. The movement's strategic use of participatory and comprehensive public opinion assessment in preparation for and throughout its election campaign provided a stark contrast to Fatah's top-down approach in electioneering. Hamas' campaign promises of responsiveness and participation were based on the movement understanding the strategic electoral advantage of such an approach. Abdel Raziq explained: 'Any leadership has to go back to the public. One of the reasons [why] Fatah had that great dramatic loss was that they discarded [public opinion]; they did not take into account the public's feelings, public opinion. They continue to do this, unfortunately they are not learning' (Abdel Raziq 2008).

The promise of participatory decision making as a guiding principle of governance was supported both in the contents of the electoral programme and in the consultative methods used to ascertain priorities of public concern and desired candidate characteristics. Assessment of public priorities was implemented using a combination of methods developed by the movement, based on internal expertise in consultation, and the selective use of publicly available polling, and perhaps even commissioned polls (Kalman 2006).[9] Overall, a strong emphasis was placed on direct communication with the public. According to Mahmoud Musleh (2009), the advice from Hamas' campaign consultant was to save on expenses for posters and media, and instead concentrate on direct communication with the public: '[Our campaign] didn't have a lot of signs, no ads in the newspaper or other media. We focused on visiting and contacting people – all people'.[10] According to Musleh, the cornerstones of this direct communication strategy were the house-to-house visits conducted by Hamas' female campaign activists, and the neighbourhood 'festivals' and subsequent house visits conducted by Hamas' male campaign activists and candidates. As such, the focus of campaign activities was directed at the household and neighbourhood level. West Bank campaign manager Abdel Raziq explained: 'In 2006 we got to neighbourhoods, our unit was so small to the point where we had divided cities into neighbourhoods, and Nablus was divided probably into ten neighbourhoods' (Abdel Raziq 2008).[11]

Public opinion assessment through house-to-house visits

As the centrepiece of Hamas' campaign in the West Bank, house-to-house visits, conducted by female campaigners in their respective neighbourhoods, constituted the perhaps most human resource-intensive aspect of the campaign. The visits aimed to cover as close to 100 per cent of households as possible in each neighbourhood (Abdel Raziq 2008), and visits by volunteers were made once before and once after the publication of Hamas' election programme (Musleh 2009). During pre-programme visits, householders were asked for their suggestions and priorities for Hamas' electoral platform. According to PLC member Musleh (2009), the activists were generally received well and visits could at times last for an hour or more; only a limited number of households refused the volunteers entry outright. This method provided the party with a wealth of information about public preferences, which were collated and which were used in the design of the election programme: 'There were many […] comments and notes from the public,

suggestions and ideas, which we have included in our election agenda and included in our national (government) programme' (Musleh 2009).

The visits also served to provide the movement with the opportunity to assess the size of potential support on a household-by-household basis: 'As a result of these visits, we thought our success will be big' (Musleh 2009). Household visits also offered an opportunity to visibly demonstrate the movement's seriousness about public opinion assessment. Used as a mobilizational tool, they facilitated discussion of the election programme, and helped raise awareness of its contents. The choice of women as campaigners ensured that the movement could directly address female voters and assess their priorities, a task that could not have been fulfilled by male activists. Fatah candidate Qaddura Faris described another dimension to the female-led house-to-house campaign when pointing out:

> They went to the homes and told them the message that God will ask you about your vote. [Female householders] became afraid, [Hamas campaign workers] created an impression that if you vote for the seculars, God will punish you. 'You should vote for the Muslims. You will be happy and receive a gift from God one day'. This […] worked very well with the simple woman. They are not educated enough (Faris 2010).

The author was unable to confirm the fear-campaign tactics suggested by Faris, or whether these were isolated incidents or part of a strategy. However, the Hamas approach highlights the attention paid by Hamas to specific voters which, as part of a strategic, well-planned and comprehensive communication strategy provided electoral advantage to Hamas.

Neighbourhood festivals

Parallel to house-to-house visits, Hamas in the West Bank increased exposure for its candidates by conducting public opinion assessment through locally organized neighbourhood festivals. *Change and Reform* candidates were divided into groups to attend festivals organised by volunteers in each neighbourhood. The volunteers were asked to invite as many people as possible from their respective neighbourhoods, regardless of their political background. Mahmoud Musleh recalled:

> All came, and most of the time we had very tough discussions. Some people said very bad things. Some people made false accusations against us. All this was taking place in the meetings. And the percentage of those attending was very high: not 50–60 percent, up to 80–90 percent, [and] sometimes 95 percent of people from the neighbourhood came. During the meetings, speeches were delivered [by] the candidates and after the meetings we sat with selected powerful people in their houses and asked them about their views, regardless of whether they supported us or were opposed to us. We spent four to five hours [after the festivals] moving from house to house, sitting with those people, listening to them, them listening to us, discussing issues with us and answering their questions (Musleh 2009).

Again, the size of gatherings served as an important indicator for the levels of support: 'We found that the difference is big. The percentage of people coming to us was much higher than the percentage of people going to any other party. This was a clear indication that the number of our

supporters was higher than that of others' (Musleh 2009). Abdel Raziq noted how the size of the public show of support created its own dynamic:

> Actually, it was one of the ways you tried to get the support of people, through these activities and through these well-organised [events]. The big crowd is usually effective in convincing others that 'these are the future', so you build [support], it's like […] snowballing (Abdel Raziq 2008).

As in the house-to-house visits, neighbourhood festivals facilitated assessment of public priorities as well as providing opportunities for publicity and discussion before and after the publication of the programme. Abdel Raziq explained:

> I remember in Salfeet district, [which has] about 60,000 inhabitants and 19 localities […]. We visited every locality to discuss the programme with supporters before we published it. In Palestine, there are many households where you find Hamas, Fatah and the left inside the same household, so you usually know what people think about in an open situation (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Once all neighbourhoods had been visited by the first group of candidates, a second round of neighbourhood festivals was held to introduce a new group of candidates in each neighbourhood, so that 'each neighbourhood got visited [by candidates] more than once' (Musleh 2009). As in the house-to-house visits, recommendations from the first round of festival activities were sent to the campaign office to be collated. Here campaign staff 'summarized it all and passed it immediately to the movement leaders so they studied it and worked within the boundaries of the positive suggestions, and if we had negative [comments], we [could] avoid and fix them' (Musleh 2009). PLC member Ayman Daraghmeh (*Change and Reform* 2006) confirmed the direct link between public opinion assessment and programme design:

> When the block was preparing its programme, you had to take some of the titles from the people. You have to listen to the people […]. We sent to this neighbourhood and that neighbourhood, Nablus district will provide its view, Jenin will provide its view and they evaluate it according to titles […] like education, medical services, water sector, electricity, police, relations between government and PLC (Daraghmeh 2008).

Mobilizing campaigners

A further focus of the West Bank election campaign was the mobilization of volunteers as communication and campaigning multipliers. This activity specifically targeted Hamas supporters working in organizations for youth, women, popular and mosque committees. Through these multipliers in public places, the campaign was able to survey public opinion and feed recommendations back to the campaign leadership. Perhaps even more importantly, the role of these multipliers was to increase public involvement in the campaign:

> All activists were asked to do this work. We were able to mobilise not thousands, but hundreds of thousands of people to work with us. At the same time we never ignored their ideas. We studied these opinions and views carefully and we took the positive [recommendations] and improved it to be part of our campaign programme […]. The

> opinions and views that we got before [the programme], which became part of the government programme, along with the opinions we got during the campaign and after the campaign, all this was included, so the public participated in decision-making and felt that they did (Musleh 2009).

Musleh believed that the public's satisfaction with the election outcome was a result of this participative process: 'People were very happy with what happened […] because the programme included their views and opinions, and that had a huge psychological impact on them. What won were our ideas, not our candidates' (Musleh 2009).

The mobilizational effort of Hamas' campaign organizers, and the design of the localized neighbourhood-level campaigns, paid off. The movement succeeded in activating a maximum number of members to contribute to the campaign, allowing it to reach people at a household level or, as elected PLC member Sheikh Mohammed Abu Ter described: 'They were like the cells of a beehive in each city […]. They worked so hard because, unlike Fatah, they weren't being paid. Our people weren't working for money; they were working because they believed in the cause, and it showed' (Abu Ter, quoted in Kalman 2006:n.p.). The mobilizational effort was clearly designed to gain public support through a programme that was recognized as corresponding to public preferences, rather than seeking to promote Hamas' direct membership overall, while keeping the organizational management limited to a smaller number of persons.

> The people who organize our movement are a small number. Fatah wants to bring everyone to be one of their organisation. We are not like that. We prefer to have only five or six people in each of the villages – but if they are good people, they can change all of the village. The whole village becomes our supporters without becoming members of Hamas (PLC member Mahmoud Ramahi, quoted in Kalman 2006:n.p.).

That Hamas had the potential to gain the support of traditional Fatah and other non-aligned voters became apparent to the movement in the last round of municipal elections, held in 2005. While the percentage of voters that had identified as Hamas supporters was 42 per cent, Hamas actually received the votes of 59 per cent of the votes in the four cities included in the last round, with a quarter of the votes received from voters outside Hamas' direct supporter group (PSR 2005b).

Responsiveness in candidate selection

Public opinion was also prioritized in Hamas' candidate selection, drawing on both polls and internal consultation to determine candidates. Recognition of the importance of public opinion in candidate selection was rooted in the understanding that leadership authority is based on a contractual relationship linking decision making to consultation, within the general confines of shari'a law. This contractual basis of authority was reflected in the method of leadership selection, in which, as Gunning suggested, 'Hamas […] appears to believe it more important that representatives have the trust of their constituency than that they are judged acceptable by a committee of religious scholars' (Gunning 2007:82).[12] According to Hamad, the attitude had been: 'Don't say: this man is not an Islamist and he is not an expert, so we should exclude him; no, I don't think so. It is according to the election of the people' (Hamad, interviewed by Gunning 2007:82).

This understanding may explain the prioritization of public opinion over religious expertise that appeared to have guided Hamas' candidate selection, although this is not to say that religiosity was neglected. Rather, a candidate's formal status as religious scholar or religious leader was deprioritized as against other criteria. Accordingly, the process of candidate selection used several different opinion assessment methods to determine the characteristics that candidates should possess in order to be seen as acceptable by the public. According to Omar Abdel Raziq, as a first step, publicly available opinion poll results on desired candidate characteristics were used:

> [In opinion polls] we were looking for the characteristics in the person [which] the voter is looking for, [such as] the age groups, the education levels etc. So we knew the trends, […] and we worked on these trends. We did not take the end results, [such as] that we have 19 percent or 20 percent [of public support]. We found that people wanted a religious candidate, they wanted an educated candidate, they wanted some specialties like economics and law and political science and medicine, things like that. We knew what the voters wanted […] from polling that we did not do [ourselves]. They were carried out by Shikaki and others. We knew they wanted someone who is not involved in the corruption that is widespread. So we used these factors and we presented the public with such candidates, as close as we could, and we got results (Abdel Raziq 2008).

A number of polling institutes had assessed public opinion on preferred candidate characteristics, and these results were publicly available. Their outcomes reflected closely the characteristics of Hamas' candidates. In a Birzeit University poll (BZU 2005) honesty stood out as the most important criterion for voters (45 per cent), followed by community service history (16.5 per cent), religiosity (13.7 per cent) and education (6.8 per cent). An An-Najjah University poll (COPSS 2005) showed that being uncorrupted was viewed as the most important quality of candidates, followed by education, religiosity and patriotic history. The prioritization of the honesty/incorruptibility quality was mirrored in poll data about the issues that determined voters' list choices, first among them was the party's ability to fight corruption (30.4 per cent as per PSR (2005c)).

Responding to these priorities, Hamas created a pool of potential candidates, guided by the principle that candidates should be untainted by corruption, be well educated and have a background of religiosity, community involvement or struggle. These criteria reflected the characteristics that the public already associated with Hamas as an organization, seen to have a 'reputation of incorruptibility, accountability and efficiency' (Gunning 2007:153). Having determined these criteria, the movement could leave the final choices of candidates to the movement's grassroots consultative bodies, confident that the public's criteria would naturally be present in the pool of potential candidates. To do so, Hamas' internal selection of candidates was conducted through a process of clandestine quasi-primaries, with varying levels of autonomy for candidate selection depending on the importance of considerations such as clan strength according to regions:[13] 'We had primaries but nobody knew we had primaries' (Abdel Raziq 2008). Kalman described a process that allowed for primaries-style participation from the grassroots up:

> So Hamas developed an extraordinary system of secret democracy, based on small

> cells of five or six people in each village who for security reasons could not be in contact with each other. They nominated a list from which the *Shura* Council and the 13-member Hamas High Election Committee – another secret body – chose the actual candidates (Kalman 2006:n.p.).

According to Ghazi Hamad (quoted in Silverman 2006c:n.p.), editor-in-chief of *Al-Risalah* newspaper run by Hamas, members voted for nominees in each local *Shura* Council according to a detailed ranking system including criteria such as education and IT skills, and were later approved as candidates by the senior '*Shura* Council'. These methods of candidate selection also served as a movement-internal mobilizational tool, binding grassroots to their candidates and motivating them to work for their campaign by increasing the sense of ownership of the process in supporters. Abdel Raziq explained this rationale further: 'We gave them the feeling that they are choosing their [own] candidates. That was one of the mechanisms we used to get the support of these people to volunteer and work hard for the candidate they chose. In Nablus, for example, the five candidates were chosen by the supporters' (Abdel Raziq 2008).

The process of using internal constituency consultation and 'primaries', and building on poll-confirmed public preferences for specific candidate selection criteria ensured that Hamas' candidates would appeal to the wider public. The prioritization of candidates based on specific criteria and genuine popularity, rather than internal power considerations, was also reflected in the choice of Prime Minister, preferencing the popular Haniyeh over the more powerful Az-Zahhar. Gunning (2007:108ff.) noted that (in the case of the municipality elections) although the process of candidate selection typically relied upon a mixture of both supporter choice and leadership endorsement, nepotistic ascension to power positions or candidature was frowned upon and appeared negligible in extent.

The outcome of the candidate selection process, driven by this combination of selection criteria and election, resulted in candidate choices that were generally seen as enjoying the support of Hamas' grassroots and beyond. The process contrasted favourably with the internal wrangling, conflict and fragmentation preceding Fatah's selection process, the process itself being marked by manipulation, violent protest and chaos in Fatah's attempts at holding internal primaries (Yaghi and Fishman 2005:n.p.). A strategy that focused on general qualities and the movement's overall aims and credibility, rather than on individual candidates, also exemplified Hamas' campaign message of *Change and Reform*.

The focus on candidates' characteristics over individual candidates would explain the low name recognition commented on by Khalil Shikaki who explained: 'Name recognition [of candidates] was negligible. For the most part the names didn't really matter. People had confidence in Hamas. Hamas supporters tended to really vote for Hamas, regardless of individuals. [This was the] most important element' (Shikaki 2008). The account of Mahmoud Musleh's candidacy suggests his selection along similar lines:

> I was one of the candidates who didn't know that I was nominated until a few days before the elections. We didn't campaign for specific people, [it was] a general campaign. I was a district candidate. When they selected me, it was based on the knowledge I had my own support from people […]. In general, the campaign was comprehensive, the same campaign in [each] region. It was not at all a personal campaign for me, as an individual, and I don't claim that I won because of my

> supporters. My supporters and the movement supporters together were the reason for my election (Musleh 2009).

Individual standing could nevertheless enter into selection consideration since some of the qualities most desired by the public were their role in service to community and struggle history, qualities that often identified well-known public figures. In order to widen its appeal and to enlist the optimum number of candidates, Hamas also recruited non-members as its candidates, a practice it had applied successfully in municipal elections. Gunning (2007:150) pointed out that Hamas, in contrast to Fatah, had to actively recruit for candidates in order to be able to compete nationwide. Non-Hamas candidates were either included on the *Change and Reform* list, or were able to run as independents with the support from Hamas voters, and at times in exchange for support of Hamas' candidates in other regions. Ali Jarbawi, a prominent and outspoken independent political scientist from Jenin, reported being invited by Hamas to be on the *Change and Reform* list: 'Hamas came to me and asked me to run with them because they had an internal poll which asked about different names [of candidates] and I was second on their list' (Jarbawi 2008). Jarbawi declined the invitation.

Overall, in stark contrast to Fatah's pre-election conduct, Hamas' candidate selection was characterized by a disciplined and consensus-driven approach which aimed to maximise electoral prospects. Determining the number of candidates that Hamas would field in each location not only depended on availability of candidates, but also on Hamas' assessment of its own support in each district (Gunning 2007:154). Fatah's candidates by far outnumbered available seats because candidates who had been excluded from the official list nevertheless entered as independents and split the Fatah vote. In contrast, Hamas' diligent assessment of public support in each area provided it with the necessary information to field the appropriate number of candidates, 'even if this meant contesting less seats than those available for election' (Gunning 2007:154). Here again, Hamas' reliance on support assessment, coupled with the discipline to follow up with strategic, rather than opportunistic choices, enabled the movement to make the most of the existing electoral system, providing the movement with a critical electoral advantage.

Hamas' methods of candidate selection allowed the movement to present the public with a choice of candidates whose credentials closely reflected publicly desired candidate qualities. Even though other factors, specifically the splitting of Fatah's vote, were major and perhaps determinative contributors to Hamas' election victory, the post-election public appeared satisfied with the new Legislative Council. JMCC's post-election poll (JMCC 2006) showed that a majority of respondents (68 per cent) felt that the elected PLC members represented their viewpoint (as against 29.6 per cent seeing elected members as non-representative of their views), while 77.9 per cent of respondents were either very optimistic or somewhat optimistic about the Council's future performance. This represented a considerably larger percentage than those who actually voted for Hamas candidates (44 per cent, as against 41 per cent for Fatah members in the proportional nationwide party list vote (Central Elections Commission – Palestine 2006a)).[14] This suggested a high level of confidence in the elected legislators, regardless of the respondents' personal choice. The poll data supported the suggestion that preferred candidate characteristics were closely matched by the elected PLC members and their political programmes. Among Fatah's candidates, even life-long prominent Fatah members reported having difficulty finding a name on the Fatah list for which they could have voted, while finding plenty of good choices on Hamas' lists (Anon 2010d).

Responsiveness in election programme

Unsurprisingly, Hamas' election programme and campaign slogans similarly mirrored public priorities and concerns. During the year prior to elections, public priorities as reflected in polls had changed gradually. Pessimism regarding chances for positive developments in the peace process was on the rise. Shamir and Shikaki (2010:143) specifically point to a public that increasingly expected violence, became more despairing regarding a possible resumption of peace negotiations and had decreasing expectations that a political settlement could be reached. At the same time, domestic concerns about corruption and the absence of law and order came to dominate the agenda of public concerns (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:143). Corruption came to be regarded as among the top two concerns, next to poverty and unemployment (PSR 2005c), and the ability to fight corruption became a prime determinant of voters' choice (BZU 2005; PSR 2005c). Hamas responded to these priorities by capitalizing on domestic policy in its election messages while distinguishing itself from Fatah by maintaining its support for Palestinians' right to resistance. The movement's campaign slogan 'One Hand Builds and One Hand Resists' reflected this dual approach of capitalizing on frustration with the peace process while prioritizing domestic action. The movement's communication avoided challenging positions that remained popular with public opinion, such as the public's in-principle support for a negotiated settlement. Hamas did not seek a mandate to reverse the peace process, despite its previous positions on the issue. As Shamir and Shikaki point out, it made no mention of its refusal to accept the two-state solution, to accept existing agreements with Israel, or to recognize the state of Israel in a permanent peace agreement (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:142–3). Instead, Hamas focused on resistance as an inalienable right, a position widely accepted by Palestinians, and capitalized on the perception of Fatah as corrupt and untrustworthy, suggesting Fatah's betrayal of the public's trust through corrupt practices and a willingness to betray Palestinian basic rights in negotiations with Israel. Shamir and Shikaki summarized the effect of shifting public opinion aptly:

> The emergence of corruption as the most important issue served Hamas' interests, as the public perceived the Islamist movement as clean and truthful. Moreover, public feelings of the loss of security and safety hurt Fatah's popularity, since most people viewed Fatah as responsible for the lawlessness. Similarly the decline in importance of the peace process caused a great deal of damage to Fatah, since it was this movement that presented itself to the public as the owner of the peace process and the two-state solution (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:143).

Hamas' campaign focus was the fight against corruption. According to Shamir and Shikaki, 'PSR polls during the preceding five years showed that an average of approximately 80 per cent of the public believed that the PA was corrupt. Hamas' success in elevating the status of corruption to a top priority constituted a magnificent achievement, ensuring its victory in the elections' (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:145). Hamas' Damascus-based politburo chief Khalid Mish'al made this link between public opinion and the movement's motivation to participate in elections with an anti-corruption agenda explicit:

> Corruption had become a real burden on the people, so reform and changing this terrible reality had become a popular Palestinian demand that Hamas could not afford to ignore. Our participation was by popular demand, because the people had no

> confidence that those responsible for the corruption were capable of fighting it. The people demanded that just as we had assumed our responsibility to resist the occupation with them, so should we bear our responsibility in participating in the administration of our internal affairs and in implementing reform. This was an essential motivation for us (Mish'al, interviewed by Rabbani 2008b:68).

Farhad Assad, who took over as West Bank campaign manager for Hamas, reported: 'The polls all said the people's first concern was about corruption, and then the security situation' (Assad, quoted by Kalman 2006:n.p.). According to Kalman (2006:n.p.), Assad used polls to ascertain whether persons who did not traditionally support Hamas would respond to a message emphasizing an end to corruption, a clean and honest government and a strong stand against the Israeli occupation. Journalist Daoud Kuttab (2006) noted that most of the Hamas television spots concentrated on corruption in appointments to government positions.[15] The movement's record of clean and non-corrupt practice in the administration of its large charitable networks and its initial successes in municipal governance allowed Hamas to present itself as a believable and proven alternative to Fatah. The movement did so not only by criticizing the existing practices, but by providing positive messages of desirable public conduct, including slogans such as 'The best to hire is the one who is strong and honest'[16]and focusing on its traditional commitment to social justice and commitment to supporting the poor – a win–win position in a society where poverty and unemployment are high. As such, by deemphasizing topics that Hamas knew were not supported by public opinion and by capitalizing on topics that were prioritized, Hamas was able to attract voters from beyond its core constituency of more conservative and pious voters. According to Shamir and Shikaki (2010:146), of those describing themselves as only 'somewhat religious', 38 per cent voted for Hamas, and even of those describing themselves as 'not religious', 19 per cent supported the *Change and Reform* list.

As a result of this strategy, Hamas was able to present itself as the political actor best equipped to address the main concerns and priorities of the public, despite its inexperience in governance at the national level. Indeed, according to polls, Hamas was able to convince voters that the movement was 'more capable of leading the reform and state building process' (Shikaki 2006a:1), a topic which had come to dominate the list of public concerns in the absence of a viable peace process. Shamir and Shikaki concluded that the prioritization of corruption as the top concern of the public in the year before the election was determinative of Hamas' success (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:143).[17] Indeed, 71 per cent of those who identified corruption as their top priority concern voted for Hamas, whereas Fatah received only 19 per cent of their vote (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:143–4). A Birzeit University post-election poll presented the following reasons why voters gave their vote to Hamas candidates:

- Hamas is not corrupt and could bring about reform;
- its leadership is competent and honest;
- Hamas will bring about internal security and will improve living conditions;
- they have a programme based on equality and justice;
- punishing Fatah and its leadership (BZU 2006).

Hamas' election programme and conduct, prioritizing domestic over ideological concerns, allowed voters to elect the candidates and list those they considered best equipped to address their prime concerns. As a result of a process that put responsiveness to public opinion centre

stage, and by drawing on 'the most professional, disciplined and calculating electoral team in the occupied territories' (International Crisis Group 2006a:8) in the period between 2004 and 2006, Hamas developed into what Baumgarten described as 'a perfectly functioning election campaign machinery' that operated like 'seasoned professionals employing the latest campaigning techniques' (Baumgarten 2006a:168). These techniques also included, for example, SMS reminders to vote 'following the will of God', telephone campaigning, posters and media appearances and a uniform look (green caps) (Baumgarten 2006a:168; International Crisis Group 2006a:8). According to the USAID's political party assessment:

> Hamas now operates what amount to constituent service centres, names candidates for local and PLC office, makes substantive political statements, produces voter education materials, actively campaigns, runs what appear to be effective election day Get-Out-The-Vote operations, and engages actively in debates over election process and timing (USAID 2006:7).

However, apparently unaware of the extent to which Hamas' campaign was guided by responsiveness to the Palestinian public (rather than its ostensible foreign support), a senior official of the US-funded NDI who observed the electoral process concluded that 'Hamas' campaign is too good not to be the result of assistance received from the outside' (Silverman 2006a:n.p.).

The price of responsiveness

Hamas' extensive public opinion assessment, arguably the largest in the history of the movement, carried a high cost for Hamas, both in terms of resources and security risk, as it forced the movement to expose its generally clandestine consultation processes.[18] Many of the movement's volunteers and campaign organizers found themselves paying a high personal price for their exposure as Hamas supporters, as Abdel Raziq explained:

> The only time we tried to work openly was in 2006 and 2005 during the elections. And everybody who worked openly in the West Bank [is] in one of three positions now: either in Israeli prison or in Palestinian Authority prisons or they lost their jobs [and are] trying to make a living. That is our problem; our biggest problem is the security problem (Abdel Raziq 2008).

The restrictive measures imposed on Hamas after the dismissal of the 2007 unity government and the Hamas takeover of full authority in Gaza were specifically aimed at cutting Hamas off from access to the wider public, the movement's most powerful source of strength. The closure of Hamas-affiliated organizations and restrictions imposed on Hamas' public activities had a direct effect on Hamas' ability to assess public opinion (and, indeed, access the public). Asked about their effect, Abdel Raziq conceded:

> Here (in the West Bank) we cannot judge [public support post 2007], we don't know how to. We are not allowed to [have] any public gatherings, so we cannot judge whether we are still popular or not, but I believe we are because again, the main factor is that people usually are with the weaker (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Speaking about the restrictions imposed on Hamas specifically targeted at the movement's ability to communicate with the larger public, Abdel Raziq explained further:

> We cannot talk in public. Even I, as a PLC member, cannot hold a public meeting and talk about the political situation. The other day, a colleague of mine, Ayman [Daraghmeh] was talking on local radio about Cairo [reconciliation talks] and the political detainees in the West Bank. And before the show had ended the intelligence forces were surrounding the radio station and they wanted to kick him out of the building by force. Just for talking to the radio station. We cannot even have a gathering (Abdel Raziq 2008).

International Crisis Group had commented on the apparent intention of Fatah to target Hamas' ability to communicate with the wider public even prior to the 2006 elections: 'Hamas also was deprived of regular contact with the population through rallies, media appearances, and the like. It therefore became increasingly difficult for the Islamists to represent and respond to their constituents' concerns' (International Crisis Group 2006a:5). Restrictions on public appearances by Hamas leaders affected even occasions that had in the past been used to show cross-factional solidarity. Abdel Raziq recalled his release from prison, an occasion that in the past would have been attended by members of all factions, reflective of the high status of political prisoners in Palestinian society:

> We were not allowed to have the celebration, not allowed to use our flags in the building [where] we were receiving congratulations […]. The worst was, there was this order distributed to all the employees in the forces, the security, [and to] all the known figures in Fatah, not to come and congratulate me. This was known to everybody, so they didn't come. Some of the close friends and relatives came. Rather than [coming] to the public place, they came to my house. I am [giving] this as an example [of how] we are not allowed to get in touch with the public, so we actually don't know [about the current levels of support] (Abdel Raziq 2008).

Theoretically, these restrictive measures, and the resultant need for communication to take place in secrecy, could undermine the integrity of the internal consultation processes critical to Hamas' internal decision making. As Gunning pointed out, the clandestine nature of consultations created the danger of the consultative process being weakened by an inability of members to scrutinize it. However, he also noted the high level of trust expressed by members in the moral conduct of Hamas' leadership (Gunning 2007:138). The value of consultation depended on trust in the accurate reflection of views by those consulted. However, while such trust may have been maintained by Hamas followers participating in movement-internal consultation, the restrictions imposed on Hamas' communications with the public at large made the continuation of wider public opinion assessment virtually impossible.

Responsiveness beyond the election campaign

Having explored Hamas' pre-election conduct in light of the movement's commitment to consultation and responsiveness to internal decision making, and having suggested that Hamas' understanding of the contractual basis of authority supported the wider application of

consultation and responsive decision making at the national level, it remains to be asked whether as a government, the movement took steps to translate its declared participatory governance approach into actual policy and conduct.

In reviewing Hamas' governing practice in relation to responsiveness to public opinion, a clear distinction is apparent between the movement's intentions for participatory decision making and the eventual practise of those principles in the context of, (a) the incomplete, subsequently reversed transfer of power in the West Bank following international and Fatah boycott of the elected government and arrest of many of its elected representatives, and (b) Hamas' assumption of full governmental function following the 2007 ousting of Fatah's governance structures in the Gaza Strip.

The Hamas case study in its focus on the West Bank does not extend to a comprehensive review of Hamas' conduct as government in Gaza since 2007 – though a number of observations can be made. The approach developed here, which interprets leadership conduct in the context of an incentive structure for responsiveness, presents a useful model that can support future research into the reasons for, and consequences of, the levels of responsiveness displayed by Hamas in government.

As for the 17 months until Hamas' 2007 Gaza takeover, the limited opportunities to develop its own style of governance make a review of Hamas' governance style in relations to responsiveness less than meaningful and enabling a look at intentions only, rather than practice. The picture that emerged from interviews with West Bank elected members conveyed a sense that continuation of a responsive relationship between governing and governed was seen as a natural extension of the previously practised consultative approach used movement-internally, and as such was expected behaviour of representatives. The intentions expressed by interviewees do not indicate that responsiveness was formalized into specific governance policy, or a declared code of conduct, nor that the practice of consultation was formalized. Inquiry into any written proof or documentation of the formal institutionalization of the election promise of *participation in decision making* was met with the response that the movement had been prevented from opportunities to govern, even within the short period of time, less than three months, before the arrest of many of its representatives (Abu 'Eisheh 2009). At the ministerial level, a number of examples were cited as evidence of the continuity of a consultative approach to governance. Birzeit University professor Helga Baumgarten recalled attending a public consultation meeting organized by the new Minister of Finance Omar Abdel Raziq during his brief three-month period in office prior to his re-arrest by Israeli forces. Held at the Ramallah municipality, representatives from the Palestinian finance and economics sectors had been invited to attend. The meeting invited open discussion and suggestions by the sectors and was conducted in a manner described by Baumgarten as an example of grassroots-democracy (*Basisdemokratie*) in action, skilfully facilitated by the Minister himself (Baumgarten 2008). Planning Minister Samir Abu 'Eisheh concurred that no explicit policies had been developed to translate Hamas' participation promise into a practice:

> Participation is of high importance, and [after elections] we weren't doing it on a large scale, but on a limited scale, hoping that we will extend our invitations to so many others […]. The situation was very tense on the ground. For example, the cabinet [building] was set on fire two times by Fatah people. PLC offices all over the West Bank were set on fire, the main building of the PLC was also set on fire, and they were

> not even able to sit in offices. How can you think of large scale policies, of interacting with people in such cases, how can they [make] such policy? They cannot even think ahead of time, only [do] crisis management. You have to solve the current issues on the street, the attacks, the burning, […] the very strict [Israeli] policies regarding blockade, siege […]. But to have a stated policy, [there was] no time and the situation was not allowing us to do that (Abu 'Eisheh 2009).

Abu 'Eisheh described his own interest in polls, in spite of his scepticism of them, and recalled asking his secretary to 'file [poll] results and looking myself at the results […], just to get an idea what people think about the government, about fighting corruption or doing this and that, [about our] policies, stances, economic policies, and financial performance' (Abu 'Eisheh 2009). He pointed to his own efforts to expand decision making at the ministerial level through inviting the participation of experts to solve specific problems and negotiate solutions, without being able to expand consultative practices beyond these limited efforts due to the circumstances.

At the individual level, newly elected Nablus *Change and Reform* PLC member Mona Mansour described her attempts at using public consultation in her role as elected representative prior to the clampdown on Hamas' public activities. She invited health professionals from the Nablus area to attend a meeting to discuss the implication of the financial restrictions imposed on the Hamas-led government for the region's health care system. The meeting was video-linked to the Minister of Health in attendance from his Gaza office, and provided participants with opportunities to make suggestions and ask questions. These were subsequently followed up by Mansour's staff with the Minister of Health: 'Fifty people attended in Nablus, from all hospitals. People from Gaza participated. People were satisfied, because the Minister for Health (in Gaza) cannot know the people's problems without such ways. Without such direct communication, things weren't clear' (Mansour 2008).

Mansour, mother of four and widow of assassinated Hamas leader Jamal Mansour, suggested that her conduct was motivated by personal conviction and history, rather than explicit movement policy, suggesting that the use of consultative approaches was a reflection of the types of representative chosen by Hamas, rather than explicit movement policy:

> I used to help people, since I was a child, then at school and university etc. I always try to direct my efforts to satisfying people's needs. I go directly to a house destroyed by the occupation […]. All this [information] arises through the regular communication with people. I make these visits unaccompanied by anyone, if I want to go with armed [guards], people panic and might not talk about the issues, they feel the closeness if you're by yourself like a normal citizen (Mansour 2008).

Elected representatives' personal conduct appeared highly sensitive to public opinion, in particular with regard to public expectations of the movement's commitment to fighting corruption and abolishing unfair privileges. University lecturer Ra'ed Na'erat recalled the hesitation of newly elected Hamas Deputy Prime Minister Nasser-Ed Din Ash-Sha'er to use a government vehicle, instead borrowing Na'erat's own car when going to his home village because his own 1983 Subaru was too unreliable:

> They are exaggerating the role of the street. And most of them, as ministers and PLC members, are living a life style less [well off] than they were before. Why are people in

> Gaza supporting the Haniyeh government? Because they are feeling that Haniyeh is speaking on their behalf, […] he is suffering as they are suffering. When Az-Zahhar says 'we are to fight Israel', his sons and brothers are! (Na'erat 2008).

Journalist Khalid Amayreh suggested that the commitment to consultation among Hamas representatives formed an integral part of their overall conduct, conduct that was well-established as movement-wide practice, and as such may not have relied on institutionalization through policy to be effective:

> This is an embodiment of the movement mindset, not the party mindset. The people who were elected continued to behave as representatives of a popular movement, not as politicians in the parochial sense of the word, that they would work eight hours a day. This is not the way. Election of these people did not constitute a psychological departure from the period before [they were elected]. [They are doing] the same activities. As Islamist activists [they don't only] deal with supporters, supporters are not a constant, Hamas constantly gets supporters. A Hamas fighter does not fight for Haniyeh or even for Hamas, he fights for Islam. But a Fatah fighter, he does it for money, for the leader, [or] for the movement to a lesser extent. That's really why Fatah collapsed […] and this is something that Hamas should be given credit for: despite the fact that they were constantly being hounded by the Israelis and subjected to all kinds of vilification from the international media, Hamas found the time to continue the process of consultation after the elections (Amayreh 2009b).

At the local government level, Hamas-supported mayor of the city of Nablus, 'Adli Ya'ish, who described himself as religious and independent, firmly institutionalized consultation and open governance. His municipal governance contrasted starkly with the conduct of his Fatah predecessor, former Nablus mayor Ghassan Shaqa'a. Independent political analyst Mehdi Abdul Hadi described his impressions of meeting the mayor as someone trusted by the people to deal fairly with their problems:

> I compared him to a similar episode, seeing the [previous Fatah] mayor, Ghassan Shaqqa'a, sitting in his seat, opening his drawer with a gun [inside] and whenever he speaks to people he shows them the gun. They had to obey his orders. I asked: 'Is ['Adli Ya'ish] a leader?' They said: 'No, he is a facilitator'. Now, what's a leader? It is a facilitator! If you trust his decision, put all your assets in his yard, you trust him, he's a leader! (Abdel Hadi 2009).

Ya'ish explained his approach of open governance, a practice he had introduced in his office: 'Before, some people couldn't meet the mayor. [Some] people had to make appointments, [while other] people can come at any time. That's the problem. Why can some people come any time and normal people can't come. So I made a decision that on certain days, on certain hours, [the public can come]' (Ya'ish 2009). When revising the city's building rules, previously undertaken by the city engineers and the mayor, Ya'ish introduced consultative decision-making practices, instituting an advisory committee that determined building rules and the building priorities plan for Nablus:

> [The advisory committee was made up of] two people from the university, two from

> the engineers association, two from engineering offices, two from the investors who are engineers, two from the contracting organisation, and then two engineers, older respected people, well known and with good experience, and our city engineers and three from the Council. They sat together to reorganise the building rules. They sat together for more than 50 meetings, and [made] new rules and then […] I brought these people to introduce the rules, to defend them. First the engineers, then the contractors, to sit with normal people and tell them why they made this rule; I was sitting [and] they were talking. [Then we] announced it to all the investors in the newspaper, and then once on the TV to all the public, and we received [comments] by phone (Ya'ish 2009).

JMCC director Ghassan Khatib similarly observed evidence of a continued responsiveness to public opinion. He described, as an example, Hamas' acceptance of concessions in order to form the 2007 National Unity Government as 'a response to strong public pressure towards a unity government […]. It was clear according to polls that there was strong public support for the Saudi initiative. The move by Hamas to [accept a] National Unity Government was, in my view, influenced strongly by public opinion, expressed partially by polls' (Khatib 2008b).

Khatib also noted Hamas' attentiveness to public opinion when its leaders were invited to participate in a JMCC initiated 'Good Governance Forum' which used polls to trace public assessment of progress towards improved government performance and accountability. This initiative attracted clear interest from high-level Hamas government representatives:

> I realized that they are giving serious attention to polls and public evaluation and the [Good Governance] Forum report. [A senior cabinet advisor] was asking extensive questions about details about polls and he ended by suggesting a wider meeting between Gaza and West Bank [*Change and Reform*] cabinet members and members of the Forum (Khatib 2008b).

These and other examples of responsiveness at both the municipal and the national level[19] provided preliminary observations that related specifically to the early months immediately following Hamas' election. The examples highlighted the continued prevalence of a pro-responsive incentive structure which remained in place until Hamas' governance was ended by the President's dismissal of the Hamas-led government following Hamas' takeover of the administration in the Gaza Strip.

Since then, the incentive structure for responsiveness as it had been present during the elections, enabling and supporting Hamas' responsive conduct, has undergone substantial changes. A number of studies have detailed Hamas' conduct in government in Gaza post 2007, noting increasingly authoritarian conduct and hegemonic tendencies, a lack of political freedoms, and limited mechanisms for accountability.[20] The conduct contrasts sharply with Hamas' declared consultative leadership approach during its election campaign, in which the movement had promised a firm commitment to civil liberties, expressed in Hamas' election manifesto.[21] No detailed analysis is available specifically looking at Hamas' conduct in relation to responsiveness to public opinion, though the increase in authoritarianism and restriction of civil and political liberties can hardly be compatible with public wishes and has cost Hamas in popularity (Milton-Edwards 2013:62). While the movement's authoritarian conduct has arguably increased in the wake of the Arab Spring, it appears to have maintained its commitment to movement-internal

democratic practice in relation to the election of its leadership.

The following changes in the incentive structure for responsiveness are likely to have affected Hamas' conduct in relation to responsive governance.

First, as long as reconciliation in practice, rather than on paper, is not achieved and elections remain only a distant future possibility, this important incentive for responsiveness has not been available. As Nathan Brown commented in 2012, in the absence of elections, 'Hamas pays only a vague reputational cost for implementing unpopular policies in Gaza, as the political system is completely bereft of any mechanisms of accountability' (Brown 2012:6). Reconciliation – a precondition for the holding of elections – has been obstructed by both parties since 2007 despite a number of reconciliation agreements having been signed between the parties.

Secondly, the unity of Hamas' leadership has been under strain, partly due to differing views regarding the need to reconcile with Fatah and consequences of such a move. Fragmentation, as demonstrated in the discussion of Fatah's leadership crisis, can be both cause and consequence of lack of responsiveness. During the elections, any Hamas-internal conflicts were managed effectively without major impact on levels of responsiveness. However, once in government, tensions between Hamas' external and internal leadership were heightened, with the external leadership the driving force behind a push towards reconciliation support,[22] leading to accusations that, on the related issues of suspending the Central Election Commissions' work, Hamas' internal leadership had 'prioritised the battle with Meshal over Palestinian public opinion' (International Crisis Group 2012:25).

The renewed reconciliation efforts in 2014, leading to the signing of a new agreement, may indicate increased support for the view that the movement needs to be seen to respond to public opinion in the wake of the substantial weakening of its position internally (in regard to the economic impact of the strained relationship with Egypt leading to the closure of the tunnel economy) and externally (resulting from its greater isolation regionally following events in Egypt and Syria). It is contended that the weakening of Hamas' position *vis-à-vis* Fatah, in tandem with the ousting of President Morsi from power in Egypt, has reminded the movement's leaders that the only source of power that is within their own ability to influence is that which derives from their domestic support base, and demonstrable most potently in elections. The agreement to hold elections under the April 2014 Reconciliation Agreement may be an indication of a refocusing by the movement towards an area of political contest in which it has, over time, developed skills and experiences that have culminated in electoral victories over Fatah at all levels.

Thirdly, while a clear ideological and practical mandate for responsiveness remains relevant as incentives for responsiveness, application in practice may well be hampered by the challenges posed by an enlarged and diversified constituency – the public at large. Much of Hamas' consultative practice was movement-internal, with canvassing of the wider public a desired, but ultimately optional addition. As government, representing the public at large, Hamas may be struggling with the application of responsive conduct to a more diverse, enlarged constituency, one which is not necessarily committed to the movement's ideological foundations. An enlarged constituency also poses technical challenges to the movement's ability to assess public opinion, making the application of its time-intensive consultations, so successfully used during the election campaign, impractical, in particular in the context of governance under enormous economic pressures and frequent military conflict with Israel. As Brown noted: 'There is no

serious mechanism for democratic oversight or even for meaningful consultation with groups outside of Hamas' (Brown 2012:13). In the absence of elections, there was little to compel Hamas' leaders to dedicate resources and invest in increasing its capacity to broaden its consultation beyond its customary base or persuade the wider public of its aims. While failing to live up to principles of democratic governance in certain areas, the movement has nevertheless maintained its commitment to internal democratic practice as demonstrated in the fiercely contested conduct of internal elections which confirmed Khalid Meshal as head of the movement's political bureau in April 2013. His re-election strengthened support for necessary concessions required to reach a reconciliation agreement with Fatah (Milton-Edwards 2013:70)[23] which, if successfully implemented, would re-introduce the electoral imperative as a major driver for responsiveness to public opinion.

Fourthly, in 2006, the opportunities presented by public perceptions of Hamas' virtues and Fatah's woes, in particular on the issue of corruption, presented easy opportunities for responsiveness to demands already well aligned with Hamas' views and practice. As governing authority in Gaza, under severe economic strain while presiding over an economy under siege by both Israel and Egypt, Hamas' image as clean and honest has suffered, particularly as the movement asserted control over income from the Gaza's tunnel economy. Hamas' ability to respond to public opinion, in particular where it relates to demands outside of the direct control of the movement, must be considered extremely difficult. At the same time, Hamas' human rights and civil liberties record, which was indeed within the ability of the government to act, has also been severely criticized, pointing to the break down of the commitments the movement undertook in its election programme. Hamas appears to have been walking a fine line, holding off on clearly unpopular moves such as tackling Islamisation of the law,[24] displaying continued sensitivity to respond to public preferences, while on questions related to the assertion of control and obstructing the expression of discontent, the movement has moved away from this ideal under prevailing circumstances.

Lessons from Hamas' election campaign, displaying conduct based on the movement's well-established political thought and practice, have highlighted the effectiveness of responsiveness as providing an electoral advantage to an organization willing and able to invest in such a strategy. The case of Hamas has also illustrated the use of responsiveness as an analytical tool, a lens through which to review Hamas' victory, but complementing and further illuminating the impact of the factors that brought about change of power. It suggested that voters not only wished to punish Fatah for its perceived failures in negotiations and governance, but also for its blatant lack of responsiveness to public opinion. The public were attracted to a campaign that responded to public opinion both in content and in method, explicitly promising a participatory approach to decision making that was unimaginable under Fatah, and that inspired hope for a fresh approach to politics. This chapter also highlighted the critical importance of Hamas' ability to build upon tried and trusted methods of opinion assessment, derived from well-rehearsed internal consultative practices. This pointed to the combination of political will and ability, based on an established practice of consultation, as a precondition to the use of responsiveness for electoral advantage. The research was unable, however, to determine whether this practice would have been more formally institutionalized as a principle of governance by Hamas. A changed incentive structure for responsiveness post-2007, in particular the rise of authoritarian characteristics of governance in Gaza, indicated the subjugation of responsiveness to other considerations.

Examination of Hamas' pre-election conduct, as was modelled here, suggested that for Hamas, the balance within the incentive structure for responsiveness was tipped clearly in favour of incentives, with disincentives perceived as limited in risk. Future research into Hamas' willingness and ability to respond post-2007 would provide important insights into the impact of an altered incentive structure for responsiveness, including the impact of postponed elections, ideological and practical challenges presented by an enlarged constituency, the impact of diminished movement-internal unity, and the consequences of economic power and privilege for the ability to communicate responsiveness.

CHAPTER 3

OVERARCHING INFLUENCES ON RESPONSIVENESS: FRAGMENTATION, RENTIERISM AND THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

This chapter discusses the range of influences that create incentives for responsiveness on political leadership, in particular the relevance of fragmentation, rentierism and civil society. Their analysis illustrates the way in which complex historical, political and socio-economic realities come to create competing demands on leadership *vis-à-vis* responsiveness: rentierism acting as disincentive to responsiveness, civil society creating incentives for responsiveness, specifically through polling NGOs; and fragmentation creating both incentives and disincentives. Other influence and concepts, such as legitimation, leadership styles or external political imperatives are equally important for the creation of incentives for responsiveness, and will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Yet other factors, including historical and cultural legacies such as the influence of social and economic structures of land ownership, refugee status, or tribalism, while only touched upon here, contain important background and contextual elements when mapping the incentive structure for responsiveness and are referred to in this chapter to the extent to which they affect this structure.

Fragmentation has had a substantial impact on Fatah's leadership, both via its contribution towards Fatah's election defeat following the last minute entry and withdrawal of a breakaway faction, and via the detrimental impact that public perceptions of lack of cohesion have had on the relationship between Fatah and the public.

Rentierism is expected to act as a disincentive to responsiveness. The study will examine the validity of rentier theory regarding the representative relationship between rulers and ruled in the context of Palestinian donor dependence, and will further expand the rentier logic to test its applicability to dependence on external political support.

Civil society's role is investigated as a driver for responsiveness and democratization, a role well established in democratization theories. Extensively studied previously in the Palestinian context, this analysis focuses specifically on the question of how intervening factors, namely donor dependence and the changing role and perception of NGOs post-Oslo (demobilization pressures) affected the ability of civil society to push for responsive leadership. An analysis of polling organizations as part of civil society provides more detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

Fragmentation

Internal fragmentation has had a profound effect on movement cohesion, Fatah's relationship with the public, and incentives for responsiveness. NEC's poll analysis uses perceptions of factional coherence as an indicator for public support, its analysis suggesting that 'Fatah's apparent fragmentation and the possibility of having candidates who will run against party line will go in favour of Hamas who is perceived to be more disciplined and resilient' (NEC 2010a:24). The causes of fragmentation are intrinsically linked to the consequences of Palestinian obligations under Oslo. Considering the diversity of backgrounds among Fatah's leadership and constituencies, their outlook and ideology,[1] a high degree of fragmentation within Fatah, while perhaps not inevitable, certainly did not come as a surprise to observers.

Diversity has been a hallmark of Fatah's membership in terms of ideological background, religiosity, class and societal background, geographic origins, age and gender. While it may be argued that such diversity has been the movement's very strength, enabling it to survive a multitude of crises,[2] the risks of such diversity are, unsurprisingly, the potential for fragmentation or factionalization. Over time, these risks have gradually increased as the movement made choices that eroded those elements of movement cohesion which had previously attracted diversity into the movement.

Ideologically, Fatah provided a 'broad umbrella […] for Arab Nationalists, Ba'athists and Marxists of various sorts […] Islamists, all united by little more than belief in national liberation and the conviction that it would come through armed struggle' (International Crisis Group 2009a:1). The vagueness of Fatah's ideological foundations allowed Fatah to be 'all things to all people' (Jarbawi 1996:34) a movement 'whose ideological substance and political programme each [group] defined in its own way' (International Crisis Group 2004:17). Indeed, Fatah's survival has been linked to the very absence of a clearly defined ideology. In its stead, the movement's members have shared an 'ideal' of state and an experience of occupation and subjugation that has allowed Fatah to have a broad appeal. Both Fatah's constituencies and its elites consisted of a diverse range of persons with vast differences in class and socio-economic backgrounds, cultural divides, ideological orientations and varying degrees of religiosity. In examining Palestinian elite formation, Brynen suggested 'a fairly heterogeneous elite structure, characterized by a multiplicity of sources, overlapping "elite-types", and multiple potential lines of elite cleavage'. As far back as 1995, he questioned 'how, in the context of so much potential elite fragmentation, a sufficient level of cohesion can be maintained to allow effective Palestinian governance' (Brynen 1995b:40–1). His answer then was 'Palestinian Nationalism'. Fatah's diversity gave the movement the opportunity to be 'in its very construction, representative' (International Crisis Group 2009a:1).

To many of its activists, self-identity and belonging to Fatah were intrinsically linked, a bond that could not be broken easily (Anon 2009b), particularly when enthused by charismatic leadership. 'Fatah never was a party in the traditional sense; for much of its history, it was more akin to "shared national property" a kind of default political identity for Palestinians who did not belong to any movement' (International Crisis Group 2009a:6). As Jarbawi observed: 'From its inception, Fatah has reflected Palestinian society and expressed that society's will, with all its differing views and contradictions' (Jarbawi 1996:34). While containing the seeds of fragmentation, the movement's very survival suggests that 'a looser structure, focused and united on a broad nationalist agenda, stood a much better chance of remaining intact' (Parsons

2005:212).

The tipping point for Fatah's ability to draw strength, rather than weakness, from its diversity, was its signing of the Oslo Agreement and the fundamental changes it brought to the Palestinian political environment.[3] At the very centre of these changes, Oslo marked the end of political consensus on Fatah's nationalist agenda, causing a 'crisis of confidence within the movement about its identity and role' (International Crisis Group 2009a:4). The changes sparked increased political competition with Hamas gaining in popularity, for many creating a political alternative. The challenges to Fatah's identity and function,[4] to its legitimacy and its role as representative of Palestinians, had a profound impact on the relationship between Fatah's leadership, its cadres, and the public at large.[5]

As the movement's transition to governing authority reduced the reliance on public mobilization, the need to show political responsiveness towards the public was reduced in tandem. Instead, Fatah faced strong new demands for responsiveness of a different kind, namely (as defined by Eulau and Karps) service responsiveness, allocation responsiveness and symbolic responsiveness. Fatah also faced unprecedented demands for accountability, and the need to demonstrate actual political and economic achievements in return for the position of power and privilege assumed by Fatah's elites. Under these changed circumstances, Fatah's broad political programme was no longer able to reflect the political realities of Fatah's increasingly specific new role in governance. Demands for a more clearly defined political programme were becoming increasingly pronounced across Fatah's hierarchy.

In light of the lack of progress in all areas of governance, and specifically in the peace process, differences between and among Fatah's leadership groups were highlighted and exacerbated. An asset while it was essentially a national liberation movement, Fatah's diversity contributed to impairing the adjustment of the movement to its new role. Rabbani suggested:

> An increasing number of Fatah leaders and rank-and-file members have come to the conclusion that the movement needs to define itself and its strategic objectives clearly in order not only to meet the challenge of Hamas but to lay the basis for organisational coherence and discipline. Yet to do so will almost certainly precipitate defections by the disenchanted and perhaps even cause a split within Fatah (Rabbani 2008a:n.p.).

Andoni suggested that

> the movement is struggling not only for its soul but for its mere survival. Years of exile, especially after the PLO lost its sanctuary in Lebanon in 1982, a failed 'peace process', the loss of Arafat, the ruthless Israeli clampdown on Fatah after the second intifada, combined with unprecedented divisions and a brewing power struggle, have eaten up the fabric of the movement's unity (Andoni 2009:n.p.).

The Palestinian Authority obligations for security cooperation with Israel contributed in particular to Fatah-internal fragmentation and to straining relations with the public at large. Under these security obligations, the PA was required to act against the type of resistance activities that had been perceived by Palestinians as legitimate for as long as the occupation persisted. Many of Fatah's 'young guard' who saw themselves as representing an alternative to the Fatah establishment figures around Arafat (generally referred to as 'the Tunisians'), viewed

the PA's security obligations as undermining the movement's credibility in the eyes of the wider population and Fatah's grassroots bases. As Milton-Edwards suggested:

> Security forces can no longer count on automatically being perceived as serving the Palestinian national interest. Today they are widely regarded as an instrument of Fatah, and not even of Fatah as a broad movement, but more narrowly, of the 'old guard' (Milton-Edwards 2005:254).

While main fault lines of fragmentation were in existence well before Arafat's passing,[6] they had, for the most part, remained contained under his charismatic and personalized leadership, 'the "glue" holding the fragile mosaic together' (Jarbawi 1996:35). Only when Arafat chose not to use his charisma to impose control on the centrifugal forces that acted within the political sphere, specifically when political progress remained absent, did these forces manifest themselves in the breakdown of Fatah as a coherent movement.[7] But Arafat's personal charisma, his leadership style, the immediacy of renewed conflict with Israel, and his house arrest in the governing complex, the 'Muqata'a', prevented these divisions from culminating in an open challenge to his leadership. The end of Arafat's life meant the end of his particular style of monopolization of power and decision making in Palestinian politics. It posed a threat to Fatah's fragile unity while at the same time offering opportunities to cleanse Fatah's image and renew its institutions.

Abbas inherited Arafat's formal positions as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (since 11 November 2004), Head of Fatah, and President of the Palestinian National Authority (since 15 January 2005, expired officially since January 2009) and President of the State of Palestine (since elected by the PLO Central Council to the position on 23 November 2008). However, he did not have the power to overrule other members of the decision-making structure. Fatah's Central Committee and the PLO's decision-making bodies remained formally positioned outside – and presumably above – the authority of Abbas in his role as President of the PA. Amidst the fragmentation and dysfunction of the movement overall, Abbas' unwillingness – and perhaps inability – to monopolize power in the manner his predecessor had, opened the doors for other arguably legitimate decision-making bodies, such as the PLO and Fatah executive organs on the one hand, and PA institutions on the other, to assert the authority they had been denied by Arafat. At the same time, as governing party, Fatah's governing organs were exposed to greater scrutiny. Arafat's dominance had shielded the members of the Central Committee somewhat from heightened public expectation that they fulfil a constructive leadership role. Under Abbas, this shield was removed and brought into view a body that was at odds with public expectations of leadership, a body that had 'no coherent leadership that can analyse and make decisions' (Wazir 2009).

The proliferation of Fatah armed groups which had formed mutually beneficial alliances with establishment members (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:14) all came to pose challenges to Abbas' authority. Within the PA, Arafat had created and encouraged competition between different branches of government and ministers in order to prevent separate centres of power from emerging. This had stimulated disunity (Klein 2003b:200).[8] In the absence of Arafat's controlling presence, centrifugal forces proliferated. Heightened competition for influence, power and position between and within areas of influence created obstacles to cohesive decision making. These developments coincided with the absence of potentially unifying achievements due to stagnation in the peace process. Fatah's fragmentation began to threaten the very survival

of a movement that was increasingly providing the stage for a struggle between ostensibly legitimate power centres.

An overview of fault lines within Fatah

The divisions within Fatah have not been lineal, but have criss-crossed and overlapped, driven by differences over programme, aims and strategies, and by group and individual conflicts rooted in contested bases of legitimacy, representation and competition for power and influence. The popular description of Fatah's division as being between the old and the young/new guard has only partially captured the complexity of personality, interest and political difference that has contributed to Fatah's fragmentation.

The younger local leadership of Fatah consisted of various groups who had competed with each other for power and influence. Jarbawi and Pearlman posited the 'establishment' (as represented in the historic leadership) against two other groups within Fatah, described as

> 'aspirant' leaders who enjoyed local-level legitimacy but were denied participation in vital national decision-making; and 'street strongmen' who formed the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to serve as a militia through which Fatah participated in armed activity during the second intifada (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:14).

In a definition that overlaps partially with that of Jarbawi, Shikaki described these latter two categories of leaders as the 'young guard' who, comprising local West Bank and Gaza leaders, were generally under the age of 40 (in 2002) and who had initiated the 1987–93 Intifada (Shikaki 2002). A limited number of them took up positions in the PA (mainly in the security sector) and some were elected into the PLC, but, as a group, they lacked 'cohesion, leadership and formal authority' (Shikaki 2002:94). The group included prominent leaders such as Marwan Barghouthi and Sami Abu Samhadaneh, but also comprised less respected gangs and armed groups. Its members were under-represented in Fatah's pre-2009 Central Committee, but had some representation in the Revolutionary Council and the Higher Committees.

In effect, constantly shifting lines of division and conflict were drawn between and within just about every part of Fatah, suggesting that the loss of unifying factors (Arafat), rather than the obvious existence of divisive factors, may have been at the core of Fatah's fragmentation.

Some of the divisions that may be characterized as primarily (though never entirely) based on difference of political outlook and strategy, are arguably those between supporters and critics of the Oslo process,[9] between various shades of reformers and non-reformers[10] either supporting democratic leadership or accepting of continued authoritarian leaderships,[11] and between those supporting a gun-and-olive-branch as opposed to a negotiation-only strategy.[12]

Some of the divisions may be characterized as primarily (though again not entirely) based on individual and group interest, for example those between groups with preferential access to position and privilege. Such divisions include those between Fatah (PA) and Fatah outside of the PA, between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (or exile versus local leadership),[13] between refugees and non-refugees, and between personality-related militant groups.[14] Some of the latter, such as the 'young guard' Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, represented a diverse range of backgrounds, motivations and attitudes that escaped easy categorization.[15] All divisions were supported by

conflicting claims to legitimacy and representation, including the claim to historical legitimacy in the case of the traditional leadership (Shikaki 2002:95), and the claim to struggle-based as well as electoral legitimacy in the case of some of the younger leaders.[16]

In addition, fragmentation was characterized by a range of inter-personality conflicts between individual leaders such as Ahmed Qurie and Mahmoud Abbas (Brynen 1995a:37), among others, invariably related to any of the above considerations. In summary, Fatah represented a movement that had split,

> not just into two or three rival camps, but into multiple, competing power centres. These power centres (generally associated with individual leaders engaged in constantly shifting alliances) consist of networks based on patronage, shared history, geography, foreign sponsorship, ideology, policy, or various combinations of the above (Rabbani 2008a:n.p.).

The dependence of the PA on foreign funding and its obligations under the agreements with Israel lay at the heart of much of the discontent fuelling internal division, in particular between those involved in the PA, and those who were not. Dependence on donor funds prevented those involved in the PA (pre-2006, until cabinets were dominated by Fatah members) from advocating for armed resistance and incitement against Israel, viewed by large sections of the public as the inalienable rights of the occupied. The PA's 'mandate for social demobilization' (Parsons 2005:175) directly affected Fatah's ability to mobilize and thereby access a source of legitimation. Lack of progress towards achievement of the national agenda, coupled with an actual deterioration of living conditions in terms of mobility, economic indicators and the increasing encroachment of settlements on Palestinian land, led to increasing dissent and disillusionment with Fatah's negotiations strategy.

The effective Fatah–PA merger prior to 2006 was seen to have negatively affected the movement's grassroots relations, including cadres' ability to communicate to the public a clear and believable strategy for achieving Fatah's declared nationalist goals. Bound by Oslo, the ability of the movement to consult meaningfully on programme and strategy was limited in light of the latent public and Fatah internal support for a combined strategy of armed or unarmed popular resistance alongside negotiations.[17] As Lagerquist pointed out:

> That Abbas has articulated no strategy for securing those national objectives may therefore be secondary to the fact that his posturing offered no opportunity for debate on those objectives – including the question of whether a 'two-state solution' […] is even desirable from a Palestinian perspective (Lagerquist 2005:6).

The PA–Fatah fault line that had emerged prior to the 2006 elections had to some extent replaced the division between the 'inside' and 'outside' categorization.[18] Rather than based on age group, these divisions may be best characterized in terms of 'effective political influence and participation in decision making' (Klein 2003b:199). Reflective of the new role of Fatah within the PA, the terminology used to describe Fatah (PA) was often highly derogatory, at times referring to Fatah–PA leaders as 'collaborators' and 'Israeli stooges'. A common description is that of the 'real Fatah', as opposed to the 'Ramallah authority' or 'Ramallah government' (Abu Zayyad 2008).[19] According to Milton-Edwards (2005:253), those among Fatah's leaders who remained outside of PA employment perceived the lack of bridging mechanisms between the two

frameworks (PA and Fatah) as in the interest of the international community, designed to neutralize Fatah's potential, and impose regime change under the cover of institutional reform of the PA.

Fatah's internal divisions reflected both political disagreement and a desire to protect positions and privilege. After 2007, Abbas instated consecutive technocrat-dominated governments, thereby broadening the ranks of Fatah members who felt excluded from effective power and privilege. This culminated in the bizarre boycott of a new PA cabinet, appointed by Abbas as president in 2009, by the Fatah parliamentary block (Amayreh 2009a) whose speaker accused Abbas of a lack of consultation for the cabinet appointments and of authoritarian decision making. The conflict signified the dilemmas of the balancing act that Abbas was performing, aiming to build strong institutions while appointing technocratic leaders whose ability to challenge his authority by building their own power bases was limited.[20] By preferencing either non-Fatah members or Fatah technocrats over Fatah power-holders in appointments to PA positions, Abbas came into conflict with a range of groups within Fatah, its cadres[21] and governing bodies such as the Central Committee[22] alike. Each of these competing power centres were pursuing their desires for influence over PA positions, including the privileges and perks that these positions brought, and which were needed to maintain a currency of influence.

Fragmentation is at the heart of Fatah's leadership crisis. For a political movement in transition from liberation movement to political party in an executive function, a significant degree of internal power struggle is to be expected. For a movement that is, at the same time, undergoing fundamental changes in terms of the realignment of its liberation strategy with a role as provider of services under external obligations, the need to maintain public support might have been regarded as paramount, creating a clear incentive for the adoption of a responsive and consultative approach to decision making. However, fragmentation became a defining feature of the inability, post-Oslo, to respond to public opinion.

Compounding the impact of fragmentation on responsiveness was the negative effect it had on organizational capacity and learning, manifested in Fatah's neglect of utilizing public opinion in its 2006 election preparations. Organizational cohesion, discipline and a capacity for organization-internal learning are essential requirements for the ability to assess and respond to public opinion. The planning and implementation of public opinion assessment, its analysis and its translation into strategy, requires organization-wide understanding of the desirability and benefits of prioritizing responsiveness to public opinion. Reduced organizational capacity due to the fragmentation of leadership can prevent such prioritization as other interests take precedence. These qualities were in short supply well before Arafat's death. According to Sayigh, Fatah Central Committee member Khalid al-Hassan

> described Palestinian disorganisation acerbically as 'a genius for failure', decried the resistance to teamwork and contingency planning, tendency to adversarial internal relations and patron-client relations, distrust of information from any but subservient sources, and disinclination to subject information to analytical processing (Sayigh 1997b:687).

Furthermore, lack of internal communication limited opportunities for an understanding of the benefits of responsiveness to be shared and reached. Referring specifically to Fatah's historic

leadership, Sayigh noted Fatah's deficiencies when suggesting that 'evaluation of performance and learning from experience were uncommon or superficial as a result' (Sayigh 1997b:681).

In short, the types of organizational qualities that are key for the effective utilization of public opinion were the ones in short supply within Fatah, directly degrading the movement's pre-election performance. Apart from preventing the movement from presenting a unified and cohesive election plan and strategy, reduced organizational capacity prevented the prioritization of public opinion in Fatah's pre-election planning. For example, in Fatah's candidate selection process, all too often consideration for the need to appease factional infighting came to dominate over consideration for electability. Reduced organizational coherence, coordination and communication limited opportunities for movement-internal learning about the need to heed the electoral imperative for responsiveness (Anon 2010b). These lessons had been learnt by some of Fatah's younger elected leadership cadres but Fatah's traditional leadership had missed out on this learning in the absence of general elections while in exile.

Fragmentation also delayed organization-internal reform and renewal, as infighting predominated the need to focus on addressing key constituency demands. The degree of Fatah's fragmentation prevented consensus-building around a common platform for reform and renewal (Anon 2009b). Internal division, and the fear of loss of power and privilege, led to an 18-year delay in holding Fatah's Sixth General Conference until August 2009,[23] which had prevented the movement from developing and adjusting its programme, aims and strategies, thereby delaying the much-needed renewal of the legitimacy of its leadership.[24]

The difficult transition from movement to political party

Fatah's evolution from liberation movement into formal, democratically elected representative, along with the development of other political parties, had in theory created favourable conditions for democratization. However, the representational benefits of this political history were, in the case of Fatah, eroded by fragmentation and subsequent lack of internal coherence. In the study of democratization, well-functioning political parties are considered to be

> essential instruments for representing political constituencies and interest, aggregating demands and preferences […] crafting policy alternatives, setting the policy-making agenda […] and integrating groups and individuals into the democratic process[…], making the democratic process more inclusive, accessible, representative and effective (Diamond 1997:xxiii).

Fatah's fragmentation, rather than its diversity, deprived constituents of a single address with which to communicate, which may be lobbied or pressured, and which could serve as a continued point of political identification and representation. Individual leaders could no longer claim to represent one Fatah constituency, but their representative role was reduced to a more narrowly defined supporter base that was often based on individual, rather than wider organizational loyalty. These divisions within Fatah caused the dispersion of Fatah's constituencies, with individualized loyalties replacing the previously generalized identification with the movement by large segments of society. Milton-Edwards argued that 'the fragmentation and demoralization of the Palestinian nation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, […] while posing no direct challenge to the outward manifestation of the structures of power beyond

disengagement and alienation, is no basis on which to take forward a political process' (Milton-Edwards 2005:248).

The presence of fragmented constituencies decreases incentives and pressure for responsiveness as leaders pay attention to the needs and opinions of more narrowly defined supporter groups. Despite Fatah's historical claim to represent the Palestinian community, movement-internal divisions prevented the prioritization of responsiveness as a guiding principle in fulfilling its supposed representational function. This minimized Fatah's willingness and ability to respond to public opinion. As such, fragmentation constituted an important and negative 'constant' within the incentive structure for responsiveness, linking fragmentation, lack of responsiveness and leadership crisis.

External influences on leadership responsiveness

The impact of external pressures on Palestinian decision making has been discussed widely, and will only be outlined briefly in this section with the aim of highlighting factors relevant to the incentive structure for responsiveness.

Two relevant areas of external influence stand out: the overarching impact of continuing Israeli occupation on every aspect of Palestinian life and politics, and the role of financial and political support by international donors. The continuing Israeli occupation has constrained the Palestinian space for decision making by limiting jurisdiction over territory, populations and natural resources, thereby affecting the *ability* of leadership to respond to public opinion. The conditionality of international financial and political support has affected the ability of leaders to respond to the preferences of domestic constituencies. Furthermore, in instances where international support has specifically aimed at bolstering the survival chances of Fatah's leadership, such support has likely also affected the *willingness* of leadership to consider public opinion.

The devastating economic and social effects of continuing Israeli occupation, movement restrictions and limited jurisdiction, regularly reported in the assessments by the World Bank, the IMF and various UN agencies,[25] highlights the occupation as the most decisive, restrictive and influential factor impacting Palestinian decision making. In addition, the constraints have had the effect of making the Palestinian leadership more susceptible to pressures from its donors and stakeholders, namely the US and European governments. The importance of leadership dependence and reliance on both economic and political support can hardly be overstated and provides grounds for some of the most severe internal criticism, as expressed, for example, by Palestinian civil society activist Azmi Bishara:

> The Palestinian economy in the West Bank is a camouflage for security arrangements and measures. It is a rentier economy that lives on aid in exchange for security and political services, an economy built entirely on foreign subsidies in exchange for certain political positions and driven by the desire to promote those who accept Israeli conditions and prioritize the protection of Israel's security (Bishara 2010:n.p.).

Weighing the need for external support (financial and political) and the need for domestic support (requiring responsiveness) may not always have been contradictory. However, when

they have, competing demands required trade-offs to be made by Palestinian leadership, weighing the need to meet the conditions for financial support[26] against the local demand for self-determination in areas such as leadership choice, specific policy decisions, and also wider policy direction (such as the prioritization of security-cooperation over internal unity).

In a subsequent and overlapping trade-off, additional political benefits were offered to the Palestinian leadership by its international donors on a conditional basis, complementing the financial incentives. These political support incentives have consisted of promises by external actors to use their leverage with Israel to strengthen the Palestinian negotiating position. This type of additional political support, termed here a 'rents plus' support, was seen as valuable in gaining support for international legitimacy of Palestinian aspirations.[27] International political support was seen as important, indeed essential, in order to 'rectify the imbalance of power inherent in negotiations with Israel' (International Crisis Group 2010:14).

Furthermore, trade-offs were made in areas of mutual interest between Fatah's elites and international preferences. Here, international actors provided support that aimed to directly strengthen Fatah's role in leadership while withholding political recognition for other groups. This type of support was provided in the form of rhetorical, strategic, legal and military assistance to Fatah's leadership,[28] specifically aimed at securing the survival in power of Fatah's leadership and minimizing the influence of Hamas.

In areas where international and domestic demands contradicted, the conditionality of financial and political support forced leaders to weigh the consequences of non-compliance, such as the potential reduction in funding or the weakening of international legitimacy, against the potentially legitimizing and unifying effects of demonstrating responsiveness to domestic opinion. Neglect of the external conditions not only would affect the ability to govern, but could directly impact the chances for elite survival.

The impact of rentierism

The Palestinian economy is highly dependent on external funding. According to the World Bank,

> the Palestinian economy has been sustained by enormous infusions of foreign aid and the recent growth in the West Bank is the direct result of a large increase in such flows combined with increased security. In 2008, budget support alone increased by nearly 80 percent from the 2007 level and at close to US$1.8 billion, was equivalent to about 30 percent of GDP (World Bank 2009:34).

The public service in particular was dependent on external aid, delivered by the main funders (the European Union (EU), and, to a lesser extent, the US and Arab states). The PA's wage bill alone was equivalent to 22 per cent of GDP (International Monetary Fund 2009:10 fn. 19). In 2008, donor funds were used primarily to pay salaries, and clear arrears to public sector employees and the private sector (World Bank 2009:34). The result, according the World Bank, was 'growing dependency on donor aid for the prevention of fiscal collapse' (World Bank 2009:6), a situation described by UNCTAD as 'systemic dependence on foreign aid' (UNCTAD 2006:2).

The objectives of the comparatively high levels of donor funding (as compared to aid distribution to other developing countries) have been openly political, aimed at 'keeping the

peace process on track' (Hilal 2003:170) by alleviating some of the economic pressures on Palestinian society that were feared to be fostering radicalism.[29] International donors regarded financial assistance as an appropriate tool for supporting and bolstering a political leadership willing and able to pursue negotiations within an internationally and bilaterally agreed framework, and to meet the conditions regarded as necessary for eventual success of this strategy.[30] The relationship of financial dependence gave external actors opportunities to influence Palestinian decision making, including in specific policy areas such as institutional reform, security cooperation and specific leadership decisions. International funding also secured donor leverage over the modalities of decision making on issues such as general development plans and aid prioritization, while also facilitating a say for Israel in this process.[31]

The characteristics of the donor-dependent Palestinian economy have been described by observers as resembling those of *rentier state* economies.[32] Alissa distinguished between rentier and semi-rentier states, with the latter describing dependence on remittances, aid and loans in non-oil-producing economies (Alissa 2007:2). Indeed, it has been argued that the PA's characterization as rentier-authority has its predecessor in the rent-dependence of the PLO. Both Beck (1997:644) and Sunderbrink (1993:55) characterize the PLO/Fatah as a semi-rentier organization which depended on external rents. The PLO's dependence on its Arab (and Palestinian) supporters required the prioritization of externally oriented policy over internal legitimization.

Beck suggested that when the PLO faced bankruptcy following the end of Gulf state funding during the Second Gulf War, Western donors signalled their willingness to step into the void on condition of substantial concessions in the conflict with Israel. Using data from the PA's 1996 budget, he calculated that it depended for more than 50 per cent on political rents. This, he suggested, made the PA a rentier *par excellence* (Beck 1997:645).[33] Beblawi argued that, parallel to typical rentier economies, the Palestinian economy of 'peace rents',

> relies on substantial external rent, as purely internal rent cannot be sustained without a strong productive domestic sector [… and in which] only a small part of the population […] is involved in generating rent [… while] the government is the principal recipient of the rent and will, because of this, play a predominant role in distributing wealth to the population' (Beblawi 1987:50–51, quoted in Jensen 2005:11).

Rentier characteristics can have a profound political impact on leadership style, state-building, the strength or weakness of states,[34] the prospects for democratization and on representational function. They have been seen as 'creating a strong impediment to democratic rule' (Huntington 1991; Ross 2001; as cited in Schwarz 2008:600). Limited reliance on taxation in rentier states means that 'no social contract is developed between state and society over the relationship between taxation and expenditure' (Rand 2005:20). Beck argued that, 'if the rent share of the state budget exceeds the critical margin of approximately 20 per cent [as is the case in the Palestinian economy], this has a profound impact on the relationship between state and society' (Beck 2007:8), encouraging distribution according to strategic, rather than social criteria.

Strategic considerations arising from external dependency, including the maintenance of power structures, position and privilege, and the need to ensure a continuing relationship with rent providers, can be a strong disincentive to responsiveness. In the absence of significant reliance by the government on domestically generated taxes, domestic constituencies are unable

to counter these external pressures. In cases where external and domestic preferences differ, responsiveness to public opinion may be overridden by dependence on rents. 'As Schwarz argues, a high level of rentierism will negatively affect the function of the modern state to represent its citizens (representational function of the modern state) […] because [it] serves as a strong impediment to democratic rule and pluralistic institutions (Luciani 1994, Ross 2001)' (Schwarz 2008:609).

The Palestinian economy's strong dependence on external rents was therefore likely to weaken incentives for responsiveness in a number of ways.

The systemic dependence of the Palestinian economy on donor funds, particularly in the public sector, inadvertently helped maintain the system of patronage (Hanieh 2006:n.p.; Jensen 2005:11) by stabilizing the regime (Le More 2005:992). Baumgarten went as far as suggesting that 'it is first and foremost the West which keeps the neo-patrimonial system in place, thereby preventing any meaningful movement towards freedom, political participation, and the building of institutions' Baumgarten (2010:n.p.). Aspects of neo-patrimonialism have continued under Abbas in parallel to technocratic state-building under Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. Baumgarten argued that this process has been substantially devoid of domestic support, and describes it as having taken place in 'total dependency on external financial support, i.e. external rents' (Baumgarten 2010:n.p.).

Reliance on external rents meant that 'the attraction, appropriation and distribution of foreign funds became a major tool to establish a power base' (Dengler 2001:n.p.). The modalities of rent distribution, and specifically their ability to replace the need for other forms of relationship-building – such as the demand for representation in exchange for taxation – caused the deprioritization of responsiveness. In providing Fatah's leadership with control over the dividends of cooperation (projects, jobs and access to resources that could be used to create obligations and loyalty), leaders were able to increase individual power without the need for a responsive approach.

At the same time, the classic benefit of rentierism, the ability to use welfare in order to silence public pressures for representation, was limited by the government's inability, despite rents, to meet the basic needs of the population within the highly restrictive and intrusive occupation context. The combined failure to deliver either high levels of welfare or effective representation,[35] contributed to the intensification of Fatah's leadership crisis. Leaders were accused of seeing themselves as more accountable to foreign donors than to the public (Brower 2000:30). Middle East scholars Agha and Malley noted that decisions were made 'in conformity with international demands, against the leadership's instinctive desires and in clear opposition to popular aspirations' (Agha and Malley 2010:n.p.). Discriminatory distribution of rents according to strategic (rather than social) criteria[36] has served to rouse public discontent further, facilitating a yearning for *Change and Reform* (adopted by Hamas as its election slogan) which helped to propel Hamas into power.

Not only did rents minimize reliance on domestic support, but the clientelistic relationship between the PA and donors also induced the PA to respond favourably to donor considerations on *how* donor funds were spent. Under the pressures of time, process and ready availability of foreign expertise, the planning of development agendas was regularly left to be led by international agencies and donor countries (Hilal 2003:170), neglecting mechanisms for consultation with stakeholders.[37] Lack of responsiveness was further exacerbated by the

pervasiveness of rent-dependence, affecting not only Fatah and PA decision making, but all sectors of society in receipt of donor funds:

> The connection between donor funded aid, redistribution mechanisms on the basis of personal relations and the accumulation of individual power can be witnessed in Palestine on different levels of aggregation, such as the Palestinian Authority, NGOs and local communities (Dengler 2001:n.p.).

Mirroring the PA–donor relationship, rent-dependency in the civil society sector affected the sector's legitimacy in the eyes of the public and in turn compromised its independence, reducing responsiveness to public need in favour of funding priorities, such as democratization and civic education.[38] According to Robinson, NGO reliance on external rents has given social forces 'very little leverage to push for democratic openings' (Robinson 2002:n.p.).

Fatah's leadership has viewed external political support as justified and indeed necessary in order to address what has been perceived as the 'structural deficiency of the Oslo process' (International Crisis Group 2010:17) represented by an imbalance of power between Israel and the Palestinians.[39] Parson suggested that:

> Illusion or not, the PA leadership were clearly tempted to believe that a Bush administration in its second term, in search of a legacy and seized of a post-Arafat movement in Palestine, might bring pressure to bear constructively on Israel and so actually do something with the Roadmap (Parsons 2005:319).[40]

US leverage, regarded at times as instrumental for achieving an Israeli settlement freeze, was hence perceived as of vital importance for Fatah. Not only did a settlement freeze come to be seen as a precondition for successful negotiation following strong public demand for a firming of the Palestinian position, but such a settlement freeze also came to be regarded as 'essential for Fatah's own standing and [the] credibility of its strategy' (International Crisis Group 2010:6–7 fn. 45). This dual need for US leverage, on the one hand related to a specific path towards achievement of national goals, and on the other hand related to Fatah's political survival, created a strong incentive to heed the conditions under which such leverage was to be extended. With the political fortunes of Fatah and the PA perceived by many within Fatah to be inextricably tied to the success of negotiations, the impact on the incentive structure for responsiveness was easily tipped against public demands and for donor requirements.

The 'acceptable partner dictate'

In return for political support in the form of leverage with Israel and the granting of international legitimacy, the Palestinian leadership had to consider trade-offs in a number of areas, directly affecting its capacity for self-determination in policy and decision making. Both financial and political incentives were used by international actors to influence Palestinian domestic decisions on leadership, specifically in the attempt to side-line Yasser Arafat and in supporting Mahmoud Abbas, Salam Fayyad and others as acceptable and favoured partners, arguably due to their commitment to institute reform and good governance. Before the background of a 'trend for forcible regime change set by the latest war on Iraq' (Parsons 2005:49), external pressures were a very real incentive to reform and *be seen* to reform. Indeed, Le More argued that the actual

motive behind the 2002 US and Israeli interest in reform and good governance was 'regime change and the removal of Arafat' (Le More 2005:993), for which both financial pressure and the threat of diplomatic withdrawal were used.[41]

While securing continued external financial and political support, the creation of the position of Prime Minister under US pressure and Abbas' appointment to the post weakened his internal credentials. Not only was Abbas the appointee by foreign preference, but his role was also delineated by external expectation. As Khatib noted:

> Abbas' position in Palestinian politics is based on pursuing negotiations to secure a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, and he is perceived by the Palestinian public as fulfilling mainly that role. If Israel has no intention to talk to him and will even withdraw from parts of occupied territory without doing so, then, from a Palestinian perspective, why is he needed? (Khatib 2009b).[42]

Abbas in turn has used the explicit nature of his reliance on international political support to his advantage, using his resignation as a pawn to improve his bargaining position on numerous occasions (International Crisis Group 2010:10). US pressure on Abbas not to pursue a resolution demanding UN Security Council action on the UN human rights council report (The Goldstone report) on war crimes in Gaza, or international pressures for continuing negotiations with Israel, illustrated the extent to which Abbas was susceptible to prioritizing external demands over popular demands. Other leadership decisions also appeared to be made in response to external expectations, including, for example, the appointment of Salam Fayyad as Minister of Finance and then Prime Minister. As journalist Khalid Amayreh pointedly notes:

> Abbas on several occasions suggested that he had no choice but to retain Fayyad as prime minister since dismissing him wouldn't bode well with Western powers that pay the salaries of tens of thousands of PA civil servants and security personnel and generally keep the PA financially afloat. One PA official, who is close to Abbas, summarised the whole issue in a few words: 'He who pays the piper, decides the tune' (Amayreh 2009a:n.p.).

At the same time, it is important to note that external and domestic demands on Palestinian leadership do not necessarily conflict. It is equally important to note, however, that where interests coincide, motivations for those demands may differ substantially. For example, both the demand for elections to be held in 2005 and 2006, and the long-term demand for reform of the Palestinian Authority were issues on which Palestinian and international demands were in agreement. Indeed, public opinion on issues such as reform of the PA had long preceded their articulation as external demands.[43] Significantly, many Palestinians felt that their demands were only taken into account *if* they concurred with external pressures.[44] Where leadership was resistant to demands articulated by both external and domestic parties, as in the case of demands for reform, resistant leaders have resorted to using the external demands to discredit internal demands, as noted by Sayigh and Shikaki:

> The process of reform became highly politicized, as those who stood to lose the most as a result of its implementation sought to resist it by presenting it as an externally-driven, and hence illegitimate effort intended to weaken and replace the elected

> President and his loyal supporters in the PA bureaucracy. Moreover, Arafat sought to portray reforms initiated by Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] as hurting Palestinian national interests […]. The legitimacy of reform was questioned by a growing number of people in the political elite, particularly within Fatah (including 'young guard' members). These powerful elements sought to label Abu Mazen 'disloyal' to both Arafat and Fatah. However, opinion polls indicated that public support for reforms remained solid (Sayigh and Shikaki 2004:7).

The security-sector focus of the Palestinian Authority,[45] specifically its compliance with external demands regarding structure, training, size, personnel and overall cooperation with Israel, reflected perhaps the strongest and most criticized area of external influence on policy direction.[46] Without elaborating on the question in detail,[47] PA compliance in the implementation of security sector reform was a cornerstone of the cooperation under which financial and political support to the PA was provided by the international community. Phase II of the Roadmap promised Palestinians 'the active support of the Quartet and the broader international community in establishing an independent, viable, state' (US Department of State 2003). In exchange for this support, Palestinians were required to consolidate the security apparatus 'into three branches reporting to an empowered Interior Minister' and resume effective security cooperation with Israel, to be undertaken 'with the participation of US security officials'. They were also required to reform civil institutions, and security structures leadership were to 'act […] decisively against terror' (Parsons 2005:300).

The perception of the role of PA security forces as enforcers of Israeli security has been a persistent source of public concern and alienation, with Abbas taking the brunt of criticism for his role in this cooperation.[48] At the same time, Abbas' focus on security, made possible with the help of international donor funds, has seen significant improvements for domestic law and order enforcement, a development that has been appreciated by the public. Abbas' challenge has continuously been to weigh competing public demands, in this case the need for law and order against the desire for values such as sovereignty, non-interference, the right to self-defence and the preservation of national pride.

In negotiations – more so in the question of the continuation of negotiations per se than in the content of negotiations – trade-offs between external demands and domestic public opinion have been made regularly, at increasingly high cost to the Palestinian leadership as peace initiatives have failed to deliver results. The demand for ongoing negotiations has been central to the rationale for donor funding. Not only was pressure exerted on the leadership to pursue negotiations without preconditions, but both financial and political support were seen as essential mechanisms to contain public discontent with the apparent lack of progress. However, the cost to Palestinian leadership has been high, both in terms of perceptions of failed policy, as well as in terms of impact on internal fragmentation. 'Young guard' leader Qaddura Faris expressed a Fatah internal view on the external dictate on leadership when suggesting:

> This kind of leadership thinks about what is suitable for the Americans. If the Americans will have a bad reaction, then they will care, if the Israelis will for example stop the money for the Authority [in remittances], they mind. At the same time they think [about] public opinion, [that we may] lose by continuing these bad negotiations. But [Fatah's leadership] will tell the people that without these continuing negotiations [they] will have no salary, that the economic situation will be a catastrophe. People

> care about their interest and their families […]. Hamas can win the public with aggressive messages against the occupation or against the Americans because they have an alternative. Maybe they will receive money from Iran or Islamic Organisations. But we have only one door to receive money. We have to acquiesce to the Americans, to not make them angry, and to care that Israelis will not have any reaction, and the Europeans. Those that finance affect the decision of the Authority much more than public opinion (Faris 2008).

There was indeed broad public support for a negotiated settlement as proposed by Abbas.[49] But after successive failures of Fatah-led PLO–Israel negotiations, calls for negotiations to be conditional upon prior undertakings such as a stop to settlement-building had been a regular demand since the beginning of the Annapolis negotiations. Whenever Abbas maintained an insistence on a settlement freeze, he found himself supported by this position in public opinion polls.[50] Neglect of these demands, however, was interpreted by the public as signs of dependence and weakness, met increasingly with sarcasm and spite.[51]

Abbas' repeated yielding to 'unprecedented international pressure to negotiate' (Reuters 2010:n.p.) undermined his domestic standing in the face of increasing public scepticism towards the PLO's negotiations strategy.[52] The at times blatant disregard of domestic opinion, illustrated for example by US pressure for an unconditional return to negotiations, suggested that the US viewed limited responsiveness by the Palestinian leadership to its domestic public as necessary – if not beneficial – for positive negotiations outcomes, a view that neglected the need for agreements to be enforceable, not only militarily, but through public consent. International Crisis Group analysis suggested:

> A leadership equipped with a clearer vision, more democratic and more attuned to popular sentiment, could limit negotiators' flexibility and capacity for concession. It also would be more credible, legitimate and capable of carrying its constituency. Outside actors, the US and Israel among them, might not like all the answers Fatah ultimately provides. But they would be better than no answers at all (International Crisis Group 2009a:ii).

Abbas' backing down to US demands increasingly alienated the Palestinian public.[53] In the considerations of Fatah's leadership, domestic opinion has been regularly outweighed by the need to secure not only the ability to govern, which depends on foreign aid, but the political support seen as important to secure political survival. Brown suggested that Abbas was seen as 'so dependent on the United States and on the West generally, fiscally and diplomatically, that he will cooperate' with the US demand to continue negotiating (Brown 2010a:n.p.).

Trade-offs for political survival

In addition to Fatah's quest for external political support for Palestinian national aspirations, Fatah also stood to benefit directly from external political support intended to bolster its dominant position in Palestinian politics. As the preferred and indeed only major political force viewed by the international community as a partner for peace, the continuation of Fatah's authority as governing party was considered to be a necessary precondition for the pursuit of a two-state solution and the maintenance of relative stability and calm. The weakening of its

opponent Hamas was seen as a precondition to ensuring the continuation and eventual success of a peaceful solution to the conflict with Israel.

International political support was targeted at doing just that. Support for Fatah included technical assistance and training[54] and military planning and expertise[55] along with political and diplomatic rhetoric aimed at supporting Fatah's electoral prospects by threatening donor fund withdrawal and political isolation in the case of a Hamas election victory.[56] While external demands could be used to justify unpopular policies or decisions, they also served to bolster Fatah's dominance. Fatah's reluctance to come to a reconciliation agreement with Hamas exemplified the utility of external demands in favour of securing and expanding Fatah's power base after electoral defeat. Reconciliation against a US veto[57] would indeed have substantially undermined Fatah's ability to govern, as funds would have been withdrawn.[58] It would also have required Fatah to voluntarily cede some of its powers to Hamas in the West Bank, something that many within Fatah were unable to contemplate. Similarly, any power-sharing arrangement could have provided Hamas with an opportunity to demonstrate successful governance,[59] a scenario not welcomed by Fatah's leadership.

The fact that the Palestinian public was well aware of the constraints placed upon the PA may have served to minimize pressures for greater responsiveness.[60] However, public demand for reconciliation had been so overwhelming that neither leadership could openly admit its preference for the status quo over a reconciliation agreement.[61] Privately however, many within Fatah have admitted that reconciliation was, at the time, not in Fatah's interest. As such, international, and particularly US pressure provided a convenient rationale for lack of responsiveness to strong public demand.

The same may be true of demands for a return to the rule of law and the institutions of governance that would provide checks and balances on government. The suspension of elections, parliament (in effect), and dismissal of the Hamas-dominated elected government by Abbas in June 2007 was not seen as ideal by either political party. However, while this lack of accountability mattered to Palestinian leaders, Palestinian political analyst and academic George Giacaman suggested that 'the leadership is weighing international pressure against popular pressure and it seems the former takes priority' (interview with Giacaman, quoted in Karmi 2010:n.p.). With similar effect, US demands for the PA to contain Hamas' influence in the West Bank militarily (International Crisis Group 2006a:30) were heeded despite strong Palestinian disdain for such a step.[62] In both the case of reconciliation and that of containment of Hamas, external pressures served as disincentives to responding to public while coinciding with the movement's own short-term interests of maintenance of power and political survival.

There is, of course, no requirement for an even-handed approach by the international community towards domestic Palestinian actors, nor is the boycott of a party that has failed to commit to donor-set principles without precedent. What makes the question of political support for the benefit of Fatah's survival of interest to the question of responsiveness is the long-term impact of such support, weakening the domestic standing of the partner whose survival the support was meant to secure.

Civil society participation and responsiveness in the Palestinian

context

The important role of civil society in supporting processes of democratization is well recognized.[63] Palestinian civil society has received abundant scholarly attention.[64] This section therefore only outlines the specific contribution of civil society to the creation of pressures for responsiveness, providing background for a more detailed assessment of the role of polling organizations in this process, as presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

The Israeli occupation and its impact on all aspects of Palestinian life has created a highly politicized public. In addition, domestic issues (albeit closely related to the conflict with Israel), such as the conduct of Palestinian security forces, reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, or governance reform, have become matters of high importance in Palestinian public debate. Wlezien and Soroka (2007:800) considered public responsiveness – the level of attention, paid by the public to political decision – to be a prerequisite for leadership responsiveness. High levels of public attention to an issue of domestic importance are expected to create pressures for high levels of leadership responsiveness. However, for civil society organizations to fulfil this role, a number of preconditions need to be present. The 'Report of the independent task force on strengthening Palestinian public institutions' has outlined these requirements in the Palestinian context:

> Public institutions should cooperate with and be responsive to the institutions of civil society, including nongovernmental organisations, social associations, private sector actors, and political parties. For this requirement to be met, it is imperative that policymaking be open and predictable, especially in matters relating to public resources and resource management. It is also essential that full freedom of association and participation, freedom of information and expression, and respect for social and cultural rights be ensured […]. Civil society would be able to question and criticize the appropriateness of government actions. Responsive governance requires popular powers to select and remove political representatives through a guaranteed electoral process (Sayigh and Shikaki 1999:31).

The ability of civil society to create the types of pressures that translate public attentiveness into public pressures for responsiveness has been affected by the Oslo process and the establishment of the PA in a number of ways. Mass-based popular organizations had played an important mobilizational and organizational role during the first Intifada, raising hopes for civil society making a strong contribution to the democratization process. However, the establishment of the PA and subsequent funding shifts from NGOs to the PA[65] affected the ability of NGOs to represent the public. NGO programme priorities began to change from charity and aid to other areas, in line with donor funding opportunities and changing opportunities for work, with NGO service provision being gradually replaced by services provided through the new PA institutions (Parsons 2005:177). As a result, NGOs were criticized for their lack of responsiveness to public demand.[66] Their choice of campaign issues was seen as being donor-driven, moving from a relief focus towards areas of work such as democratization and civil society support which reflected the changing priorities of donor countries. These changes weakened and fragmented the civil society sector (Hanafi and Tabar 2004:215) and impacted on the ability of NGOs to represent Palestinian grassroots. The role of civil society organizations as contributors to a nationalist agenda was marginalized by the emerging national authority (Parsons 2005:178), further

weakening the representative function of a sector that had traditionally been dominated by small left-wing political parties. Some analysts argued that the main contribution of NGOs to the decision-making process post-Oslo was their ability to supply personnel, trained within the civil society sector, for the emerging governing institutions and some leadership positions (Kassis 2001:46).

While Hilal noted the contribution of NGOs to 'circulating the globalized discourse that elevates notions of democracy, human rights, human development and popular participation', he concluded that 'the impact of Palestinian NGOs on political democratic change has not been noticeable despite their active presence since 1994' (Hilal 2003:167). Furthermore, the shift in funding, from NGOs to the newly established Palestinian Authority,

> led to a system where social forces were subordinated to the emerging state through a strategy of co-optation. Overall, society was weakened and this reduced the prospects for the development of democratic structures that could hold the political elite accountable to society (Hanafi and Tabar 2004:220).

This is not to say that Palestinian civil society has been politically ineffective overall. Civil society organizations such as NGOs and professional associations have played important roles in creating a vibrant culture of political and social activism, have attracted the attention of international audiences for their lobbying and were vital in providing staff and expertise to, for example, the Madrid conference and other political initiatives. In the area of welfare, they have continued to play important roles in filling the gaps left by service provision of the PA in areas such as health, agriculture and education. However, their influence and agendas have been consistently subordinated to interpretations of the national interest by the leadership of Fatah and the PLO and donor priorities.

In addition, the division between secular and Islamic organizations, each working within their own frames of reference without substantial coordination or acknowledgment of each other, has weakened opportunities for the sector overall.[67] Islamic charities, which primarily focused on direct assistance, were increasingly subject to political pressures which culminated in the closure, seizure of assets and dismissal of boards of West Bank organizations linked to Hamas from 2008. These restrictions were symptomatic of receding political freedom and rights of opposition-affiliated groups in the West Bank and were reciprocated in the Gaza Strip by Hamas' clampdown on Fatah-affiliated groups. Arrest campaigns against opposition-affiliated persons in both of the Palestinian territories have severely limited participation opportunities (International Crisis Group 2008b, 2008c). The closure of media outlets (for example the temporary closure of a PFLP radio station and the Al Jazeera offices in the West Bank) indicated a narrowing of opportunities for free and open participation. It is within this context that the role of Palestinian polling organizations took up the public voice where Palestinian NGOs might have failed (Rabah 2008).

To sum up, the combination of rentier economic dependence and the perceived need for external political support has created an inherent imbalance in the representational function of leadership, caught between external and domestic demands. Public perceptions of leaders' subjugation to external dictate has weakened the relationship between leaders and their public, exacerbating the vulnerability of leaders. Poll data on popularity and legitimacy have reflected such vulnerability and the threat they constituted for the political future of those leaders.

Perceptions of lack of responsiveness to domestic opinion were widespread, both inside Fatah and outside the movement. Internal fragmentation and loss of mobilizational capacity further limited resilience of the movement to counter its dual vulnerability, forcing leadership into a careful balancing act of trade-offs between external demands and domestic discontent. Pollster and analyst Jamil Rabah expressed the fragility of this situation aptly:

> Abu Mazen can be very popular today and can lose a lot tomorrow. So he needs to be very sensitive, needs to listen and care about the people, but that could be at the expense of his objectives and strategic vision, which of course he cannot [allow] because he has pressure from the Israelis, the US, the EU. He needs money to pay for salaries in Gaza, so what can he do? That's where it is a 'Catch 22' situation (Rabah 2008).

Similarly, Andoni viewed Fatah's dilemma as a near-impossible balancing act, in which,

> in order to keep itself relevant on a regional and international level [Fatah] would need to project itself as a 'moderate' force committed to a non-existing peace process, thus risking the further demise of popular legitimacy. To salvage its legitimacy and unity it would need to disengage from the Palestinian Authority's compliance to American and Israeli terms that aim at turning the movement into a malleable political tool and an enforcer of Israeli security (Andoni 2009:n.p.).

The negative impact of the perception of Fatah's leadership as clients of external forces can hardly be overstated. International security analyst Dominic Moran suggested that 'any durable popular legitimacy for the rump Fatah leadership relies on the progressive severing of clientelist relations with the US and Israel […] and the ability to win tangible irreversible gains in peace negotiations with the Israeli government' (Moran 2009:n.p.).

Within this context of vulnerability, the civil society sector constituted a social force with the potential to exacerbate pressures on leadership by articulating public discontent and galvanizing it into action. However, mirroring the PA's dependence on external funding, Palestinian NGOs have similarly been dependent and competition for funds affected their ability to work together cooperatively to represent the public and create pressures for responsiveness. The arrested state of democratization limited the ability of civil society to voice dissent.

The Palestinian polling sector – as part of the civil society sector – took an approach towards political leadership that sought to influence by way of information and analysis. By creating an instrument to assess public opinion, polling organizations have offered leaders the opportunity to assess and respond to public opinion. They have also created opportunities for other civil society organizations to strengthen their own voice by providing them with data that may back up their demands. Whether and how leaders have utilized this offer will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

LEGITIMATION AND RESPONSIVENESS IN PALESTINIAN POLITICS

As the dominant party within the PLO, Fatah historically saw itself as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and, by nature and merit, the ruling party. The 2006 PLC election victory by Hamas was difficult for Fatah leaders to comprehend, and nearly impossible to accept. As a foreign analyst observed: 'The idea that the people should have the audacity to vote out its natural representative, this possibility did not exist to their way of thinking' (Anon 2008h). Responses to the defeat varied from blame to soul-searching. A senior Fatah official recalled: 'After the 2006 elections, they started to blame the people, [saying] that the people are stupid, that they were cheated by Hamas' (Anon 2008f). However, clearly audible were also a multitude of voices from within Fatah who were critical of the movement's conduct. Some saw Fatah's election defeat as a watershed, an opportunity for the movement to re-evaluate its relationship with the public and to embark on strengthening and rebuilding that relationship. They were aware that the relationship between movement and public had become strained and alienated, and that the perception of a lack of responsiveness among Fatah's historic leadership was widespread. The legitimacy of Fatah's historic leadership was being questioned openly.

It is suggested here that within a radically changed political environment post-Oslo, the continued validity of previous modes of legitimation could no longer be taken for granted. This chapter examines changing perceptions of legitimate leadership, requirements for renewed legitimacy and how these affected the incentive structure for responsiveness. Two issues in particular are of relevance when assessing the impact of a legitimacy crisis on incentives for responsiveness: the role of mobilizational legitimation in the absence of electoral legitimation opportunities, and the impact of an undecided state of thinking among the public about the bases of legitimacy.

David Beetham's work on *The Legitimation of Power* (1991) offers a rational framework and language that is well suited to examining legitimacy in the context of transition to democracy. Beetham discusses legitimation as a process, rather than a state, requiring the public expression of consent, given electorally or mobilizationally, and is therefore particularly suited to exploring the link between legitimacy, elections, mobilization and responsiveness in the context of arrested non-state democratization and leadership crisis. Beetham's definition of legitimacy combines legal, belief-based and expressive/mobilizational indicators for legitimacy as against the prevailing Weberian definition which views legitimacy as the belief in legitimacy by relevant social agents. He proposes an examination of legitimacy that views the existence of

demonstrable evidence of expressed consent to the power relationship as one of three components on which legitimacy may be based. The other two components are defined as: the legality of the power relation (asking whether power is valid in terms of the law, for example in the way in which power is acceded to, passed on, and exercised within the law); and the justifiability of the law in terms of the beliefs and values established in the society (for example in terms of the belief in the role of elections or an other alternative, as a valid mode of giving consent).

According to Beetham, public expression of consent may confer or confirm the legitimacy of a power relationship either electorally through the act of casting the vote, or mobilizationally through public acclamation, participation and other publicly expressed forms of consent as appropriate within the conventions of the particular society. Expressed consent refers to the interaction between governing and governed, the 'form and extent of political participation, and the way in which the party system is arranged to give effect to it' (Beetham 1991:159). It is this *active* requirement for legitimacy which appears to be particularly useful in understanding the legitimacy crisis in Palestinian leadership. The term 'legitimation', adopted from Beetham in this research, refers to *acts of consent* that confer legitimacy on the powerful 'because they constitute public expression by the subordination of their consent to the power relationship and their subordinate position within it' (Beetham 1991:91).[1] The term delegitimation 'denotes a process whereby those whose consent is necessary to the legitimation of government act in a manner that indicates their withdrawal of consent' (Beetham 1991:209).

Modes of legitimation

In the electoral mode of consent, consent is expressed as the act of voting. In the mobilizational or expressive mode of consent, acts of consent may take one of two forms: expressed consent by participation in consultations or negotiations with the powerful – here, the public is not provided with leadership selection choices (such as in a monarchy), but the subordinate's observance of the negotiated terms is regarded as a public recognition of leadership which confers legitimacy (Beetham 1991:93). Second is expressed consent by public acclamation. This type of consent describes the public expression of support for leadership at, for example, public rallies, demonstrations and the like (Beetham 1991:95). Where a movement is able to harness and maintain the enthusiasm and commitment of a mass following, typically infused by ideology and charismatic leadership, the prestige and authority of its leaders is enhanced.[2]

The modes of consent Beetham describes signify different types of commitment, undertaken by the public in relation to their leadership. Electoral mobilization implies a contractual obligation, a 'commitment' to accept election results, and the underlying legal order, as legitimate. It confers legitimacy for the duration of the electoral term, unless disrupted. In contrast, acclamatory or mass mobilizational modes of consent do not entail such a promise or obligation of continued support in respect to the future. For Beetham 'this means not only that [consent] has continually to be demonstrated, but that its normative or legitimating effect depends entirely upon the quality of the action undertaken' (Beetham 1991:95). He notes that the expressive mode of consent is typically effective when linked to an ideological programme or cause, while it tends to degenerate once enthusiasm for the cause wanes, unless revived through some form of cultural revolution or revivalist campaign.

Beetham suggests that progress through the developmental stages of legitimation is generally not reversible. Although in reality, modes of consent coexist and complement each other, the changes observed within each of the components of legitimacy (for example the development from the expressive to the contractual mode; from conventional to legal regulation of power relations; from the paternalist to consultative determination of the common interest) denote a hierarchical order of development 'in the sense that once a later stage or level is reached in each case, it is impossible to regress to the earlier' (Beetham 1991:98). While a political system may in practice revert to a lower stage, once a higher level had been reached, legitimacy cannot be restored on the basis of an earlier or lower principle.

Finally, Beetham suggested that the mode of legitimation on which political institutions rely has implications for the role and conduct of those institutions and their relations *vis-à-vis* the public. A party that relies for its legitimacy primarily on the electoral mode of consent places greater importance on preparation of policies and leaders for electoral choice and approval. A party that relies more heavily on expressed consent (which, in lieu of a contractual bond requires the continuing renewal of such support) needs to devote greater attention and resources to the mobilization of political activity on which the party's legitimacy depends. To maximize electoral chances, both roles would be fulfilled, with one taking organizational priority over the other.

Mobilizational legitimation post-Oslo

The examination of mobilization as a source of legitimation appears to be particularly relevant in the context of a national liberation movement which had defined itself historically through popular resistance. Varying over time, mobilization for public participation in the nationalist struggle took a range of expressions from armed struggle to non-armed forms of resistance such as civil disobedience and boycotts, participation in demonstrations, meetings, and the development of a vibrant and diverse civil society sector which contributed to national resistance through the provision of services and support to the community.

Referring specifically to the role of armed struggle in this process, Sayigh noted:

> In retrospect, the armed struggle had allowed the founders of Fatah, the PFLP, and other guerrilla groups to achieve mass mobilisation among the scattered Palestinians and to integrate them politically into the single, over-arching national framework of the PLO as a state-in-exile (Sayigh 2008:5).

The ability to mobilize was premised on the existence of a high degree of consensus around the strategies of resistance among PLO factions and the Palestinian public. The legitimacy derived from the ability to mobilize public support for the agreed-upon strategies coexisted with legitimacy based on mandate that was either derived from elections (which were codified but irregularly held), or an appointment as allowed under the PLO's and Fatah's constitutions under extraordinary circumstances (Fatah Constitution 1968). Legitimacy was further enhanced by personal qualities of leaders (such as charisma) which served to strengthen their mobilizational capacity by providing the public with an inspiring example personifying the revolutionary strategy. Elections were regarded as acts of defiance conveying a superior type of legitimacy which, due to the circumstances, was not strictly limited to a defined 'term' or mandate. Alongside, mobilizational legitimation provided legitimacy defined only by one's ability, character and belief in the underlying cause.

In this context, discussion of sources of legitimacy must consider the effect that Oslo's 'mandate for social demobilization' (Parsons 2005:175) had on Palestinian leadership legitimacy, specifically in light of the parallel loss of opportunities for the renewal of legitimacy through postponed elections. It also considers how these changes impacted on the incentive structure for responsiveness.

Importantly, not the Oslo process in itself, but its failure, affected in fundamental ways the opportunity for Palestinian leaders to rely on mobilization as a means to confirm their legitimacy. The failure of the Oslo process spelled the end of a general consensus on a political programme and strategy and inaugurated a bipolar political environment of pro- and anti-Oslo sentiment. A successful Oslo process may have offered leadership the opportunity to shift mobilization effectively from an expression *against* to an expression *for* – for example in support of the new state-building projects. However, the failure of Oslo on the ground, along with a dearth of alternative vision, deprived leaders and parties of mobilizational ability for a coherent strategy. With resistance no longer permissible as an avenue for popular mobilization, leaders were required to either rely on their previously accepted, but arguably expired PLO or Fatah electoral legitimacy, or rely on electoral legitimation conferred through the newly codified electoral processes under Oslo.

Having raised expectations for elections to become the primary mode of leadership legitimation also raised expectations for a similar process to take place inside Fatah in order to renew the mandate of leaders who had not faced electoral contest since their elections into the FCC in 1989. The stalling of both national and internal electoral processes prevented a shift to a new paradigm in which legitimation relied primarily on elections.

With the expiration of electoral mandate, and in the absence of fresh elections, a fall-back on mobilizational legitimation was the obvious response to a developing legitimacy crisis. Many of Fatah's leaders had experience in mobilizing the public, either for a common cause, or for supporting a leader, based, in the past, on what Beetham described as an enabling belief system or political cause around which the party can rally support. Both the PLO and Fatah had been able to mobilize the public because of their ability to outline strategies for liberation and self-determination that, though vague and changing over time, were seen to be feasible avenues for achieving Palestinian national aspirations.

This powerful motivator for public support of Fatah's strategy was undermined by the divisions that were created by Oslo regarding the feasibility of the suggested strategy, and the failure of the peace process to bring about tangible results. The effective Fatah–PA merger deprived the movement of the opportunity to maintain a separate resistance identity and created the perception that the movement's members were 'no longer fighters (*munadilin*) but clerks (*muwazzafin*) (former Arafat confidant, cited in International Crisis Group 2009a:4 fn. 20).

As a consequence, Fatah's ability to re-invigorate the kind of belief system, programme or action plan, able to provide a point of identification for its cadres and the public at large, had diminished. The subsequent loss of internal cohesion, causing factionalism and fragmentation, demonstrated to the public an inability to unite behind a belief system. Many within Fatah recognized this as the main reason for a reduction in mobilizational capacity. As a mid-level Fatah leader expressed in frustration:

> I spoke to Abu Ala two weeks ago [December 2008] and I asked him 'Where are we

> going?' He told me 'I don't know where we are going'. Salam Fayyad is the PA, not Fatah, so the PA is not Fatah. Abbas is not interested in Fatah. There is no one most powerful in Fatah – there's no Arafat, so Fatah consists of many roads now. They taught us resistance in Fatah. After Oslo we thought that we were at the beginning to the Palestinian State. After 15 years of PA, there is no state, no Jerusalem, settlements, 11,000 prisoners, checkpoints, no work, no safety, no hope. The leadership can't do anything. There's no money. Abu Ala told me that there's no money in Fatah now, no power. The money is in the PA with Salam Fayyad. We need a national programme, but we don't have a national programme now. If you want to go to a demonstration, Fatah says 'No'. If you want to go to clashes, Fatah says 'No'. So, I am Fatah, what can I do? I can't go to Hamas! (Anon 2009b).

A loss of confidence in Fatah's strategy, and an absence of opportunities for its cadres and the public to remain meaningfully involved, contrasted with Hamas' continuing mobilizational potential, described by the same Fatah leader when recounting his recent observations in an Israeli prison:

> Now I go to prison and this is what I see: [there's] nothing to talk [about] in Fatah! What can we talk about? They talk about food, smokes, TV, mobiles. And then I see Hamas in prison, and I see that Hamas are now just like Fatah used to be: learning, languages, sport, praying, they are one group. In Fatah, there is a Nablus group, a Tulkarem group, a Jenin group, a Hebron group, and no unity (Anon 2009b).

Further debilitating for the movement's mobilizational capacity were the negative perceptions of the personal qualities of movement leaders. Allegations of corruption and cronyism (AMAN 2010), perceptions of senility (not to mention incontinence) (Anon 2010d), anti-democratic behaviour, distance from the public, and obstruction of future elections (International Crisis Groups 2006a:4), eroded the public's sense of the leadership's personal integrity to varying degrees. Beetham elaborated on the impact of leaders' personal qualities on legitimation in the mobilizational mode:

> Degeneration into mere self-interest does not undermine legitimation in the contractual mode […] since its normative force stems from the action itself, not from the quality of the motives, or the degree of enthusiasm, with which it is undertaken. [It] survives in societies where self-interest is paramount. [For the *mobilisational mode of consent*, however] because of the need for continuous mobilisation, leaders who possess the capacity for arousing mass enthusiasm have a particular place in this mode of legitimation. […] the effectiveness of participation as a legitimating process depends on the commitment of those involved to a cause over and above that of their own personal advancement (Beetham 1991:95).

The charismatic personality of Arafat had been an important mobilizational asset to Fatah, even as the movement failed to achieve its programmatic objectives. His commitment to the cause had been regarded as unquestionable. However, other members of Fatah's leadership were not similarly spared from criticism. Their image as corrupt and self-interested was contrasted with the image of Hamas leaders as clean and uncorrupted (Faris 2010). Public perceptions of self-serving elites thus directly constrained Fatah's mobilizational ability. To compound public

perceptions, members of Fatah's historic leadership actively worked to limit the role of younger local leadership with more significant ties to community and greater mobilizational capacity, such as Marwan Barghouthi, the leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. His popularity was on par with, and at times exceeded that of Mahmoud Abbas, and his strategies of armed resistance alongside negotiations enjoyed considerable popular backing.[3] Thus, criticism of Fatah's historic leadership came from inside the movement, as well as from the outside.

Prominent Palestinian analyst and head of the Palestinian think-tank PASSIA, Mehdi Abdul Hadi, expressed this utter disillusionment with the historic leadership:

> [These are] 15 impotent cardinals over 75, doing absolutely nothing, they don't have a constituency whatsoever. They are not retired, they are retarded. They speak all the time about the '70s […]. They are waiting for their salary and endorsement from Abu Mazen and the man who signs the cheques. Political will [to translate united public opinion into action] is missing (Abdel Hadi 2009).

These sentiments were also reflected in public opinion polls. In a survey conducted by FAFO in 2009 prior to Fatah's Sixth General Conference, 87 per cent of respondents expressed the opinion that it was time for Fatah to change its political leadership (FAFO 2009). An International Crisis Group report noted: 'The movement found itself without an address at the top, with its highest bodies empty shells that neither met regularly nor set policy. Nor did it possess an effective organizational structure capable of mobilizing supporters and maintaining discipline among members' (International Crisis Group 2009a:4).

This is not to say that Fatah's vision of achieving its nationalist objectives through negotiations did not offer opportunities for mobilizational legitimation in the absence of elections. A successful Oslo process may have enabled the 'pro-Oslo' leadership to effectively mobilize the public around the new state-building project. According to Parsons, a number of early alternative mobilization strategies, attempted under the auspices of the PA, failed due to the internal, rather than external constraints, and a lack of commitment. Parsons describes the establishment of the Land and Settlement Confrontation Committee as an unsuccessful attempt at mobilization against settlement building, signifying 'the limits of the PA's institutional response to the accelerated colonization project to which it had attached itself' (Parsons 2005:207). Fatah's new 2009 programme and subsequent PA initiatives represented attempts to provide a focus and strategy for mobilization towards state building.[4] But in the absence of visible progress and presence of visible signs of regression in the form of increased settlement activity, movement restrictions, and a shrinking civic space, positive mass mobilization for a state-building strategy under these circumstances was going to be an uphill struggle for mobilizers.

Compounding the external context of demobilization was Fatah's neglect of its local cadres, which affected internal Fatah communication between leadership and organizations such as its youth, women, camp, and regional representatives who in the past had been effective mobilizing agents. This process, begun under Arafat, was perpetuated by Abbas' increasing reliance on the PA, rather than Fatah, for an effective alliance: 'As Fatah's institutions broke down and its cadres were demobilized, the PA offered an alternative structure' (interview with former Arafat advisor, International Crisis Group 2009a:21 fn. 148).

With only limited opportunities for mobilization either *for* or *against*, opportunities for the display of public expression of consent able to confirm or confer legitimacy were limited. In

contrast, the Islamic Movement had maintained its ability to utilize both modes of legitimation effectively – retaining its mobilizational ability through presenting a coherent nationalist/religious, cultural and socio-economic programme, complemented by electoral legitimacy, both based on Hamas-internal processes and as a result of its participation in the 2006 elections – aided by the effective portrayal of its leadership as united. A Nablus-based Fatah leader noted: 'Arafat used to say "I don't need elections to give me legitimacy; I am legitimate because I lead the struggle against occupation". Now Hamas has all kinds of legitimacy, the kind that comes from elections and the kind that comes from leading the struggle' (cited in International Crisis Group 2009b:16 fn. 163).

Legitimation and responsiveness

Leadership responsiveness is a prerequisite for mobilization. The most important contribution towards mobilization is arguably made by leadership providing the public with a sense of empowerment and with the experience that individual and community involvement matters and public voices are heard. As such, leadership responsiveness facilitates the ability of leaders to mobilize, which in turn confers legitimacy on the leader. Palestinian recent history had provided examples of responsiveness playing this role. During the early years of the first Intifada, the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) provided members of the public with a range of opportunities to actively participate in various levels of decision making, and to experience the effectiveness of public involvement. Optimistic observers described political conduct during the early years as characterized by,

> relationships of solidarity and mutual support that have been built under severe stress, the proximity of the political leadership to the grass roots, the egalitarianism in social and economic behaviour, the democratic and consensus-building character of decision-making, the fierce sense of identity and political awareness (Abed 1989:57).

Expectations were raised that 'these social and political behavioral traits can be expected to imbue a future Palestinian society, freed from the oppressive burdens of occupation, with greater social cohesion and political vitality' (Abed 1989:57). Abed's expectation of a lasting impact of the type of political conduct he described during the early years of the Intifada may not have been realized overall. However, this research refers to the political conduct during the pre-1990 Intifada – one characterized by proximity between leadership and the public – because it provided a learning opportunity for both leaders of the uprising and the general public alike with regard to the legitimizing effect of responsiveness. The early experience illustrated that in the absence of electoral legitimacy, the legitimacy enjoyed by the clandestine leadership of the Intifada was conferred mobilizationally. Glenn E. Robinson observed that, in order to mobilize the public, 'the new elite had little choice but to incorporate multiple voices into the making and execution of decisions' (Robinson 1998:15). Consent (required for legitimation as per Beetham's definition) was expressed in the extent of voluntary subjugation to the leadership's programme and requests for active popular participation:

> The demands of the uprising have not only been clear; there has also been a consensus around them […]. Through its political loyalty to the PLO and its local presence, it has been possible for the leadership to interact creatively with the masses and their local

> committees. Because of these factors, and given that the local leadership of the national movement is also in harmony with the Palestinian national consensus, it has been possible for it to work effectively. It has played the role of field command, in both its political and non-political aspects (JMCC n.d.:n.p.).

The responsive relationship between a locally based leadership and the public during those early years of the Intifada was born out of the coincidence of a range of factors including a 'deep sense of resentment at the indignities of their treatment by Israel' (Bowker 2003:48), particularly prevalent among refugee populations, to which local leadership responded. Alimi suggested that the outbreak of the Intifada was brought about by the coincidence of a unified vision and strategy with a Palestinian shared perception of the ripeness of conditions for collective action (Alimi 2004:n.p.).[5] This created the opportunity for an overlapping of the interests of leadership, social activists and community-based organizations.

Whereas the need to mobilize the public had created strong incentives for responsiveness during the early years of the Intifada, these incentives were gradually eroded by other considerations. By March 1990, the UNLU had effectively collapsed and the PLO was generally in control on the ground (Bowker 2003:49). With some of the earlier achievements of coherence and responsive decision making reversed, decision making was centralized and appeals for voluntary compliance gave way to at times violent enforcement of directives.[6] The externally located PLO was keen to regain control and initiative from the Intifada's local leadership. With the signing of the 1994 Oslo I and 1995 Oslo II Agreements and the subsequent return of most of the exiled leadership, the need to demobilize the resistance took away this incentive altogether. In its stead, elections were expected to renew the legitimacy of Fatah's leadership.

Aside from the effects of Oslo, a number of other factors contributed to declining mobilizational potential over the following decades. These included the waning prospects for improvement,[7] the exhaustion factor,[8] and the assessment of high risk associated with the consequences of mobilization.[9] As a result, the potential for mobilization – as an alternative legitimation strategy – had faded:

> The Palestinian public is not just in a state of despair. It is, for now at least, thoroughly demobilized; the grassroots political and social structures that nourished the first Intifada withered during the Oslo years and no longer exist. [The population is] suspended between on the one hand, anger at the occupation and resentment at its leadership, and on the other, a passivity born of the sense that nothing ordinary people do matters (International Crisis Group 2009a:26).

Twenty years on from the brief experience of responsive mobilizational leadership during the first Intifada, perceptions of Fatah leadership's responsiveness were overwhelmingly negative (Karmi 2010); indeed, not a single interview respondent suggested anything to the contrary. Both Fatah and non-Fatah commentators alike described a situation of the leadership's complete neglect of public sentiment in decision making: 'What affects [Fatah's historic leadership] is the second group in Fatah, not public opinion [referring to those inside Fatah, generally in positions within the PA, who are trying to reform the movement]. They know they lost public opinion' (Abdel Hadi 2009). A Palestinian pollster described a prevailing attitude of complete disregard for the public: 'When those guys were elected, they relaxed, they got legitimized and that's it, *khalas*, no more public, and not thinking about the next elections' (Anon 2008b).

The ‘state of thinking’ about legitimacy

Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007:20) noted that ‘until society reaches a consensus on what constitutes authority in the new era, the bases of legitimate domination will hang in the balance’. This section examines how the absence of a social consensus – an undecided state of thinking about legitimacy – impacted the incentive structure for responsiveness.

The Oslo process triggered a gradual process of rethinking what *should* constitute legitimate bases of authority. As discussed, mobilization played an important role in the legitimation of leadership prior to Oslo, but had always co-existed with electoral legitimation. Historically, elections had played an important role in Palestinian politics, and served as an integral part of the legitimation of power. Prior to the first national general elections of 1996, elections in student councils, political party/movements, committees, professional syndicates and NGOs constituted recognized and valued elements of the political process. Fiercely contested elections were generally regarded as free and fair (with few exceptions), and served to confirm the legitimacy of the elected representatives in their roles. They were seen as important indicators of the wider balance of power, with student council elections regularly referred to as barometers reflecting the levels of support commanded by political factions. They also served to strengthen participation by providing incentives for political parties to maintain close grassroots links (Hilal 1995:12). Elections were anticipated as a means of transfer of power by the PLO to any future political structure. The Palestinian Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Palestine National Council (PNC) in 1988, envisaged a parliamentary democracy with regular and fair public elections (Hilal 2003:164).

At the same time, the development of electoral processes within the PLO factions lagged behind progress in civil society. While envisaged as the means of determining representation in the PNC – the ‘parliament’ of the PLO – both practical obstacles along with lack of commitment often prevented the codified prescription for elections from being put into practice. Even where elections were used as the means for transferring authority, electoral schedules lapsed frequently, both within the PLO and within Fatah. This meant that for example in the PNC, factional representation had not been adjusted, maintaining Fatah’s dominance to the exclusion of Hamas representation in the body (Herremans 2011:n.p.). In the critical period between 1989 and 2009, no elections for Fatah’s highest decision making bodies, the Central Committee and the Revolutionary Council, took place.

Prior to Oslo, practical and security reasons were held responsible for lapses in electoral schedules. The dispersed nature of the Palestinian leadership between exile and occupation limited opportunities for compliance with regular meeting schedules, and the clandestine nature of political organization also provided justification for irregularities. Within a resistance context, elections were perceived as part of the struggle. As acts of resistance, the legitimacy that elections conferred, even when held only irregularly, was arguably of a *superior* nature due to the considerable obstacles that had to be overcome under conditions of occupation and/or geographic dispersal. As such, election into the PLO was considered to provide a higher form of legitimacy to leadership than localized West Bank/Gaza/Jerusalem elections, creating representation for all, rather than just locally based, Palestinians (Ishtayyeh 2008). The experience of elections as in effect an act of defiance imbued the process with increased legitimizing potential and created strong appreciation of and desire for elections, reflected for example in the high participation during the first Palestinian Legislative Council elections in

1996, despite a participation boycott by opponents to the Oslo process.[10]

After the conclusion of the Oslo Accords, the meaning of elections underwent a transformation, arguably changing from being viewed as acts of resistance to acts of compliance with the Oslo framework, democratic protocol and international expectation, in particularly as Oslo failed to bring about independence and effective self-determination. It is suggested that this change in perceptions, from a nationalist to a procedural role for elections, also changed their value, from conferring superior, long-term legitimation, independent of specific terms of duration under extraordinary conditions, to conferring ordinary legitimation of authority, for a limited period of time at best. The institutionalization of elections in law raised expectations of their regularity and procedural fairness, exposing the process to greater public scrutiny.

It is within this changed context that the effect of lapses in electoral schedules after 1996 became significant for legitimation. While prior to 1996, those elected under exceptional circumstances continued to enjoy legitimacy despite their lapsed electoral mandates, increasingly, this was no longer accepted as a matter of course. The expectation of election regularity also brought into focus the lapse of Fatah internal elections, attracting increasingly sharp criticism of an aging and mostly non-local leadership.

This evolution of perceptions was a gradual process and far from publicly acknowledged or agreed. However, during the gradual shifting of perceptions, claims of legitimate authority were beginning to be reassessed – by the public, in polls, and within Fatah. Conceptions of performance-based electoral legitimacy overlapped and coincided with the historical concepts of electoral legitimacy based on the 'superior' mandate granted to leaders under adverse historical circumstances. The problematic impact of contrasting perceptions of legitimacy was expressed by Mohammad Ishtayyeh, close advisor to Abbas, prior to his election to the 2009 Fatah Central Committee: 'We are caught between the incapability of Fatah leadership and their legitimacy. They will continue to be legitimate until someone votes them out through democratic means. They are legitimate and incapable' (Ishtayyeh 2008). Mahmoud Abbas' then chief of staff noted of Fatah's historic leadership in 2009: 'They have legitimacy until such time when we elect someone else or when the population takes a decision […]. Some people have hung on for longer than they should, but that doesn't mean they are not legitimate – but it also doesn't mean they are fully legitimate' (Husseini 2009).

Had elections moved into a regular cycle, as envisaged under the Oslo framework, the process of transition to a more clearly defined electoral legitimation of authority may indeed have resembled more the developmental shift described by Beetham. However, the absence of firm institutionalization, and the indecisive state of thinking about legitimacy that resulted, enabled leaders insistent on their historical legitimacy (whether based on election or personal struggle history), to persist, damaging the credibility for the movement as a whole. While claiming 'superior' electoral legitimacy, historic leaders' expectation of public acclamation remained high among its members, evidenced in the disappointment about the 'short public memory' for Fatah's past achievements. However, in the absence of viable alternative means to renew legitimacy, through either elections or mobilization, insistence on historical legitimacy was perhaps the only option at hand. As one grassroots Fatah leader explained:

> Because they know that they are going if there are real elections and they know that all their interests will be lost in any real elections, it is in their best interest to continue talking about an old legitimacy that is still valid, and not to [allow] real elections […]

> They think that legitimacy is coming from the elections, and as long as they are in position, they don't care [about popularity] (Anon 2008e).

These expressions of discontent by the younger generation of Fatah leaders illustrated changing perceptions regarding the hierarchy of sources of legitimation. It corresponds to Beetham's developmental stages of legitimation suggesting that once a higher level of legitimation has been introduced, reversion to a lower level weakens this type of legitimacy. The initiation of a process of internal Fatah elections by 'young guard' leader Marwan Barghouthi was reflective of such a 'sea change in Fatah's political culture' (Parsons 2005:214). The aim of this process was, among others, to 'organize ourselves and have legitimacy as a result of this process' (Marwan Barghuthi, quoted in Parsons 2005:214fn 169. However, when these processes came to be seen as threatening the positions of historical leaders, they were obstructed, at times disrupted, and their results ignored wherever possible.[11]

Legitimacy and popularity/public approval

A commonly expressed description of historic members of Fatah and PLO governing bodies is their being historically legitimate but unpopular (Ishtayyeh 2008). Yasser Abed Rabbo was frequently cited as an example of a PLO executive committee member possessing legitimacy without popularity. Elected into the PLO, originally as representative of a minor political faction, he remained in his position even when he no longer represented this faction. Such persistence in roles of authority may well be facilitated by the undecided state of thinking about acceptable sources of legitimacy, where a disconnect between popularity and legitimacy is justifiable for the time being, allowing leaders to 'not associate their mandate with their popularity' (Abu Libdeh 2008).

This disconnect impacted on leadership responsiveness. Under conditions of regularly held elections, unpopular leaders continued to have an incentive for responsiveness to improve future election prospects. Without the 'threat' of regular elections, unpopular leaders had little incentive to improve their standing through responsive conduct, in particular where leaders knew (from polls or otherwise) that their popularity has sunk beyond resuscitation. To these leaders, responsiveness and political survival became a contradiction in terms. Responding to public demand would have meant removing themselves from office (and privilege) or making way for internal elections, which many leaders suspected would remove them from their leadership position all the same (as was eventually borne out in Fatah's Sixth General Conference). Qaddura Faris, a prominent Fatah leader from Ramallah, summed up his views regarding attitudes of the historic leadership towards public opinion:

> This doesn't mean that Fatah as a whole doesn't care about public opinion. The selfish leadership of Fatah, this primitive group that is leading the Fatah movement now, they care about their positions, they care about their interests. They don't care about the future of the movement. In the end, they want to die while they are leading the movement. After that, they don't care. They can say that after them Fatah became divided. They are not responsible leaders, unlike the real leaders of the movement (Faris 2008).

This suggests that only those leaders who believe that they may eventually be able to renew their

mandate in future elections have an incentive to respond in order to maintain support, including mobilizationally. Ali Jarbawi cited example of this dichotomy amongst the PLO leadership where 'legitimacy is based on membership of the PLO, disconnected from popularity ratings' (Jarbawi 2008). According to George Giacaman, 'many in the PLO structure do badly in polls. They perceive their sources of legitimacy not in public support, but in history […]. We are stuck between history and the present, which is not quite yet the future' (Giacaman 2008).

Some Fatah leaders are acutely aware of the consequences of the disconnection between popularity and legitimacy in the absence of elections. However, their calls for a return to regular elections at all levels, national and Fatah internal, were repeatedly ignored. Fatah leader Qaddura Faris noted:

> Absence of popularity facilitates corruption. It facilitates centres of power and favouritism. He who wants to remain in positions of leadership will protect his position. With any opinion that threatens his position, he will use his power and executive position to suppress that opinion. The legitimacy of these persons has long expired. But they still remain in positions of leadership. The people no longer love them. There is a need to change them. They are there solely because they have authority, funds, power, and security. They lost the Palestinian public […]. It leads to an absence of trust in the leadership and division within Fatah, and people will leave Fatah. Whoever leads this party will fail (Faris 2008).

The combination of a crisis of legitimacy and the transformation of the public's thinking about legitimacy illustrates how the discontinuation of electoral processes has impacted on the relationship between leaders and their public, or government and society, in a range of different ways. To those leaders who experienced the legitimizing power of responsiveness during the first Intifada, the link between responsiveness and legitimacy was evident. However, their *ability*, as opposed to their *willingness* to respond to public opinion, remained confined by the factors, internal and external, that could tip the balance of incentives and disincentives in favour of the latter. However, even in the absence of electoral processes, there was a growing demand for leaders to focus on public opinion as a strategic priority. Qaddura Faris commented:

> Those who think they were elected and they can fly with this mandate forever, they don't respect the people or themselves. They run with this mandate to make dirty deals with the region and world. Those who believe that we should represent the interests of our people, they have to check monthly, every year, what the people want, you have to be worried if you feel you go down [in popularity] (Faris 2008).

In this sense, Arafat's most consequential failing in terms of the legitimacy of the political institutions and personalities he left behind was perhaps his neglect of implementing a reliable electoral schedule. By letting the elections scheduled for the year 2000 and subsequent elections lapse, the onus for legitimation of power was unable to shift to a formal electoral mode. Instead, legitimation remained reliant on mobilization, requiring active public consent at a time of increased contention and dissatisfaction.

The different modes of legitimation have different organizational requirements, mobilization requiring a party to place greater reliance and resources into grassroots mobilizational capacity, while electoral legitimation requires parties to focus more on policy development, candidate

preparation and party-internal cohesion. For both modes, analysing and acting on public opinion are essential prerequisites. But while the basis of legitimation remained undecided, work on the associated organizational requirements of gaining legitimacy under either mode was neglected. On the one hand, the diminished mandate for mobilization under Oslo diverted attention away from developing the capacity of cadres to mobilize. While Fatah, in its dual roles as political movement and government, focused on the running of government and its institutions, mobilization 'seemed unnecessary – indeed to some extent undesirable […]. As a result, the movement's clandestine hierarchy never made the transition to open organising, and recruitment was neglected' (International Crisis Group 2009a:2). On the other hand, stalled electoral processes diminished the urgency for the movement to re-focus on the preparation of policy and leaders for electoral contest as a priority. Without the electoral imperative as its main incentive, internal organizational development hovered in limbo between its previous and its future role. Without the urgency to focus on either, the incentive to pay attention to public opinion, an essential prerequisite for both, was diminished.

Legitimacy and responsiveness – Mahmoud Abbas

Challenges to the President's legitimacy differed from those experienced by other members of Fatah's governing bodies prior to 2009. While the electoral mandate of the latter had expired over a decade ago, Abbas had secured a direct mandate as successor to Arafat in the 2005 presidential elections. Although a closer look at the election results indicates that the reported landslide victory of 62.5 per cent of the vote (Central Elections Commission – Palestine 2006a) might have been a mandate from a mere 26.7 per cent of eligible voters due to low voter turnout (Esposito 2005:135), the elections nevertheless provided Abbas with a mandate accepted by all parties.[12] Abbas had expressed his commitment to the electoral process as the means of legitimation, and had followed through with his commitment by conducting elections in 2005 and 2006 against the strong advice from some within his own party.[13] The removal of most of Fatah's historic leadership from their long-held positions by way of election in 2009 was only made possible by Abbas' resort to unilateral decision making, imposing on the party both the date and location of Fatah's Sixth General Conference. Abbas' then chief of staff confirmed this view: 'I think the President's opinion is that legitimacy is established at the ballot box – for the period concerned' (Husseini 2009). The end of his legal term in office in January of either 2009 (as some constitutional experts and the opposition held) or January 2010 (as other constitutional experts and Abbas himself maintained), created legal and public debate over his continued legitimacy in office beyond a four-year term.[14] Survey data, conducted prior to the 2009 expiry date (PSR 2008b), which suggested that a 64 per cent majority of Palestinians believed that Abbas' term ended in 2009, were dismissed by the President as politically motivated and inaccurate.[15] Asked in 2009 about whether there was a need for Abbas to convince the public of the legitimacy of *his* interpretation of an extended presidential term, his then chief of staff, Rafiq Husseini, responded:

> Eventually, you have to convince the public of everything you do – that is our *modus operandi*. But short-term popularity does not mean you are out or in. There is a need to convince the public of what you are saying [regarding the admissibility of an extended term], but we don't believe the public *was* against what we are saying [having dismissed poll results to the contrary as politically motivated]. This is all a myth on Al

> Jazeera and on television. It's not a true issue. A fuss has been made about nothing, and we have been sure that no serious person will question the legitimacy of the President after the 9th of January [2009] (Husseini 2009).

Perhaps the question of the legality of an extension of the presidential term by one year is somewhat dwarfed by the broad range of challenges to Abbas' legitimacy that were to arise subsequently from issues such as the continued suspension of presidential elections beyond 2010, the reversion to legislation by presidential decree, and the impact of other crises during his presidency.[16] Abbas' legitimacy was called into question frequently, often very directly and publicly, such as during Al Jazeera's coverage of the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict, when analyst Mouin Rabbani commented:

> As of today, Mahmoud Abbas is a political corpse, waiting only to be taken to the political cemetery to which his partners Ehud Olmert and George W. Bush will soon be going. Mahmoud Abbas has made so many miscalculations of such overwhelming magnitude, particularly during the past month, that his position has now become irrevocably untenable (Rabbani 2009a).

The extent of challenges to Abbas' legitimacy was also reflected in poll results. A FAFO survey conducted in March 2009 found that 56 per cent of respondents no longer considered Mahmoud Abbas the legitimate President of Palestine (FAFO 2009). Even comments by the US President Barak Obama indicated a growing awareness of the legitimacy crisis in Palestine, when he suggested that 'the leadership of the Palestinians will have to gain additional legitimacy and credibility with their own people' (Obama, quoted in Mozgovaya 2009). Perhaps as an indirect acknowledgement of the severity and urgency of the crisis of legitimacy, Abbas moved to seek re-confirmation from Fatah's governing bodies in his role as the leader of Fatah. As mentioned, in an act of unilateralism and assertion of authority, supported by some, and fiercely fought by others within Fatah, Abbas convened the long-delayed Sixth General Conference in August 2009. The re-election of Abbas as head of Fatah during the conference was conducted by way of public show of hands, in front of hastily admitted television cameras, which were excluded from all other parts of the conference proceedings (Houk 2009) – perhaps signifying the intention to add an acclamatory aspect to the electoral process. Just prior to the disputed January 2009 expiry date of the presidential term, Abbas had also been elected to the position of President of the State of Palestine by the PLO Central Council (Abu Toameh 2008:n.p.).

With electoral legitimacy only partially intact, strengthening his arguably expired electoral legitimacy mobilizationally was neither an obvious option – nor choice – for Abbas. Lack of on-the-ground policy achievements in negotiations with Israel did not lend themselves to mobilization for an expression of consent to what needed to be a shared or inspired strategy. As a staunch supporter of implementing security cooperation with Israel, Abbas' options for mobilization were limited. In addition, as discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, Abbas' personality, his lack of charisma, as well as his pursuit of a rationale that sought to postpone responsiveness to public opinion in favour of other public goods, and the impact of reduced incentives for responsiveness as a leader 'by default', made mobilization an unlikely strategy for legitimation for Abbas.

The withdrawal of consent

A note of caution is in order. The absence of confirmation or renewal of legitimacy cannot be equated automatically with a *withdrawal* of consent. As Beetham points out, withdrawal of legitimation requires public acts of discontent. In spite of the weakness arising from Abbas' arguable expiration of mandate, there was a notable absence of overt expression of public *withdrawal* of consent to express the view that he had lost his legitimacy. The perhaps fiercest criticism of his performance came from within his own party, rather than the public at large, including a direct attack on his legitimacy in statements made by Farouq Qaddumi alleging Abbas' collaboration with Israel in the killing of Arafat (*Guardian* 2009). The allegations, potentially aimed at instigating a mobilizational response from the public, failed to trigger a public response that could be interpreted as a withdrawal of consent. Abbas responded to the allegations by temporarily closing the West Bank offices of Al Jazeera, the news agency that had first aired the allegations,[17] adding to an already tense relationship following Al Jazeera's highly critical coverage of the role of Fatah, the PA, and the President during the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict.[18]

As the above example indicated, one of the reasons for the absence of an overt withdrawal of consent may have been the increasingly restrictive political environment, specifically targeting the expression of dissent by Hamas. Since the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank following Hamas' takeover of security control in Gaza in 2007, restrictions on public demonstrations had been in place and members of Hamas arrested (Amnesty International 2008). As Beetham had noted, since the *public* aspect of delegitimizing acts are essential, 'governments have good reason to try and curtail or suppress news coverage, since they understand only too well that the dissemination of information in such a context can have profound political consequences' (Beetham 1991:210). The dependence on public sector employment in a high unemployment environment with the PA is the largest employer, and where preferential treatment of Fatah or pro-Fatah prospective employees was common, may have contributed to limited overt expression of discontent (Fishman 2006a:22).

The sense of loyalty to Fatah and its leader, while not sufficient to confirm legitimacy, may also have prevented the overt expression of withdrawal of consent to the governing relationship. Attachment to Fatah as a movement went beyond purely political considerations. To many Fatah members, *being* Fatah was a matter of personal identification and therefore difficult to shed, even where strong disagreement was expressed with the current leadership and its programme. The nature of its history as a liberation movement provided for a kind of default political identification that went beyond current-day political consideration, but was 'akin to "shared national property"' (International Crisis Group 2009a:6). This kind of emotional attachment is not readily dissolved, despite diminished willingness to demonstrate public support for Fatah, or even an electoral choice for another party. The need for constant renewal of consent, posited by Beetham, cannot take account of this identity factor in the legitimation of Fatah's leadership.

Pressures for renewal from within Fatah

Excluded from direct decision making, mid- and lower-level Fatah leadership cadres saw their political standing eroded by the loss of credibility inflicted upon the movement by what they perceived as leadership failure. Younger leaders expressed the need to re-establish closer links with the community, something they perceived Prime Minister Fayyad was doing better than Fatah (International Crisis Group 2009a:21). As a Hebron-based Fatah leader suggested: 'More

needs to be done to create a genuine organisational structure with grassroots input and support' (Hebron Fatah leader, quoted in International Crisis Group 2009a:21 fn. 147). Lower-level leaders expressed the conviction that a dual strategy was required to re-establish the legitimacy of Fatah's leadership, using both elections and mobilization. A number of steps were taken towards both. The selection of delegates to Fatah's General Conference during 2008 was based on local and regional Fatah internal elections which reintroduced the notion of electoral legitimacy at lower leadership levels, a notion fiercely supported by lower leadership cadres who had long called for more internal democracy. Some 250 new regional leaders were elected, all aged under 40 at the time of the elections, and serving as delegates for the first time (International Crisis Group 2009a:8). The newly elected regional leaders, all younger and new in their leadership roles, were hopeful that elections would help unify the movement and lend new legitimacy as 'it is hard to confront the legitimacy produced by elections' (International Crisis Group 2009a:8).

The success of internal elections generated hope and pride for local cadres at the regional leadership level. Although excluded from decision making at the national level, they nevertheless embarked on a process of identifying the reasons for Fatah's loss of popular support and mobilizational capacity. Surveys, initiated by and conducted among grassroots leaders, pointed to communication between the higher leadership and local leaders as one area of breakdown. As one of survey organisers pointed out:

> [Survey results suggested that] the leadership of Fatah is weak and doesn't take into consideration the opinions of young leadership. Local leadership find out about official positions of Fatah from television, the internet, newspapers, or other political parties. They know about them from all different [kinds of] sources, except from Fatah itself – unless someone has a personal relationship with a leadership figure (Anon 2009f).

Regional leaders tried to exert pressure for improved communication by putting in place processes that allowed local cadres improved access to Fatah-internal information through emails and weekly telephone calls. Whether by coincidence or by learning from observation, the Nablus governorate's Fatah leadership used a process similar to that used by Hamas during its 2006 election campaign, in which house-to-house visits were conducted targeting independents, Fatah supporters and ex-supporters, in order to inform them of Fatah's plans and policies (Anon 2009b). Fatah-internal elections also supported the demands for stronger representation of the newly elected delegates at the Sixth General Conference, in fact, leaders threatened to boycott the conference unless adequate representation of elected leaders was secured:

> There will not be a conference without us. […] We are the implementers, and they cannot go to the conference without us. We will go and participate. The Sixth Conference will be an important date in the history of Fatah. There will be young people entering into all leadership positions and will participate in decision making. And that is how the picture of Fatah will improve in the street, because we are closer than them to the street. We talk to this person and that, and we see what they say. We will deepen whatever is right, and we will distance ourselves from whatever is bad (Anon 2009f).

To the disappointment of the regional leadership, the approximately 250 elected delegates attending the conference were hopelessly outweighed by the steadily increasing number of

appointed delegates which, following last-minute additions, reached approximately 2,122 (International Crisis Group 2009a:12, 15 fn. 101). Despite being hailed a success for the fact that elections were held in the first place, the electoral legitimacy gained during the conference was questioned, with allegations being expressed of irregularities and the stacking of conference representation in favour of Abbas-friendly delegates. Gaza leaders, who felt marginalized by their inability to attend the conference[19] and who were subsequently grossly under-represented in both executive bodies,[20] expressed the conditionality of their support for the newly elected leadership: 'The leadership will win my commitment to them in accordance with the extent that they actualize the Fatah programme' (International Crisis Group 2009a:16 fn. 113). The concerns highlighted that electoral legitimacy by itself may not in itself create a sufficiently strong basis for Fatah's leadership renewal.

The conference also raised hopes for programmatic renewal, enabling cadres to address Fatah's mobilizational incapacity. The conference saw discussion of a new programme which emphasized, at least nominally, Fatah's support of mobilization towards non-violent resistance activities. The new deputy head of the Revolutionary Council Sabri Saidam described the evolving strategy of the newly elected Revolutionary Council as mobilizational and reformative, intended to re-establish the credibility of Fatah: '[It is] an infant programme, [that was an] outcome of the general conference'. Its priorities were described as:

> Vocal, practical and physical support for popular resistance, here I'm talking about unarmed popular resistance, Bil'in, [a village in the West Bank conducting weekly protest action against the wall encroaching on its land]; boycott of Israeli produce; […] pressing charges against Israel and continue to uphold the Goldstone report and chase it in legal courts; and achieving consensus by restoring national unity […]. People are fed up and have reached despair; people will only live if they feel they can do something to end the occupation. So if Fatah becomes more openly supportive of popular resistance, if Fatah becomes more pushing for the boycott [of for example settlement products], pressing charges, striving for unity and achieving it and ensuring financial stability, credibility and transparency, Fatah has something to provide in case the peace process is not moving (Saidam 2010).

However, although the new programme reflected the willingness of Fatah's new leadership to show greater responsiveness, limitations on their *ability* to do so were also clearly articulated by Saidam:

> So imagine we go to the next elections with trillions of dollars, imagine we have a huge army of volunteers, imagine we have the best material and the best national experts to guide us, yet the peace process is continuing to die, more checkpoints, the wall continues to snake its way, more settlements, total Israeli negligence to Palestinian aspirations, I think it will be a hard fight. So if the meat that we need to sell in elections is not there, it will bring us down tremendously (Saidam 2010).

The elections that elevated the new group of leaders into Fatah's Central Committee and Revolutionary Council rekindled incentives for responsiveness. Eventually, from their ranks, leaders would be chosen to succeed Abbas in his various official positions. This would create incentives for prospective successors to shore up their popularity and may therefore be more

likely to ‘avoid stances that risk running afoul of a broad Palestinian constituency’ (International Crisis Group 2009a:15). The fact that the new leadership was overwhelmingly local, rather than exile-based, positioned them closer to their constituencies, and made them more accessible to pressure from a public of which they were a part. As Shikaki suggested optimistically regarding the new make-up of Fatah’s leadership groups: ‘The people are being represented by those who have triumphed as well as suffered alongside them. Fatah becomes relatable to, rather than apart from, its constituents’ (Shikaki 2009:4–5). A level of independence of the new Fatah leadership from Abbas and the PA was crucial for their ability to respond to public opinion, as the example of the postponement of the Goldstone report had shown.[21] They were also more expose to pressures and demands for responsiveness and many had experienced the legitimizing effect of responsiveness during the first Intifada and as candidates during previous elections. However, they were also more loyal to Abbas than their predecessors had been, some indebted to his hand in the process of delegate selection that favoured Abbas-loyal candidates, potentially acting as a disincentive against responsiveness. Ambition to succeed Abbas could encourage members to prioritize ‘Abbas watching’ over ‘public watching’, so long as Abbas’ role was likely to be important in the determination of succession. Perhaps more importantly, as long as the framework of the Oslo Agreements continued to delineating the parameters for admissible public participation, the ability for political leadership to strengthen their public support mobilizationally remained, for the time being, confined to the expression of admissible demands that did not threaten Fatah’s overarching commitment to a negotiated solution as supported by the international community.

CHAPTER 5

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND RESPONSIVENESS

This chapter focuses specifically on the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas from 2005 to 2009 in his role as prime decision maker and head of Fatah. Under Abbas' leadership, the Fatah movement and the presidency itself faced challenges that weakened Abbas' position and threatened the survival of Fatah. Abbas' prime challenge remained the lack of progress in negotiations with Israel, but in addition, the severe criticism he faced regarding his personal performance affected both him and the movement. By describing Abbas a 'leader by default', the analysis draws on those personal and political characteristics that help explain the limitations on his willingness and ability to show responsiveness to public opinion.

Mahmoud Abbas: Leadership by default

Despite his supposed landslide victory in the 2005 presidential elections, Abbas was seen by many, Fatah's own cadres and the general public alike, as the 'candidate by default' (Lagerquist 2005:n.p.).[1] His nomination, challenged only temporarily by imprisoned Fatah 'young guard' leader Marwan Barghouthi, had been surprisingly smooth.[2] In Abbas, Fatah confirmed a man whose style of leadership and whose position within the organization could hardly have contrasted more sharply with that of his predecessor, Yasser Arafat. Fatah chose a man whose authority had consistently been undermined by Arafat; a leader whose standing within Fatah was marked by lack of practical support and frequent obstruction, and whose lack of charisma and crowd-shy nature differed markedly from that of his predecessor. Unlike Arafat, Abbas' personal political history was not built on participation in armed struggle. Though one of the movement's founding fathers, Abbas had always been a bureaucrat within the PLO structure, 'an intellectual who has thought out of the box' (Saidam 2008), advocating negotiations with Israel well before this position became more widely accepted, and someone who admitted to never having fired a shot nor carried a gun (Saidam 2008).

While the ability of both men to respond to the demands of the Palestinian public was similarly constrained by external factors, namely continuing Israeli occupation and foreign donor and political support dependence, the differences in their styles of leadership were likely to create a very different set of incentives and disincentives for responsiveness. In the time between his election as President of the Palestinian Authority in 2005 and his re-confirmation as leader of the Fatah movement during the Sixth General Conference in 2009, Abbas presided over a range of disasters that fundamentally affected his movement and the Palestinian people at large:

Fatah's 2006 electoral defeat; its 2007 loss of security control in Gaza which led to Hamas taking full control of the Gaza Strip; the creation in effect of two Palestinian governments following Abbas' dismissal of the Hamas-led government and appointment of a new government with power only in the West Bank; the subsequent failure to reconcile the two sides of Palestinian politics; the suspension of electoral processes and democratic institutions and a return to rule by presidential decree; the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict to which Fatah was a bystander; and most importantly, the failure of continuing negotiations with Israel.[3]

The failure of the negotiations strategy was manifested for all to see in the continuing Israeli military presence across the West Bank and ongoing restrictions on access to land and resources under the Oslo framework, continued settlement building in parallel with negotiations, and the imposition of a closure policy by Israel that prevented the realization of expected economic growth.[4] These daily realities had contributed to an erosion of public trust in the process and its proponents; Abbas' insistence on continuing negotiations was increasingly regarded as driven by ulterior motives, namely the preservation of power and privilege[5] and his need for external legitimation and observance of international political and financial dictates.[6] This view was reinforced by the very public exposure of cases of corruption,[7] abuse of position, and resistance to leadership change among members of Fatah's historic leadership fragmenting the movement. Despite this record of challenges and, indeed, failures, there was little doubt that Abbas' tenure as head of Fatah would be re-confirmed during the movement's long-delayed Sixth General Conference, his reconfirmation an apparent contradiction in light of his widely shared negative evaluation by many within Fatah.

The endorsement of a leader in spite of programmatic failure and little expressed support from within his own party suggests description of Abbas as a leader by default. As analyst Mehdi Abdel Hadi noted: 'Abbas is seen, even from within Fatah, as the President by default, while at worst he is seen as a collaborator with Israeli and US interests' (Abdel Hadi 2009). Similarly, Jarbawi and Pearlman noted that 'Fatah power-brokers decided that Abbas was the default figure to represent their movement' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:12). Understood as such, Abbas' position of authority was a result of the convergence of factors that presented him as the only possible alternative in the search for a leader under specific circumstances, the lack of positive evaluation outweighed by the undesirability of a possible leadership challenge and its consequences. It was well understood that external candidate endorsement would be required to ensure continuing financial and political support and that the precarious balance of forces within Fatah required agreement, even if begrudged, on the least risky choice of leader in order to prevent a break-up of the movement and increased Hamas influence in the West Bank as a result. These criteria, and the default rationale they supported, impacted directly on the incentive structure for responsiveness to public opinion.

Communication, charisma and symbolic responsiveness

In examining the relationship between leaders and the public, a brief look at charisma is essential. Comparing the charismatic leadership of Yasser Arafat with the bureaucratic leadership of Mahmoud Abbas helps to highlight the role of charisma in facilitating the relationship between leaders and their public. Beetham argues that 'leaders who possess the capacity for arousing mass enthusiasm have a particular place in [the mobilizational] mode of legitimation' (Beetham 1991:156). Without elevating charisma to the *source* of legitimacy,[8]

Beetham suggests that charismatic qualities in leaders contribute to legitimation because such leaders are seen as the exemplary embodiment of a belief system. However, he suggests that the belief system itself, rather than the charismatic quality of a leader, enables charismatic leaders to use mobilization for legitimation. Responsiveness is seen as an essential and natural quality of charismatic leaders.

This is not to say that charismatic qualities may not make a substantial contribution to the stability of the belief system, as suggested by Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007). However, the loss of public confidence in Fatah's programme and strategy, rather than the death of the charismatic leader himself, was responsible for the crisis of the PLO and Fatah after Arafat's death. This became increasingly apparent during the last years of Arafat's life when, unable to maintain previous levels of public support, 'the revolutionary goal that Arafat embodied remained elusive, [while] the relative weight of charismatic personalism to patronage-based personalism increasingly shifted in favour of the latter' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:9). Abbas' lack of charisma likely affected his ability to infuse a belief system with the enthusiasm necessary for public mobilization. However, it is suggested that Abbas' inability to provide tangible outcomes as a result of his negotiation strategy outweighed the absence of charisma in overall effect. Rather than interpreting Abbas' focus on institution-building as a way to 'derive authority that his personality alone cannot command' within a system in which Abbas' 'lack of charisma has rendered him unable to govern the system that Arafat bequeathed him' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:6), it is suggested that Abbas' leadership and legitimacy crisis was aggravated by, but did not originate from, his lack of charisma.[9]

Most observers concur that effective communication with the public was not one of Abbas' strengths as leader. Palestinian political analyst Mouin Rabbani, for example, noted:

> Key […] is Abbas' relationship to his people: simply put, it never existed. Arafat saw the Palestinians as the ace in the deck to be played when all else failed, and understood that his leverage with outside actors derived from their conviction that he represented the Palestinian people. If he consistently failed or refused to properly mobilize this primary resource, he at least always held it in reserve (Rabbani 2009b:n.p.).

Abbas has been described as someone who 'does not admire connecting with big crowds' (Saidam 2008), someone who was 'not a man of the people […], does not do well on the streets, working the crowd […], doesn't like being interviewed [and is] much more comfortable within the confines of his Muqata'a headquarters in Ramallah' (Baskin 2009:n.p.). People close to him regarded him as someone who believed in speaking his mind, regardless of public expectations (Ishtayyeh 2008). His language and mannerisms being that of a bureaucrat, he appeared to be so reluctant to engage in public encounters that his advisors during the 2005 election campaign had to push him to attend his own campaign rallies (Ishtayyeh 2008).

During times of crisis, the importance of symbolic responsiveness is elevated as communities seek leadership, reassurance and interpretation of the events unfolding. Throughout the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict, Abbas was accused of fleeing the scene, prioritizing meetings with international leaders over verbal reassurance and guidance to the public. In a particularly misguided move, Abbas' spokesman levelled accusations against Hamas, in an apparent misjudgement of public sentiment, solidarity and support for Gazans.[10] Only after this initial public relations blunder, and in order to control the fallout from it, did Abbas criticize Israel

while touring abroad, prompting political analyst Mouin Rabbani to comment:

> He has barely visited Palestine [since the start of the bombardment]. On his last sojourn he stayed only long enough to inform the Qataris that he could not attend their emergency meeting to discuss the war […]. He didn't seem to realise that even an empty Palestinian chair would be a major scandal at home (Rabbani 2009b:n.p.).

Fatah mid-level cadres regarded Abbas' communication with the public as so lacking and disastrous for the movement that they felt compelled to take the unusual step of addressing his handling of the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict in a letter to him, containing recommendations on his public relations. According to one cadre, 'Abu Mazen needed to go out and make a speech, and he didn't do that' (Anon 2009f). Fatah-internal perceptions of the urgent need for Abbas' lack of communication to be addressed became apparent to this author when urged by a presidential office staffer, prior to meeting Abbas' chief of staff during the Israel–Gaza crisis, to 'please tell him that Abu Mazen needs to go on television and speak to the people!' (Anon 2009d). Similarly, when Abbas was faced with severe criticism following his unpopular decision to seek a postponement of the Goldstone report at the UN Human Rights Council in October 2009, his lack of communication exacerbated the negative repercussions of his suggested error in judgement, prompting the former envoy to Egypt and previous close associate and advisor Nabil Amr to comment: 'How, in the shadow of such an affair, can Abu Mazen (Abbas) choose to travel around the world and not be with the people and explain to them what happened?' (Waked 2009:n.p.).

Abbas' advisors encouraged him to be more active and to engage with the public, although they conceded that his personality was not favourable to 'connecting with big crowds' (Saidam 2008). A suggestion by Sabri Saidam that Abbas consider symbolic acts such as 'going to Gaza to show the Gazans that he is their President too' yielded no response (Saidam 2008). An October 2009 article (Ma'an News Agency 2009d:n.p.) on Abbas' visit to the northern West Bank town of Jenin pointedly referred to the visit as the President's first since taking office in January 2005, despite the fact that Jenin was one of only seven major cities in the West Bank, located less than two hours' drive from Abbas' residence and offices in Ramallah.

Comparison with Arafat was unavoidable. Abbas' lack of intuition in relation to the public stood in sharp contrast with the natural intuition that characterized his predecessor. A former Fatah leader and close Arafat associate described Abbas' reluctance to address the Israel–Gaza conflict: 'He is not the kind of charismatic leader who is ready to confront and to challenge and to lead […]. Had it been Arafat, he would not wait for people to tell him. He would always take the initiative' (Abu Zayyad 2008). To Arafat, close relations with his own cadres and the wider public were clearly of great importance, and he devoted time and effort towards establishing those relationships. Political analyst, pollster and former Labour Minister Ghassan Khatib described him as 'the kind of leader who would care very much about his popularity. [He was] very good at appealing to the average level of the public, [he was] a genius in that' (Khatib 2008a). A former close associate described his 'gift for establishing personal relations with the rank and file among the guerrillas' (Nofal 2006:24), exerting great effort to cultivate and maintain strong personal relationships that formed the 'backbone of his support' inside Fatah, consisting of 'men who would support him regardless of whether he was right or wrong' (Nofal 2006:27). Compounding Abbas' comparative disadvantage, Arafat had worked to minimize Abbas' authority by 'degrading and obstructing him for all to see' during the latter's brief prime

ministerial tenure in 2003 (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:12). Unable to communicate with the public in a way that suggested he shared and understood their concerns, Abbas' failure to utilize symbolic responsiveness in words and gestures, particularly during times of crisis, left him wide open to criticism as aloof, arrogant and out of touch.[11] Unlike policy responsiveness, which is not predicated on the ability to connect with crowds, symbolic responsiveness relies on an ability to communicate effectively with the public in a way that confers understanding, sympathy and commitment to addressing public concerns. Under-utilization of symbolic responsiveness directly impacted the perception of a lack of responsiveness in a number of ways.

First, under-utilization of symbolic responsiveness necessitated a greater reliance on other expressions of responsiveness in order to maintain an overall impression of leadership responsiveness. Under circumstances where Abbas' *ability* to respond substantively (for example through policy) was constrained, the importance of symbolic responsiveness was elevated. Whereas blame for a lack of policy responsiveness may be laid at the door of the occupier, international donor demands or internal opposition, even audiences favourably predisposed towards the President found it hard to tolerate the neglect of symbolic responsiveness, particularly in times of crisis.

Secondly, a consequence of the under-utilization of symbolic responsiveness was the loss of its potential as a facilitator of mobilizational legitimation. This is particularly important where there is potential for public mobilization, for example where there is sufficient public support for a cause, where the public can see the potential benefit of mobilization, and the cost is reasonable. Under such circumstances, symbolic responsiveness could contribute to a sense of shared undertaking, even where leaders' ability to provide substantive proof of progress was constrained. Under-utilization, however, minimized potential for mobilization, and allowed the public to disengage from the political process.

And thirdly, under-utilization of symbolic responsiveness deprived leaders of a tool that could be used to increase popularity, enhance trust in leadership and prepare the public for the need to compromise by guiding their expectations. When communication is less effective, leadership is judged more harshly by the public, maximising the negative impact of programmatic and policy failure. Increased popularity provides leadership with increased ability to act within the internal confines of competing power centres and external demands, while lack of popular support may be used as a pretext for unilateral actions by external forces. Ariel Sharon's description of Abbas as 'a chick with no feathers', referring to his conclusion that Abbas was a man who would never have the support of his people (quoted in Baskin 2009:n.p.) illustrated how lack of popularity was able to be used as a pretext to justifying the unilateralism in Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Service and allocation responsiveness – the legacy of Yasser Arafat

In order to highlight the changes that Abbas brought to the system of governance and their implications for responsiveness, a brief look at the rationale underlying Arafat's system of governance is warranted. While charisma and legitimacy constituted important aspects of Arafat's authority, his style of leadership was variously described as authoritarian and hegemonic (Jamal 2001:3), neo-patrimonial (Brynen 1995b), neo-patriarchal (Frisch 1997), as the 'antithesis of institutionalisation and the concept of separation of powers and power sharing' (Abu Amr 1997:94), and as marked by 'authoritarianism and anti-institutional personalization of

power' (Robinson 1997:181). Centralization of power may coincide with institutionalization of power, but the personalization of power contradicts the requirements for institutionalization. The logic of Arafat's personalized authoritarian leadership was described by Robertson as a 'tool that the PA – at base, an organization of the "Tunisians" – used to consolidate its position of power in a society and an "inside" counter-elite that it did not fully trust or control' (Robinson 2001:115).

As the likelihood of success for Arafat's strategy towards a negotiated settlement grew more distant post-1996, Arafat's personalized style of governance became increasingly important in supplementing and supporting his legitimacy. Personalization of power occurred in response to the intensification of social and political power struggles which required Arafat to foster allegiances based on personal attention, inducements and cooptation (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:9). His willingness to also employ more heavy-handed practices of intimidation and marginalization were criticized severely and repeatedly by civil society actors and by reform-oriented members of the Palestinian Legislative Council who regarded these practices as undermining prospects for democratic rule in a future Palestinian system of government.

In an environment in which diverse social groups demanded to be represented and centrifugal forces threatened to tear apart the national unity required for the state-building project, Arafat was a master of balancing acts. He utilized all resources at his disposal, intervening personally and using assistance, positions, financial resources and his monopoly on the use of force to persuade and accommodate demands and to minimize, control or repress the expression of dissent. For example, the composition of Arafat's first cabinets illustrated his attempts to balance the interest of various elite groups (traditional elite, regional elites, outsiders and insiders, bureaucrats and fighters) (Lindholm Schulz 2002:29).

A central element guiding Arafat's conduct was his awareness and prioritization of relationships with constituencies. This focus, rather than his personal character, came to define his style of leadership. Brynen (1995b:31) viewed Arafat's leadership as neo-patrimonial by necessity, rather than tradition. Building on definitions of neo-patrimonialism developed by Migdal (1988), Brynen argued that social change and the rise of state 'create new potential neo-patrimonial dynamics' (Brynen 1995b:31). Rather than seeing this renewed neo-patrimonialism as rooted in traditional politics and political culture, Arafat's resort to neo-patrimonial leadership was interpreted as a response to

> a set of objective factors characterised by asymmetrical power relations, discriminatory access to scarce and desired private goods, a lack of client solidarity and elite control over resource distribution [which] create an organisational incentive to use patronage both to mobilize supporters and to counteract centrifugal forces (Brynen 1995b:31–32).

Arafat's intense personalization of power, necessitating the subjugation of other considerations for the institutionalization of power, may therefore be interpreted in light of his need to maintain the ability to manage both elites and mass constituencies. Brynen also noted the utility of a neo-patrimonial leadership style in keeping internal oppression contained, recognizing that when Arafat's ability to use neo-patrimonial politics was constrained by external forces, the prospect of repression increased (Brynen 1995b:fn.39). Interpreted within this context of neo-patrimonialism by necessity, Brynen questions whether neo-patrimonialism may perhaps not have been the main problem with Arafat's leadership style, but rather Arafat's inefficient use of

it (Brynen 1995b:fn. 43).

Arafat's unique relationship with the public helped maintain an exceptionally strong mandate, based both on his election and his central role with Fatah and the PLO. His role as the father of the nation and embodiment of the national struggle was further strengthened by lack of competition for this position and representational role, to which he contributed by marginalizing competing representative bodies such as the 1996 Legislative Council.[12] Arafat further undermined the independence of the legislative body by linking all decision making back to himself, requiring individual PLC members to seek his personal approval when intervening on behalf of constituents (Sha'ban 2008). In this way, Arafat was able to demonstrate responsiveness to the public, if not substantively, at least within the parameters of the limited powers set by the Oslo Accords. He used personalization, centralization of decision making and a system of patronage to demonstrate service and allocation responsiveness, binding PLC members to him through his required cooperation in their own show of responsiveness to constituents.

In the absence of overall success in his strategy towards achieving independence, and constrained by occupation and external dependence, Arafat's leadership style ensured his ability to demonstrate service and allocation responsiveness. Micro-level centralization of decision making and the use of patronage allowed Arafat to maintain a strong relationship with the public, confirm loyalty, and provide opportunities for the public to be heard by him directly. With limited alternative opportunities to demonstrate substantive responsiveness, this type of responsiveness fulfilled an important political function. At the same time, it obstructed the formation of oppositional expression through civil society actors, and limited the appeal of alternative forms of public participation such as organized lobbying efforts.

Leadership and responsiveness the Abbas way

Few studies have looked at Mahmoud Abbas' style of governance in detail. The most thorough analysis of Abbas' leadership to date was Jarbawi and Pearlman's 'Struggle in a Post-Charisma Transition: Rethinking Palestinian Politics after Arafat' (2007), on which this research builds. Jarbawi and Pearlman placed Abbas' rule within the framework of Max Weber's study of charismatic leadership, documenting pathways of post-charisma transition. It focused primarily on the dilemma of Abbas' inability, in the absence of charisma, to govern the system Arafat had bequeathed him. Building on Jarbawi and Pearlman's analysis, this study applies the lens of responsiveness to their findings; it examines the impact not just of the lack of charisma, but also the lack of interest and inclination to seek interaction with the public that might have provided him with opportunities of responsiveness in the absence of charisma – drawing on the widened interpretation of responsiveness as defined in the Introduction. Where Jarbawi and Pearlman examine Abbas' attempts – in the absence of charisma – to strengthen his position through institution-building and working towards a would-be alliance with a newly-legitimized Legislative Council, this study focuses on Abbas' subsequent fostering of an alliance with the technocrat Prime Minister after his envisaged alliance with the new Legislative Council failed to materialize.

Abbas had experienced firsthand the powerlessness of prime ministership under Arafat, expressed angrily in his letter of resignation to the PLC in 2003 (Abbas 2003). Having been

frustrated by Arafat's leadership style and by his lifelong experience within the PLO, Abbas was keen to depart from the style of governance pursued by his predecessor. Not inclined towards symbolism and charismatic rhetoric, Abbas focused on reform and institution-building to improve living conditions, suggesting that deeds spoke louder than words.[13] In the absence of strong support from within Fatah, Abbas aimed to build systems of governance, delegating considerable authority to his Finance Minister (and later Prime Minister) Salam Fayyad whose approach reflected a similar focus on letting results speak for themselves.[14]

As Jarbawi and Pearlman show, rather than monopolize decision making, Abbas tried to create a style of leadership that was delegative and based on a bureaucratic legal framework. Where Arafat took control, Abbas attempted to devolve control. A notable example of this approach – and its implications for relations with the public – was Abbas' departure from Arafat's system of direct appeals to the President for anything from financial assistance to intervention in disputes of any kind. Rejecting direct appeals to the President, a system was developed which logged and referred all public appeals and complaints to appropriate departments within the PA structure, removing the President from direct involvement in individual decision making on the micro-level (Saidam 2008). However, implementation of this reform inadvertently deprived a non-charismatic President of opportunities to show responsiveness to the public in the way that the public had been accustomed to. Rafiq Husseini described both Abbas' intention and the public response to it in the following terms:

> He is a strategic leader, not a leader of detail. Palestinians want to see someone like Yasser Arafat. Abu Mazen is not like Yasser Arafat: [He is] a strategic leader who has a moral duty to create institutions in Palestine. He does not want to be a leader who signs every piece of paper that comes across his desk, or involves himself in every detail, in every election, [in every] aspect of life. He wants to delegate responsibility. This is his method of leadership, and this method cannot be understood by many of those who lived the days of Arafat and who don't see [Abu Mazen] as taking charge of every aspect of life. That does not make him a reluctant leader. He is reluctant in so far as not wanting to deal with the detail, but he is not reluctant in so far as wanting to be in a strategic position of leadership […]. That's not him. He has inherited [a system that is] led by one person and he is saying 'I am not this person, I don't want to lead in the way that Palestine was led. I don't want to be involved in every decision of marriage, divorce and every decision of aid and giving money to every person in town' […]. The people have not understood that this is a different style of leadership (Husseini 2009).

This delegative leadership style also affected Legislative Council members for whom the previous system of personal intervention by the President in requests for assistance had provided opportunities as intermediaries to demonstrate their own responsiveness to constituents in the form of service and allocation responsiveness. Lu'ay Sha'ban, then president of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, explained:

> The most important job of the parliament members was to bring documents and papers to be signed by the President for assistance, cash money, money for marriage, assistance for health problems etc. This is not the case with Abu Mazen, he doesn't accept this. This door was open (providing a) legitimate window to get assistance. But

> nowadays it is closed. Abu Mazen doesn't accept it. If you want to go get something, go to the Prime Minister, all the assistance is redirected to the Prime Minister. He deals with it more professionally; [he] does not only look at the affiliation. It is rational, he has committees now who look at every single case and decide. [This is] more professional. This is why the role of the members of parliament has been reduced (Sha'ban 2008).

While Abbas' reforms were in line with reform demands by internal and external critics, Abbas' rejection of neo-patrimonial client relationships inadvertently deprived him of valuable opportunities to demonstrate the service and allocation responsiveness that was so effectively utilized by his predecessor. This foregoing of opportunities for responsiveness must be considered within the overall context of limited alternative opportunities for a non-charismatic leader to demonstrate symbolic and policy responsiveness.

A return to authoritarianism

As Jarbawi and Pearlman show, the detrimental and degrading treatment Abbas had received by Arafat continued to overshadow Abbas' presidency after Arafat's passing. 'Palestinian political figures held Abbas in no awe and would not defer to his leadership unless it suited their own interests' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:13). Abbas was confronted by centrifugal forces inside Fatah that were unleashed in the absence of progress in negotiations with Israel and limited jurisdiction by the PA over territory, people and resources. Unable to assert his authority or unify the movement, by the end of 2005 Abbas' authority had deteriorated to the extent that 'many of the president's directives were systematically ignored and he was barely on speaking terms with some of his own security chiefs' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:14).

Despite Abbas' acclaimed commitment to democratic reform and a more transparent style of leadership, the circumstances that defined his succession to the presidency led to a resurgence of authoritarianism that stopped well short of genuine progress towards democratization. As long-time observer Nathan Brown argued, the effect of Abbas' reforms, 'even if regularized and softened, […] is undeniably authoritarian' (Brown 2009a:4). This was evident, for example, in Abbas' repeated threats of early parliamentary elections following Hamas' election victory, the neglect of the presidential election schedule, the suppressive measures taken against his Islamic opposition, and his undermining of a comprehensive transfer of power subsequent to the 2006 election failure of Fatah. As Brown notes:

> This is a new kind of authoritarianism, at least for Palestinians. Under Yasser Arafat, the PA would often act in an arbitrary, corrupt and unpredictable manner, steered by numerous cross-cutting pressures as well as the contradictory impulses of its charismatic leader. What is occurring in the West Bank now is far more regular and predictable even if it is more authoritarian – the trend might be described as the routinisation of the lack of charisma (Brown 2009a:4).

Nathan Brown's observation of the 'routinisation of the lack of charisma' (Brown 2009a:4) highlights the link between the apparent lack of charisma and a return to a new type of authoritarianism. For Arafat, charismatic authoritarian rule had required mutual responsiveness between leaders and the public in order to maintain his legitimacy. For Abbas, lack of charisma

meant a greater reliance on alternative means of legitimation which, drawing on Beetham's concept of legitimation, required the public expression of support and hence, responsiveness. Both charisma and effective communication with the public appeared similarly unattainable for Abbas. Within the emerging new kind of authoritarianism – absent charisma or effective communication with the public – responsiveness was no longer seen as an essential element in the legitimation process. Rather, Abbas hoped that deeds, rather than words, would deliver him the legitimacy he needed. When the economic success and a peace dividend failed to materialize, it left the President with intentions only, a poor substitute for the anticipated policy achievements.

Abbas had repeatedly and publicly expressed his reluctance to remain in his leadership positions. As the public and his own party proved reluctant to come around to understanding and supporting Abbas' intentions in lieu of results, Abbas threatened his resignation, blaming the public for failing to understand his approach and giving the impression of a reluctant leader.[15] These threats may have been a way of distinguishing himself from Arafat, or a way to seek re-endorsement of his leadership (a way of relegitimizing his position through the indirect endorsement derived from holding him back from resigning). They may also have indicated a genuine unwillingness to continue on in an unenviable position. Interpreted positively, they could be interpreted as Abbas' readiness to give way if a suitable successor could be agreed upon (Saidam 2008). Others interpreted his apparent reluctance as a plea for sympathy and an expression of virtue:

> He has no ambitions anymore; he feels this [leadership] is a burden that he wants to put on someone else's shoulders […]. He is not acting as an Arab leader [to whom the chair is more important than the nation]. He wants to show the people how much he is suffering, [to] make us feel that he is not the [kind of] person just looking out for himself (Khreisheh 2009).

Others were less generous, describing him as 'not a leader, he is a representative against his own will. He is Mr Sulky. If he doesn't like it, he will leave' (Abdel Hadi 2009).

His apparent reluctance to lead, only to be re-endorsed for posts in which few seemed to hold him in great respect, reflected Abbas' frustration with Fatah as a fragmented party unable to provide him with the necessary internal backup. A northern West Bank Fatah leader recounted Abbas' words at a meeting of the PLO's Central Council in late 2008 during discussion of Abbas' proposed election into the new position of President of the State of Palestine:[16]

> I heard Abu Mazen after they told him 'You are the President of the State of Palestine'. He said: 'I don't [want] that. I don't care'. He told us that he didn't care about anything. He said: 'I don't want the Authority [*Ana ma biddi as-sulta*], I don't want Fatah, I don't want the PLO, I am leaving. I am only staying now because no one [else] can sit in the place where I am now'. […] Abu Mazen says 'I am not going to be President [of the PA] another time'. He was very serious about this (Anon 2009b).

Despite his clearly expressed reluctance, Abbas continued to occupy an increasing number of leadership positions in an apparent solidification of power as head of Fatah, head of the PLO, President of the State of Palestine and President of the PA. It may be argued that his expressed reluctance was most pronounced when he was assured of being brought back. And while his

advisors confirmed Abbas' denial of leadership ambitions to the author (Saidam 2008), at the same time he was said to have commissioned survey research into his chances for re-election.

Abbas' apparent leadership reluctance lent further support to the characterization of him as a leader by default. By 2009, one of his close Fatah colleagues described: 'His chair is more of a headache for him. Abu Mazen knows that if he resigns I'm not sure that many people will follow him to the door and bring him back. I think there is no alternative for Abu Mazen' (Anon 2009k). With regard to his announcement that he would not be a candidate in future presidential elections, Zeidani suggested:

> He is disappointed as far as the peace process is concerned. He is not the kind of politician [who] can handle the severe criticism from the many different directions that he's been exposed to, whether from his own movement, Hamas or beyond. All this comes in the absence of any real progress in the peace process. […] I think it would be difficult for Fatah members to unite around another candidate. I cannot single out any other candidate that could unify Fatah behind him (Zeidani 2009:n.p.).

A description of his personal qualities, as opposed to his performance and leadership qualities, highlights a more favourable evaluation. Despite the lack of support for him from within Fatah, other than as a default president, Abbas escaped some of the harshest criticism levelled against other members of the Central Committee, specifically regarding their pursuit of personal over national objectives. In contrast, Abbas was regarded as not directly tainted by corruption, and, perhaps due to the various threats of resignation, not as power-hungry. Fatah secretary-general for the Nablus region Haitham Halabi described him as the only one within the Central Committee who understands his 'responsibilities at home' (International Crisis Group 2009a:9). He was described invariably as part of the undemocratic establishment and part of the reformist camp, as overdue leader (following the expiration of his presidential mandate), but not as power-hungry. A Fatah-internal survey of mid-level cadres summarized Abbas' qualities as 'diplomatic, wonderful, good for external affairs, but not as a president' (Anon 2009f). In the absence of any serious attempts at replacing him as leader, Abbas appeared to be seen as the right leader during this stage of Fatah's development, despite his track record in office. Indeed, his reconfirmation as Fatah leader by acclamation during Fatah's 2009 General Conference suggests a prevailing objective not to challenge the status quo by providing sufficient, albeit contested, support for Abbas' continuation.

The attributes of Abbas' leadership by default impact on the incentive structure for responsiveness. A position of leadership that suffered from lack of strong internal support, external dependence, and limited capacity to effectively communicate with the public produced limited incentives for responsiveness. In particular, Abbas' reluctance to be re-nominated reduced pressures on responsiveness and the need to increase his popularity and bring his positions in line with public preferences. In turn, the neglect to respond to public opinion impacted negatively on Abbas' effectiveness *vis-à-vis* other stakeholders, such as Fatah or PLO executive bodies.[17] In addition, default leadership – while it provided stability of leadership for as long as the dearth of alternative leadership remained – meant that Abbas could not rely on a solid source of internal support. Rather than relying on his own movement, and through it seeking connections with the community, Abbas had to seek alliances outside of Fatah, including with appointed PA and external actors, neither of which required him to heed or respond to public opinion in a way that his own movement, or the PLC might have done. Default leadership

also weakened Fatah's potential influence in demanding responsive leadership. As long as Fatah prioritized default considerations over the electability and popularity of their leader, their ability to pressure Abbas to respond to public opinion was neutralized. Seen as indispensable in maintaining the fragile balance inside Fatah necessary to survive and contain the threat of Hamas, Abbas' popularity was of secondary importance to his movement, coming to the fore only when threats emerged to the very rationale of the default leadership, as was the case when Abbas decided to ask for UN postponement of the Goldstone report in September 2009. The level of popular outrage engendered by that decision appeared to critically undermine the rationale of Abbas' default position and his ability to maintain his leadership position, forcing an embarrassing about-face.[18]

As indicated above, in addition to the incentive-minimizing effect of the 'leadership by default' paradigm, Abbas' style of leadership minimized opportunities to demonstrate service and allocation responsiveness. Not inclined towards symbolic responsiveness either, Abbas was left with the need to demonstrate policy responsiveness as the only other option open to him – just the area of responsiveness in which Palestinian leadership had been under the greatest limitations in terms of their *ability* to show responsiveness.

A rationale for the suspension of responsiveness?

As mentioned earlier, Abbas had responded to the lack of support for him from within Fatah by trying to build alliances outside of his own party in order to strengthen his position *vis-à-vis* competing Fatah power centres. Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007:15ff.) traced Abbas' quest for alliances and his pursuit of institutionalization and reform, arguing that Abbas' pursuit of institutionalization, the rule of law, and new PLC elections was undertaken in the hope of strengthening his hand *vis-à-vis* other decision-making bodies.

However, these attempts met with a swift reversal in 2006, when the unexpected domination of the PLC and PA by Hamas destroyed Abbas' hope for an alliance with these newly legitimized institutions. Encouraged by external powers, Abbas used the authority arguably provided to him in the Basic Law to revert to rule by presidential decree, undoing the fledgling reforms of a devolution of authority from the president, a stronger oversight role for the PLC, and enhanced decision making and financial authority for the PA cabinet. The failure of the National Unity Government of 2007 and the takeover of control over the security apparatus in Gaza by the elected Hamas government prompted Abbas' dismissal of the Hamas-dominated PA cabinet and the appointment, by presidential decree, of subsequent governments, the powers of which de facto only extended to the West Bank.

The appointment of Salam Fayyad as prime minister, a technocrat (and previous finance minister) who had won a seat on the 2006 Legislative Council in his own right as candidate of a later-defunct party, and who was highly regarded by external funders, finally provided Abbas with a potential ally. Sharing with Fayyad a philosophy that centred on improvements on the ground, Abbas was hopeful that by securing funding for, and thereby empowering, an independent and technocratic government, he might be able to achieve objectives on the ground. The alliance between presidency and the appointed Prime Minister, made possible only in the absence of legislative oversight and suspension of the electoral process, enabled pursuit of a common strategy that focused on providing improved security and prosperity in the West Bank. Economic success, it was hoped, would deprive Hamas of public support as the West Bank

would become a model of political and economic progress (International Crisis Group 2008b:1) showing up the discrepancies with the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. The alliance with an appointed PA also gave Abbas a degree of authority and influence out of reach from Fatah power centres. By divesting authority to a non-Fatah PA for which he alone, by the power of presidential decree, was the 'kingmaker',[19] and with no oversight body (as the PLC remained incapacitated by boycott and lack of quorum following Israeli arrests of Hamas legislators in 2006), Abbas strengthened his power *vis-à-vis* his own Fatah movement.

The US government's endorsement of Salam Fayyad as a suitable, if not the *only* acceptable candidate, deprived Fatah of a role in major appointments, leaving the party to complain at the lack of consultation, even declaring the 2009 appointed Fayyad government 'illegitimate' in protest at having been ignored in any consultation surrounding appointments to cabinet positions (Anon 2009a). In addition, the Fayyad government's hastily regained financial authority following the dismissal of the National Unity Government restricted Fatah's access to resources that had previously been in their hands. It left Fatah cadres bemoaning their exclusion from positions within the Authority that they regarded as theirs by right (despite the election failure). Fatah cadres were particularly unhappy with the 'blame without gain' effect of an empowered PA under Fayyad. Cadres complained of being blamed for any negatives in the performance of the caretaker PA, while being unable to take credit for positive developments, which were invariably credited to Fayyad, an independent: 'At the end of the day they say this is the authority of Fatah, not Salam Fayyad. All the faults of a policeman or security officer reflect on Fatah at the end, and society comments that this is the fault of Fatah, not [the fault of the] security forces' (Anon 2009f).

These public perceptions of blame stung Fatah, particularly in light of reforms of the security sector aimed at minimizing the direct influence of Fatah by, for example, targeting apolitical youths for recruitment and enforcing the early retirement of older Fatah cadres and those involved in armed resistance during the second Intifada. The perception of blame without gain, exacerbating already strained relations between Abbas and his movement, fuelled accusations that Abbas had abandoned the movement in favour of the PA (Anon 2009b). At the same time, these security sector reform measures were regarded by external funders as a necessary precondition for the provision of security funding. In light of the lack of progress towards a negotiated settlement, the focus on security and prosperity promised Abbas the ability to lay the groundwork for independence while negotiations were continuing. However, mirroring the obstacles that had prevented success of the wider negotiations strategy, success of a policy focused on prosperity and security was equally dependent on external factors, namely Israeli cooperation in removing barriers to mobility and transfer of goods, and donor funding as the necessary economic stimulus and foundation. In the absence of guarantees regarding Israeli cooperation in removing barriers to mobility, no amount of Palestinian reform or economic management expertise was able to achieve the envisaged objectives. Instead, the World Bank reported increased economic dependence, a ballooning public sector and continued stunting of private investment for the period to 2009 (World Bank 2009:1–6).

Notwithstanding this lack of progress, the economic dependence of the PA on donor support created political imperatives for Abbas to make trade-offs affecting national self-determination. Without adhering to the terms of security cooperation with Israel, and handling of relations with Hamas in a way that met with the approval of his foreign backers, Abbas could not pursue the security and prosperity project. Abbas' alliance with the technocrat government of Fayyad must

be seen in this context. The success of the economic strategy pursued by the Abbas/Fayyad alliance depended on their ability to deliver according to the strict parameters of implementation set by external parties. Indeed, Abbas would have found it harder to perform this task with his own fragmented movement. Instead, a government that was appointed directly by the President without legislative approval created an opportunity for Abbas to bypass pressures for greater participation in decision making, particularly from the Fatah grassroots sector. Fortified with this new alliance, Abbas could afford to ignore calls for a new strategy of resistance alongside negotiations, calls that would have inevitably threatened compliance with the conditions underpinning the economic/security development package.

It appeared that Abbas pursued this strategy out of the conviction that its implementation served the public good and that his rationale would eventually be embraced by a public that would appreciate the benefits of improved living conditions. At the same time, Abbas' departure from democratic process, evident in his obstruction and eventual replacement of the elected parliament and government and his return to rule by presidential decree[20] put him on a path of decreasing opportunities for responsiveness to Palestinian concerns and wishes. In fact, according to this logic, responsiveness to critical public opinion had to be largely set aside, along with democratic processes, in order to provide a window of opportunity for this latest attempt at delivering tangible results; if the strategy was successful, the people would acknowledge the wisdom of this 'temporary' suspension of their views, while if it failed, Abbas' credit would be spent. The arguably justifiable 'suspension' of responsiveness in favour of a perceived long-term public good was matched by Abbas' high levels of responsiveness to external demands and pressure. From Abbas' perspective, violations of the human and political rights of Hamas members to contain the movement's ability to function, as for example detailed by Human Rights Watch (2008), could be excused, as future economic prosperity would marginalize support for Hamas. In a similar vein, despite overwhelming public demand, national reconciliation would best not be pursued seriously since any power-sharing arrangement would have threatened the fragile balance of security compliance and external funding on which the prosperity and security paradigm relied – and with it the credibility of the government. Within this logic, the conditionality of economic success on meeting external expectations justified suspension of responsiveness to public opinion. In commenting on the questionable sustainability of the improvements envisaged, Brown pointed out that 'they come at a very high cost in Palestinian eyes: every step towards prosperity and security on the West Bank is predicated on deepening divisions between the two Authorities' (Brown 2009a:2). The apparent failure of the similarly preconditioned political process provided little grounds for optimism regarding the sustainability of any progress towards either prosperity or security. The cost was also high for Fatah as a movement. Unable to claim responsibility for the thinly spread improvements, but blamed for the negative side-effects of external dictates, the movement found its mobilizational capacity diminished and its internal fragmentation unresolved. Abbas' reliance on the appointed PA, rather than on the Fatah movement, neutralized any role of the movement in bringing to bear pressures and incentives for responsiveness.

CHAPTER 6

POLLING, RESPONSIVENESS AND LEADERSHIP CRISIS

The contribution of polling to creating incentives for responsiveness

Polls have been described as a tool for political communication between leaders and the public, one that can provide both information and voice (Althaus 2003:268). Following on from the approach taken in the previous chapters, using a widened definition of responsiveness to map the incentive structure for responsiveness, the following two chapters explore the social and political construction (Said 2009) of polling in the Palestinian context. This chapter focuses on the interaction between political leadership, the instrument of polling, and the public. In looking at the factors that enable or limit the ability of leaders to utilize this instrument, it outlines the unique contribution of polling within the context of arrested non-state democratization and provides an overview of the Palestinian polling sector, its actors, aims, and issues affecting trust in the instrument. It also outlines the areas in which polling has been used by leaders, and aims to unravel the apparent contradiction between overt scepticism of polling and increased poll use. Chapter Seven looks at a number of specific issues that illustrate how polls had begun to influence leaders. The chapter also discusses the risks of polling in a fragile political environment where polls have the potential to contribute to the prolonged suspension of elections.

Polling in the context of non-state democratization and leadership crisis

The novelty, and as such the added value that polls may provide for the study of leadership responsiveness, lies in the nature of the information that polls provide. Polls introduce information of a kind 'that would not otherwise exist' (Verba 1996:1), providing a new quality and quantity of information about public perceptions and preferences available to leaders and the public alike. First developed in established democracies in the early 1900s, this new type of information was seen to have 'altered in systematic and important ways the behaviour of elected politicians' (Geer 1996:xiii).

The study of the opinion–policy link has focused on the extent and the mechanism through which surveys influence policy and decision making. The empirical findings of the 'link' literature divides roughly into three positions taken by researchers: those who find a close association between opinion and policy; those who see minimal or a decreasing effect; and those who find that public opinion matters sometimes, but not always, and mostly when the issues are of high relevance (Manza et al. 2002:3ff.). The literature on the public opinion–policy link highlights the parameters of poll influence, from the 'antelope' (Stimson et al. 1995:559) to the 'crafted talk' (Jacobs and Shapiro 2002:65), in reference to the levels of responsiveness politicians show towards polled public opinion: 'antelope' denotes high sensitivity and responsiveness to polled public opinion, while 'crafted talk' refers to politicians tracking public opinion, to 'determine how to craft their public presentations and win public support for the policies they and their supporters favor' (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000:xiii), rather than inform policy. Link literature examines the mechanisms through which a link is forged and maintained, the why and how of responsiveness of political elites to citizens' preferences. This area is of central concern in the study of elite-society relations.

The following Table 1 provides a summary overview of the range of potential uses of political surveys by politicians and the public, based on the experience of polling in established democracies.[1]

The start of polling in the Arab world brought this poll-induced increase of information to the region, with Palestinian polling spearheading developments since the early 1990s. However, the fundamental differences between the Palestinian political context and that prevailing in established democracies require recognition. When polling is conducted outside the context of established democracies, its uses, influence and meaning may differ, depending on the nature of opportunities and constraints that define the relationship between leaders and their publics. The specific political environment will define the ways in which polling can create incentives for responsiveness.

Table 1 Poll use in established democracies

Poll uses by politicians	Poll uses by public
Information	**Information**
•Climate of opinion	•Widening of public debate
•Specific information	•Range of opinion/political diversity
•Balance of power/support distribution	
Policy Making	**Participation/Representation**
•Issue identification/signal function	•Equal voice
•Limit identification	•Enhanced representation
•Public input	•Polls for advocacy
•Corrective action	
Policy Implementation	**Accountability and Control**
•Sustainability/acceptability	•Prioritizing concerns
•Corrective action	•Policy feedback/monitoring
	•Popularity impact
Mandate/Legitimacy/Popularity	•Mandate/legitimacy feedback
•Mandate clarification	•Clean elections safeguard
•Power enhancement	
•Legitimacy	
•Electoral prospects (forecast)	
Marketing/Strategy	
•Candidate identification	
•Communication strategies	
•Policy acceptability testing	
•Policy advocacy	
•Image enhancement	
Manipulation	
•Issue creation	
•Opinion manipulation	

Constraints on the ability of leaders to act do not necessarily mean that polling may play a lesser role in providing participation opportunities for the public. Indeed, under conditions of arrested democratization and constraints on participation, the role of polls may be elevated as perhaps one of the only remaining channels of communication and information between leadership and the public. The literature on polling in the context of democratization outlined in the Introduction has provided information on the potential role of polls in three areas: (1) polls as information for decision makers and the public, (2) polls as participation when other participation opportunities are limited, and (3) polls as a control mechanism against electoral fraud. Table 2 summarizes the role that polls may play in influencing state–society relations outside of the democratic context:[2]

Table 2 Poll use in the pre-democratic context

	Ruling elite	Counter-elite	Public
Aim	Survival	Power or ideology	Representation and good governance
Need	Legitimacy	Legitimacy & delegitimization of opposition	Participation
Information value	Legitimacy Policy Public preferences Public concerns	Legitimacy Opportunities for mobilization Self-assessment	Opinion climate/opinion diversity Responsiveness of leadership
Information use	Legitimacy campaigns/ Strategy Early warning Leading public opinion	Campaigns/Strategy Legitimacy Delegitimization Mobilization	Normalization of diversity Public debate Interest representation Safeguarding election integrity Accountability

The unique context of Palestinian polling

Palestinian polling has been at the forefront of survey research in the Arab world, lauded for its reliability and professionalism (Pollock 2008:45), in spite of the setback suffered by the sector in failing to predict Hamas' 2006 election victory.[3] The founders of Palestinian polling expected polls to assist 'the public as a whole to participate in the process [of negotiations]' (Khatib 1999), and to become 'an essential supporting mechanism for democracy' (Awartani 2008). US polling expert Mark Tessler and colleagues[4] optimistically suggested that the 'institutionalised study of public opinion[5] […] increases the likelihood that the quest for democracy and accountable government will be successful in Palestine' (Tessler and Nachtwey 1999:36). While pollsters expressed confidence in the positive impact of their work, they have been acutely aware of the obstacles and setbacks faced by their sector, and have emphasized the developmental and educational role of polls in preparing both leaders and the public for an increased role of public opinion in policy and decision making in future.

Interview respondents provided a broad range of responses to questions about the impact of polling on leadership. Sceptics – many of whom were found among political leaders and their advisors – described the 'total failure of polling in the Palestinian experience' (Ishtayyeh 2008), while the more optimistic view – primarily expressed by pollsters – saw polling as 'part of the transformation towards increasing the importance and weight of public opinion in the decision making and thinking of politicians' (Khatib 2008a). The view of those who saw polls as not increasing responsiveness was based on prevailing scepticism towards the relatively young polling sector, often combined with a general perception of Fatah leadership as immune to public – and even Fatah internal opinion – per se. Furthermore, civil society was blamed by some for failing to have applied the necessary pressures on politicians to make polling more effective (Abu Libdeh 2008). One widely held perception was that polls were predominantly used for manipulative purposes, providing leaders with popular talking points and positions rather than informing substantive issues and policy (Sha'ban 2008). Even despite such negative assessments, most sceptics conceded that polls may be able to offer a contribution to the process of democratization (Abu Libdeh 2008). On the other side of the spectrum, pollsters expressed a profound belief in the ability of their work to contribute positively, if slowly, to the increasing importance of public opinion in decision making. They were encouraged by the level of interest

in poll results expressed by members of the political community (Rabah 2008; Said 2008).

The context of Palestinian polling has been unique within the Arab world,[6] marked by an absence of legal restriction or overt government interference, a relatively well established level of institutionalization, professionalism and diversity within the polling sector, and strong civil society links. The Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) began its regular opinion polling in February 1993, shortly after the PLO began secret negotiations with Israel in Oslo,[7] and seven months prior to the 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles. It preceded the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority pursuant to the 1994 Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area (Cairo Agreement) by 16 months and first elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council by nearly three years. Regular polling by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) followed shortly after, in September 1993. Both organizations have since dominated the Palestinian polling sector, with a number of other organizations joining the field in later years.

The parallel emergence of polling and democratic institutions was significant in that it enabled the development of the polling sector unhindered by regulatory and legal restrictions. Its head start to the establishment of a legislative body and the establishment of an executive authority set it apart from other Arab countries where polling suffered from a more restrictive political environment (Said 2008). Neither the Israeli military administration of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, nor the Palestinian Authority, has targeted polling institutions. Indeed, Israeli government agencies, and in particular Israeli security services, are highly attentive to survey data and have relied on them in analysis and risk assessment (Ayalon 2002:5), and Israeli media outlets report poll findings diligently and regularly.[8] Pollster Nader Said, whose work outside Palestine has allowed him to compare polling environments in Palestine and other Arab countries, pointed to the uniqueness of a polling environment where polling was embedded in ‘a society that created a social and political movement that fully legitimized polling among the public policy makers, legislators, among media and international community’ (Said 2009).

Another unique feature has been the strong civil society foundation of polling in Palestine. Polling emerged from within the civil society and academic research sector and was conducted as part of a civil and democratization agenda by these organizations and their funders. This agenda has driven a remarkable frankness and courage in tackling difficult and at times sensitive questions. The funding of the non-commercial polling sector has been provided primarily by international donors under the headings of democratization and support for civil society. This ensured that from the beginning, poll results were accessible to the public and to politicians alike, free of charge. At the same time, the sector’s reliance on international donors has left polling organizations open to criticism of being driven by external agendas and influences. Over the past decade, a small number of commercially run polling organizations have been established. Whereas the majority of commercial polls are commissioned by international organizations and focus on economic and social data analysis to assist in needs assessment for donor interventions, individual politicians and parties have become occasional clients commissioning political perception polls, specifically in the run-up to elections. The political affiliation of polling organizations and pollsters has been characterized by a degree of diversity, albeit within a spectrum that excludes the Islamist perspective. It is highly competitive internally with little cooperation between organizations in spite of the substantial crossover in personnel.[9]

The development of polling has coincided with increased political polarization since Oslo.

This stimulated interest in data reflecting factional support, and created opportunities for poll use to support accountability by monitoring performance of the newly established institutions of government. The development of polling came at a time of fundamental political change and volatility, polarization and important political decision making on issues of long-term political, social and geographic importance for the future of Palestinian aspirations. It is therefore not surprising that Palestinian polls have posed questions of critical interest to politicians, the public and international actors alike. Both issue salience and high levels of public politicization are regarded as enhancing the ability and reliability of polls to reflect public opinion, provided that technical quality and bias are controlled for.[10] Palestinian polling, driven by local expertise, has consistently asked highly salient questions of national importance that reflected the state of the public debate. Examples of the range of topics included questions regarding:

- political options – public support for political options regarding the peace process, different types of armed resistance and use of violence;
- political preferences – factional support and support of individual political leaders (voting preferences, trust);
- accountability – performance evaluation of leadership and institutions;
- legitimacy – of leadership and institutions;
- concerns – issue prioritization;
- mood – levels of optimism/pessimism;
- specific issues tracking, such as support for reconciliation, perceptions of corruption, specific negotiation positions; and
- preferred forms of government, for example support for democracy versus religious forms of government.[11]

The range of topics covered by Palestinian pollsters is indicative of the substantial independence of the sector, the commitment to civil society and participation, and the personal courage of pollsters to ask difficult and at times risky questions. The quality of analysis overall has allowed poll data to become a much-used analytical tool for international organizations and local and international academics and governments. Few articles on Palestinian affairs get by today without reference to data on Palestinian public opinion, most often citing the balance of factional support between Fatah and Hamas and support for violence and negotiations.

Pollsters, their aims and their funders

Palestine has witnessed the rapid development of a substantial polling sector in the past 15 years. A core of quality polling organizations has dominated the field, with the JMCC and the PSR (both since 1993) having led the way in the conduct of regular and qualitative political polling. Newer polling organizations include the commercial enterprises Alpha International (Alpha, since 2001), Near East Consulting (NEC, since 2006), and Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD, since 2007). Each of the commercial organizations was set up by pollsters who originally worked for JMCC or PSR. NEC and Alpha are the only operators using telephone polling, all other organizations rely on house-to-house surveys. Both Birzeit University (since 1998) and An-Najjah University (since 2004) have established polling units and teach survey methodology in the university context. Only one polling organization, the Palestinian Centre for Public Opinion (PCPO, since 1994), is located in the southern West Bank

(Beit Jala), while all other organizations are based in the northern West Bank (mainly in the administrative centre, Ramallah).

A range of other organizations conduct irregular political polling. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), a governmental body answerable to the President of the Palestinian Authority, has conducted occasional political polling, for example prior to the 2006 elections, on request by the President. Online news polls have proliferated in recent years, with nearly all media outlets conducting online polls on current affairs issues. In addition to indigenous polling, a number of international organizations have conducted occasional polls, for example periodic polls conducted by FAFO. While the headquarters of all polling organizations are located in the West Bank, polling in the Gaza Strip is conducted through Gaza-based personnel (with some organizations maintaining field offices in the Strip) or telephone polls.

Only one Gaza-based research centre, the *Mustaqbal* (Future) centre, had conducted occasional polls and was regarded as being closer to the Islamist political spectrum. Its polls were published on the organization's website, but the quality and methodology could not be verified here, nor has its website been available consistently. It has been suggested that Hamas have done their own polling (Jarbawi 2008), but little detail was available on specifics. Chapter Two has discussed the methods used by Hamas to assess public opinion in more detail. The lack of information on Hamas' public opinion assessment is surprising: even among Palestinian pollsters, there is little to no awareness of the methods Hamas uses to assess public opinion. Hamas' highly structured opinion assessment, as for example employed prior to the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, has remained widely unnoticed by political observers. On the other hand, Hamas leaders appeared to follow all publicly available polls closely and expressed trust in the information of some polling centres, exempting data on factional support and popularity from this expression of trust because such data were believed to consistently under-represent Hamas' popular support (Abdel Raziq 2008).

According to Omar Abdel Raziq, Minister for the Economy in the 2006 Hamas cabinet and manager of its 2006 West Bank election campaign, Hamas had been interested in conducting polls themselves. Abdel Raziq had held initial meetings with local experts, but the idea had been abandoned due to a number of constraints. Legislator Ayman Daraghmeh (*Change and Reform* 2006) emphatically denied the existence of any formal polling conducted or commissioned by Hamas, explaining:

> Hamas can't do polling here in the West Bank. No one can do this from Hamas, people even fear to go to the mosque. The situation is, you are not allowed to work […]. After the 2007 Gaza crisis, Hamas is totally banned, not allowed doing any activity, you are only allowed to go to jail, or to die (Daraghmeh 2008).

The founding organizations of Palestinian polling (JMCC, PSR) saw their role as directly related to peace negotiations with Israel and the establishment of Palestinian self-governance. Their aim was to strengthen the voice of the public by providing information on public attitudes to Palestinian negotiators involved in the Oslo negotiations. The JMCC, headed by former Palestinian People's Party spokesperson Ghassan Khatib, conducted these first polls against the backdrop of an assessment, common among left-wing organizations and indeed other political activists (including those from Fatah), that peace negotiations were in danger of compromising on basic Palestinian rights (JMCC 1999:n.p.).

Such assessment was based on the experiences of those involved in the earlier Madrid negotiations, including Khatib himself, who had seen their negotiations efforts undermined by parallel secret PLO–Israel negotiations in Oslo. The Madrid negotiating teams had been comprised of political leaders and 34 Technical Committees (Parsons 2005:68) supported by a wide range of expertise and knowledge drawn primarily from within the Palestinian territories. While not constituting an alternative leadership per se, the negotiating team had de facto represented constituencies within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (Parsons 2005:79). In contrast, the secret Oslo negotiations that overtook the Madrid process were dominated by a more narrowly defined group of individuals representing the high-level Fatah leadership (Arafat, Abbas, Qurie) as well as Abed Rabbo (formerly Fida), 'Asfur and Bashir al-Barghouthi (PPP) and a few others (Sayigh 1997b:652), all of whom had close links to Arafat, affording him much greater control over negotiations than the complicated Madrid process had (Parsons 2005:78–79). This composition of personalities was thought by many to insufficiently reflect the diversity of Palestinian society. The limited number of persons involved also meant that the expertise, assembled for the Madrid process through technical committees on areas such as water, agriculture and others, was not utilized.

Within this context, polls were seen as a tool that could support peace negotiations by linking diaspora negotiators more closely with Palestinian constituencies, inserting much needed public participation in the process:

> There was clearly a gap between the leadership outside and the general public that needed to be bridged. Assessment of public opinion in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was necessary in order to link Palestinian representatives outside with the population inside and for the outcome of any negotiations with Israel to be perceived as legitimate (JMCC 1999).

According to Khatib, 'allowing the public to voice their opinions, and to have those opinions assembled together into hard data is one very clear way in which the public as a whole can "participate" in the process' (Khatib 1999:n.p.). As such, from their inception, opinion polls were seen by civil society pollsters as an instrument to exert pressure on leadership, warning decision makers off straying too far from public expectations. As Khatib wrote in 2007:

> The results of the most recent Palestinian public opinion poll by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre should therefore act as an early warning system for the Palestinian leadership if it is involved in some kind of political discussion with Israel. The gist of the poll in this regard is that while Palestinians are still committed to a two-state solution, they continue to insist that this solution be consistent with international legality. In other words, the Palestinian public is not willing to compromise on the 1967 borders, the right of return of Palestinian refugees or the right of Palestinians to occupied East Jerusalem (Khatib 2007).

PSR's director Khalil Shikaki described polls as playing 'a significant role in empowering and constraining leaders' (Shikaki 2006b:3). Civil society polling was explicitly conceived as an instrument in the service of the public, intended to both inform and educate. Pollster Nader Said, then working for the PSR, expressed the idea of public ownership of poll data by noting: 'Everything has to be published; everyone has to have access […]. Like graffiti, polling is a channel for protest' (Said 2008).

Established at the height of hopes for democratization, good governance, and an active role for civil society, polls were also regarded as an educational tool in this process: 'In addition to the important role of the polling process in promoting democratic practices, [it required] the sharing of the results in public to encourage popular debate on issues' (Said 2000:5). As part of the *Polling for All* project, individuals with leadership qualities and public influence such as journalists, representatives from all political factions, educators, NGO leaders and women's groups were offered training aimed at enhancing understanding of the role and uses of polls and poll analysis in this politically aware group. According to Said (2008), 'polls are part of building a culture of democracy; they are a tool in this training'. Jamil Rabah, who conducted the first regular polls for the JMCC, commented on the participation value of polling:

> Public participation in decision making is one of the most important roles for polling, especially in regard to the peace process. We were pioneers in Palestine. It is important. Why? Because how do we know that reconciliation is important to people, that they support the peace process, that people want Christmas trees as well as Ramadan lights? How do you know? Polls are the easiest way to know (Rabah 2008).

Even after some of the early pollsters set up commercial polling organizations, the commitment to polling as a participatory tool remained, reflected in, for example, the provision of periodic political polling free of charge. Seeing this as his civic duty, Rabah explained:

> Although we are a private company, we refuse to be supported by any organisation [for the periodic conduct of political polls free of charge], this is totally independent. That is one of the missions we had as NEC […]. We are trying to give [the information to] anyone, politicians, decision-makers, civil society organisations, and to tell them 'this is the voice of the people' (Rabah 2008).

Funding opportunities for polling increased as international priorities shifted from aid and relief funding to support for civil society and democratization in the wake of first PLC elections. PSR and JMCC were both able to source funding for polling within this shift toward democratization funding. Initially, the main funders of polls were two German political foundations: the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation (FES, related to the German Social Democratic Party) funded the JMCC's polling activities and training, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) related to the German Christian Democratic Party) funded the PSR. Further funding was subsequently provided by the International Republican Institute (related to the US Republican party). A number of other international donors joined in to fund polling activities of these and other organizations, either funding polling outright, or commissioning polls for a wide range of purposes.[12]

This funding structure excluded Islamist organizations because they generally did not have funding relationships with Western donors. However, funding constraints may not have been the principle reason for Hamas not conducting its own polling, or specifically commissioning polls. Rather, it may be an indication of Islamist organizations' use of publicly available poll results, and its stronger reliance on other, more trusted alternative means of tapping into public opinion – a topic discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Trust in polls, attitudes towards polling

Interviews for this study encountered a wide range of attitudes towards polling. Reasons for the extent of trust in polls (or lack thereof) can be summarized as determined by a number of factors:

- levels of trust in the technical ability of pollsters and polls to accurately reflect public opinion;
- trust in the absence of political bias;
- assessment of the political and social environment as allowing free expression of opinion; and
- attitudes towards the necessity for polling to complement traditional means of assessing public opinion.

Since the establishment of regular polling, pollsters had reported increasing levels of public acceptance for polling, reflected, for example, in the growing demand for poll data and an increasing number of polls commissioned by politicians, analysts, foreign governments, NGOs and international organizations. The suggested growth of public confidence in polling, also reportedly evident in increasing willingness to participate in surveys, was interpreted by Said as a sign of public recognition of polling as a mechanism supporting the process of democratization. He cited fieldworkers' reports of individuals *enjoying* responding to the polls, and reports of persons requesting to be included in the sample (Said 2000:4).

Ghassan Khatib (2008a) described a gradually increasing acceptance of polling by politicians. Increased polarization in the Palestinian political spectrum post-Oslo was seen to have enhanced interest in a tool that could help politicians gain a better understanding of these divisions and provide insight into factional strength in preparation for elections. Khatib recalled of his time as minister in the 2002 and the 2005–6 PA cabinets:

> Whenever there is a poll, it will be typical that this poll will be mentioned in the discussion, either in leadership or cabinet meetings […] mostly as part of someone trying to prove his point […] in order to strengthen a certain argument. [Poll data may be] included in suggestions: 'Let's forget about that, you noticed in the last poll […] being attached with such a position is not helpful to [our] popularity' (Khatib 2008b).

Such interest contrasted with the initial scepticism towards polls, described by Khatib with regard to his own small party, the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) prior to the 1996 elections:

> In the beginning they […] didn't take polls seriously, and I know they were always arguing that this [poll result] didn't make sense, and they didn't believe it to be correct. The shock happened after the elections, when these factions got almost no seats. They started to realize that maybe these polls were accurate. The PPP got one percent in both elections. Now they believe strongly in polls, [are] waiting for the results […]. Gradually, attention picked up and ten years on we have reached a situation where decision-makers give attention to polls (Khatib 2008b).

The following more detailed examination of the issues affecting levels of trust in poll data provides an insight into motivations for the use of polls or their rejection. While this analysis highlights the state of evolution of polling in Palestine, it also provides reflection on attitudes towards the need for public opinion assessment, putting into context the reaction of individual leaders to polled public opinion.

Issues influencing trust in factional support data

The failure of polls to predict Hamas' 2006 election victory had caused a serious setback for trust in Palestinian polling. Whereas the reasons for this failure were well understood by pollsters and analysts, the failure provided fuel to poll sceptics and diminished confidence in the technical ability of pollsters to accurately reflect public opinion. Most analysts agreed that two factors contributed to the misprediction. The electoral system, a split system that distributed seats evenly between party lists and districts, made polling very difficult. While national list outcomes were predicted with reasonable accuracy by most polls, accurate prediction of district level results would have required a large enough representative respondent sample in each district. The resources necessary for adequate polling at the district level were not committed at the time.[13]

At the same time, there was some evidence supporting the argument that Hamas support was under-represented because of respondents' reluctance to state their voting intentions openly, either intuitively, or following instruction by Hamas. Daraghmeh noted:

> People feared that they would be punished by Fatah […], or if results showed Hamas in the majority, that Fatah people would come and destroy or burn the [ballot] boxes. In my area, where I was elected, we discussed this on the day of the elections and we suggested to people not to tell who they voted for. We tried our best that day to [give] this kind of warning and I think it affected the [poll] results (Daraghmeh 2008).

Whether calls by Hamas would have been heeded by those outside its core support group, and whether such calls, reported also by other informants active in the *Change and Reform* campaign, would have found reflection in the relatively small polling sample, cannot be verified.[14] However, the fact that such calls were issued illustrated a keen awareness by Hamas' West Bank leadership of the critical role of polling in the electoral contest. It also highlights how the contracting civil liberties and increasing repression of oppositional voices may start to affect the reliability of factional support data in poll results. The assertion that respondents were increasingly reluctant to state support for Hamas (Daraghmeh 2008) gained credibility after Hamas' 2007 Gaza security takeover and the subsequent establishment of two parallel governments. While politically motivated repression of oppositional voices was officially denied by Fatah's leadership, the PA's crackdown on Hamas activity, its leadership and affiliated organizations in the West Bank has been well documented.[15]

The claim that the restrictive environment made Hamas supporters reluctant to publicly acknowledge their support for the organization for fear of being targeted by the Fatah-dominated security agencies in the West Bank was corroborated by reports of a control experiment on the accuracy of telephone polling, conducted by Mohammad Ishtayyeh during his management of the 2005 presidential campaign. When respondents in a poll conducted by a Palestinian polling organization for the 2005 campaign were rung back a second time, this time with Ishtayyeh's staff posing as survey researchers for a fictitious Western polling organization, many respondents changed their answer, and were more likely to declare their intention to vote for Hamas (Ishtayyeh 2008). Pollsters acknowledged that Hamas support was expected to be higher than indicated in polls.[16] An assumed under-representation of Hamas supporters is acknowledged by pollster Rabah, whose analysis of those survey respondents who decline to answer questions on voting intentions reveals their closer proximity to Hamas than to Fatah.[17]

The apparent under-representation of Hamas' support in the 1990s affected trust in polls, specifically by Hamas leaders, as expressed by Hamas leader Mahmoud Az-Zahhar: 'This centre [PSR] has specialised for some time in assigning the ratio of 18 per cent to Hamas; [predicting that Hamas] could win at most only 32 seats, whereas in fact it won 39 seats [the same as Fatah]. Therefore, we doubt the credibility of the centre and its polls' (Al-Zahhar, cited in Hroub 2000:230). However, others, such as West Bank Hamas leader Abdel Raziq (2008), expressed a higher level of confidence in PSR polls, though specifically excluding factional support data.

Mahmoud Abbas' trust in polls

Mahmoud Abbas was described by his advisers and colleagues as a leader highly sceptical of polls and their ability to inform decision making: 'While he personally is not much into public opinion [polls], and does not give much weight to the public or public opinion, his team includes a number of people who believe very strongly in polling' (Khatib 2008a). His presidential campaign manager Mohammad Ishtayyeh who, despite his own expressed scepticism of polls used commissioned polls extensively during the campaign, reflected on the President's attitude towards polls:

> I don't think Abu Mazen uses polls for strategic decision-making. He is like a person who has been bitten by a snake when it comes to opinion polls [referring to the 2006 election misprediction]. He doesn't dare to put his hand again in that direction, I think. He doesn't really trust it (Ishtayyeh 2008).

Similarly, Abbas' then chief of staff, Rafiq Husseini, commented to the author on Abbas' attitude *vis-à-vis* polls:

> Of course he reads the polls, the polls are there in front of him, but […] he has to make his own judgment with regard to the polls […]. Most of the pollsters are there to influence, rather than to actually gauge the feelings of the people. This is how we feel about it […]. Who has done the poll is as important to us as the result of the poll. That is why we are not influenced totally by these results (Husseini 2009).

Polls and the media

Complaints of biased media reporting of poll data were expressed mainly by pollsters themselves. While pollsters appeared to be satisfied in general with the factual accuracy of poll reporting, they noted the issue of bias by omission (Awartani 2008). Pollsters criticized that in cases where detailed analysis revealed the strength of Hamas' position, such detail did at times not receive coverage, with news agencies concentrating on general summary information that highlighted government-favourable results. Ghassan Khatib pointed out the coopting effect of 'publishability'. He suggested that pollsters anticipated the type of questions that media were most likely to publish or omit, and suggested that this encouraged pollsters to tailor their questions accordingly in order to receive higher media exposure for their results. He also noted that in the absence of quality control for the survey research sector, 'anyone can claim to be a pollster, and whoever publishes in *Al-Quds* [newspaper] is perceived to be a pollster […]. There are no standards that allow the public or media to evaluate the seriousness of a poll' (Khatib

2008b). According to Khatib, the fierce competition between polling organizations was responsible for the lack of cooperation regarding establishment of national quality standards for the industry (Khatib 2008a).

Commercial polling centres cited ownership of poll results by the commissioning client as a loophole for selective media reporting of poll results:

> I give the results to my clients and the clients may selectively give results to media. [A particular politician] gave a small part of the survey to the media, […] only what was serving his interests. People accused me of being biased. But he, as a client, can publish or hide what he wants! (Awartani 2008).

Funding impact on trust

The funding structure of Palestinian polling has left the sector open to criticism of being externally driven, commercially oriented and therefore subject to external manipulation, as expressed by Mohammad Ishtayyeh:

> Most opinion polls are donor driven. [They] don't reflect national aspiration, and are all tailored in a certain direction. Why is it that donors pay for opinion polls in Palestine? Some donors believe that there is something here called 'leadership by perception'. If you appear on TV two to three times, four times, if your name is in the polls, [then] your name starts to go around in people's minds. [Polls] make you think of [their] name. Mr X goes to the pollsters and tells them to include his name in the list of names, and he pays for that. Just having his name mentioned […] gives him credit, regardless of whether he gets 1.6 percent or whatever. At least his name is being dealt with. This is falsification of reality; you are channelling the thinking of the people into this direction […]. Very rarely do you find an opinion poll that is not driven by donors. The only polls not driven by donors were what we did for our own use [during the presidential election campaign], which was not funded by donors. Every single donor wants something out of this opinion poll, for their own purposes (Ishtayyeh 2008).

Similarly, Palestinian anthropologist Reema Hammami noted a number of concerns related to the external funding of polling, including their use by external actors, primarily to scrutinize Palestinian public opinion, the exploitation of poll results against the Palestinian public, and political framing of poll questions for external consumption. Hammami believed that polls were 'implemented to convince Israelis that there is a Palestinian "public", but nobody cared. The Palestinian public didn't count to the Israelis and Americans' (Hammami 2008). Referring to poll data on public perceptions regarding suicide attacks, Hammami also suggested that externally framed polling was exploited against Palestinians.

Contradictory evidence on trust

The range of factors influencing trust in polls is not atypical for the early stages of polling in any given country. Indeed, many of the concerns voiced in Palestine are equally heard and expressed in established democracies. It is noteworthy that suggestions of intentional falsification of poll results were rare, even from Hamas. Evidence of general awareness of poll results and interest in

polling, reported by pollsters and decision makers alike, appeared to contradict the poll scepticism expressed by some leaders and advisors. At times, overt poll scepticism appeared to be expressed only in relation to unfavourable results. Pollster Nader Said noted:

> [the leader of a certain political party] would go on TV and say: 'Oh, public opinion polls are bullshit'. Then next he will call me and say 'Nader, why don't we meet and talk about this poll, how come these numbers are like that, why aren't we more […]' which shows how much they care about polls! (Said 2009).

On a similar note, Alpha director Faisal Awartani suggested that most politicians were selective in the way they use polls: 'They select the results that suit, even within the same poll' (Awartani 2008), and PSR director Khalil Shikaki noted: 'People believe polls that confirm their existing beliefs […] and are suspicious of data that contradict their beliefs' (Shikaki 2008). Indeed, within the Fatah movement there has been evidence of substantial diversity of attitudes towards the utility of polling in decision making. To some of the older returned leadership, direct and personal proximity to the 'grassroots pulse' was a matter of personal pride that may have decreased their interest in a new and technology-dependent way of assessing public opinion. Said described a typical view of the returning leadership: 'We understand what the people want; we don't need anyone in between. We are the nation, everyone is Fatah basically. So we don't need anyone to tell us. We are totally in touch with them. Are you accusing us of not being in touch with our own people?' (Said 2009).

However, many within Fatah's younger generation of lower to mid-level rank, those substantially excluded from power, generally showed greater interest in polls and were more likely to publicly espouse polling as an information tool. For example, the poll results from all polling institutes were a regular addition to the literature sent on a periodic basis to popular Fatah 'young guard' leader Marwan Barghouthi, imprisoned by Israel.

Reports from pollsters contradicted the poll scepticism expressed by some Fatah leaders. Pollsters reported substantial interest in their data from within Fatah's leadership, along with the leaderships of most other parties. The office of the President, all prime ministers, the leaders and secretary-generals of Al Badil, the Third Way, the PPP along with many others were counted among their clients for commissioned polls. 'There is strong attention to poll results and parties started to commission polling institutions […] to help the parties learn about public opinion' (Khatib 2008a). Pollsters reported spending considerable time each week consulting directly with political leaders from various parties, including Hamas, explaining results and analysing specific questions, either in a formal setting or during informal conversation. Rabah (2008) reported seeing 10–15 politicians at his offices each month, and estimated that he was asked about results 50–60 times each month, spending many hours in (mostly informal) discussions with enquirers. Similarly, Khatib recalled responding to frequent poll-related questions from colleagues in the government when he served as Minister of Labour. 'We know that polls reach politicians at the highest levels' (Khatib 2008a). The idea of the pollster who is attached to higher office as an advisor to political parties, government or the office of the President or Prime Minister has clearly entered the Palestinian political vocabulary, although pollsters are hesitant to declare such status, fearing that this may compromise the perception of independence of their regular polls. The parallel expression of poll scepticism and interest in poll results speaks to the growing influence of polls. While they may be mistrusted (and may not be acted upon), they have nevertheless become too important as a source of information and trigger for public debate to

ignore completely.

Trust in polls is an important factor in the consideration of responsiveness to polled public opinion. If trust in polls was completely absent, lack of responsiveness to poll results would be its logical consequence. However, the evidence for this research suggested that this was not the case. Trust in polls may not be universal but it appeared to be selective, depending on the convenience of results. The diversity, lack of coordination and lack of professional oversight mechanisms in the polling industry in Palestine gave political leaders the opportunity to choose from a number of poll providers, allowing them to choose one they trust. This has indeed taken place, with politicians having commissioned polls from a range of pollsters, at times in parallel to create controls. Distrust in polls may not be the main reason for a lack of responsiveness to polled public opinion. As Said suggested: 'It is not about resistance to polling, it's about inability to do anything about it' (Said 2009).

Influence and impact of polling on responsiveness

Polling, legitimation and representation

Palestinian polling has provided observers and insiders alike with a window into the fragility of the relationship between governing and governed. Information on factional and individual leadership support was naturally among the most sought after poll data. But how did this affect leadership? Did the information provide incentives for responsiveness? Did the publication of data, and leaders' responses to such data, exacerbate or mitigate leadership crisis?

The introduction of a new type of information that allowed politicians and the public alike to monitor popularity, performance and – implicitly – perceptions of legitimacy, was of heightened importance in the specific context of arrested non-state democratization. In the absence of regular elections and restrictions on political expression, specifically affecting the Islamist groups, poll data provided a new and potentially significant type of information on popular support. Furthermore, within a political context in which competing claims for legitimate representation were at the heart of the leadership and overall political crisis, it stood to reason that information which tracked and analysed public perceptions of such claims could be of particular interest to politicians and the public, and could impact claims to representation.

Whether the potential of polls to challenge claims to representation and legitimacy is actually realized depends on a number of factors. Practically, it depends on the acceptance of polling, including trust in polling, reliability of data and the level of publicity that poll results receive. Conceptually, the contribution of polls to challenges of legitimacy depends on the state of thinking about accepted bases of authority, specifically whether popularity/popular support and legitimacy are perceived as being linked – a question that has been discussed in Chapter Four. The availability of a new quality and quantity of information through polls, covering politically sensitive areas such as political support, performance evaluation and perceptions of legitimacy, has the potential to affect the relationship between leaders and the public in a number of ways:

Polls and representational claims

Polls provided a new way of assessing the size of factional support bases, directly speaking to the representational claims of political factions. At a minimum, data that challenged representational claims could create pressures for groups to substantiate those claims. Newly available poll data on factional trust and public approval ratings provided quantifiable information, widely available at regular (generally monthly) intervals. The first public opinion polls provided political factions with instant and at times shocking insight into the accuracy of their representational claims. The considerable political influence of left-wing parties (PPP, PFLP, DFLP, FIDA) as reflected in their representation within the PLO (Hammami 1995:58), was based on claims of representing significant sectors of society and was supported by their active role in, and indeed domination of, the civil society/NGO sector. The first opinion polls sent shock waves through the left wing party spectrum as data revealed an apparent lack of public backing. As Hammami wrote at the time: 'Public opinion polls in the West Bank and Gaza bear witness to the left's shocking lack of popular support today' (Hammami 1995:63, fn. 7). Ghassan Khatib recalled:

> [It] was a shocking experience. Struggle [was] no longer the criterion. The public was using other criteria in [their] evaluation of parties and leaders. For example, the PFLP, who considered themselves a competitor to Fatah, the number two, found themselves ranking between 2–3 percent; the PPP used to stress its public activities and [its] many popular based NGOs […] which means that they are popular; [they, too] found themselves ranking between 1–2 percent, and [it was] the same for all the other factions (Khatib 2008a).

The revelation of low support rates for factions that had previously claimed second and third place in the factional hierarchy challenged the ability of these parties to maintain their claims. While the PLO's commitment to national unity demanded that the smaller left wing parties were represented within the emerging Palestinian Authority, their authority was somewhat weakened by the clear and unequivocal reflection of the limited popular support in polls and – post 1996 – also in elections. Rather than being able to demand representation and a share of positions within the PLO or PA by right, continuing participation in decision making despite minimal public support made the inclusion of minor parties more gratuitous and as such less independent. At the same time, this poll-facilitated clarification of the factional pecking order may have 'indirectly reduced potential conflict among contending political factions, each of which had traditionally claimed to be speaking for the majority of the Palestinian people' (Ibrahim 2003:n.p.).

In an increasingly bipolar political environment, polls publicly tracked the gradual rise of Hamas' popularity, putting the movement well in front of any other faction aside from Fatah. As Shikaki noted, 'by July 2001, the Islamists' popularity had increased to 27 per cent. And for the first time ever, support for Islamist and nationalist opposition groups, combined at 31 per cent, surpassed the 30 per cent garnered by Fatah and its allies' (Shikaki 2002:92). Emboldened by their rise in popularity, Hamas began to demand a greater role in the political process and its inclusion in, for example, the PLO structure: 'Polls emboldened Hamas to ask for more, to enter elections' (Rabah 2008).

The availability of information that provided both early warning of a narrowing gap between Fatah and Hamas, and insight into the causes underlying these shifts in public preferences, could be expected to create incentives for responsiveness. By highlighting in detail the areas of public discontent, polls – at least theoretically – provided the information necessary for responding to

these concerns. The regular, quantifiable and readily accessible information was indeed utilized extensively in written analysis and policy-suggestive papers, both by international and Palestinian analysts. Pollsters and analysts made efforts to alert politicians to their areas of weakness. Jamil Rabah recalled a conversation that began with a group of Fatah cadres asking him: 'What do you think we should concentrate on?'

> I said 'You have a weakness with women and young people. Fatah has failed to address women's issues and the issues of the young'. You get these results from polls. For example it is known that Fatah has very strong support in farming areas, in villages in the West Bank, whereas their weakness is in the cities. And they say 'Why?' and I say 'They are the educated you have a problem with, especially the science stream' and they say 'Why?', and I say 'It's very simple, the science stream, their knowledge base is either Russia or Europe or Saudi Arabia. Highly limited, not spread to other cultures, and therefore as we have more of those science people, they know technology, internet, they know how to use it […] so they are much stronger in terms of influencing messages'. 'So what should we do?' 'You need to see how you can gather support from the youth, the educated, how you can play with the media, the internet, these are issues' […] and I would [be asked to give advice like this to] other organisations too [aside from Fatah]. This is only one example (Rabah 2008).

Relying substantially on poll data, pollster Khalil Shikaki provided analysis of the trend of waning support for Fatah and increasing popularity of Hamas, clearly outlining the causes of shifts in public support:

> The collapsing peace process and deteriorating economic and living conditions are not the only factors bleeding the ranks of Arafat and Fatah's supporters. The Palestinian public's evaluation of the status of Palestinian democracy, official corruption, and governmental performance have moved from bad to worse over the past six years. In 1996, 43 percent of those surveyed gave Palestinian democracy and human rights a good bill of health; by 2001, only 21 percent agreed (Shikaki 2002:92–93).

The information made available through polls not only provided guidance for leadership towards substantive responsiveness, but was also suggestive of acts of symbolic responsiveness. Particularly within a context where the public shared an understanding of the constraints on leadership responsiveness and sympathized with those constraints,[18] symbolic responsiveness could have provided a useful, if only short-term, alternative to substantive responsiveness. But, rather than respond, Hamas' growing popularity as reflected in polls was brushed aside by many within Fatah's leadership as a temporary aberration for which the ignorance of the people, misled by Hamas, was to blame (Sha'ban 2008). And despite confirmation of Hamas' rising popularity in local and association elections and eventually in its 2006 election victory, Fatah's leadership maintained an attitude of wilful ignorance regarding the challenges to its own position throughout and beyond its 2006 election defeat.

Poll impact on legitimation opportunities

Polls in and of themselves do not create or take away legitimacy. However, polls can impact on opportunities for legitimation of leadership. By making information on public perceptions of

legitimacy regularly and widely available, polls can create pressures and incentives for leaders to respond to these perceptions. This can take place in a number of ways. Firstly, the information provided in polls can inform leadership of possible weaknesses in their sources of legitimation. This information can provide politicians with early warning regarding the severity of a leadership crisis and possible threats to the political survival of leadership, creating incentives for responsiveness to public opinion in order to avert or limit the extent of crisis.

Secondly, the entry of poll data into the public sphere can enhance or limit opportunities for leadership legitimation. The private act of participation in a survey cannot be described as a public act of consent that confirms legitimacy. However, when poll data on popularity, performance evaluation and legitimacy perceptions are made public, they may affect the readiness of the public to be mobilized for acts of consent that provide legitimacy. Poll data can allow people to see that their opinions or factional support is no longer a minority position, but has become mainstream, emboldening them to express their support more publicly. While it is the supportive act that serves to confer or confirm legitimacy, information from polls may enhance the willingness to act. Conversely, where poll results reflect a general lack of popularity or decreasing levels of trust and dissatisfaction with performance, legitimacy may be undermined, not by the poll results themselves, but vicariously by the cumulative effect that polled indicators of dissatisfaction have on opportunities for the expression of discontent. Over time, the publication of information on legitimacy perceptions or factional support can contribute to the actual withdrawal of consent to a power relationship, particularly in cases where polls remind the public of a continuing lack of responsiveness over time. As such, polls can play a part in breaking the 'spiral of silence'[19] of privately held views, and contribute to more open articulation of these views. If the breaking of isolation contributes to a public show of support for the opposition, either mobilizationally or electorally, then polling has contributed, albeit indirectly, to the legitimation of alternative political leadership.

The suggestion that publication of poll data on support, performance and legitimacy created incentives for responsiveness[20] remains theoretical however, in light of apparent lack of overall responsiveness. The discrepancy between the two positions could only be explained by looking at the overall incentive structure for responsiveness, in which strong disincentives to responsiveness counterbalance the incentives that were – theoretically – created by polls.

Polls and governance

Polls provided Palestinian leadership with a new quality and quantity of information that could be used as inputs for policy and decision making. Poll data provided leaders with the opportunity to identify specific policies that enjoyed popular support, even where overall satisfaction with other aspects of leadership was low. The availability of information on specific policy options was expected to create incentives for issue-specific responsiveness. Even where the issues identified could not be addressed substantively, knowledge of their prioritization by the public created incentives for symbolic responsiveness or a response of 'small steps'. A good example of this approach was Prime Minister Fayyad's '1001 projects' approach, initiated to demonstrate impact and to strengthen relationships with local communities through small-scale support (Anon 2009c). The approach allowed the PA to show responsiveness, provide photo opportunities and create publicity of the PA's attention to local concerns.

There is some evidence to suggest that opportunities such as these, created by poll data, were

recognized, albeit not consistently or frequently. For example, in spite of high levels of dissatisfaction with the overall performance of the Fatah leadership, polls provided Fatah with assurance of the continuing general support for a negotiated strategy for the time being,[21] allowing the movement to continue to pursue this path. Poll data measuring perception of the performance of specific institutions, individuals and parties created incentives for addressing specific issues. For example, polling was used (temporarily) as a performance management tool during the prime ministership of Ahmed Qurie (2003–6). Results from the unpublished commissioned poll guided the Prime Minister's feedback to individual ministers on their performance (Ishtayyeh 2008). These opportunities supported, at least intentionally, what Tessler and Jamal (2006:435) outlined as the contribution of polling within the Palestinian context, namely political liberalization, monitoring and self-knowledge, good governance and informing public policy.

Polls can be used as a tool to guard against straying outside of what the public perceive as the outer boundaries of acceptable policy and decision making. This is an important function of polls, specifically where the political rights and freedoms of certain groups are restricted. In general, the incentive for politicians to heed public opinion on specific decisions lies in the potential for increased popularity or support. Issue-specific responsiveness may also be reflected in the choice of implementation strategy (where less popular policies require different implementation strategies to policies that enjoy widespread support). For nationally sensitive questions, poll data may enable leaders to consider the risk of public backlash against the benefit expected from the implementation of unpopular policy. An example of this in the Palestinian context was the testing of public sentiment in polls regarding the question whether the PA should arrest persons wanted by Israel, as requested by Israel.[22] Questions such as these, for which there was considerable external pressure on the Palestinian leadership, were also highly sensitive domestically and could contribute to undermining leadership. Polls under these circumstances allowed leadership to assess the risks associated with such steps and calculate impact on overall leadership credibility.

Benefits of polling for the public

Of particular importance within a context of restrictions on political freedoms, is the participation function of polling – allowing not only for the silent public to be heard, but to be heard *equally*. The Palestinian NGO sector had been highly polarized and highly competitive internally. There had been little to no cooperation between the predominantly secularly-oriented NGOs and the Islamic charitable sector. When Islamic charities were targeted through PA restrictions and closures following the 2007 Hamas takeover of security control in Gaza, the secular NGO sector did not put its own safeguarded position on the line in order to defend the wider principles of political participation and freedom of association that were violated by the crackdown. However, polling in the West Bank contributed to ensuring that the strength of opposition support[23] and its demands continued to be raised publicly. Indeed, West Bank polling of the Gaza Strip population fulfilled a similar function, reflecting the views of those whose political articulation had been restricted by Hamas.[24]

In addition to acting as a vehicle for participation, polls provide the public with information about itself, potentially affecting the size and shape of the public political sphere. Published polls can support and strengthen arguments, give credibility to views previously considered minority

views or influence which topics arise within the public sphere. Polls can become one of the sources of information that contribute to an emerging consensus within public discourse over time. As Lynch argued: 'It is not the impact of a single story or a single event, but rather the impact of a constant stream of converging information from multiple sources that builds the conventional wisdom of society' (Lynch 2003:71). Poll data, in particular where widely accessible as was the case in Palestine, could contribute to the emergence of consensus to create additional pressures and incentives for responsiveness. Lynch also noted the ability of polls to reinforce the public sphere's influence by giving credibility to the 'hidden discourse' (Lynch 2006:68). In Lynch's assessment, the growing importance of satellite television stations had led to the emergence of a new Arab public sphere. Although this sphere had lacked institutionalized mechanisms for influencing policy, he observed that 'the political importance of this new phenomenon relates to the fact that political decision makers *act as if* this public sphere matters', giving it a 'longer-term constitutive power' as policies are formulated within a set of assumptions, ideas and beliefs that are 'conclusively shaped by the new public sphere' (Lynch 2006:71).[25] Where polls constitute a regular and widely available information source, regularly reported in popular new information channels, their information content, too, contributes to a sphere that is of increasing political importance.

The analysis thus far has examined the 'social and political construction' (Said 2009) of polling in the unique context of arrested non-state democratization in Palestine. Along with providing for responsiveness through making quantitative data regularly available, polling created challenges for leadership by exposing support levels and challenging representational claims through publicly available poll data. Chapter Seven builds on this outline by looking specifically at the ways in which polling has affected the incentive structure for responsiveness in a number of cases.

CHAPTER 7

POLLING – OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

It is worthwhile examining a number of specific examples of how polls have affected the willingness and the ability of leaders to respond to polled public opinion. These examples illustrate the opportunities as well as the risks of polling within the distinctive context of arrested non-state democratization.

Polling and national reconciliation: The 'omni-impotence' of public opinion

Public demand for cooperation and reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas has been strong and consistent ever since the 2006 elections exacerbated the tension between the two sides. The issue of reconciliation at times topped the list of public concerns, ahead of concerns over the economy and occupation. Most Palestinians saw the need for reconciliation as an issue of the highest national importance and felt deeply frustrated, shamed and dismayed by the prevailing state of disunity. Opinion polls regularly tracked public opinion on the issue and reflected this high level of public concern. For example, a March 2009 NEC poll showed that the issue of highest concern to Palestinians was the internal power struggle, followed by economic hardship (NEC 2009a). A December 2009 PSR poll showed that 61 per cent of respondents considered achieving unity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the most important issue (PSR 2009).

When reconciliation efforts resulted in the short-lived 2007 National Unity Government, the public had greeted this development with unprecedented support, 87.6 per cent of respondents in a PSR poll stating they were satisfied with the formation of the new government (PSR 2007). In spite of this overwhelming public support and a continuing demand for reconciliation, neither side made the compromises necessary to achieve lasting reconciliation. Fatah had indeed signed an Egyptian-brokered reconciliation agreement in October 2009, though analysts suggested that Fatah did so 'because it was convinced Hamas would not', describing the step as 'a gamble, since the U.S almost certainly would not have accepted reconciliation on the basis of that document' (International Crisis Group 2009a:27). Hamas refused to sign, as expected, citing changes to the document on which Hamas had not been consulted (International Crisis Group 2009a:27 fn. 189).

Examining the incentive structure for responsiveness on this issue provides a better

understanding of the interaction between pressures for and against responsiveness as they influence how Fatah's leadership responded to public opinion on this matter.[1]

Substantive incentives for leadership responsiveness on the issue were articulated clearly within public discourse. The state of disunity was decried as 'catastrophic'[2] for the Palestinian national interest, both practically and notionally.

Practical implications of the lack of reconciliation include a further routinization of the separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including the development of separate legislative and regulatory frameworks, the repression of the 'opposition' by each government and inequalities in access to funds, manifested in increasingly disparate poverty levels. Notionally, lack of national unity was seen to threaten

> the Palestinian higher national interest [which] must remain an area of national consensus that can constitute a basis for agreement on common national denominators that allow for achieving national unity and that can enable the Palestinian people to achieve their national goals (letter by Palestinian personalities demanding reconciliation, quoted in Ma'an News Agency 2009b:n.p.).

While the continuing state of disunity was seen to impact directly on prospects for state, security and prosperity, it also contained a moral/religious dimension. The fraternal feud was likened to the fighting between the pre-Islamic tribes that the Prophet Muhammad succeeded in uniting.[3] Perceptions of the ethical unacceptability of continued strife had the potential to undermine claims by both Fatah and Hamas of occupying the moral high ground in the debate. In addition to the moral/religious and national interest incentives, further incentives arose from the potential consequences of a lack of responsiveness. Neglect of public opinion on an issue as important as this threatened public support for both movements and contributed to the general disillusionment with all political parties. These incentives were weighted against a number of disincentives. These included:

Disincentive 1: Power gains, power maintenance

Both parties stood to lose power in areas of particular significance to them.[4] Hamas, having experienced the failure of a full transfer of authority following its election victory in 2006, was reluctant to give up any power that it had managed to acquire. The movement may also have been pressured by its international backers to retain control of Gaza (Kliger 2010:n.p.), and might have hoped to weaken the position of Abbas and the West Bank government in peace negotiations by denying them the ability to claim to be representing both parts of the territories. For Fatah's leadership, a reconciliation agreement would have required the movement to share power, both in the PLO[5] which it dominated, and in its control of governance in the West Bank. Most importantly, a National Unity Government would have required Fatah to share its West Bank control in important areas such as security and finance.[6] In fact, any power-sharing was likely to have deprived Fatah of international support for its programme to establish security and prosperity in the West Bank, a plan predicated upon financial backing from international donors and on security cooperation with Israel.[7]

Any changes to the international relationships that supported the West Bank economic and security programme on which the movement's leadership had staked its claim to legitimacy

could have impacted Fatah's re-election chances negatively, creating a strong disincentive to responsiveness. Pollster Khalil Shikaki realistically assessed the limited ability of public opinion to compete with such a disincentive: 'Both [parties] are in a power struggle. What the public says becomes unimportant if it doesn't affect these two goals, acquiring [and maintaining] power. Neither [party] wants to undermine their authority in their respective areas' (Shikaki 2008).

Disincentive 2: The breakdown of the electoral imperative

The breakdown of the electoral imperative represented arguably the most powerful disincentive to responsiveness. Its impact was two-fold. On the one hand, it disabled the electoral imperative as a general incentive for responsiveness as outlined in previous chapters. On the other hand, the persistence of disunity provided a reasonable justification for the continued postponement of elections, seen by Fatah as necessary to prevent potentially unfavourable electoral outcomes until its economic programme had time to yield results. Creating a Catch-22 situation in which, as long as reconciliation was not achieved, elections could not be held, the interests of both parties were served, at a time when neither was prepared to risk losing power. As such, stalled progress on reconciliation could be used to justify the lack of responsiveness to yet another public demand, that for a return to regular elections. Indeed, it may be argued that lack of reconciliation became a necessary precondition for justifying the continuing delay of a return to the electoral process.

Disincentive 3: External pressures

Direct political pressure, specifically by the US and Israel, acted as a further disincentive. According to the International Crisis Group (2009a:27 fn. 189), US rejection of reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas was based on the US administration's strategic understanding as well as on legal considerations prohibiting dealings with a prescribed terrorist organization.[8] Indeed, the Bush administration played a direct role in preventing the success of reconciliation talks.[9] Any power-sharing between Fatah and Hamas would, in Washington's view, have meant 'jeopardising […] the efforts of Fayyad and the US security coordinator, General Keith Dayton' (International Crisis Group 2009a:27 fn. 189). An example of the preventative US role was provided by a human rights activist who recalled a meeting of human rights activists with Abbas in 2008 aimed at pressuring the President to release Hamas members reportedly held for political reasons in PA prisons and one of the sticking points in reconciliation talks (Anon 2009g).[10] When Abbas was pressed for answers by the human rights advocates, he reportedly became exasperated, threw up his arms and exclaimed: 'This issue is not in my hands, this is in the American file!' (Abbas, quoted by Anon 2009g).[11] Hamas leaders have accepted, and at times promoted the view that the PA was unable to decide on matters such as these. An anonymous observer close to Hamas noted: 'Hamas must realize that the prisoners issue is out of Fatah's hands' (Anon 2009j).

International actors, too, supported the rationale that lack of reconciliation provided a good pretext for delaying Palestinian Legislative Council elections scheduled for 2010. Neither the US nor other international donors wanted to risk another electoral outcome that favoured Hamas and, given the continuing disarray within Fatah, they could not be sure that a more favourable outcome could be achieved. Brown suggested that 'widening division [was] US policy, […] as

much by inertia as by design' (Brown 2010b:49). Postponement of elections would allow economic and security assistance time to impact favourably on Palestinian lives. In turn, such improvements might prove favourable to Fatah's electoral prospects in future.

Disincentive 4: The missing consequences of public blame

Despite overwhelming support for reconciliation, political fallout from the continuing inertia was mitigated by the way blame on the issue was apportioned. First, polls revealed that blame for the lack of progress on reconciliation was attributed fairly evenly between Fatah and Hamas.[12] Even within Fatah itself, cadres did not only blame Hamas, but apportioned blame to both sides.[13] Those perceptions minimized chances of a one-sided apportionment of blame which might have pushed the 'guilty party' to act in order to escape negative publicity and loss of support. As long as neither party needed to fear that its own lack of action would disproportionately disadvantage it, the incentive for positive action was reduced.

Secondly, awareness among the public about the international pressures that Fatah faced could have eased the blame apportioned to Fatah. As journalist Khalid Amayreh noted:

> The public consensus [on reconciliation] moved away from the politicians and the movements […]. The public does not blame the movements solely for that, they would blame foreign factors, for example some people would blame Israel and the US and Egypt for Fatah's refusal to accommodate Hamas […] within the context of the Palestinian political system. Fatah could not do certain things, even if it wanted to, because of overwhelming pressure by Israel, the US and some other countries. The same [applies], but to a lesser extent, [to] Hamas (Amayreh 2009b).

Disincentive 5: Fragmentation

Fatah's own fragmentation prevented cadres from effectively turning wider public sentiment on reconciliation into pressure on the leadership.[14] Opinion on reconciliation within the highly fragmented movement was as diverse as the composition of the party itself. While critical voices inside the movement held the view that Fatah's historic leadership (and specifically its Central Committee) was to blame for the lack of progress on reconciliation, others pointed to the reluctance of the mid-level and local Fatah leaders to engage with Hamas after the bloodshed and humiliation of the 'coup'.[15] Jihad Wazir saw the issue of reconciliations as related to the crisis of legitimacy of Fatah's leadership, noting:

> If polls show that these people [with low popularity ratings in the pre-2009 Central Committee] are unacceptable, [that] people no longer welcome them, they would [still] want to maintain their [positions], try every strategy […]. That is why this agenda of reform is being rejected, why reconciliation is being rejected, because real reconciliation means that these faces have to go (Wazir 2009).

Former Minister of State Ziad Abu Zayyad (2008) blamed Fatah's internal divisions for the absence of sufficient political will for reconciliation, citing 'young guard' leader Qaddura Faris as an example of Fatah's willingness to reconcile with Hamas. As a result, not only did Fatah's fragmentation prevent effective pressure for reconciliation to be exerted by the movement, but

the issue itself contributed further to Fatah's fragmentation dilemma.

Disincentive 6: The limited role of civil society

And finally, overt pressure from civil society was muted, especially prior to the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict. In spite of reconciliation presenting opportunities for united action by civil society groups, lobbying for reconciliation was not made a priority. Again, the balanced apportionment of blame may have contributed to a lack of action by affecting the mobilization potential of civil society on the issue. In addition, the civil society sector, dominated by secular, left-wing organizations, was not a natural supporter of power-sharing with Hamas, and most Hamas-affiliated civil society organizations in the West Bank had either been closed down or had their activities frozen while under severe scrutiny by PA security forces (Al-Risheq 2009:n.p.). The inability or unwillingness of NGOs to turn public opinion (including poll data) into effective pressure on politicians brought much criticism upon the sector.[16] A PLC member (*Change and Reform* 2006) complained:

> Civil society is not at all representative. [As I] told many of these centres: 'You are not doing your job. Everyone knows that [for] over a year [since 2007], the situation in the West Bank is bad: arrests, closing of [Hamas-affiliated] organisations; but I didn't see any one of you leading a demonstration, or going to the media' (Anon 2008a).

Similar criticism was voiced by senior Fatah member and then advisor to the prime minister, Hassan Abu Libdeh:

> I am personally very disappointed with civil society's performance. I am holding them accountable for much of the miserable situation we are in. They are taking a very passive position *vis-à-vis* a lot of things […]. If polls were used by civil society [groups] to organise the so-called fourth or fifth power in a country, [politicians] should pay for their arrogance or lack of loyalty to those who employed them, the people. But here [in the Parliament], those who push the national agenda very hard and those who don't, are both equal in the same office; because neither is rewarded or threatened by public opinion (Abu Libdeh 2008).

Civil society pressure for reconciliation appeared to increase following the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict. The 'One Million Signatures Campaign' was launched by independent Nablus businessman Munib Al-Masri and was supported by several high-level West Bank Hamas, Fatah and independent leaders and personalities in December 2008. In another example, Al-Quds University's student body reached an agreement between its Fatah and Hamas student bodies (Nuseibeh 2009). And in another initiative, an inter-factional conciliation committee met with all sides to try to narrow the gaps (Ma'an News Agency 2009a). Other local initiatives called for reconciliation and hosted discussions between the two sides. While these initiatives reflected the increased pressure for reconciliation in the aftermath of the Gaza War, their overall impact appeared insufficient to tip the balance between incentives and disincentives to responsiveness in favour of the former.

Polling organizations – as part of civil society, had contributed to creating pressures by publicizing the level of support for reconciliation. While acknowledging a potential role for

polls, a 2006 PLC member (*Change and Reform*) emphasized the need for civil society to mobilize around the issue as the only effective way of pressuring politicians towards reconciliation. He suggested that, if poll data on reconciliation

> [could] be re-shaped or used in demonstrations or some activities, [they] can make more pressure. But our politicians don't care much about the results, figures and numbers. But if they see people in the streets, they go 'oh, they [the people] are moving against us' – this will make more pressure (Anon 2008a).

To PSR director Khalil Shikaki (2008), the use of polls by civil society was dependent on greater openness and democratization of society in general, and on an increased appreciation and understanding of the role of polling in society, including by civil society organizations. None of these preconditions, Shikaki believed, existed yet, limiting the role that polling could play in serving civil society for the time being.

Cost–benefit analysis within a complex incentive structure

The reconciliation issue highlights how case-specific analysis of the incentive structure for responsiveness can highlight reasons for a persistent lack of responsiveness on an issue under specific circumstances. Polls provided information that could be used by a range of actors, strengthening incentives for responsiveness on the issue. These were countered by disincentives in a balance that was not static and which could conceivably tip in favour of greater responsiveness at a future date. Used as an early warning tool for leaders, polls could detect, quantify and publicize the strength of public discontent, enabling leaders to assess pressures for reconciliation against the factors soliciting against reconciliation, and track shifts in perceptions. For example, if polls had revealed a one-sided shift in the apportionment of blame for the lack of reconciliation, such information could have strengthened incentives for responsiveness as leaders tried to avoid disproportionate loss of support. PSR director Khalil Shikaki suggested that unless leaders were forced to pay a high enough price, they would neglect public opinion:

> The demand for reconciliation by itself is not important. What is important is when this demand affects something else, like the popularity of Hamas. If you look at the latest surveys, there is little link between the two [popularity and reconciliation]. The public demand reconciliation but Hamas is not paying a price, [and] Fatah is not paying a price (Shikaki 2008).

Even in the context of an incentive structure that was tilted against substantive responsiveness, polls may nevertheless have influenced political rhetoric and symbolism by requiring, at the very least, that leaders acknowledge the outer boundaries of acceptable political conduct. NEC director Rabah noted this effect of polls on politicians' rhetoric regarding reconciliation:

> Polls show intensity of demand. Accordingly, they give politicians the [message] that 'I cannot be in a position where I say 'Go to hell' to the other'. Both have to sit together. The result is that we see at least an *attempt* to do something in Cairo, an *attempt* to reconcile the differences […]. Politicians from both sides realize that 'If we stay like this, people will hate us more and more' (Rabah 2008).

The impact of the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict increased pressure on both parties to pursue reconciliation. An NEC poll, conducted right after the end of the assault reflected the high prioritization of the issue. Working towards reconciliation was considered first priority by 55 per cent of respondents and topped the list of priorities, ahead of issues such as reform (21 per cent) or the economy (20 per cent) (NEC 2009a:20). These results raised expectations for greater responsiveness and more serious attempts at reconciliation, as expressed by Rabah:

> Now people in Gaza are very serious about national reconciliation. If both leaderships will not get closer, both will suffer. Most surveys show a strong correlation: when there is tension, both lose. This time, because of the magnitude, we will see real pressure […]. People are telling them 'Enough is enough' (Rabah 2009).

However, these pressures were yet to translate into substantive outcomes. Pressure did indeed lead to increased activity by civil society organizations and to resurgence in calls for unity and a return to reconciliation talks by Fatah leaders – in an effort to show greater, albeit symbolic, responsiveness. Polls – among other indicators of public opinion – served as a tool for leadership to monitor the strength of public outrage, and accordingly rhetoric was stepped up to relieve the pressure and accommodate public opinion.[17] Palestinian academic George Giacaman suggested: 'Leaders must appear not to reject reconciliation. [It is a] battle for perceptions' (Giacaman 2008). Although substantively ineffective, symbolic responsiveness may indeed have some mitigating effect on inter-factional conflict. Rabah noted that '[there have not been] so many personal attacks on each other. Maybe if polls were not there, the war of words would be greater' (Rabah 2008).

The choice to effectively ignore public opinion while paying lip service to public demands was made within a complex incentive structure for responsiveness. Within this structure, leaders undertook rational, if unstated, cost–benefit analysis. During the period of investigation, the cost to leadership consisted of evenly distributed blame between the two parties, without specific impact on popularity, despite overall signs of public disillusionment with both parties. In the absence of elections, no immediate electoral consequences needed to be considered in the calculation. The rather diffuse cost of public blame would then need to be weighed against the potential electoral advantage expected to occur as a result of continuing international support for an economic and security programme that would enhance the living conditions of the public. Because this programme was predicated upon the exclusion of Hamas from governance, the need to maintain undivided control of the West Bank by Fatah required the failure of reconciliation. Within the tight constraints of this scenario, there was no room for Hamas' participation in decision making. Shikaki suggested the relevance of a cost–benefit calculation in the question of reconciliation: 'If [the] public blame Fatah alone, Hamas doesn't have to do anything; it's Fatah that needs to do something about it. But even if the public does exact a cost for lack of compliance, other interests dominate' (Shikaki 2008).

When the amount of direct international pressure *against* reconciliation was added to this cost–benefit calculation, the balance was seen to tip clearly against responsiveness to public opinion. In a surprisingly frank comment to the author, then chief of staff of the President's office, Rafiq Husseini, indirectly confirmed this analysis when stating:

> I think on these issues there is immunity to public pressure. Both Hamas and Fatah understand that there cannot be any more National Unity governments. And therefore

> there is this immunity […]. We will do what we think is right and Hamas will do what they think is right. Of course we want unity. Everyone wants unity, but on what conditions? We talk about it every day, but it doesn't mean that we are going to arrive at it. Talking about it, wishing it, is one thing, achieving it is another, and *the influences around us and the pressures around us are so great* [author's emphasis] that wishing is not good enough (Husseini 2009).

The need for international approval of any reconciliation formula had the effect of pitting two important issues of public interest against each other. The public demand for reconciliation and the demand for security and prosperity are both of public interest and would, under different circumstances, not have been exclusive of each other. However, as the likelihood of an international financial boycott against Hamas' participation in a reconciliation formula threatened the feasibility of the security and prosperity programme being pursued, leaders were placed in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between two important public goods. It may therefore be argued that by neglecting public opinion on reconciliation, leaders simply accorded higher priority to the pursuit of an alternative public good, one that in their estimation was of superior public interest. This rationale relies, however, on the ability of leadership to achieve the promised improvements and as such binds leadership into an increasing dependence on continuing financial support by international donors, limiting their room for manoeuvre overall. And since such programmatic achievements required time, they also, by default, required that elections be postponed to ensure that the only leadership able to deliver these benefits remained in power until such benefits materialized. The suspension of elections until such time that the rationale of the greater public good could be seen to translate into electoral support was therefore critical to this rationale. The even apportionment of blame and the relative acquiescence of the public and civil society to lack of progress on reconciliation provided leaders with arguable justification for their prioritization of one public demand (for reform, security and economic development) over another (reconciliation).

Opportunities for polling in the mitigation of leadership crisis

Polls provided political parties with information that could support processes of internal reform, and a number of examples demonstrated a growing interest in the utilization of polling for this purpose. Those within Fatah who viewed greater responsiveness to public opinion as essential to the renewal of the relationship between the movement, its leadership and the public started to use polling as a tool for internal lobbying and internal reform. In one such initiative, pollster Nader Said (AWRAD) was asked by a group of newly elected mid-level Fatah leaders from the northern West Bank to assist in their analysis of problems inside the movement. The analysis used poll data to assess public perceptions of Fatah, and was complemented by a series of focus group meetings to ascertain the perceptions of Fatah cadres and lower and mid-level leaders (Said 2009). The findings were then summarized into recommendations that addressed areas of primary concern, including movement leadership, intra-Fatah communication as well as concern about specific decisions. Recommendations were presented to Fatah's leadership at the governorate level, where the process of focus groups was repeated, confirming the picture that had emerged at the middle and lower levels of Fatah's hierarchy. Finally, a summary report was presented to the President in an effort to lobby for change. A mid-level Fatah leader described

the aim of this initiative:

> After all the shocks that Fatah received recently – Gaza, the municipal elections – there was pressure from the young leadership to employ results of the surveys to […] influence the leadership […]. The central leadership should do many things that influence public opinion. We should respond to the public and tell them what they would like to hear. There is pressure from the governorates on the central leadership to take action to influence public opinion. If young leaders [were allowed to] participate in the leadership [of the party], this would be reflected in surveys. It is in Fatah's interest to get back to the survey centres and employ surveys for this [purpose] (Anon 2009f).

Practical steps were taken to follow-up on the findings. The Fatah leader explained that,

> tomorrow we are meeting with the governor and we are going to ask him to work on improving the performance of the security forces, to not relate to the public in a negative way and to implement the law. We want to improve the image of the security forces in the streets to reflect positively on Fatah, not always the opposite (Anon 2009f).

Said noted of the effort: 'They are all new, elected a few months ago, [and they want to know] what to do, not only to change the image of Fatah, but also to do something [practical] for society' (Said 2009). The newly elected northern West Bank leaders were also considering ways to bring defected Fatah members back to the movement and to reach undecided voters. Based on poll and focus group findings, Said, who had initially been approached on a personal basis, helped the activists design activities to increase the popularity of Fatah in the regions. The analysis also formed the basis of very specific suggestions on internal policy. For example, a three-page discussion paper made recommendations to Fatah's senior leadership regarding improved ways of communicating with the public about the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict. The voluntary participation of a pollster in internal Fatah reform[18] meant that Fatah regional groups who were without sufficient resources to commission polls were able to access AWRAD's general survey data for sector and region-specific analysis, allowing them to address specific regional issues more confidently. Said noted the overall impact of regional leadership's changing approach to relations with the public, seeing their interest in polling as an acknowledgement that public opinion mattered:

> The Hamas approach is a fresh new approach that relies on community participation, in all its work. Fatah is a bureaucratic, out-of-touch organisation that was [based] outside of Palestine, [and] thinks that it can manipulate instead of actually utilize [public opinion]. There is a change now [referring to the initiatives of new elected Fatah secretaries from the Northern regions] (Said 2009).

Regional leaders themselves suggested that there had been a change in attitude towards public opinion. As one leader noted:

> We want […] to identify a strategy to address those people who are not in Fatah or any [other] party […]. We as mid-[level] leadership […] base our actions on survey results.

> We look where our negatives are and guide our actions based on this. We consult scientific researchers without the central leadership because we think the future of Fatah should be corrected (Anon 2009f).

However, the effectiveness of pressure for greater responsiveness from within Fatah was subject to the same obstacles affecting the overall incentive structure for responsiveness. From the perspective of those younger leaders who utilized surveys, success was varied, if not at times wholly disappointing, in the presence of overwhelming disincentives to responsiveness:

> [We are] pushing them to make changes, but their capacity is limited, not enabling them to do what is required. They are stuck in the past and they think that the Palestinian community should go back in time [to evaluate Fatah based on its historic achievements]. Unfortunately the memory of the Palestinian people is weak. [They have] forgotten that Fatah was behind the resistance and the revolution. What remains in the memory are the recent things, the last scenes (Anon 2009f).

Another group of reformists made up of professionals, many of whom were working within the PA structure, also considered polling an important tool for reform. The *Istinhad* (Revival) group, specifically formed with the aim to bring about Fatah's Sixth General Conference, had also arranged for a poll and had attracted the volunteer support of pollsters for their objectives (Saidam 2008). NEC director Jamil Rabah recognized the changes in attitudes among a new generation of Fatah leaders. 'The younger, educated generations ask all the time [about poll results], they think about it; I was asked to present to them, and they come to the office' (Rabah 2008). Rabah also recalled advising individual Fatah members who approached him about analysis of Fatah's areas of weakness and attitudes towards relations with the public.

Another group of younger leaders around the imprisoned Fatah Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouthi similarly expressed a keen interest in public opinion. Barghouthi himself closely followed poll results, sent to him in prison, while his campaign office worked to keep him and the prisoner issue in general in the public mind. Publicly available polls were used to plan the timing and focus of campaign activities. Said (2009) recalled having received at least 20 phone calls from the *Free Marwan Barghouthi* Campaign over the past two years, asking him for data and the interpretation of results related to the imprisoned leader. According to Sa'ad Nimr who headed the campaign office of the Campaign, polls from a range of organizations were used both to monitor Barghouthi's popularity and to guide the strategy to keep him in the public eye, increasing public activity on his behalf when poll data show a decrease in his popularity: '[We] did not do polls ourselves. But we talked with pollsters, we are in constant consultation, sometimes about questions; they are open to the idea […]. It is up to organizations like ours to translate this public opinion into activity' (Nimr 2008). Nimr described Marwan Barghouthi as one of those politicians attentive to the public:

> Knowing Marwan, he believes in the people anyway. He is a grassroots-oriented person and he believes that people should always have a say. That's why all his official positions have been elected. From his very first position, as a representative of the prisoners when he was 17 years old, he was elected (Nimr 2008).

Barghouthi compatriot, 'young guard' Fatah leader and 1996 PLC member Qaddura Faris, similarly represented a generation of Fatah grassroots leaders who, having been prominently

involved in both Intifadas, became aware of the link between lack of responsiveness and Fatah's leadership crisis.

> I run after any poll and I read it […]. I ask those that make the polls about their analysis. I try to understand; there is no other way to know. In general, I can know [and] don't need […] polls to understand that the community want freedom, independence. […] Those who believe that we should represent the interest of our people have to check monthly, every year, what the people want, [and] you have to be worried if you feel you go down [in popularity]. If I'm a leader and I care about my movement, I will deal with these polls seriously. But if I don't care about my movement, I will ignore these polls and I will decide according to my interest and my group in the movement – and this is what has happened (Faris 2008).

However, Faris' interest in polls did not mean that he followed polls in every issue, even if his personal conviction was opposed to public opinion. A member of the controversial 'Geneva Peace Initiative', he supported this initiative while fully aware that he was going squarely against public opinion. Polls commissioned by the Palestinian Peace Coalition in support of the initiative monitored the effectiveness of the communications efforts in support of the Geneva Initiative, rather than being used to influence the initiative's aims and directions as such. Faris explained:

> I belong to a way of thinking that you should never be kidnapped by what public opinion wants. [Sometimes] you need to create some things that may not have support, but convince the community that you are a leader. You can prepare your agenda according to the polls, that's it […]. We went to Geneva at the end of 2003 – during the Intifada. It was a crazy step to participate […]. We were condemned […]. Until today you can find our names written on some Ramallah walls, declaring us as collaborators with the occupation. But I tried to convince the people, to tell them what it means. To be frank, the peace coalition polls didn't affect our policy. Why? Here in this special community and with the Palestinian mentality, if people know that you are a good person, they can forgive you some mistakes. If you are credible, they give you another chance [referring to the increase in votes for him between the 1996 and the 2006 elections despite his participation in the Geneva Initiative] (Faris 2008).

As these examples demonstrate, Fatah-internal pressures for responsiveness derived from the role played by mid-level leadership as facilitators of the relationship between leadership and the public. The mobilizational capacity of the party depended on their ability to address the public in a way that was relevant and inspired commitment. Their interest in public opinion was a function of this role, even though the role itself had diminished as a result of Oslo's 'mandate for demobilization' as discussed earlier. However, the ability of various levels of Fatah reformers to encourage greater responsiveness to public opinion was hampered by the fragmented nature of the organization manifested in fierce internal rivalry and animosity. Even those who demanded greater responsiveness were fighting among themselves while vying to be heard by decision makers within Fatah. While these cadres were essential in the push to reform and revive the movement, they were not essential to Fatah's pre-2009 leadership, whose lack of popularity made them rely on patronage, rather than mobilizational ability, for political survival.

The risks of polling

Polling in Palestine had been expected to support the process of democratization by safeguarding elections through the control function that pre-election polls could perform (Taylor 2002:315ff.). Pre- and post-election polls had successfully played a safeguarding role in other democratization situations.[19] However, under circumstances where a regular electoral schedule was not yet well institutionalized, in theory, polls could in fact contribute to undermining electoral schedules. This possibility depends on a number of factors, chief among them the ability of one party to control the electoral schedule (because of constitutional arrangements that give one party – in this case the President − rather than an institutional procedure, the power to set the election date). It could also occur as a consequence of political circumstances under which continued postponement of elections is being justified for reasons of civil strife or lack of authority over territory. Electoral postponement could be further aided by the acquiescence of the international community to the suspension of electoral processes.

All of these factors were indeed present in the Palestinian context of arrested non-state democratization, and there was some evidence to suggest that the scenario of polls contributing to electoral postponement was already a reality. As seen in previous chapters, electoral postponement not only suspended the process of democratization, it also removed the electoral imperative as a central incentive for responsiveness to public opinion. This directly affected the incentive structure for responsiveness overall. The interviews with Fatah leaders regarding the 2006 elections highlighted the potential risk of polls being used to inform decisions on the postponement of elections. The evidence suggested that many within Fatah's leadership viewed the postponement of elections as justified in the national interest (viewing Fatah governance as in the national interest) in light of concerns about a potential Fatah election defeat. Such views were expressed quite openly in interviews, suggesting the more general acceptability among some Fatah leaders of a rationale that disregarded the legal codification of electoral schedules in favour of what was perceived as the national interest, that is Fatah election victory.

The postponement of both presidential and parliamentary elections for almost ten years following the first national elections in 1996 had set the stage for this disregard of the newly instituted electoral process early on. While revealing the willingness of decision makers to postpone elections for political advantage, interview evidence suggested that, ironically, it may have been the reliance on misleading polls that encouraged Abbas to push ahead with holding the 2006 PLC elections. Mohammad Ishtayyeh, by his own account revealing previously confidential information, recalled:

> One of the embassies here had asked one of the polling organisations to conduct a secret poll about the popularity of Fatah and Hamas [three to four months] before the 2006 elections. That opinion was put on the table of the American President [George W. Bush]. That poll showed that Hamas had only 20 percent of the PLC – and the reality was that Hamas got the majority of the PLC. On the basis of that opinion poll, the Americans insisted on elections in Palestine. We would not [have] gone into elections, because we knew that the polls were not in our favour. [There was] nothing on the ground [in our favour]: 600 checkpoints, killing, assassination, unemployment, poverty; why [would] you go for elections and you are the decision-maker and everything on the ground is against you? It is suicidal! (Ishtayyeh 2008).

According to a number of interviewees, the period prior to the January 2006 elections was not only marked by Fatah's dysfunctional performance, but also by vigorous discussion within Fatah about whether elections should be postponed in light of increasing doubts about Fatah's ability to win. Despite some contradiction in accounts, it appears that there were strong demands for postponement, withstood by Abbas until just prior to elections when he, too, apparently changed his mind. Ishtayyeh recalled his own efforts to have elections postponed:

> I never believed in the timing of these elections. I went to the President; I told him 'Please, please, we are going to lose these elections. Nothing on the ground is in our favour; this is suicidal […]. The image is so bad, the lack of progress [with Israel], the checkpoints, unemployment, poverty, humiliation, incursions, assassinations – what are you going for? Nothing, you don't have a leadership in Fatah, it's an aging leadership, your candidates are not the best in town!' Everything was a disaster. He said that '*khalas*' [enough!] he wanted to go for it, he'd promised the American President and that's it […]. I spoke for 35 minutes against the election in the Cabinet. Abu Ala was on my side. He had been hoping to be number one on the list, [but] when they put Marwan Barghouthi [as] number one, Abu Ala turned against the elections. The issue was not the people in the Cabinet. They were not in the inner circle. I am one of the people in the inner circle with the Prime Minister and the President, so I had a say in the exercise. But the President didn't want to listen in the end, unfortunately. He was misled by the opinion polls. This is a very clear case where opinion polls actually misled the decision-maker – I don't say deliberately (Ishtayyeh 2008).

Ishtayyeh's views were shared by many within Fatah. Former UN ambassador Nasser Al-Qidweh recalled that 'many people blame Abbas for not doing precisely that [postpone elections]' (Al-Qidweh 2009). Even though most polls were wrongly predicting a Fatah victory, they predicted the victory to be narrow, with Hamas gaining a substantial number of seats. Other accounts suggested that about two weeks prior to the election date, Abbas' insistence on holding elections began to wane in light of opinion polls showing Hamas and Fatah neck and neck, and that Abbas may have suggested to the US administration that elections be postponed. Nader Said recalled:

> All the indicators were there, and […] the Americans […] knew about the poll [suggesting a very close race] […]. It was transmitted to Condoleezza Rice, and they refused to postpone the elections. My poll did not say Fatah will win. I was working with someone in the State Department, and I was in direct contact with him on a daily basis. He was very clear that 'This is [being] conveyed to Condoleezza Rice and we are trying to push them in a direction to help maybe postpone or something like that' […]. Everybody knows about the call that Abu Mazen got at the last minute, Condoleezza Rice saying 'Go ahead and do it'. But there was so much pressure within Fatah – and these are all seemingly contradictions, because actually the populace [membership] within Fatah wanted to postpone elections, and they were pressuring [Abbas] to postpone because of the popularity issue, which is a polling issue (Said 2009).

Lu'ay Sha'ban, then president of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, confirmed an attitude within Fatah that accepted postponement of elections as a strategic option to avert

electoral defeat:

> I knew from inside that Abu Mazen wanted […] to postpone the elections and the Americans refused […]. It was clear to us before the elections that things are not very well on the ground. No development on the peace process, people humiliated on daily basis, people are seeing Fatah and the PA as corrupted. Mohammad Ishtayyeh, Nabil Sha'th and myself, we were against elections. Abu Ala was against the idea of elections. Most of Fatah seniors were against the elections. The only one who was for elections was Abu Mazen and at the very last minute he [inaudible] Jerusalem as an excuse to withdraw [from holding elections], and the Americans went to the Israelis and asked them to [allow] the elections in Jerusalem (Sha'ban 2008).[20]

Abbas' last-minute change of mind was apparently overruled by US insistence on going ahead with planned elections. To the US, holding elections represented an important milestone in the drive for democratization of the Middle East, following elections in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2005.[21] The Fatah view of the conditionality of electoral schedules might have been shared by the US administration had polls clearly predicted a Hamas victory before it was too late to change course. This suggestion is supported by Said's comment above, and also by State Department polling analyst David Pollock who noted:

> Some US government survey researchers[22] had in fact warned about a Hamas upset electoral victory. The warning, however, apparently came much too close to election time for anyone to *do anything about it* [emphasis added], even had anyone been so inclined (Pollock 2008).

The comment – though based on speculation – suggested the possibility that, something may well have been *done about it* if poll data had revealed unfavourable outcomes further ahead of time. In such a scenario, pressure towards postponement of elections might well have been applied (though, under the circumstances, would have met with gratitude by Ishtayyeh and others who had argued against elections).

In addition, as discussed previously, poll data on reconciliation could be used to justify postponement of elections. A 2009 NEC poll showed that only 25 per cent supported Abbas' call for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held on 24 January 2010, regardless of the success of reconciliation, whereas 65 per cent wanted to see elections held only after reconciliation had been achieved (NEC 2009c). Holding elections without reconciliation would indeed have presented enormous practical obstacles. As it was, the above poll results provided justification for decision makers to postpone elections, even if other motives may have been prevalent. In addition, public pressure towards a clear commitment to new elections was muted by the experience of the consequences of a Hamas victory – including the international boycott of Hamas-led post-2006 PA and the subsequent Gaza–West Bank split, experiences that few would have liked to see repeated.

While polls may have constituted part of the information on the basis of which electoral processes were suspended, the conditionality of commitment to elections by Palestinian leadership and – arguably the international community – rather than polls, must take the blame for the stalling of the electoral process. Even without the availability of poll data, other, albeit perhaps less precise, mechanisms would have provided politicians with the type of information

on the basis of which elections may have been postponed until the winner could be assured *a priori*.

Polling and responsiveness – a work in progress

A learning process

Despite its steady maturation, the comparatively short history of polling in Palestine meant that its acceptance, utilization and effectiveness as a tool for democratization and participation was yet to fulfil its potential while the sector gained experience and learned lessons over time. Progress towards increased use and acceptance of polls, manifested for example in growing demand for polling data, was tangible when reviewed in a historical perspective. Ghassan Khatib described the changing perceptions of polling as a political tool used by small left-wing parties:

> In the beginning they […] didn't take polls seriously, and were always arguing with me that 'this doesn't make sense'; they didn't believe it was correct. The shock happened in the elections, when these factions could not get anything [in terms of electoral results]. They started to realize that maybe these polls are correct. [The experience] empowered public opinion. Factions started to pay attention to the need to satisfy the public through their positions and practices. They became more sensitive to public opinion. And they were able to understand public opinion. Previously they had been saying that they were adhering to public opinion and appealing to public opinion, but they had no means of understanding public opinion on an issue. [There was] no way for them to know if they represent the public or not because there had been no elections until 1994 […]. Public opinion meant much less to politicians before 1993 than after. Polls were part of the transformation and the increasing importance and weight of public opinion in the decision-making and thinking of politicians (Khatib 2008a).

Routinized consideration of poll data by politicians, the media and the public was expected to be a work in progress. Political scientist Ali Jarbawi suggested that, in theory, polls fulfilled the role of 'teaching people that they have political efficacy' (Jarbawi 2008), though regarded this ideal as remaining some way off becoming a reality. On a similar note, former PA Minister of the Economy Hassan Abu Libdeh described the slow path of polls being used to increase responsiveness:

> Polling has been used extensively for guidance, but [is] not yet capable of being used as a matter of empowering and producing or reducing authority. [It is] used to inform about what might be, [the] next move, but not as an auditing tool [to] monitor the performance of politicians. [It is] not successful at all yet in shaping the behaviour and attitude of politicians. […] The role of polling is to show the power of the public [but] the power of the public is not invested in (Abu Libdeh 2008).

Recognition of the utility of polling for leadership responsiveness was part of a learning process for political leadership and pollsters alike. Some lessons from the 2006 polling debacle were

learnt, not only in terms of the technical aspects of polling in a dual electoral system, but also in terms of the way in which polls could be used to provide more detailed information on the political orientations of specific groups, such as those who 'don't trust anyone',[23] women or younger voters. Experience was also gained in the analysis of areas of factional weakness and clarification of mandate. There were indications, and there was certainly the desire by pollsters, that polls would play an increasing role in informing decision making. NEC's Jamil Rabah suggested:

> There are policy makers who want people around them to know how polls are done, examined and implemented, to see perceptions, how they change and why they change. It is a new thing and they are trying to work on it to help them better position themselves (Rabah 2009).

Indeed, the Office of the Prime Minister showed a keen awareness of public opinion, and used polling for specific decision making in a number of cases, such as prior to and after the deployment of the newly trained security forces in Jenin, Nablus and Hebron, but also on other issues of public interest.

Learning 'symbolic responsiveness'

Just as the utilization of polls for internal reform was a learning process for all involved, so was the utilization of polls in the management of perceptions, in 'leading' public opinion and in informing opportunities for symbolic responsiveness in areas where policy responsiveness was outweighed by constraints and overriding considerations. Lu'ay Sha'ban, then president of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, a government department which conducted occasional political polls at the request of the President, noted:

> Polling is ideally used in three stages: firstly, to identify perceptions, secondly to monitor public perceptions towards public policy and performance of party and thirdly as a tool for evaluation/accountability. Here, the second two stages are not used. Poll use focuses only on description. People want to know what public perceptions are on certain issues, and accordingly they adapt their speech, but don't change strategy (Sha'ban 2008).

Symbolic responsiveness, even in its limited and presently somewhat haphazard use, provided some benefits to leadership unable to address the underlying causes of leadership crisis. As discussed earlier, Mahmoud Abbas under-utilized opportunities to show symbolic responsiveness, specifically during periods of heightened crisis, such as the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict, in which his absence from public view was criticized by commentators and the public alike. Available resources, in the form of polling expertise, were under-utilized, in spite of the keen interest by some pollsters to provide such services. And yet, there were also indications of change, of increasing use and growing professionalism in the use of symbolic responsiveness. The President's decision to seek the services of a 'perception manager' as a consultant (Anon 2008d) may be seen as an indication of growing awareness of the crucial role of public opinion – unsurprising in the face of the severity of legitimacy and leadership crisis that Abbas faced. In another example of symbolic responsiveness, Abbas changed his behaviour in meetings with his Israeli counterpart Ehud Olmert following a poll in 2008 that had revealed public dissatisfaction

with the friendly greetings between the two leaders. When discussing the results of the poll, Alpha director Awartani suggested that Abbas should 'stop kissing the guy [Olmert]' (Awartani 2008). Awartani recalled the President's initial scepticism towards the results, overcome only when he was shown the data. 'Now when Olmert comes towards him, he even pushes him back […]. Olmert is using this [friendly demeanour], it's good for him, but as far as we're concerned […] "be proper, don't smile too much"' (Awartani 2008).

While the substance of the relationship between Olmert and Abbas remained unaffected by critical public opinion, the example cited above demonstrated the role of polls as a source of information, acted upon where it was within the ability of the leader to do so in order to appease public criticism. The availability of this type of information allowed the President to make changes to his conduct, of his own accord and based on public opinion, rather than relying on critical voices pressuring him to make adjustments. This type of self-initiated image adjustment monitoring is perhaps the gentlest, if not least obligatory pathway of responsiveness to public opinion. Poll-initiated image adjustments are a part of daily political conduct the world over, particularly during campaign periods, and may therefore not appear extraordinary. What they revealed in the context of the specific stage of political process in Palestine, however, were the very beginnings of an integration of public opinion polling into day-to-day political practice.

Another example of campaign polling illustrated this point further. The presidential election campaign of 2005 used polling extensively.[24] According to Ishtayyeh who managed the campaign, polls were used strategically as a tool to influence and be influenced by public opinion: 'We were directing public opinion politically in a certain direction [through the media] as well as receiving input from them in [finding out] what it is that they want, […], [with] the linking mechanism being the opinion poll' (Ishtayyeh 2008). For the first time, the organizational structure of the presidential election campaign included a designated unit for opinion polls.[25] Parallel polls were commissioned from Birzeit University's polling unit and the PSR, with additional polls by the Central Bureau of Statistics to compare results and check reliability. Polls were used to examine public priorities by district and gender, and to ascertain any areas of public criticism of Abbas as candidate.

Data from the polls, broadly in line with each other, formed the basis of the presidential campaign strategy. They provided Ishtayyeh with 'a road map', and were used by the campaign team to prepare socio-political and economic profiles of campaign locations. These profiles were used to 'prepare the speech for the President, the talking point for him' and to ensure that they 'reflect the concerns of the people in the district'. Ishtayyeh explained that the campaign team,

> combined socio-economic with political data before preparing the speech for the President; the talking points reflected the concerns of the people in the district. I thought that was really something. Opinion polls in that direction were very helpful, [and gave us] scientific data to rely on to see what the people want (Ishtayyeh 2008).

Hassan Abu Libdeh, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs at the time and involved in the conduct of the campaign, explained: 'We observed the interaction between the public and the issues very closely and we changed the course and tailored the focus of the campaign, because we wanted people to feel that this is a president who is going to serve them' (Abu Libdeh 2008).

The presidential campaign used polls strategically in order to feed information to the media. Easy access to pro-government media worked to the campaign's advantage. Commissioned polls

provided the necessary ownership of the data, which allowed campaign management to decide what information to give to the media: 'Of course we used to direct the media. Media are like washing machines, they need something to wash every day […]. Every single data we sent to them they took and published. The media was very receptive in that direction' (Ishtayyeh 2008). However, as a high-level Fatah and PA official observed, these talking points remained symbolic, with little or no substantive follow-up:

> [Abbas] likes to know that he is popular, but I don't remember at any stage that there was a real work […] to see what's behind that, what positions, how he should change on a systematic basis. But ad hoc, I can claim that it is done. [During] the elections, they tell you 'Okay this is what you have to deliver; you have to talk about prisoners, talk about Israel, don't talk smoothly about the US, be more harsh with the West'. [It's] because the people want to hear this, not because he would like to make policy that is more popular (Anon 2008i).

Sporadic shows of symbolic responsiveness were unlikely to address the leadership crisis substantively. Within the constraints placed on decision making in the Palestinian context, addressing public opinion required a more substantive, policy and decision-based approach, or – though less effective – a more sustained and convincing effort at symbolic responsiveness. The latter could have eventuated with the professionalization of image development, using polls both as source of information and as a tool to influence the public. However, the personality of Abbas did not lend itself readily to the latter, although attempts were made.

Palestine's unique, civil society-initiated polling sector has introduced a new and potentially powerful element into the relationship between leaders and their public. While this has provided leaders with a tool to assess public opinion – perhaps more accurately than was previously possible – this did not automatically translate into an increased willingness to use this tool, nor an increased ability to respond substantively within a context of fundamental constraints. At the same time, polling has provided information to the public about itself, an opportunity that can strengthen civic engagement and representational pressures. The routinized use of polls to support responsive policy and decision making is clearly on the agenda of pollsters, though its realization remains a work in progress. It depends as much on the ability of pollsters and the public to engage leaders with the information, as it does on an enabling environment for responsiveness. This enabling environment, as discussed throughout this book, is complex and dependent. The role of polls within this environment is susceptible to threats, including the potential for decreasing trust in poll data if data integrity and impartiality are not ensured or liberties and political freedoms are declining. Just as international experience has seen polling support processes of democratization, the inadvertent use of poll data in the decision to postpone elections can undermine the potential of polls to be a supporting force in democratization and civic empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Looking at responsiveness to public opinion during the period 2005 to 2009 has highlighted a number of issues that are relevant to understanding Palestinian leadership conduct in the context of arrested non-state democratization. The first is that responsiveness to public opinion matters in Palestinian politics, and its neglect carries consequences, both immediate in terms of election outcomes, and also more long-term in terms of the prospect for the survival and revival of political movements – even as the process of democratization has come to a standstill. The second is that in order to show responsiveness, leaders need not only possess the means for assessing public opinion – something polling is increasingly providing – but more importantly, responsiveness requires an environment in which – on balance – incentives outweigh disincentives, supporting leaders' willingness and ability to prioritize responsive conduct. As was demonstrated here for the period observed, major external and internal disincentives created an environment of limited willingness and ability among Fatah leaders to prioritize responsiveness. The opposite was true for Hamas in the period leading up to the elections.

This limited responsiveness to public opinion played a critical role in the perpetuation of Fatah's leadership crisis. While leadership characteristics, evolving perceptions regarding the bases of legitimacy, and historic experience constituted important overarching elements influencing the relationship between leaders and their public, the research aimed to capture more comprehensively the way in which both overarching, as well as specific factors such as campaign organization or election postponement considerations affected the incentive structure for responsiveness, and as such helped to tip the overall balance of competing influences against Fatah's responsiveness during the period observed.

Existing studies of leadership responsiveness had focused primarily on established democracies. To study Palestinian leadership responsiveness, the specific circumstances affecting Palestinian political conduct under conditions of continuing occupation and limited sovereignty needed to be explicitly recognized as affecting both *willingness* and *ability* of leaders to respond. Drawing on a range of areas including the study of democracy and democratization, authoritarianism and transitions, rentierism, the study of legitimacy and legitimization, the study of the link between public opinion and policy responsiveness, and the role of polling, the approach taken here illustrated how responsiveness can be used as an analytical tool in the study of leadership conduct in a context other than established democracies. By contrasting the pre-election conduct of Fatah with that of Hamas and examining the prerequisites and mechanisms by which a pro-responsive pre-election environment was created for the latter, the study contributed to a better understanding of the reasons for Fatah's electoral defeat and the events that led to the prolonged postponement of Palestinian national aspirations during the following years.

The story of Fatah's leadership crisis and electoral defeat during the period from 2005 to 2009 presents a wealth of insights into the mosaic of influences and complexities that guided

leadership conduct in Palestine during the period observed and beyond. These are relevant for assessing the prospects of the revival and survival of the movement into the future. Some of the main conclusions arising from this study are as follows.

A lack of confidence in the reliability of the electoral processes and schedules – even prior to the 2006 elections – substantially weakened incentives for responsiveness by undermining the *electoral imperative* as one of the main drivers for responsive leadership conduct. Doubts about election dates and repeated postponement of elections disrupted organizational and personal learning about the benefits of responsiveness in electoral contests, suspending the evolution of the public's thinking about legitimate bases of authority. The lack of firm institutionalization of elections also presented the risk of poll data being used to inform decisions on further postponement of elections until favourable outcomes could be predicted.

The much needed *renewal of legitimacy* was repeatedly delayed by postponement of national as well as Fatah-internal elections, leaving an arguably 'expired' historical leadership in place up until 2009 and delaying a transition from traditional and mobilizational to electoral legitimation. The undecided state of thinking about legitimate bases of authority weakened pressures on Fatah's historic leadership, allowing their insistence on continued legitimacy, de-linked from popularity or elections. Lack of progress in negotiations limited opportunities to mobilize for shared objectives, while the security commitments under Oslo prevented broad-scale mobilization *against*, limiting the possibility for new or less established leaders to gain legitimacy mobilizationally.

Fatah-internal fragmentation obstructed internal communication and prevented the lessons and experiences of the benefits of responsiveness and the electoral imperative from being shared. This also weakened the relationship between decision makers and their constituents, a relationship that had relied on the facilitating role performed by Fatah's lower and mid-level cadres whose mobilizational role had diminished post-Oslo. As a result, Fatah's capacity to assess public opinion and to transmit public and Fatah-internal pressures for responsiveness upwards into Fatah's hierarchy was diminished.

Mahmoud Abbas' departure from the patronage-based leadership style of his predecessor deprived a non-charismatic and crowd-shy *leader by default* of opportunities for demonstrating service and symbolic responsiveness. As such, incentives for responsive conduct by him remained limited until his actions created a direct threat to Fatah or his own political survival. Whenever this occurred, however, Abbas was forced to respond to public opinion.

Fatah's dependence on economic support along with a perceived need for external political support for the achievement of national objectives produced a quasi-rentier effect in which (as predicted in rentier theory) external dependencies weakened incentives for responsiveness to domestic opinion in favour of responsiveness to donor/political support. The conditionality of international support for a 'West Bank only' programme of governance, prosperity and security pitted one public good (economic and institutional development) against another (reconciliation), highlighting the contradiction between the Western democracy promotion agenda (including support for responsive governance), and disincentives to responsiveness resulting from the conditionality of support. The impact of this contradiction is substantial in its contribution to leadership crisis. By undermining leadership legitimacy and weakening the commitment to a firm institutionalization of electoral processes, it set in motion a cycle that revolved around postponed elections, subsequent loss of incentive for responsiveness, diminishing legitimacy,

authoritarian leadership conduct, internal fragmentation and leadership crisis. These findings contribute to the study of democratization with regard to the role played by external economic and political imperatives in sustaining resilient authoritarianism.

At the same time, the opportunities created by a new quality and quantity of information available through polls were seized only partially, limited by the prevalence of the disincentives to responsiveness outlined above as well as by selective poll scepticism and the prevailing confidence of leaders in their ability to assess public opinion without polls. When polls *were* used by Fatah's leadership during the period observed, such use was largely limited to campaign rhetoric and symbolic gestures, and generally lacked substantive follow-up. However, a new generation of Fatah leaders seized opportunities provided by polling, specifically in their attempts to strengthen their voice within the movement. They were supported by pollsters interested in providing additional support for the non-Hamas political spectrum (while maintaining their general polls available to the wider public).

The example of Hamas' prioritization of public opinion in its 2006 elections demonstrated the power of committed responsive campaigning based on *historical experience and organizational learning*. Hamas' West Bank campaign strategy illustrated the electoral advantage that can arise from the presence of know-how and experience in the assessment and use of public opinion, polled and otherwise. Hamas' well-established consultation and opinion assessment practices provided the movement with an electoral edge over Fatah, whose prior experience in responsive decision making had been neglected internally.

Rather than focusing on isolated leadership characteristics, the confluence of influences outlined above created the specific incentive structure for responsiveness observed. Changeable over time, its balance may tip, creating perhaps different outcomes for responsiveness in future. For Fatah, the renewal of leadership in its 2009 Sixth General Conference provided such an opportunity for change. During the conference, a new group of leaders, many of whom had experienced the electoral and legitimacy benefits of responsiveness, were elected to Fatah's governing bodies. In time, their experience could translate into greater prioritization of responsiveness unless obstructed by Fatah's internal fragmentation or other disincentives.

However, in the period under review, the most serious obstacle for Fatah to demonstrate responsiveness in policy and decision making remained their limited *ability* to fundamentally affect the lives of Palestinians under continuing occupation. These constraints, exaggerated by conditionality of international donor funding, limited the space for Fatah to manoeuvre. At the same time, these constraints made seizing existing opportunities for responsiveness all the more important for Fatah's political survival. As long as elections remained suspended, a key driver for responsiveness remained suspended also, in particular in the absence of opportunities for mobilization as an alternative driver for responsiveness. The use of polls in inadvertently facilitating the postponement of elections presents a risk to pro-responsive leadership conduct. Continued lack of responsiveness contributed to a sustained leadership crisis by alienating both the public, and Fatah cadres, from the leadership. Without strong leadership, neither attempts at strengthening the Palestinian negotiation position *vis-à-vis* Israel, nor the domestic agenda for development and reform, was likely to be sustainable. Milton-Edwards summed up the critical importance of public opinion when suggesting:

> It is unlikely that the Palestinians will be able to take forward any serious political process from this situation of weakness and division. It will need consensus and the

> ability to gather a critical mass of political grassroots support if there is to be any chance of overcoming the general frustration and distrust and to energize the street for what will become an extremely demanding process (Milton-Edwards 2005:255).

And as long as the achievement of public priorities such as prosperity and security continued to be fundamentally dependent on external conditions and policies, namely Israeli closure policies and donor conditionality, Fatah's prioritization of one set of public goods over priorities such as reconciliation and democratic process constituted a risky and ultimately short-sighted balancing act between competing public demands. As Ghassan Khatib noted in reference to the sustainability of the unpopular internationally funded security cooperation with Israel pursued by the PA:

> The Palestinian Authority is only able to maintain public support and understanding for this security policy on the basis that it is necessary for the success of the political process intended to bring Israel's illegal occupation to an end. For Palestinian officials to go on preventing what many Palestinians consider legitimate resistance to the occupation at the same time that the occupation is being consolidated will undermine the Palestinian government's public stand and put it in jeopardy (Khatib 2010:n.p.).

Hamas, in turn, was equally susceptible to changes in the balance of factors shaping the pro-responsive incentive environment in 2005–6. Aided by its understanding of the electoral imperative, its experience in consultation and opinion assessment, and by Fatah's policy failures, Hamas had little to lose and much to gain from responsive conduct. However, Hamas' post-2007 conduct suggested shifts in this formerly pro-responsive incentive structure. Regional developments, power consolidation in Gaza and restrictions in the West Bank, an enlarged and more diverse constituency, internal challenges and the absence of electoral imperative must be considered when assessing influences on Hamas' ability to maintain its responsive leadership style as governing body.

POSTSCRIPT AND OUTLOOK

Reconciliation, responsiveness and beyond

Since 2009, Fatah and Hamas have each experienced significant challenges as a result of domestic as well as regional developments. The post-2007 geographical, political and administrative divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip created quite different challenges and experiences for the two populations and their leaderships. The experience of the Gaza population over the past years has been one of extraordinary isolation, trauma and economic de-development. The continuation – and further tightening – of the Gaza blockade and the devastation wrought by three wars since 2009 have not only traumatized generations, but have caused an 'unprecedented scale of destruction' in the small enclave, the 2014 war alone leaving an estimated 100,000 Gazans homeless.[1] The Strip's public infrastructure has been decimated, by the destruction of electricity generation and water purification facilities, sewage infrastructure, schools and hospitals and more, causing long-term impacts on productivity, health and education. According to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 'Gaza's economy and its capacity to create jobs has been devastated, with the majority of the population becoming dependent on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs. The official unemployment rate in Gaza for Q2 2014 is 44.5 per cent' (UNRWA 2014:n.p.). Hamas' leadership, having fully established their role as sole governing authority in the Gaza Strip following 2007, have faced increasingly complex regional challenges that added to the already formidable obstacles of economic management under the Israeli blockade. The rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the civil war in Syria and the emergence of an anti-Muslim Brotherhood alliance in the Gulf[2] have helped increase Hamas' political, geographic and economic isolation, ultimately rendering its governance of the Strip unsustainable. These challenges appear to have affected, and perhaps have undermined, the incentives for responsiveness that were in place prior to the movement's election victory.[3]

The West Bank population, having benefitted from modest progress in some areas of governance and economic development, witnessed accelerated settlement growth alongside unsuccessful negotiations with Israel. Palestinian Authority security cooperation with Israel left the West Bank a mere bystander to three Gaza wars. While not subject to the levels of economic deprivation as the Gazan population, but faced with a continuing lack of any progress towards the achievement of national aspirations, the West Bank public has become increasingly disillusioned and hopeless. 'People are frustrated; the mood is bitter, and hopes have dimmed. But the overwhelming – and understandable – sense among Palestinians is that their politics are in a state of almost unshakeable stagnation' (International Crisis Group 2013:3). As violence in Jerusalem began to increase in frequency from mid-2014, sparking talk of a third Intifada,[4] the relative calm in the West Bank may not only be a function of the PA's restrictions on political

expression, but may also be a explained by ‘social and political fragmentation, and the widespread Palestinian acquiescence that national liberation should come second to the largely apolitical and technocratic projects of state-building and economic development’ (Thrall 2014:n.p.).

The Fatah movement, having hoped to overcome its leadership crisis through radical leadership change during its 2009 General Conference, was unable to translate these reforms into increased public support and legitimacy more broadly. Fatah and the PA struggled to contain the public discontent sparked by general frustration and austerity measures introduced by the PA in 2012. While the PA project of state- and institution-building did result in improvements in some areas, it did not bring about the desired prosperity and ‘on the ground’ progress that it had aimed for. The deterioration of relations between Fatah and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad ultimately prompted Fayyad’s resignation in April 2013. And while the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt presented an opportunity to re-build relations with the new Egyptian leadership and exert pressures on Hamas, this too failed to significantly strengthen Fatah domestically. At the end of another nine months of failed negotiations with Israel, Abbas declared that he would not resume bilateral negotiations but would instead pursue a resolution through the United Nations.

Within this changed regional and domestic context, the assessment of old and new incentives and disincentives for responsiveness can provide insight into the reasons behind specific decisions made by leaderships on both sides, and help assess their prospects and risks.

Reconciliation is the issue with the most potential to strengthen leaders’ willingness to consider public opinion in decision making. A return to an electoral schedule as part of a reconciliation agreement would put in place the strongest possible incentive for responsiveness, enabling other incentives to be strengthened in its wake. Public demand for reconciliation, the re-unification of Gaza and West Bank governance, and a return to elections, had been constant since the violent 2007 split, and was expressed across all political divides. The failure by the parties to reconcile was considered shameful by many Palestinians,[5] has damaged trust in political parties and undermined perceptions of the legitimacy of either. The April 2014 Reconciliation Agreement incorporated the main tenets contained in previous unimplemented agreements.[6] It led to the resignation of the Hamas Gaza government following agreement on a temporary technocrat government to take over most aspects of governance in the Gaza Strip and prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections.

The signing by both parties of the 2014 Reconciliation Agreement is a milestone well suited to re-examining the incentive structure for responsiveness as it presented itself in 2014. Regardless of the eventual success or failure of the 2014 agreement, the decision by both parties to respond to the public demand for reconciliation must be interpreted within the context of an incentive structure affected by regional and domestic developments and challenges since 2009. As such it provides an opportunity to review what has changed or remained unchanged among the factors influencing leaders’ willingness and ability to respond. The following discussion presents a snapshot of the incentives that led to heeding public opinion on the matter, and outlines some of the disincentives that are likely to determine the prospects of this latest reconciliation attempt.

Responding to the reconciliation demand – Fatah

Failure of negotiations and economic and governance challenges

The April Reconciliation Agreement followed challenging years for Fatah and the PA. Despite some notable successes of the PA's state- and institution-building project led by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad,[7] the improvements had not translated into a strengthening of Fatah's position. As the PA's financial difficulties escalated following the PLO's application for full UN membership in late 2011, public protest, initially directed primarily at Prime Minister Fayyad, also began to be targeted at Fatah and Abbas, including from inside the movement.

Fatah signed the reconciliation agreement during a period of little optimism: its decade-long negotiations strategy had led to nought; international donor funding of the PA was decreasing and real per capita GDP had declined in 2013 (World Bank 2014). Few of Fatah's internal problems had subsided and the challenge to Abbas by Mohammad Dahlan, the former Gaza preventative security chief recently expelled from Fatah, was intensifying fragmentation (Abu Amer 2014a:n.p.). Ghassan Khatib summed up Fatah's reasoning for considering an agreement as follows:

> The Fatah leadership had growing legitimacy and governance problems. With elections more than three years overdue, a paralysed parliament, a stop-and-go budget and a marginalized government – symptoms of one-party regime – Fatah was as desperate as Hamas for a change in the status quo (Khatib 2014:n.p.).

The requirements for pursuit of a new strategy

The signing of the agreement was interpreted widely as a tactical move to achieve a range of objectives, among them strengthening Fatah's negotiating position *vis-à-vis* the US and Israel; diverting public attention away from the failure of the latest round of peace talks; and, by strengthening the PLO's role as legitimate representative, assisting Abbas' bid to take the Palestine question to the UN for resolution. Abbas' refusal to renew peace talks with Israel and plans for membership applications to international organizations resulted in a temporary boost to his popularity (Khatib 2014:n.p.), badly needed in light of the failure of negotiations with Israel. Having invested his political capital in these negotiations over decades and having lost the public's trust in this approach along the way, it was hoped that a new strategy would demonstrate the continuing relevance of Abbas himself, his party and his government. The new strategy,[8] seeking a UN Security Council resolution that sets a timeframe for Israeli withdrawal and membership in international bodies, such as the International Criminal Court, had the strong support of Fatah's own cadres.[9] For this strategy to be effective, Abbas needed a reconciliation agreement. As Jonathan Cook aptly summed up: 'Abbas' new strategy – creating a momentum towards statehood at the United Nations – requires that his government-in-waiting establish its democratic credentials, territorial integrity, and a national consensus behind the diplomatic option' (Cook 2014:n.p.). Even after the resignation of the Hamas government, elections would likely present the only way for Abbas to regain power over the security sector in Gaza, still under Hamas control.[10]

Changing international views on reconciliation and elections

At a time when blame for the failure of the latest round of peace talks was primarily apportioned to Israel (Khatib 2014:n.p.), the announcement of this new strategy coincided with signals that a unity government may be more acceptable to international partners than in the past (Christopherson and Alayasa 2014:n.p.), weakening one of the main disincentives – Western international rejection – which had played a role in the failure of earlier reconciliation attempts. This provided an opportunity for Abbas to demonstrate responsiveness while at the same time being encouraged to 'play hardball' with Hamas in order not to weaken relations with Arab supporters (Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) who were strongly opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood and by extension to Hamas (Kuttab 2014d:n.p.).

The electoral imperative

The commitment to holding parliamentary and presidential elections reinstated the long-neglected electoral imperative. For Fatah, victory in elections is a requirement on which the survival of the movement and its political legitimacy depends. Defeat is therefore not an option, the difference this time being that defeat is not inconceivable. With the imperative for a win tantamount (and defeat a realistic possibility), incentives for responsive conduct are high, and so is the need to learn lessons from the 2006 campaign. Regaining access to Gaza constituents is just as relevant for Fatah as access to the West Bank is for Hamas. With a reconciliation agreement, Fatah's ability to reach out to potential voters in the Strip will depend on the extent to which Hamas regains access to its constituents in the West Bank. Reconciliation would give Fatah a long-barred opportunity to re-connect with a public that has felt neglected. And while this imperative creates a strong incentive for Fatah to respond to public opinion and apply significant resources to facilitate this process, effective reconnection could be undermined by a lack of trust in the commitment to elections. A perception within the movement that elections could be postponed or prevented if pre-election surveys predict a likely defeat would weaken the commitment to strategically prioritize responsiveness. A clear, unequivocal commitment by key international actors to recognize the outcome of elections would significantly strengthen incentives for responsiveness and, conversely, prior indications of non-recognition would weaken incentives.

Polling and other assessment methods

Fatah's *ability* to show responsiveness in part depends on the extent to which polling is reliable, which is directly related to the degree of reciprocal political freedoms granted; it also relies on the extent to which leaders and election managers use public opinion (polled and otherwise surveyed) to inform candidate selection, campaign strategy and programme. As in 2006, the polling sector is willing and able. Even if the reliability of stated voting intentions may be compromised by a restrictive political environment or perhaps deliberate attempts to under-project Hamas' popularity,[11] it is likely that the more detailed information available from polls, for example on preferred candidate characteristics, issues of prime concern or strategy preferences, can offer useful information to interested politicians on all sides. Their use of the available information from polls or other sources depends on Fatah's prioritizations of responsiveness as a strategic campaign choice. Such choices would become apparent early on, starting with the implementation of the demand for transparent internal democratic processes. Successful candidate selection processes will serve to demonstrate that change has taken place,

enlivening and mobilizing cadres.

Succession, legacy and succession planning

The inevitable age-related end to Mahmoud Abbas' political roles, which he himself has referred to on numerous occasions, has the potential to create both incentives and disincentives. Subsequent competition for succession could create further divisions within Fatah, and has already begun to do so, as evidenced by the conflict between Abbas and Dahlan. Potential candidates would need to balance increased Fatah-internal responsiveness, for example in the use of increasingly bellicose language,[12] with a parallel need to seek the endorsement of international actors.

As for Abbas, at nearly 80 years of age, his wish to leave a legacy other than failed peace negotiations may increase his willingness to show responsiveness rhetorically and, where possible, substantively. This desire appeared evident in his September 2014 speech to the UN General Assembly when, despite his lack of charisma as a public speaker, the strong language and symbolism used, his focus on Gazans, and the use of imagery to convey the suffering of Palestinians, reflected well a Palestinian public (and President) exhausted by years of effort to prove themselves to the international public. The speech (Abbas 2014), which angered Israel and the US with its use of terms such as 'genocide' in describing Israel's actions in Gaza, followed the failure of negotiations, another war, and a signed reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas. The Palestinian President's acknowledgement that negotiations had failed and would not be pursued further through bilateral negotiations, may signal a shift in incentives for responsiveness. Abbas' apparent decision to no longer prioritize the international demand for continued negotiations may free him to pursue an approach that, while safeguarding Palestinian political support, enables him to show at least rhetorical responsiveness reflecting the public disillusionment with 'negotiations for negotiations sake'.[13] Counteracting this is his reliance on international support for his new strategy of calling for a UN resolution, which once again creates pressure to compromise on domestic demands in favour of international ones. As a strategy intended to involve clearly defined timeframes, Abbas may seek to put a time limit on any anticipated pressures, resulting in less constraint over the long run.

Legitimacy, centralization of power and mobilization

Legitimacy has remained a point of weakness for Fatah and Abbas, despite the 2009 renewal of legitimacy of Fatah's leadership. To counteract a fragile expired mandate, Abbas has steadily expanded his presidential powers into the legislature's province (through ruling by presidential decree), into other executive areas (through direct appointments to fill PA positions), the economy (through for example his appointment of the board of the powerful Palestine Investment Fund)[14] and into the judiciary,[15] with some suggesting that 'signs are growing that Palestine is moving toward unifying all branches into one branch and under one person'.[16] Weak legitimacy as a consequence of the absence of elections, complemented by centralization of power, contributes to the weakening of incentives for responsiveness by depriving a broader, more heterogeneous and more connected leadership circle from the ability to influence decision making. The mobilizational capacity of Fatah cadres, potentially able to strengthen legitimacy in the absence of elections, has remained under-utilized despite Fatah's explicit inclusion of non-

violent resistance in its 2006 programme.[17] Within the strict confines of security cooperation with Israel, and parallel suppression of any non-sanctioned protest activity, the officially sanctioned areas for mobilization (such as the boycott of Israeli settlement goods, or legal action against the separation wall), though popularly supported,[18] were perhaps not well suited to supplement expired electoral legitimacy as a means of mobilization.

Fragmentation

Fatah-internal fragmentation remains a disincentive to responsive campaigning. The renewal of leadership during Fatah's Sixth General Conference elevated a group of younger, home-grown West Bank leaders, whose experience of responsive conduct during two Intifadas supported a greater ability and willingness to respond to public opinion than that shown by Fatah's traditional leadership pre-2007. But while the 2009 Fatah Conference confirmed and unified those close to Abbas, the under-representation of some groups within Fatah alienated many (International Crisis Group 2009a:16). A bitter leadership feud between Abbas and former Gaza preventative security chief Mohammad Dahlan[19] has highlighted the need for responsiveness from Abbas and threatened further fragmentation of the movement. Dahlan's strong support in Gaza and his determined efforts to provide financial and political support for Gazans through direct funding and political lobbying has increased the pressure on Abbas and Fatah to show responsiveness to the needs of Gazans.[20] But the conflict threatens to side-track attention from the need for responsiveness and might undermine the commitment to internal democratic processes in the run-up to the seventh Fatah conference, which had been scheduled for August 2014 but was postponed. The Dahlan–Abbas conflict also has the potential to impede Fatah-internal processes prior to elections. Meanwhile, Abbas' continued absence from Gaza in the aftermath of the war did not bode well for him in terms of symbolic responsiveness, his absence seen by many as neglect of both the suffering of Gazans and any reconciliation efforts.

In summary, the prospect of elections has, at least in theory, revived the electoral imperative for responsiveness. In contrast to 2006, Fatah is now well aware of the possibility of defeat, and in light of the challenges the movement has faced in relation to failed negotiations, flailing governance progress and Abbas' expected desire to leave a legacy, strong incentives are in place for Fatah to prioritize responsiveness strategically by implementing the reconciliation agreement and in particular by preparing for elections. In addition, a capable polling sector is in place to support the ability of Fatah's new and perhaps more willing leadership to assess public opinion. However, the prospect of elections could also present a risk to responsive leadership conduct. In the context of very weak institutionalization of electoral schedules and the idea that 'defeat is not an option', postponement of elections (and reconciliation, by extension) may continue if a Fatah-favourable outcome is considered unlikely. Such a move may well be supported, even requested, by Fatah's international backers. Fatah's electoral prospects in turn depend on its ability to present a unified leadership, which requires the movement to implement internal democratic processes that bring together rather than divide its members. In this regard, the conflict with Dahlan does not bode well, nor does the postponement of Fatah's Seventh General Conference. However, Fatah's ability to pursue its new UN-directed strategy, which has reconciliation as a prerequisite, and the need to renew the expired legitimacy of its leaders and role, presents a strong incentive for a strategic choice of responsive leadership conduct to be made.

Responding to the reconciliation demand – Hamas

The dramatic regional developments since 2007 when Hamas assumed full control of governance in the Gaza Strip affected the incentive structure for responsiveness in important ways. The rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the impact of the war in Syria and changing alliances within the Arab world isolated Hamas regionally,[21] while economic pressures created by the Western donor boycott and continuing Israeli blockade have continued and intensified. Ultimately, the impact of these combined factors fundamentally undermined Hamas' ability to govern effectively. The regional experience of the Muslim Brotherhood also cast doubt over the role and opportunities for Islamist parties to be accepted as players in electoral contests in the region in the future.

The decision by the Hamas leadership to sign the reconciliation agreement with Fatah must be viewed within these broader challenges. The agreement, and the subsequent resignation of Hamas ministers, was interpreted by some as a capitulation to Fatah demands in the face of rising economic pressures (Kuttab 2014b:n.p.), while others saw this as a strategic move on the part of a movement whose governance of the Gaza Strip had been rendered unsustainable. As Ghassan Khatib observed:

> Internal evaluations by Hamas led its leaders to conclude that the transformation of the movement's role and image from one of resistance against Israel's occupation to that of governance had been responsible for the deterioration of the movement's public position, both in Palestine and in the region. As a result, it agreed to form a joint government with Abbas' Fatah (Khatib 2014:n.p.).

In addition to these considerations, and in light of Hamas' previous conduct, some contend that Hamas also sought an opportunity to use the signing of the Reconciliation Agreement as a means of recovering lost support and re-engaging with the public. In the run-up to the decision to sign, Hamas' leaders had shown a keen awareness of their diminishing popularity and the increasing criticism of their role in government. Speaking in 2014, a Hamas official evaluated:

> Hamas realizes that the mood of the public has been affected by the difficult reality – as the economic hardship has continued for many years now – [of] the conflict between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza, and what the misleading media has said against Hamas. These reasons led to a shift in the public opinion, [with] other parties gaining preference and a decline in the popularity [of Hamas]. This requires Hamas to develop a comprehensive media, charitable, public and social programme in the next stage, to ensure the continuation of communication with the public (Abu Amer 2014b:n.p.).

The commitments entered into under a reconciliation agreement would assist Hamas in its strategic objective of re-establishing its relationship with the public:

First, the prospect of elections – if Hamas participated – would provide the opportunity to renew an expired electoral mandate and demonstrate the movement's significant support base, which would support its claim for representation within the PLO. Despite the experiences of the Muslim Brotherhood and its own election, the movement appeared to be committed to pursuing 'legitimacy gained from the parliamentary elections', political advisor Ahmad Yousef describing the elections as representing a 'historic juncture' (interviewed by Alakhbar English 2014:n.p.).

Arguably, Hamas has less to lose than Fatah in future national elections. While the movement may only participate if it expects to win a significant percentage of the vote (perhaps one similar to the 'blocking minority' it expected to achieve in 2006), it would not need – and perhaps does not wish to – win a majority outright. Citing its 2006 experience of international non-recognition and donor boycott, Hamas could be excused for deciding to boycott future national elections, but the movement appeared, at least for the time being, committed to contesting future elections.[22]

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, a guaranteed lifting of restrictions on political rights and freedoms to ensure free and fair elections are a necessary prerequisite for Hamas' ability to restore and mobilize its West Bank institutions – something that may not be achieved without elections. The ability to mobilize its supporter base would be necessary to enable the movement to communicate with, assess and engage broader sectors of the West Bank community. Just as in 2006, Hamas' electoral prospects depend on the ability to connect to the West Bank public beyond its own supporters. This requires greater political freedom than currently available to Hamas' cadres. A reciprocal lifting of the restrictions would enable the movement to mobilize its West Bank resources, decimated by Israeli arrests and PA restrictions, and would enable a return to effective election campaigning and mobilization of its supporter base. This would benefit Hamas' West Bank institutions and cadres, irrespective of whether elections are finally held and whether the movement participates.

Thirdly, returning the burden of unsustainable governance to Fatah enables Hamas to distance itself from the negative public perceptions of increasingly authoritarian rule, instead allowing it to focus on repairing and re-establishing its credentials as honest and incorruptible, characteristics which suffered during its governance. Without governance responsibilities, the movement can re-focus on communication with the public and its 2006 reform agenda, which had set it apart from the PA and Fatah's poor performance.

Despite the enormous obstacles presented by the Israeli and Egyptian blockade[23] and the Western donor boycott, many aspects of Hamas' governance of the Gaza Strip had been regarded as reasonably successful under the circumstances: 'Outside observers expressed admiration for the level of professionalism in administration attained by the Hamas Government' (Bröning 2011:26–27), and Sayigh (2010:2) noted that 'Gaza ministries and agencies display enviable levels of coordination, information sharing, and mutual support'. Hamas' re-organization of the security sector was considered by observers to have brought 'more than just a small degree of calm and order to Gaza's streets, despite being simultaneously criticized for human rights violations' (Bröning 2011:27). Increasingly however, under pressure to consolidate its power and control in the Gaza Strip, Hamas' rule had become heavy-handed, likened to 'a restrictive party-state' (Brown 2012:4ff.), with Hamas imposing restrictions on civil society and political and individual freedoms.[24] These restrictions contrasted sharply with the commitments that had been made in Hamas' 2006 election manifesto: to safeguard political liberties, pluralism, the freedom to form political parties, and civil liberties of freedom of expression, press freedom, freedom of assembly and others (Hamas Election Manifesto 2006 in Tamimi (2007:276)).

Prior to the signing, Hamas' leaders had expressed keen awareness of their failings while in government, in particular their decreasing responsiveness to public concerns, caused both by an inability, under the circumstances, but also a reduced willingness to prioritize public concerns. Former Haniyeh advisor Ahmed Yousef questioned Hamas' performance just prior to the handover of governance to the unity government by asking:

> Did Hamas leaders take the initiative to walk in disguise in the markets or the streets of the camps to hear the pain of the people? Did its ministers approach UNRWA food aid distribution centres to observe the rush of defeated Palestinians to receive a bag of flour? Did they live with the youth of Gaza, where life has become meaningless with the lack of jobs? (Abu Amer 2014:n.p.).

Hamas' withdrawal from direct governance would enable the movement to re-focus on its social programme and prioritize responsiveness to public demand as a charitable gesture, rather than as part of expected and demanded governmental service delivery.

Rescinding its governance would enable the movement to demonstrate its resistance credentials uninhibited by governance responsibilities.

Within the context of fresh elections, the 2014 Gaza war provided Hamas with an opportunity, intended or imposed, to set the stage for reaffirming the movement's resistance credentials, an opportunity that at a later point might have been constrained by altered governance realities in Gaza. As a starting shot in an electoral race, the 2014 war significantly boosted Hamas' popularity and boosted public support for its strategy of resistance.[25] While postwar opinion polls often reflect short-term spikes rather than long-term trends in the context of an election campaign, starting from a position of strong public support would certainly boost the movement's prospects as well as the morale of those on whom the movement relies for support during a campaign.

In summary, external economic and political pressures have certainly contributed to taking Hamas to the point where effective governance was no longer sustainable. At the same time, rather than being interpreted as a surrender to Fatah dictates, Hamas' decision to sign the reconciliation agreement and its subsequent hand-over of most, though not all of its governing functions to a technocrat government that did not include a single Hamas representative, may perhaps be interpreted better as a compromise that enabled the movement to pursue more long-term strategic objectives. The commitments undertaken under the terms of the agreement may be regarded by Hamas as allowing the movement to position itself favourably within a post-reconciliation political landscape and to once again capitalize on responsiveness to public opinion as a means of securing electoral advantage. The prospect of fresh elections has thus created a strong incentive for a more responsive approach to public demands. Even if the 2014 reconciliation effort falters and the prospect of elections is further delayed, in the context of Hamas' regional isolation and its awareness that governance of the Gaza Strip under existing conditions was likely to erode Hamas' support in the long run, a return to a struggle for the public's hearts and minds is likely to be a relevant strategic consideration by Hamas in continuing to support reconciliation. Were elections (at any level) to be held, Hamas might calculate that the opportunities presented by its withdrawal from governance in Gaza outweigh the probable loss of control.

Outlook

The expression of public opinion through polls is a development that has begun to change the way public opinion is viewed, both by politicians and by the public. The polling sector in Palestine is maturing and becoming a firmly established feature of the political landscape. As

leaders become more aware of the opportunities provided by polling, their ability and willingness to use polling is expected to increase, as is the spectrum of users. While Fatah's responsiveness to polls was found to be limited during the period under review, there were signs that the increasing maturity of the industry would lead to increasing responsiveness, in the sense that the information was acted upon or used in decision making. However, whether leaders act on the information in ways that strengthen the ideals of democratic representation, or whether instead it is used to support undemocratic practice, is uncertain, as this depends on the incentive structure for responsiveness that predominates at the time. This research has outlined the potential electoral benefits of responsiveness. It has also provided examples of a range of uses for polls, from party-internal polls that support party-internal democratization and reform, to the examples provided by Shamir and Shikaki (2005:325) and Shamir (2007), describing the use of polling to create a mandate for decision making in peace negotiations, where polls can maximize opportunities for successful negotiations, but could also restrict negotiators' room to manoeuvre.

Some of the risks, such as the use of polling primarily for manipulative purposes, have been outlined in Chapter Seven. Geer's (1996:3) observations on the use of polling in the consideration of a choice between responsiveness and willingness to use coercion are insightful, specifically within a non-democratic context. Where leaders consider the use of coercion (through calculation of risks and required resources), information about the extent and intensity of discontent can be an important information source. It may dissuade leadership from the use of force in cases where responsiveness is considered a cheaper option. However, information revealing the relative isolation of discontent through polls may provide leaders with a rationale for the use of force, enabling them to predict limited risks and required resources. Commenting on a PA crackdown on Islamists following suicide attacks against Israel in 1996, Shikaki described this kind of consideration:

> The PA was further comforted by the fact that most Palestinians supported its crackdown [in 1996]. But during the second intifada the opposite was true. Lacking political legitimacy and confronted by a strong popular opposition committed to violence against Israelis, the PA found it hard to resort to the same methods it had used in 1996 (Shikaki 2006:12–13).

However, blaming the misuse of power on polling may be a case of shooting the messenger. While polls may inform choices made in the absence of democratic control mechanisms, it is also likely that such abuses would occur, with or without polls to back up the decisions. The only addition which polls might make in terms of a contribution towards the practice may be their role in providing the information that allows for the coercive measures to be made more efficient and effective.

As such, the ability of polls – and public opinion in general – to support responsive leadership conduct depends primarily on the extent to which democratic process, such as regular elections, and the safeguarding of political freedoms, have been firmly institutionalized, ensuring that: (a) polling can capture and reflect public opinion accurately, (b) public opinion is reflected accurately in the media, and (c) leaders have sufficient incentive to respond. Equally, the independence of polling organizations – including their continuing diversity, independence from government, and public availability of results – is of critical importance.

The findings presented here have illustrated a specific role for responsiveness in mitigating

leadership crisis. Beneficiaries of this insight are both leaders and international actors. For leaders, a better understanding of the role of responsiveness may strengthen incentives and their ability to interpret and utilize past experience in more responsive decision making. For international actors aiming to support good governance, the understanding may suggest a change in approach. All too often, international actors, seeking to shape the behaviour and policy priorities of the Palestinian leadership, have failed to recognize the complexity and critical importance of the relationship between the Palestinian leadership and their public, at times forestalling the effectiveness of domestic pressures on issues such as good governance. Within a context of constraint created by continuing occupation and economic dependence, the impact of donor conditionality on the delicate relationship between leaders and their publics has not always been accorded the consideration it deserves.

Hamas' prioritization of reform, its anti-corruption agenda and poverty alleviation objectives during its 2006 election campaign, were not a response to external pressures, but to diligent assessment of public demands and pressures. The success of Hamas' reform agenda, based on public rather than external demands, suggests that not only has responsiveness to public opinion been overlooked by the international community as a factor in its quest for reform and development, but that encouraging responsiveness to domestic needs may indeed be the key to a more effective approach to such reform.

In supporting responsiveness to domestic public demands, international actors would not only avoid the dangers of inadvertently undermining local actors by demanding compliance with donor, rather than domestic demands; in encouraging accountability to domestic constituencies, governance and reform are strengthened in the long-term as they continue to be supported, acted and voted upon by those who have the most to gain from such reform: the public at large.

To gain a better understanding of the crisis of Palestinian leadership, we must gain a better understanding of the role of responsiveness in the creation and perpetuation of that crisis. Understanding the causes and consequences is relevant and urgent, not only for leaders whose political and, at times, personal survival depends on their ability to understand and manoeuvre such crisis; it is also relevant to international actors who, as donors and political stakeholders, want to see their political and financial inputs used effectively by a leadership that has the ability and willingness to do so.

NOTES

Preface

1. Both Fatah (inverted acronym of the Palestine National Liberation Movement) and Hamas (acronym of the Islamic Resistance Movement) are referred to in this book interchangeably as movements and parties, their internal organization and conduct reflecting a stage of transition during which each exhibits movement and political party characteristics.

Introduction

1. As Glenn E. Robinson pointed out, the mobilizational campaign was invigorated by the competition between the PLO's factions, each of which strove to recruit and build its network of civil society organizations (Robinson 1998:15). However, Robinson also suggested that Fatah's policy of political mobilization was not always fully supported by, for example, the more conservative strata of society, and patronage 'continued to be one means of policy implementation' (Robinson 1997:47).
2. For a critique of the consensus-based decision making within the PLO and the dominance of Fatah see Lindholm Schulz (2002:24ff.).
3. Democracy theorist Robert Dahl noted: 'A key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals' (Dahl 1971:1). Geer argued that the 'relationship between elected officials and public opinion represents a critical aspect of representative democracies [… which] lies at the centre of democratic government' (Geer 1996:22).
4. For a discussion of the characteristics of the PLO's 'state in exile', and their transformation into the statist features of the PA, see the analysis of Sayigh (1997b: Part III).
5. Theories of democracy based on a 'procedural' understanding do not automatically preclude a role for polls; however, in many studies of the opinion–policy link, a substantive understanding of democracy is implicit.
6. Following their return from exile, members of Fatah's Central Committee and Revolutionary Council had been over-represented in the senior ranks of the PA (Parsons 2005:139).
7. Dictionaries define the term 'crisis' as a 'time of intense difficulty or danger' or 'a time when a difficult or important decision must be made' (The Oxford Dictionary of English (revised edition) 2005), or as 'dangerous or worrying time: a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, especially a time when action must be taken

to avoid complete disaster or breakdown' (Encarta World English Dictionary (MSN) 2009).

8. See for example Khalidi's analysis (2008:4) under the headline 'Leadership Crisis'.
9. The author received this information from persons working in government offices within the complex who were asked to leave their work for the day.
10. As Romero pointed out, such information may be 'key to their survival, though in a different manner than in democratic nations', with polls being seen as a 'thermometer for measuring ex ante and ex post collective reactions against regimes' transgressions on citizens' rights' (Romero 2004:487).
11. Geer suggested that lack of responsiveness required a greater willingness to use coercion against one's own people. The degree of coercion leaders were willing to use was seen as a critical decision, dependent on resources, the relative size and intensity of discontent and the sources and strength of legitimacy on which authority rested. The less coercion was seen as an option, the more incentive there was for politicians to be well informed about public opinion (Geer 1996:3).
12. Kwiatkowski's (1992) study of Poland's transition to democracy discussed the use of polling by state agencies that provided the Polish government with information about the levels of public discontent. Nelson (1995) as well as Miller and Hesli (1993:6) examined the use of polling by Gorbachev and Yeltsin to gauge leadership legitimacy and to enhance public acceptance of their reform programmes by publishing supportive poll data. Secret polling conducted for the opposition movement Solidarnosc provided information on public willingness to participate in protests that enabled the opposition to design effective strategies. Singer and Scotto noted the ability of polls to become 'instruments of political and social actors achieving their specific goals' (Singer and Scotto 2004:485). For a discussion of factors believed to act as disincentives for responsiveness in new democracies, see Roberts and Kim (2007:3).
13. For an overview of election dates and results, see the website of the Palestine Central Elections Commission (2006a).
14. Mark Tessler and colleagues (Tessler and Nachtwey 1999) have a long association with survey research in the Middle East, having cooperated with and trained Palestinian and other Arab survey researchers and conducted survey research in Palestine and other Arab countries. While not evaluating the actual impact of polls on decision making, Tessler and Jamal (2006:435) outlined the potential contributions of polling within a context of transition to democracy, optimistically suggesting that polls may impact positively on political liberalization, responsible and effective governance and accountability. Their research pointed to the contribution of polling as building the trust of citizens in the political system and influencing government policy. Similarly, Tessler's resource book for polling and academic institutions (University of Michigan 2005) outlined the societal and political use of survey research in ensuring control and accountability, and in facilitating political participation.
15. Barber (1984) and Pateman (1970), quoted in Mark Robinson (1998:151).
16. Over 80 personal interviews were held, primarily in 2008 and 2009, with a small number of follow-up interviews held in 2010.

Chapter 1 Responsiveness in the 2006 PLC elections – Fatah

1. Blanc (2006b:13–14), an elections consultant for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) during the 2006 elections, argues that either a fully proportional system, or a disciplined Fatah approach preventing the candidatures of Fatah members as independents, could have resulted in a near equal if not slightly higher number of Fatah seats compared to Hamas seats at the district level.
2. When combining the votes of official and 'unofficial' Fatah and Hamas candidates respectively, at the district level, 44 per cent of the votes would have gone to Fatah and Fatah-affiliated independent candidates, and 45 per cent to Hamas and Hamas-affiliated candidates (Blanc 2006b:13). These results are similar to the result of the proportionally calculated national lists (41 per cent Fatah, 44 per cent Hamas (Central Elections Commission – Palestine 2006a)), maintaining a slight plurality in favour of Hamas.
3. Indeed, it may be argued that the significant proportion of the voting public who 'don't trust anyone' (between one third to one half, according to most polls over the period under investigation) may signify a tri-polar political environment.
4. Polls chart a continuous increase in support for Hamas between 1994 and 2006, against fluctuating support for Fatah, a general decline of support for left wing parties (Hilal 2006:6) and an increasing sector of the public frustrated with all political parties.
5. According to a PSR exit poll (2006), 5 per cent of Christians voted for Hamas.
6. Analysis of Fatah's pre-election conduct focused primarily on the failure of its primaries, while journalistic accounts covered aspects of campaign messages and conduct. To the author's knowledge, no research has been conducted to specifically look at Fatah's preparations and decision making regarding election programme and campaign design.
7. Expressed, for example, in the 1974 political programme of the PLO (PLO Political Programme 1974).
8. Wider representation was provided through a quota system that provided a semblance of pluralism while simultaneously assuring the movement's dominance of the PLO.
9. For example, the Palestinian National Charter (1968) does not mention democracy, but focuses entirely on liberation.
10. The Fatah Constitution states as basic principles: 'a) Democracy is the basis of discussion, investigation and decision taking at all organizational levels. b) Democratic centrality is the basis of handling responsibilities, and this involves concerted work, thinking and political participation in the Movement.' (Fatah Constitution 1968). The constitution illustrates the subordination of the ideal of political representation based on elections to the requirements of political decision making under adverse conditions. Only 11 delegates to the General Conference which determines the movement's programme and elects both Revolutionary and Central Council members, are to be elected at the district level (Article 40b), with another (or perhaps the same) 11 district delegates selected *if* conferences cannot be convened for security purposes or failing to have quorum (Article 40c). In effect, this provision diminished elections as prevailing principle for representation, especially since all other members to the Conference were 'selected' or appointed, with the exception of Revolutionary Council members, who are to be elected by the General Conference. Convening the conference every five years has been neglected regularly with an 18-year

lapse prior to the 2009 General Conference.

11. Three evaluation reports of Fatah's election defeat were prepared, none was made public and only a limited number of Fatah representatives have been allowed access to the findings. All three arrived at similar conclusions (Saidam 2010).
12. In comparing Hamas' house-to-house assessment to Fatah's conduct, Hamas candidate Mahmoud Musleh suggests that 'Fatah mobilized the security forces to go to the houses and ask people directly "are you going to vote for Fatah or Hamas?". The results showed that Fatah will win [1]46,000 votes [in the Ramallah district], and Hamas will win [1]20,000 votes. And the reality was exactly the opposite' (Musleh 2009). In fact, Fatah district candidates received 114,330 votes, compared to 134,858 votes for Hamas candidates in the Ramallah district (Central Elections Commission – Palestine 2006b). While Musleh's claim could not be independently substantiated by the author, the use of PA personnel – including security force – in Fatah's campaign was confirmed by Fatah informants and international observers (NDI 2006:27).
13. Unfortunately for Fatah, this slogan had already been claimed by Hamas as the name for its list.
14. Fatah's election programme can be found at http://www.idsc.gov.ps/arabic/gover/elections/11.html (last accessed 12 May 2012). A translation of Hamas' election manifesto is found in Tamimi (2007, Appendix VI).
15. For example, 240 Fatah Gaza activists resigned in protest because of, among other issues, a lack of progress towards reform, forcing the postponement of Gaza primaries in November 2005. This constituted 'a severe blow to Abbas' efforts to unify the party in order to prevent a strong showing by Hamas in elections' (Abusada 2005).
16. Pollster Jamil Rabah (2010) recalled his impression of some of the campaign activities in Ramallah: 'They campaigned like hooligans: Going in cars with flags of Fatah, beeping [horns] and [fire]crackers, which people thought was shooting. They did not campaign properly. It was just "*yalla yalla*, we are the Fatah guys, let's go, *yalla yalla*" […]. A lot of [these young guys] were not regarded highly […] in their neighbourhoods. They were simple. Fatah's reason did not show; its illogical parts prevailed'.
17. Similar to Hamas, Fatah used modern technology to mobilize voters with last minute phone campaigns (Ishtayyeh 2008), and SMS messaging to subscribers and a toll-free hotline (Bicakci 2007:73).
18. US funding of approximately US$2 million, distributed by USAID for public projects just prior to elections, aimed at creating 'a constant stream of announcements and public outreach about positive happenings all over Palestinian areas in the critical week before the elections'. In spite of US denials that the funding was campaign funding, the events, such as the US-financed tree-planting ceremony in Ramallah, attended by Abbas, 'have resembled Fatah rallies, with participants wearing the trademark black-and-white *kuffiyehs* emblazoned with the party logo, walls plastered with Fatah candidates' posters, and banks of TV cameras invited to record the event' (Wilson and Kessler 2006).
19. AMAN (Transparency Palestine) defined the most prevalent manifestation of corruption in Palestinian politics as 'Favouritism, nepotism and *wasta* [clout, connections] caused by political affiliation, kinship and personal ties; Misappropriation and waste of public funds; Bribery; Money Laundering; of these types, favouritism, nepotism and *wasta* in public

affairs and recruitment are regarded as the most prevalent' (AMAN 2008:12).

20. A valuable overview of the Palestinian reform movement is provided in Klein (2003a:44).
21. As had been the case in municipal elections (Denoeux 2005:124).
22. Sayigh suggested that the progress that had been achieved through institutionalization and establishment of legal frameworks had been out-balanced, undermined and reversed and that 'little progress overall [was made] in transforming itself into an effective government'. Sayigh specifically blamed the Qurie government for failing to visibly 'address key public concerns relating to corruption and lawlessness, and generally adopt[ing] an attitude ranging from neglect to obstruction towards other areas of institutional and policy reform' (Sayigh 2006:79, 80–1).
23. The final report of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) election report stated: 'Significant issues were noted by international and Palestinian non-partisan election observers concerning use of Palestinian Authority resources for the benefit of Fatah and campaigning in a significant number of mosques for Hamas candidates. Public resources, including government funds, vehicles, communications equipment, materials and work hours of government officials and employees belong to the Palestinian people and should not be used for the benefit of individual parties or candidates. The lack of a clear and enforceable regulatory framework for campaign activities and financing undermines public trust' (NDI 2006).
24. According to Faris, the movement had commissioned three simultaneous polls to 'check who is most acceptable and credible in the eyes of the community' (Faris 2008).
25. Ahead of the upcoming primaries, Fatah's Central Committee had declared that 'even though it supports the ambitions of the young generation to control Fatah, it will only use the primaries as an opinion poll to guide the formation of the final Fatah list' (Yaghi and Fishman 2005:n.p.).
26. This lack of discipline was already evident in the 1996 elections. Arafat had failed to address this issue and indeed inadvertently encouraged it when 'instead of being penalized, they got rewarded later on' with government positions post-election (Wazir 2009). Abbas pleaded and threatened 'independent' Fatah candidates, but 'no one took that threat seriously and they ran in their district anyway' (Wazir 2009).
27. For example, key Fatah members, such as popular Revolutionary Council member Ahmad Hillis, did not run due to disagreements over the formation of Fatah's lists. Yaghi suggested that 'The inability of Fatah to include all of its key national and local figures on its lists and limit the number of Fatah members running as independents will greatly damage its ability to mobilize the diverse range of Fatah voters' (Yaghi 2006).
28. Fatah did not win any of the eight seats in Gaza (City) electoral district.

Chapter 2 Responsiveness in the 2006 PLC elections – Hamas

1. What to the Western political understanding of popular sovereignty might initially appear to be a contradiction between individual freedoms on the one hand, and the subjugation to divine law on the other, cannot be discussed in detail here. An insightful description and interpretation of what Gunning terms the 'dual contract', 'divine' and 'of the people', that

constitutes the source of political authority in Hamas' political thought, can be found in Gunning (2007: Ch. 3).

2. An insightful analysis of the actual and theoretical role of the *Shura* Council in Hamas' organizational structure, particularly of its limitations in light of its clandestine nature, is presented by Gunning (2007) in Chapter 4.
3. Mishal and Sela (2006:xix) suggest that the *Shura* Council was meant to bestow religious legitimacy on Hamas' decision making, though the authors suggest that the number and identity of its members – Palestinian or non-Palestinian as well as clergy or non-clergy, or a combination of each – has never been revealed.
4. A view that departs from Mawdudi, whose ideas are otherwise influential in Hamas' political thought (Gunning 2007:69).
5. For the theoretical bases of Hamas' political thinking in relation to Mawdudi (specifically his 'contractual theory'), see Gunning (2007:68–9).
6. The incomplete transfer of authority to Hamas and subsequent obstruction and chaos prevented Hamas taking on normal governing functions. According to Usher (2006c:28), incomplete transfer of power included, for example, the post-election presidential decree transferring direct responsibility for three out of the six police and security forces to the direct control of the president, along with the ministry of information and the ministry of finance; the creation of a new general secretary for personnel, salaries and comptroller institutions to be appointed by and reporting directly to the president, effectively placing control of hiring and firing in the president's hands. In addition, the outgoing PLC gave the president the power to appoint a new nine-judge constitutional court with the right to cancel any law approved by Parliament on the grounds that it is unconstitutional.
7. Of course, Hamas has been able to act as elected representative at the local level since its municipal election victories. Its conduct *vis-à-vis* responsiveness to local opinion has not been studied in detail, though a number of examples indicate that a consultative approach has been applied by its local mayors and councillors (International Crisis Group 2006a:12ff.; Abu 'Eisheh 2009).
8. With increasing levels of religiosity, apparent for example in the doubling of the number of mosques since the 1970s (Gunning 2007:117), opportunities for Hamas to communicate with the mainstream public have naturally increased. The mosque is an important recruiting ground for Hamas, as suggested by Post, Sprinzak and Denny (2003:173) according to interviews and surveys of Hamas members.
9. The existence of specific commissioned polls referred to by Kalman (2006) and Tamimi (2007) is disputed by Hamas' West Bank campaign manager Omar Abdel Raziq (2008), who referred to publicly available polls as the only source of polled data used in election preparation.
10. While this strategy may have been the original plan, Hamas did in fact have a very substantial presence on the street with posters and banners, and was also present, though perhaps in a less costly manner, on the media, in talk shows and debates.
11. The organizational structure for the campaign, described by Abdel Raziq, was most likely not a campaign-specific invention, but utilized pre-existing structures of Hamas' various social activities and training programmes which appear to be organized along similar geographic lines as described by Mishal and Sela (2006:158 and Appendix One).

12. Gunning (2007:83) also elaborated on the question of bringing specific expertise into the legislative process through the input of experts, as practised in the make-up of Hamas' current *Shura* consultative process, and the attention to a balance of expertise that should be reflected in the choice of candidates.
13. Abdel Raziq explains that for candidate selection in areas in which clan affiliation is strongest, such as in Hebron, these considerations were taken into account, while in other areas, such as in Nablus or Salfeet, individual characteristics of candidates were more decisive for candidate selection.
14. Whereas only half of the seats were distributed according to the nationwide proportional list, with the other half distributed according to a district block system, it is the list results that arguably provide the best reflection of the closely matched popularity of the competing parties (Blanc 2006b:13). The district-based seat distribution reveals a similarly equal match when considered in terms of percentage of actual votes for party and affiliated candidates: 44 per cent of the votes went to Fatah and Fatah-affiliated independent candidates, and 45 per cent went to Hamas and Hamas-affiliated candidates (Blanc 2006b:13), though these resulted in only 17 of the 66 PLC seats available for district candidates (own calculation, based on data from the Central Elections Commission – Palestine 2006a).
15. Journalist Chris McGreal reports on Hamas' campaign advert that opens with the word 'corruption'. 'It swiftly explodes into a ball of fire followed by a similar fate for nepotism, bribery and chaos. Only then come the pictures of Palestinian gunmen fighting Israeli forces in Jerusalem and Nablus, followed by scenes of wounded Palestinian children' (McGreal 2006:n.p.).
16. The full poster read:

    The best to hire is the one who is strong and honest.
    Change is to remove compulsion, reform is to remove poverty.
    Enough of having citizens suffer, yes to reform and change.
    Let's fight unemployment and poverty.
    We are with the side of poor, deprived and oppressed people.
    Home is dogma, we do not betray.
    You are entrusted with a voice, that you will be asked on Judgment Day.
    Favouritism is the base of corruption, it should be removed.
    Freeing prisoners is a religious duty and a national priority.
    Women's rights are essential in our beliefs and a part of our Shari'a (Muslim Law) (Beirutblues website).
17. The rise in concern about corruption was reflected in municipal elections. During the first three rounds of municipal elections, the public viewed corruption as only the third most important problem confronting Palestinians. During the fourth round, corruption had become the top concern, translating into increases in Hamas' vote (Shamir and Shikaki 2010:143).
18. West Bank campaign manager Abdel Raziq reflected on the effort: 'It was very difficult, very resource demanding, and unfortunately it exposed our people, our supporters, and now they are targeted by the Israelis and Palestinians'. (Abdel Raziq 2008).
19. Also documented in Gunning (2007:156).

20. For observations on Hamas' authoritarian conduct in Gaza post-2007, see for example International Crisis Group (2008d:10ff.), Brulliard (2012:n.p.), Sayigh (2011:106, 119ff.), Sayigh (2010), Brown (2012), Milton-Edwards (2008:1596) and Milton-Edwards (2013:62ff.).
21. 'Eight of the nineteen domestic policy commitments in its 2006 election manifesto concerned civil liberties' International Crisis Group (2008d:11); the election manifesto is available in Tamimi (2007: Appendix VI).
22. An International Crisis Group report details the impact of internal conflict over the Cairo and Doha agreements, ultimately leading to their failure (International Crisis Group 2012:18ff.)
23. For a more detailed analysis of the positioning of Hamas leaders with regard to reconciliation, see Milton-Edwards (2013:70ff.).
24. For a discussion of Hamas' conduct in setting up a legal system in Gaza, see Brown (2012:10ff.).

Chapter 3 Overarching influences on responsiveness: Fragmentation, rentierism and the role of civil society

1. Most analyses of contemporary Fatah discuss the question of internal fragmentation in some detail, see for example Parsons (2005: Ch. 6), International Crisis Group (2009a), Shikaki (2002), Milton-Edwards (2005), Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007), Roy (1994), Lindholm Schulz (2002), to name just a few.
2. I thank Jamil Rabah (Near East Consulting) for sharing his analysis of this unlikely strength of Fatah.
3. Jarbawi saw the 1996 parliamentary elections as a turning point for Fatah: 'Fatah's electoral success came at the expense of its coherence. Indeed, the election saw the final division of the movement into different centres of power' (Jarbawi 1996:35).
4. Andoni noted that Fatah's 'merger into the Palestinian Authority after the signing of the Oslo accords distorted its identity and function' (Andoni 2009).
5. Jarbawi (1996:31) suggested that the return of the exiled leadership brought about a qualitative transformation of the relationship with constituency, from an unsteady to a permanent relationship which raised greater expectations for the quality of this relationship with regard to democracy, rule of law and political process.
6. As Sara Roy (1994:87) wrote poignantly as early as 1994: 'Fatah is increasingly seen as a reactionary force promoting discord, not harmony. Disaffection, disorganization, and fracture within Fatah's ranks in Gaza are rife; there is great confusion as to who is in charge. Indeed, the internal breakdown of Fatah appears to be the dominant and defining dynamic in Gaza, one that seems to supersede even the traditional tensions between Fatah and Hamas.'
7. For example, during the second Intifada, Arafat adopted a permissive approach towards the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades activities in order to avert a direct challenge to his leadership. For a more detailed analysis of changes affecting Arafat's leadership and authority after

2000 see Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007:10).

8. For an early account of the rivalries between Fatah leaders in charge of various economic portfolios within the PA, see Brynen (1995a:37).
9. For an analysis of the internal differences regarding support or rejection of the Oslo Agreements and Fatah's liberation strategy, see Klein (2003b:198).
10. Lindholm Schulz has suggested the existence of two camps, those defending the growing authoritarianism as necessary for the time being, and those demanding democratic reform now. She argued that these differences have created 'a deep cleavage […] which cut across Palestinian political society, the core institutions of state-building and the Fatah movement' (Lindholm Schulz 2002:35).
11. Jamal (2005:27) points to the difficulty of integrating the 'outside' leadership, who were perceived as part of an authoritarian political culture and as seeking high-ranking positions within the PA at the expense of the local political elite. Their traditional, hierarchical leadership style (Shikaki 2002:95) contrasted with the more consultative leadership style of the 'young guard' whose middle-command activists introduced a more participatory, democratic, 'native' style of leadership (Lindholm Schulz 2002:33).
12. Parsons described the 'The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades phenomenon' as contributing to the 'localization of politics and the acute fragmentation of political authority in Palestine', a fragmentation of resistance that was 'one function of the new cartography drawn by Oslo' (Parsons 2005:268–69).
13. Sara Roy described the reversal of decision making back to external [returned] leaders: 'Aside from the resentments caused by the absence of local involvement in the decision-making process and the fact that the appointees are imposed by yet another external authority, it is the choice of appointees that has given rise to the greatest bitterness, even rage' (Roy 1994:86).
14. According to Roy (1994:90), armed gangs, even those related to Fatah, maintained only nominal factional connections and were characterized by an absence of nationalist concern. They contributed to Fatah's fragmentation by creating multiple localized centres. 'Those with guns, money, and followers' stood to gain from a political arena 'unregulated by charisma or law' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:17).
15. An International Crisis Group report described the Brigades as follows: 'The newly formed Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, which provided a loose umbrella for the movement's alienated militants, sprang to life as a result of internal competition between Fatah leaders, dissatisfaction with Oslo's slim yield and Fatah's worry that the Islamists were seizing the initiative' (International Crisis Group 2009a:2).
16. Lindholm Schulz (2002:33) discusses the perceptions of the young leadership, identified with the term 'struggle' (as opposed to the term 'revolution' as used by the outside leadership) which signified a more participatory, middle-command activist approach introducing a more democratic 'native' style. For an interesting analysis of the differences in political culture between the younger local leadership and returning leadership, see Lindholm Schulz (2002:33).
17. The website Jewish Virtual Library (n.p.) provides a selective collation of a number of Palestinian opinion poll results post-2000 that deals with questions of the acceptability of armed struggle. It includes data from a range of polling institutes, including the PSR, JMCC

and PCPO.

18. Initially, after the return of the exiled leadership, the newly formed PA institutions were dominated by those from the 'outside' who were in need of a role and position (Frisch 1997:352). However, Hilal observed the careful balancing between the insiders and outsiders in the appointments to the 1995 Cabinet and observed the 'substantial integration of the "returnee" with local political groups in the process of consolidating the new national authority' (Hilal 2002: reviewed in Tamari (2002):106).
19. Ziad Abu Zayyad, former Fatah member, Palestinian Authority minister and member of the 1996 Palestinian Legislative Council, expressed a view of the divisions within Fatah that is common both among current and disaffected Fatah members: 'There is a specific class of Palestinians who are benefiting from this situation. Whether benefiting from special treatment […], privileges as VIPs and as senior officials in the PA or personal benefits. These people don't want to lose these benefits and therefore they argue all the time for the necessity to keep the PA […] and to continue the struggle until we get the state. They will not get the state through the PA under the current circumstances! Mahmoud Abbas is part of that group. Everybody who is defending the existence of the PA and the need to maintain the PA is part of that group' (Abu Zayyad 2008).
20. Earlier PA leaders had done just that, creating strong power bases, specifically in the various economics portfolios and the security apparatus (Brynen 1995a:37), which led to rivalries and general dysfunction.
21. Jarbawi and Pearlman comment on Abbas' precarious position of finding himself at the helm of an organization that was 'at loggerheads with his own programme'. His need to wrest power from local strongmen put him in conflict with them. Despite being 'the last refuge of [Fatah's] access to money and formal power […] a sizable portion of the movement now made him the target of their wrath, blaming him for having held elections in the first place' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:18).
22. While being a part of the Central Committee himself, Abbas had often been in conflict with the body, specifically during his prime ministership under Arafat. He expressed his profound disappointment with the Central Committee, which culminated in his resignation from his post as Prime Minister and membership in Fatah's Central Committee. In his resignation speech of September 2003, he states: 'I submit my resignation from the Central Committee because this committee, which commissioned me, is the same party which is stabbing me from [sic] the back and I am not accusing all members of the committee' (Abbas 2003:n.p.).
23. For an overview of the factors leading up to Fatah's Sixth General Conference, see International Crisis Group (2009a:1–5).
24. Even Abbas' then-chief of staff of the President's office, Rafiq Husseini, suggested in an interview with the author: 'Fatah at the moment has no leadership to reckon with, there has to be a renewal of leadership' (Husseini 2009).
25. These are available from each organization, for example UNCTAD (2006), IMF (International Monetary Fund 2009), The World Bank (World Bank 2008), to name only a few relating to the period under consideration.
26. The conditionality of aid is undisputed, though the exact terms and conditions are interpreted variously. For example, Hofmann suggested 'that relying on inflow of external

resources is connected to conditionality, such as the Washington consensus, and limits the government's space of action' (Hofmann 2010:n.p.).

27. For a discussion on the Palestinian quest for international legitimacy see International Crisis Group (2010:17ff.)
28. For further analysis of such support, see for example USAID (2006), International Crisis Group (2006a:30–1), Sayigh (2007:14ff.) Rose (2008), Fishman (2006b), Johansen (2006:n.p.) and Agha and Malley (2007:n.p.).
29. Le More suggested that in the 1990s 'the fear was that worsening economic conditions would lead to the political radicalization of Palestinian society and a derailment of the peace process. In the early 2000s, the rationale for a doubling of donor funds has in essence been similar: to avoid a total collapse of the PA and the Palestinian economy, alleviate human suffering so as to ensure a minimum level of stability, and prevent more violence and a further degradation of the situation' (Le More 2005:992). For further analysis of the political conditionality of the 'peace rent', see also Brynen (1996).
30. Le More (2005:992) argued that the 1990s donors and diplomats 'were mainly concerned with establishing a strong power structure around Chairman Arafat capable of delivering security and a peace deal, while containing the Islamist opposition to the peace process'. For Abbas, whose domestic power base was regularly undermined by Arafat, 'meeting the demands of the external powers and winning their cooperation in the form of measures that would improve Palestinians' dire situation' helped him create his own power base (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:11).
31. This included Israeli participation in decision making to ensure Israeli interests are secured (JMCC 1997).
32. See for example the works of Abdul Karim and others (2010), Baumgarten (2010) and Jensen (2005). For the analysis of rentier characteristics in Arab states, see for example Beblawi (1987), Schwarz (2008), and Schlumberger (2006).
33. For the detailed calculations, using the PA's budget plans for 1996, see Beck (1997:645).
34. As long as rentier states can sustain high levels of welfare, they can be durable states, but in the absence of sufficient resources, both representation and welfare suffer, creating weak states (Schwarz 2008:599).
35. Schwarz argues that dissatisfaction over the non-delivery of the expected benefits from rentierism may lead to 'stagnation, political incrustation, and lack of economic reform' (Schwarz 2008:600). This appears to reflect the Fatah experience, though Salam Fayyad's reform programme since 2007, implemented *despite* Fatah's leadership, is lauded for its successes in reforming processes of financial transparency and other administrative reforms in the PA.
36. For example, discrimination against Hamas supporters in the area of public service hiring is widely acknowledged, specifically in the security sector and, to a lesser extent in the teaching profession (numerous personal interviews with both Fatah and Hamas supporters).
37. This was confirmed in an interview with an international consultant to the Ministry of Planning (Anon 2008c), who suggested that time pressures and predominance of international consultants in the five-year planning processes led to the exclusion of public consultation from the process and only arbitrary consideration of the input from ministries. A 2006 UNCTAD report highlighted the need for a 'well-defined national development

policy that reflects the aspirations of different strata of Palestinian society' (UNCTAD 2006:45) as a vision for a revised economic policy framework of the PA.

38. Abdel Shafi argued that 'A close look at most prominent NGOs shows that directors play a central role and have almost unlimited powers within their organizations. There is a clear process of "personalization" […]. Constituencies are not represented and are dealt with as "clients" or "beneficiaries" and not as partners or stakeholders. There is clearly a patronizing pattern in the relationship between NGOs and their constituencies' (Abdel Shafi 2004:12). For further analysis of the impact of rent-dependency on civil society organizations see Jensen (2005).
39. For a more detailed analysis, see under the sub-heading 'The Palestinian Quest for Leverage' (International Crisis Group 2010:17ff.).
40. Indeed, both Abbas and Arafat before him had invested heavily in a relationship with the US, 'believing that was a key to persuading or pressuring Israel' (International Crisis Group 2010:14).
41. The International Crisis Group noted, for example, that the Bush administration's 2007 stepping back from the diplomatic process was done 'largely in an effort to press the Palestinians to change their leadership' (International Crisis Group 2010:3).
42. Rabbani concurred with the demarcation of Abbas' role by US and Israeli expectations when noting: 'Nor would Abbas' line of credit in Washington be extended if he were to fend off internal challengers by altering his pragmatic rhetoric to appear to his own people as a stauncher defender of Palestinian aspirations, rather than as the best interlocutor with the US and Israel' (Rabbani 2005).
43. Blanc suggested that the international position demanding that elections be held in 2005 and 2006 was in part taken because 'the Fatah-led government did not reflect real power relationships in the PA and so was unable to deliver meaningful reform of PA institutions or improvements in security for Israel' (Blanc 2006a:n.p.).
44. Palestinian academic Sari Nuseibeh suggested: 'If Dayton decides, this is the time, they will have elections. Our politics is determined by Dayton and so on' (Nuseibeh 2009).
45. Under the Oslo and Cairo Accords, the Palestinian police are responsible for 'public order and the internal security of Palestinians' (Oslo Agreement, signed 13 September 1993). Usher (1996:32) uses the term 'securitization' to describe the impact of the Oslo-induced militarization process on Palestinian society post-Oslo. Milton-Edwards' use of the term 'militarism' in this context refers to the 'current proclivity in the PNA for military methods, aggressive patriotism and a reliance on the gun for public order and internal security', which in her view point to 'the maintenance of militarism over liberalization' (Milton-Edwards 1998:99–100). For analysis of its continuing prioritization and mandate to protect Israeli security, until 2005 see Parsons (2005:151ff.)
46. For an analysis of the donor responsibility for funding the establishment, training, hardware and running costs of the Palestinian security organizations, including their impact on security sector reform, see for example Lia (2004), Friedrich (2004) and Milton-Edwards (1998:112).
47. For detailed analysis of the security framework and its implementation, see for example Usher's 1996 analysis of security within the Oslo framework and its political impact (Usher 1996). For an assessment of the security sector and needs for reform, see for example Jones

and Riley (2004). Milton-Edwards (1998) examines implications of a prioritization of security organization for state-building and state-society relations, while Luft (2004) considers the role of the security apparatus as a tool for achieving political aspirations by maintaining the option of violence against Israel.

48. A respected Palestinian independent analyst expressed this sentiment powerfully with regard to the inauguration ceremony for Palestinian Security Force deployment in Nablus in 2008: '[Abbas] reached security agreement with [US generals] Dayton, Fraser, Jones and [Quartet Envoy] Blair and arranged with the Israelis to bring these young trained soldiers to enforce security in Nablus. So he goes on the first day, with the American consul and Blair, addressing the community. In the public meeting in Nablus he told them "you will enjoy security". Everyone closed their eyes to the American presence, closed their eyes to Blair's presence, and said: "we will accept". I went to Nablus, all the militia ran away to hide […] and it was beautiful and the polling said "we are witnessing the rise of a leader". In the evening, Israeli forces entered the city, arrested the people, closed institutions, kidnapped and I don't know what. Everybody said: "He [Abbas] is a collaborator". On the third day, people like me said "we are witnessing an Iraqi episode: American Agenda, American security personnel, and we are the tools in their hands, and this man is a collaborator. He lost it. But the polling results were nice for him [attesting to an increased sense of law and order]. Why did he do it? Because he wants to make sure he will survive this mission"' (Anon 2008j).

49. Public opinion polls have tracked public support for various strategies towards achieving a clearly supported two-state solution (PSR 2008a) over the years. Poll data for the period under investigation here showed that in an April 2008 JMCC poll 78.8 per cent of respondents supported the ongoing negotiations if Israel continued expanding settlements. The same polls revealed that only 26.9 per cent expect that Mahmoud Abbas would execute his threat of negotiations suspension if Israel continued expanding settlements, while 66 per cent expected he would not (JMCC 2008). On the question of a strategy of armed resistance alongside negotiations, JMCC's February 2006 poll showed only 38.8 per cent of respondents believed in a 'negotiations only' approach to achieving Palestinian national goals, while 17.9 per cent and 40.3 per cent respectively believed in either armed struggle or a combination of negotiations and armed struggle to achieve these goals (JMCC 2006).

50. A June–July 2009 poll, conducted by NEC, showed that 92 per cent agreed with Abbas' decision to stop the negotiations with Israel as long as settlement building continues (NEC 2009b).

51. Public expression such as the one reported by Reuters are common: "'We have no hope. Netanyahu will not give a thing, not in a year, not in years,' said Jamal Khamis, a metal foundry worker in Gaza. "Abu Mazen was forced to agree and therefore the talks will never succeed," added the 42-year-old. Zakaria Al-Qaq, a political commentator, said: "What he has opted for is the option of a crippled, helpless politician […]. Peace process? What peace process? That's so nineties. After 18 years, don't they feel silly?" he said' (Reuters 2010:n.p.).

52. For example, a June 2008 PSR poll showed 68.4 per cent of respondents believed that negotiations between Abbas and Olmert were not beneficial and should be stopped (as opposed to 27 per cent who felt the opposite) (PSR 2008a).

53. An illustration of such a cost is the damage to Abbas' standing following his meeting with

Netanyahu under US pressure in October 2009, having had to abandon his condition of a prior settlement freeze. Khatib suggested that the combination of this, and the Goldstone report postponement, 'damaged the domestic standing of the leadership and offset any hard-won improvement in that standing, following the Fatah conference, the convening of the PLO's National Council and improvements to the economy and in the field of law and order achieved by the government' (Khatib 2009a:n.p.).

54. This also included political party reform support (USAID 2006). While not all training was exclusive to Fatah, the explicit exclusion of Hamas in US governance and electoral support programmes made Fatah the main beneficiaries of the programme (International Crisis Group 2006a:30–31).

55. For an analysis of US support for 'regime change', reversing the 2006 election outcome, see for example Sayigh (2007:14ff.), the exposé of the Gaza Takeover plans in *Vanity Fair* by Rose (2008), as well as Fishman (2006b) on 'Funding Alternatives to Hamas', among others.

56. On the threats to boycott a Hamas government and discontinue its funding of public service and development projects, made prior to the 2006 elections, and a statement by EU envoy Javier Solana to this effect, see International Crisis Group (2006a:31). Indeed, the result of pro-Fatah rhetoric has often been contrary to intended outcomes. As Johansen suggested: 'With an extremely one-sided rhetoric by the US, Israeli and European politicians and media regarding Hamas, nobody should be surprised by the growing support for them. The fact that Hamas obviously was the group Israel and the US feared automatically made them heroes among many Palestinians' (Johansen 2006:n.p.). Similarly, Agha and Malley noted: 'One of the goals of the US and Israel may be to bolster Abbas, yet nothing has weakened the Palestinian president more than misplaced international attempts to strengthen him' (Agha and Malley 2007:n.p.).

57. US rejection of reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas was based on the US administration's strategic understanding as well as on legal considerations prohibiting assistance to a proscribed terrorist organization (International Crisis Group 2009a:27 fn. 189). Israeli rejection of reconciliation is similarly pronounced. Milton-Edwards suggests that within the Israeli leadership, too, there are those that 'view any increased Palestinian cohesiveness as detrimental to Israeli interests by virtue of presenting Israel with a united and more assertive Palestinian negotiating posture' (Milton-Edwards 2005:252).

58. Chief among these is the possible end to PA funding. International Crisis Group suggested that 'were Hamas to participate in the official Palestinian leadership, international paths would be obstructed, resources for state-building would dry up and popular struggle potentially would become more explosive' (International Crisis Group 2010:17).

59. However, not all would agree with this assessment. Fatah leader and head of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Lu'ay Sha'ban, suggests that 'for me the political division, the split between Hamas and Fatah […] is not Palestinian-made, it is European, US and Israeli-made. If they had accepted Hamas [post-election] we would not have reached this situation. I am from Fatah and I tell you it was a real fault of the Americans and Europeans not to accept the outcome of the elections. And there is no plan b, therefore they squeezed all of us in a corner and now they are telling us "look if you don't reconcile we can't talk about peace"! All of us were victims, Fatah and Hamas together' (Sha'ban 2008).

60. Amayreh suggested that 'the public does not blame the movements solely for [lack of

reconciliation], they would blame foreign factors. For example, some people would blame Israel and the US and Egypt for Fatah's refusal to accommodate Hamas […] within the context of the Palestinian political system. Fatah could not do certain things, even if it wanted to, because of overwhelming pressure by Israel, the US and some other countries. [The same is true], but to a lesser extent, for Hamas' (Amayreh 2009b).

61. Giacaman described a 'battle for perceptions' over the issue, in which all sides 'must appear not to reject reconciliation' (Giacaman 2008).
62. A US veto on the release of Hamas prisoners, considered by Hamas to be an essential precondition for a resumption of reconciliation talks, may have provided the President with a not entirely unwelcome barrier to reconciliation talks. While the crackdown on Hamas has been unpopular domestically, it has provided the PA with the ability to show that it 'is fulfilling its obligations under the roadmap to "fight terror"' (Abu Nimah 2009:n.p.), while at the same time containing the threat of Hamas influence in the West Bank.
63. For a sample of literature on the role of civil society in democratization processes in various countries, see Yom (2005:n.p.). For a review of the arguments, see for example Diamond (1994).
64. For a review of the literature on Palestinian civil society organizations see Hilal (2010).
65. Reports of the exact amount of funding received by NGOs pre- and post-Oslo vary. The World Bank reports a drop from US$120–180 million in the early 1990s annually, to about US$52 million by 1999 (World Bank 2002:55).
66. A poll on public perception of the work on NGOs, conducted by the Coalition for Accountability & Integrity – AMAN, showed that 38 per cent believed NGO projects were not responsive to the needs and priorities of Palestinian society, with 32 per cent crediting NGOs with a low rate of responsiveness, 20 per cent with moderate responsiveness and 5 per cent with high responsiveness. Similarly, the highest percentage of respondents (36 per cent) felt that foreign donors were responsible for deciding upon programmes, as opposed to 21 per cent who believed that programmes were driven by the needs of their target groups. (Nazaha 2006).
67. For a discussion of the definition of civil society and the inclusion of faith-based organizations under this term, see (Hilal 2010:n.p.).

Chapter 4 Legitimation and responsiveness in Palestinian politics

1. For a discussion of the importance of 'public' action, as opposed to the effect of the silent majority, see Beetham (1991:90ff.).
2. Even in the age of the 'rent-a-crowd', Beetham argues that a distinctive legitimacy is conferred by the show of popular support and mass mobilization.
3. For example, a March 2009 poll conducted by NEC showed trust in Barghouthi as exceeding trust in Abbas (56 per cent versus 44 per cent), though support for Abbas is stronger amongst members of Fatah (NEC 2009a). A PSR poll conducted prior to the January 2005 Palestinian presidential elections showed Abbas and Marwan Barghouthi in a

close race with 40 per cent for the former and 38 per cent for the latter as candidates. The same poll showed a majority of respondents expressing a preference for Barghouthi as head of Fatah over Abbas (PSR 2004).

4. Recognizing the mobilizational potential and real achievements of non-violent resistance activities, Fatah's 2006 programme embraces as a variety of methods for struggle and resistance, in particular non-violent forms of struggle and popular mobilization, see the Political Platform of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement Fatah (2009) in Bröning (2011: Appendix 2, 204ff.).
5. However, Bowker noted that, specifically among refugee populations, awareness of official PLO slogans or clauses of the Palestinian National Covenant was minimal (Bowker 2003:48).
6. For more detailed analysis of the changes throughout the course of the Intifada and the role of the PLO in regaining control over local leadership initiative, see for example Bowker (2003:46–50), Sayigh (1997b:632–7), Robinson (1997:Ch. 5) and Schiff and Ya'ari (1989: Ch. 7).
7. Expectations regarding the success of negotiations were naturally low after 16 years of negotiations.
8. The International Crisis Group reported 'The Palestinian population today is characterized by the West Bank idiom "*zhiqna*" (we're fed up), which carries the implication of political weariness bordering on apathy' (International Crisis Group 2009a:26).
9. The Israeli response, both in the 2002 invasion of West Bank cities and in the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict had illustrated to Palestinians the potentially high cost that can be anticipated from acts of resistance.
10. Participation in the 1996 elections was 71.66 per cent according the Central Elections Commission (1996).
11. An example are Fatah primaries, held prior to the 2006 elections which, when their results were ignored during candidate selection, led to the formation of the independent *Future* list headed by Marwan Barghouthi (International Crisis Group 2009b:3).
12. Seven candidates competed. Notably, Hamas did not field a candidate. The candidate who came second to Abbas, the independent Mustapha Barghouthi, received 19.5 per cent of the vote (Central Elections Commission – Palestine 2006a).
13. Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007) qualify the commitment to democratic rule by arguing that Abbas' resort to elections was a result of his unsuccessful search for alliances outside of Fatah. He had hoped, they suggested, that a new parliament would strengthen his hand. Others, however, confirm his sincere commitment to the democratic process and see his holding elections against the will of many within his party as evidence of such commitment (Husseini 2009; Saidam 2010).
14. For the legal arguments see www.palestinianbasiclaw.org. Prior to the expiry date, Hamas had publicly denied continued legality beyond the four-year term and had run a publicity-effective countdown of the remaining days of his presidency. Hamas subsequently softened its attack on presidential legitimacy after January 2009, in effect acknowledging Abbas as the legitimate President after that date (International Crisis Group 2009b:32 fn. 314) by agreeing to hold elections in 2010. While the President's office has denied a legal basis for a challenge to Abbas' legitimacy, there was sufficient concern about the issue to press Arab

and other countries to endorse his extended mandate publicly (International Crisis Group 2008a:3). Rather than a manifestly legal dispute, it has been argued that the controversy is of a political nature, with both sides relying on interpretations of relevant laws that manipulate the intentions of the law (PCHR 2009).

15. Husseini (2009) explained in an interview held the day after the 2009 expiry date that the President's office had been 'shocked' by the results of the PSR poll, but had decided, on further analysis, that the results were not trustworthy. Instead, the chief of staff noted that the President's office regarded general support for Fatah (which he suggested was consistently in the 40th percentile and above, according to a range of unspecified opinion polls) as a better indicator for public perceptions of the legitimacy of the President after January 2009.
16. The most consequential of these may be the failure of negotiations to bring about visible improvement in Palestinians' lives, in addition to the failure to bring about the envisaged state and independence. Other challenges included electoral defeat in 2006 and during municipal elections in 2004–5, loss of Fatah authority over Gaza and the establishment of two governments (West Bank and Gaza Strip), continuing fragmentation of his own party, an Israeli assault against the Gaza Strip in which Fatah was relegated to being an impotent onlooker, and a number of crises arising from specific decisions and policies that put him at odds with public opinion and opinion within his own party.
17. According to a 2007 JMCC poll, Al Jazeera was the most watched television channel by Palestinians (JMCC 2007).
18. Visibly upset by the topic of Al Jazeera, the chief of staff of the President's office commented: 'We are at war with Al Jazeera' (Husseini 2009).
19. A number of Gaza delegates were unable to attend because of Hamas' refusal to allow them passage out of the Gaza Strip (International Crisis Group 2009a:11).
20. Four out of 19 Central Committee members were from Gaza, none resided there at the time. Sixteen out of 80 Revolutionary Council members were from Gaza, only two resided in the Strip (International Crisis Group 2009a:16).
21. Balancing support for their leader, seen as crucial in order to strengthen the movement before eventual election in future, while also paying attention to the strong public condemnation of Abbas move, the new Central Committee's response was clearly critical, but not loud. Members expressed disagreement on an individual, rather than official level, in spite of Abbas neglecting to consult the newly empowered committee members prior to his decision to call for a postponement. This prompted the Committee to subsequently take an informal decision that *it* must be the 'source of authority' for the President's decisions (Central Committee member, International Crisis Group 2009a:123 fn. 58), a step indicating the willingness to assert greater authority *vis-à-vis* the President in the future, even though the decision was taken in the President's absence.

Chapter 5 Leadership styles and responsiveness

1. Jarbawi and Pearlman also use the default terminology in relation to Abbas when recounting the decision made by Fatah power-brokers that 'Abbas was the default figure to

represent their movement' (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:12).

2. Barghouthi submitted his candidature and was tipped to be running a close race with Abbas (Karon 2004:n.p.), but withdrew his candidacy on 19 December 2004 under intense pressure from within Fatah's leadership.
3. For a summary of the challenges facing Abbas in light of a range of policy failures, see also Alashqar (2010:n.p.).
4. A 2008 World Bank report stated: 'In the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian economy was expected to enter a period of sustained and rapid growth. Instead, after a few years of growth, starting in 2000, the economy has been in steady decline, with overall GDP and per capita GDP respectively down 14 per cent and 40 per cent from their peak in 1999, and poverty on the increase. Meanwhile foreign aid has succeeded in doing little more than slowing down the deterioration of the economy, despite ever larger volumes' (World Bank 2008).
5. Public annoyance with the small-scale daily abuse of privilege is expressed widely and reflected in, for example, the Ma'an News Agency article entitled 'PA Favouritism Irks Travellers, Officers at Allenby Crossing' (Ma'an News Agency 2009c:n.p.).
6. This view is expressed for example by Baroud with reference to Abbas and Sha'ath, noting that 'the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah will continue to adhere to its methodology: don't criticize Israel too harshly, so as not to lose favour; follow the US dictates, so as to maintain a "moderate" status and many privileges' (Baroud 2010).
7. One such account was presented in a PLC Special Committee report in 1997. For a later report, see also (AMAN 2010).
8. In contrast, Weber (1968) elevated the charismatic characteristics of leaders into a type of legitimacy.
9. For a more detailed discussion see Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007:8ff.).
10. Nimr Hammad, presidential advisor, said in a much publicized statement: 'The one responsible for the massacre is Hamas, and not the Zionist entity, which in its own view reacted to the firing of Palestinian missiles' (Hammad, quoted in Lieber 2009:n.p.).
11. This public sentiment was expressed by Rabbani in the aftermath of the Gaza assault, when he described Abbas as 'comprehensively out of touch with his own people, as if deliberately so, and dealing with the Gaza Strip as if it is a foreign country he has never heard of' (Rabbani 2009b:n.p.).
12. Although the high participation rate in the 1996 PLC elections provided a strong mandate for this new representative body, the boycott of the Islamic Bloc weakened its representational function.
13. In Abbas' view, 'his capacity to deliver meaningful change was the only means of bolstering his credibility'. This required him to win the cooperation required to deliver the goods and pressures that would improve Palestinians' living conditions (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007:11).
14. But contrary to Abbas, Fayyad has in fact pursued a strategy that has provided him with maximum personal exposure to the public, illustrated by frequent field visits, face-to-face meetings with local committees and the very publicity-effective management of the *1001 projects* initiative (Anon 2009c).

15. Abbas had threatened to resign, or not to stand for re-election, both for positions he holds within Fatah and in the PA numerous times. He did indeed resign from his position as prime minister in 2003. All other threats have been made without follow-up thus far (International Crisis Group 2010:10; Abbas 2003:n.p.).
16. He was indeed elected to, and accepted, the PLO election as 'President of the State of Palestine' subsequent to the above-mentioned meeting.
17. 'The machinery of government, loosely defined, is more responsive to a popular leader than to an unpopular leader' (Geer 1996:28). This makes intuitive sense, though the theoretical argument developed in Western literature refers to increased presidential influence in relation to legislative bodies, a relationship which is non-functioning in Palestine at present.
18. Abbas' decision, commented on by the chief editor of *Al-Quds al Arabi* as 'the first time, the Palestinian leaders submitted to the pressure of Palestinian public opinion, and Arab public opinion' (Atwan 2009), resulted in Fatah adopting a clear strategy of successfully distancing itself from him, reflected in a slump in presidential approval ratings while Fatah's approval remained constant (JMCC 2009).
19. Fayyad is appointed as the caretaker prime minister by presidential decree, rather than PLC sanction (International Crisis Group 2008b:1).
20. A list of all presidential decrees issued between June 2007 and June 2008 is found on the website of Palestinianbasiclaw.org.

Chapter 6 Polling, responsiveness and leadership crisis

1. Manza, Lomez, Cook and Page (2002,3ff.) provided an excellent overview of the evolution of polling, the broad range of poll uses and their implications in 'Navigating Public Opinion – An Introduction'.
2. The overview summarizes what various authors have observed in the context of specific countries, in particular Pollock (1992), Romero (2004), Geer (1996), Puryear (1994), Kwiatkowski (1992), Nelson (1995), Miller and Hesli (1993), Taylor (2002), Singer and Scotto (2004), Roberts and Kim (2007), Tessler and Nachtwey (1999), Tessler et al. (1987), Tessler and Jamal (2006), Shamir and Shikaki (2005), and Shamir (2007).
3. Although polls failed to predict Hamas' election victory, most polls predicted a close race, with Hamas winning a substantial number of seats.
4. Tessler has been directly involved in the Palestinian polling sector, providing training and cooperating with the PSR, one of the first Palestinian polling institutes.
5. Tessler refers specifically to the work of PSR here.
6. I thank Nader Said for sharing his insights into the comparative analysis of polling environments in the Arab world.
7. A number of irregular polls were conducted prior to the onset of regular polling. For an overview of these and analysis of results see Moughrabi (1987).
8. Only during polls prior to the establishment of regular polling have there been reports of obstruction of polling by Israeli military authorities, including confiscation of data and arrest of field workers (Moughrabi 1987).

9. The directors of the three commercial polling organizations, AWRAD, NEC and Alpha all worked in one of the two founding organizations of Palestinian polling, the JMCC and PSR, before setting up commercial polling organizations (Rabah 2008; Said 2008; Awartani 2008).
10. The criticism, voiced within the Western discourse, points to the limitations of polling as reflection of public opinion when respondents provide 'off the cuff' answers to questions they have not previously contemplated (Stimson 2004:15ff.); see also Althaus (2003). In the Palestinian context, this issue is less of a concern. The generally high salience of polled questions and high levels of politicization of the public ensure that most polled issues have been contemplated and discussed by survey respondents prior to being voiced during the conduct of a survey.
11. Summary based on a review and broad categorization of political questions posed by the main polling organizations PSR, JMCC, NEC, AWRAD and Alpha.
12. Interviews with Khatib (2008), Rabah (2008) and Shikaki (2008).
13. A more detailed discussion of the range of reasons for the misprediction is provided by Pollock (2008:46).
14. For a discussion of the issue see Baumgarten (2006b:38–39).
15. The Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights, established by Yasser Arafat in 1993 and reporting to the President and the Legislative Council, regularly reports on these abuses.
16. Nader Said explained: '[We have] learnt our lesson in the last elections. If Hamas and Fatah are head to head, Hamas gets seven more points' (Said 2009).
17. NEC's press summary for its February 2010 poll stated: 'Again, while the majority said that they trust Fatah most, the analysis of NEC's monthly surveys directs to the conclusion that a distinctive part of those who trust no faction are closer to Hamas ideologically, an issue which renders Hamas significantly stronger than it appears' (NEC 2010b).
18. Polls regularly showed that the public apportioned partial blame for internal Palestinian problems to factors outside of the control of the Palestinian leadership, specifically to Israeli occupation. For example, NEC's analysis states: 'As for their general outlook, the majority (88 per cent) feel concerned about the current situation in the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territories], and 32 per cent attributed their concern to the economic hardship, 26 per cent to the Israeli occupation, 21 per cent to the internal Palestinian dispute, 9 per cent to the lack of security and safety, and 3 per cent to family problems' (NEC 2010b).
19. The theory of Nölle-Neumann's (1989) 'Spiral of Silence' is based on the premise that a fear of isolation may lead to under-representation of a majority view that is perceived as minority opinion.
20. In spite of expressed denial of interest in personal approval ratings by leaders such as Mahmoud Abbas – commonplace among politicians the world over – anecdotal evidence suggests that popularity ratings have some direct impact. Then Deputy Finance Minister Jihad Wazir, referring to higher approval ratings for Salam Fayyad (as Finance Minister) than for Abbas (as Prime Minister), noted: 'It makes life harder for people, showing the Minister of Finance [as] more popular than the Prime Minister, it wasn't easy what these polls have led to in terms of internal politics; what work and appeals of government can continue to operate under those circumstances' (Wazir 2009).

21. There has been consistent support for a peace agreement with Israel throughout the past decade. Poll results indicate that Palestinians support that Hamas change its position on the existence of Israel, a position that has already been implicitly altered, as indicated by various Hamas leaders over the past years. Most polls provide information on public support for various peace options, with a majority of Palestinians consistently favouring a negotiated settlement over a return to violent conflict. For an older analysis, see for example Shikaki (2006b:5ff.), or NEC's December-January 2010 Bulletin (NEC 2010a:26).
22. For example, a PSR poll asked the question: 'Palestinian security services say that they are arresting persons who carry out bombing attacks inside Israel. Do you support or oppose these arrests?' The results showed 86.3 per cent of respondents opposed or strongly opposed (PSR 2002).
23. Accurate reflection of the size of opposition support depends naturally on the confidence of opposition supporters to state their political views before survey researchers. There is some indication that such willingness has been on the decline. At the same time, other statements of political preferences may be less affected by disinclination to explicitly state support for opposition parties, and may as such continue to reflect public opinion.
24. For an insightful article on the effect of restrictions on either movement respectively, see Perry (2010).
25. An explanation for the influence of public opinion on decision makers is provided by social psychology, which sees 'actors, at least in part, form their preferences and their expectations by surveying the cues in the discursive environment about how many others support a position, the costs of supporting that position, and the identity of those supporting each position' (Schüssler (2000), quoted in Lynch 2006:71).

Chapter 7 Polling – opportunities and risks

1. A similar analysis regarding the response of Hamas' leadership would be of merit, but lies outside the scope of this research, focused primarily on the role of responsiveness in the analysis of Fatah's leadership crisis.
2. A public letter demanding reconciliation, signed by prominent Palestinians in 2009, stated: 'The political and geographic split is catastrophic to the Palestinian cause' (Ma'an News Agency 2009b:n.p.).
3. The bipartisan 'One Million Signatures Campaign' was kicked off in Nablus with a mosque meeting in late 2008 likening the Palestinian situation to the pacification of warring tribes by the Prophet Muhammad.
4. For an insightful analysis of the incentives for Hamas in the reconciliation option, see Brown (2009b:n.p.).
5. Reform and restructure of the PLO to include Hamas and Islamic Jihad was one of the preconditions for Hamas' signing the 2007 Mecca Agreement. For text and analysis of the agreement, see DCAF (2009).
6. After the end of the official term of the PLC in January 2010, designs for a unity government were dropped from reconciliation proposals and replaced by suggestions for a committee to oversee preparations for national elections without wider political powers.

However, the proposals continued to require the restructuring of the security forces and the PLO, issues that would require Fatah to concede its sole control in these areas.

7. The international donor community rejected the National Unity Government (NUG) and threatened to re-impose a boycott it had imposed on both the Hamas and National Unity governments after 2006. For Fatah, a boycott of donors was seen as depriving the movement of the economic and institutional development that it hoped would provide it with an advantage in future elections. Any economic development in the West Bank depended on a degree of mobility. As a result of increased PA security cooperation with Israel, Israel had gradually begun to implement a partial easing of internal mobility restrictions in 2008 in the West Bank. These measures, predicated upon levels of security cooperation, would likely be reversed in the event of a return to a Unity Government.
8. For an analysis of the US rationale regarding power-sharing with Hamas, see International Crisis Group (2009a:27).
9. The Bush administration boycotted the NUG of 2007, insisting that Hamas accept the Quartet's conditions recognizing Israel and past agreements. US policy towards engagement with Hamas under Obama has shifted little from the position of its predecessor. It is similarly based on the isolation of Hamas, and support for Fatah in the West Bank. The lesson, that deepening division – facilitated by US policy – does not lead to a solution to the intractable problems, has not been learned (Brown 2009a:n.p.).
10. Their release had been made a precondition to signing of any reconciliation agreement by Hamas.
11. This understanding of US veto on the release of Hamas prisoners is corroborated by an international security consultant to the PA (Anon 2009h).
12. For example, a December 2009 PSR poll shows that 61 per cent of the public believe that Fatah and Hamas together are responsible for the continuation of the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; 17 per cent believe that Hamas is responsible for the split and 12 per cent believe Fatah is responsible (PSR 2009).
13. A Fatah member working in a Fatah-affiliated office explains: 'Even in our office, we blame Hamas and Fatah equally. […] a few leaders of Fatah and a few of Hamas are hijacking both movements for their own interest. […] Some people in Fatah don't want any kind of reconciliation, their interests are [served] much better in this way; some people in Hamas [similarly], they [are having] a unique experience in Gaza, and want to go all the way with this experience' (Anon 2008e).
14. 'The problem is not with Fatah, it is with the leadership, *Sultat Ramallah* [the Ramallah Authority], *Hukumat Ramallah* [the Ramallah government], *Muqata'at Ramallah* [the Ramallah presidential compound]. Fatah say it is the time to unify and fight together with Hamas; this is what Qaddura was saying, and even Dahlan. He called upon Hamas to release the Fatah prisoners and to give them arms to fight side by side with Hamas [during the 2008–9 Israel–Gaza conflict]' (Abu Zayyad 2008).
15. 'The central leadership wants talks, but the popular leadership doesn't want because young people witnessed Fatah people being slaughtered in the streets of Gaza. Before the dialogue they ask for prosecution of those people who committed these actions, then the dialogue' (Anon 2009f).
16. Presidential advisor Sabri Saidam compared the mainly secular and the Islamic civil society

sectors: '[The "one-man-show" political reality has] infected civil society; lefties are owners of big homes, and queue up upstairs [at the President's office] to get cars and body guards. There is only one civil society, and that is Hamas. The private sector is after its own interest. Everyone is standing on a different island. Civil Society is always preaching, but [it's a] shop of convenience' (Saidam 2008).

17. An example of this was the pronouncements of united support by all parties during a 2010 unity conference in Gaza (Ma'an News Agency 2010:n.p.).
18. Said was not the only pollster approached by Fatah. Two other pollsters report having formally or informally advised Fatah on questions of internal reform.
19. In Georgia, polls contributed to the combating of election fraud in the 2003 elections, and similarly in the Ukraine in 2004 (Freeman et al. 2006:n.p.).
20. The US and the EU applied pressure on Israel to remove the last obstacles to elections, restrictions on voting in Jerusalem, in order to allow elections to go ahead (International Crisis Group 2006a:15).
21. For an analysis of the US interest in seeing Middle Eastern elections, see Ottaway (2010), also (International Crisis Group 2006a:10). Reasons include the conviction that 'nothing will improve with delays' (International Crisis Group 2006a:30).
22. Reference is made to a report by the US Department of State (2005:1 (asterisked note)) one week prior to elections which in turn refers to a JMCC survey of 13–15 January (denied by JMCC director Khatib), forecasting Fatah winning with only a two-seat majority over Hamas.
23. For example, NEC has begun surveying perceptions of factional cohesion as an additional indicator of electoral advantage. Similarly, most polling institutes have developed a number of questions that enable pollsters to more accurately analyse the factional sympathies of the 'undecided' and 'don't trust anyone' voter.
24. The data from polls conducted as part of the campaign are published in Ishtayyeh (2007).
25. See the organizational chart for the campaign office in Ishtayyeh (2007:259).

Postscript and outlook

1. Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in (United Nations News Centre 2014:n.p.).
2. Comprising Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait.
3. A more comprehensive analysis of Hamas' conduct in government, in particular in relation to responsive leadership conduct, is merited but is outside the scope of this book. Existing analysis of Hamas' time in government has focused primarily on its economic and administrative performance (ICG 2009b, 2012; Sayigh 2010), its conduct *vis-à-vis* civil society (Roy 2011; Milton-Edwards 2013:62) and the degree to which it sought to impose Islamic principles through its governance (see e.g. Bröning (2011:38ff.)).
4. In January 2014, a leaked Palestinian security assessment predicted an third uprising if peace talks failed (Yaakov 2014:n.p.). Media speculation of an uprising increased following

unrest in Jerusalem in 2014.

5. FAFO survey, quoted in Christopherson and Alayasa (2014:n.p.).
6. Cairo Agreement May 2011, Doha Agreement 2012. The main tenets of all reconciliation agreements have been the creation of a unity government, elections, PA control over the Gaza Strip and its border crossing, and mutual respect for political rights and freedoms, among others.
7. Achievements listed by the American Taskforce on Palestine included 'probably the most transparent public finance system in the Arab World', reform of the security forces, restoration of law and order and reduction of crime rates, the wide-ranging community development programme that included the building of schools and hospitals (American Taskforce on Palestine 2013a: n.p.). Assessment of the PA's West Bank programme is described in more detail by the American Taskforce on Palestine (2013b:n.p.). A more critical evaluation of the lack of accountability in PA institutions and the erosion of earlier gains in institution-building and good governance is expressed in the European Commission's 2014 evaluation of its cooperation with Palestine from 2008 to 2013 (European Commission 2014:100ff.).
8. Deputy Secretary General of the Revolutionary Council Sabri Saidam outlined a three-step approach agreed at Fatah's 2009 conference: 'seeking a vote in the Security Council; if the United States vetoes […] join all UN agencies, including the Rome Statutes regarding the International Criminal Court; and then, […] declaring the end of security coordination with the occupiers' (Kuttab 2014c:n.p.).
9. For example, a June 2014 PSR poll conducted following the suspension of negotiations and the signing of the reconciliation agreement shows 42 per cent of the population believing that Hamas' way is the best way to end occupation and establish a state, only 39 per cent still believe Abbas' way is the best way (PSR 2014a:n.p.).
10. Shikaki notes that 'the reconciliation government cannot be expected to perform effectively in the security sector and succeed in imposing the "one authority, one gun" reconciliation term (thus delivering on Gaza demilitarization) in the near future. Only if elections are held, and he wins, will Abbas be in a position to tackle this issue seriously' (Shikaki and Feldman 2014:n.p.).
11. As was the case in 2006, when it was reported that Hamas called on its members not to reveal their voting intentions.
12. For examples of an increasingly bellicose rhetoric from potential contenders for Abbas' succession in the run-up to Fatah's Seventh General Conference, see Issacharoff (2014:n.p.).
13. Though others have interpreted Abbas' post-negotiations rhetoric as a sign of desperation. Palestinian analyst Diana Butto noted: 'He has nothing to hang his hat on any longer. He is making more forceful statements because he knows that public opinion toward him and his party is at an all-time low' (quoted in Laub and Daraghmeh 2014:n.p.).
14. In the absence of a functioning legislative council, Abbas appointed positions within the West Bank PA. He also increased his economic influence by appointments to the board of directors of the powerful Palestine Investment Fund 'in contradiction to the original operating policies' (Prince 2014:6).
15. Judicial affairs expert Majed Arruri noted that 'the appointment of the current and previous

heads of the Higher Judicial Council shows a clear violation of the Basic Law' (Kuttab 2014a:n.p.).

16. Judicial affairs expert Majed Arruri, quoted in Kuttab (2014a:n.p.).
17. For a detailed analysis of non-violent resistance, see Bröning (2011: Ch. 5, 132ff.).
18. According to a 2013 JMCC opinion poll, 83.8 per cent of respondents support non-violent means of resistance and 78.9 per cent think such efforts should be intensified (JMCC 2013: n.p.).
19. For background on this conflict, see for example Abu Amer (2014a) or Jaraba and Ben Shitrit (2014).
20. In 2014, the PA and Dahlan competed with each other to finance a mass wedding and present start-up gifts to the newly married couples (Abu Toameh 2014:n.p.).
21. For an analysis of the impact of the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood on Hamas' position, see International Crisis Group (2014:9ff.).
22. Support for participation was expressed, for example, by Hamas political bureau member Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, (Fouad 2014) and Musa Abu Marzouk, deputy chair of the political bureau, who explained: 'Hamas has decided to participate in all political and union elections but did not decide on participating in the presidential elections, but we are most likely to participate' (Abu Marzouk, interviewed by Middle East Monitor 2014). In light of the likelihood of an international boycott, Hamas may also consider running as part of a combined list with Fatah or other organizations, according to Ahmad Yousef, advisor to the former prime minister in Gaza Ismail Haniyeh (Alakhbar English 2014).
23. In addition to the Israeli embargo on imports and the movement of goods and people, Egyptian authorities have repeatedly clamped down on the trade through tunnels, for example in 2010 in implementation of the ceasefire conditions following the 2008–9 war (Pelham 2012:13–14) and again, with devastating effect on the Gaza economy, since the ouster of President Morsi in 2013 (see EU Heads of Missions 2014:n.p.).
24. By the end of 2013, Milton-Edwards observes that 'the limits on freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and other rights and social freedoms, including issues of gender segregation, hairstyle and the role of human rights organizations, were increasingly being curtailed by the Hamas authorities' (Milton-Edwards 2013:63).
25. Analysis of the PSR's postwar poll suggests: 'Gaza War ends with a victory for Hamas leading to a great increase in its popularity and the popularity of its approach of armed resistance: for the first time since 2006, Hamas wins parliamentary and presidential elections if they were to take place today while West Bankers support transferring Hamas' approach to the West Bank' (PSR 2014b). An anonymous Hamas official noted: 'Hamas was able to gain huge popularity thanks to the resistance, which made a lot of sacrifices and boosted its popularity, even though this popularity has declined in recent years because the movement failed to meet the everyday demands of the masses. Yet, the two wars in which Hamas was engaged in Gaza in 2008 and 2012 lifted its popularity to unprecedented levels' (Abu Amer 2014b:n.p.).

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