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Palestinian Forces

Palestinian Authority and Militant Forces

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The Military Forces of Palestine

There is nothing new about an Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Seen from the viewpoint of historical perspective, this conflict began well before World War II, and has been a steady war of attrition ever since 1947. While state actors dominated the struggle from 1948 to 1967, Jordan's expulsion from Jerusalem and the West Bank made a fundamental shift in the nature of the struggle that took on organized form in the late 1960s, was officially recognized by the Arab League, and then given further recognition when Jordan declared it would no longer seek to recover Jerusalem and the West Bank.

From 1970 to the Oslo Accords, virtually every Palestinian faction, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Yasser Arafat's dominant Fatah faction, not only declared itself at war with Israel but also denied Israel's right to exist. The rise of Palestinian activism and the Palestinian struggle with Israel was a key factor leading to the clash between Palestinian

forces and Jordan that drove Palestinian leaders into Lebanon in 1970. The Palestinian presence in Jerusalem was the official reason for Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. While some initially felt the expulsion of Arafat and Palestinian forces from Lebanon marked an end to the Israeli Palestinian struggle, the various Palestinian factions found new host countries, and internal riots in the West Bank that began in 1988 led to a popular uprising or Intifada that became an asymmetric war of attrition so exhausting that it pushed both sides into signing the peace agreement that became the Oslo Accords.

The Oslo Accords and the New Israeli-Palestinian War

It was not until the Oslo Accords led to the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (the DOP), that was signed in Washington on September 13, 1993, that efforts at creating an Israeli-Palestinian peace process acquired real meaning. The PLO gave up a formal state of war with Israel to become a "protostate" as the dominant part of a new Palestinian Authority. Even then, however, significant numbers of Palestinian organizations rejected the new peace process, and the PLO was reluctant at best to act on the portion of the Accords that called for it to reject the portions of its charter that called for Israel's destruction.

The resulting peace process did make progress. A transfer of powers and responsibilities for the Gaza Strip and Jericho occurred as the result of the Israel-PLO Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of May 4, 1994. This transfer was expanded to cover additional territory on the West Bank as a result of the Israel-PLO Interim Agreement of September 28, 1995; the Israel-PLO Protocol Concerning Redeployment in Hebron, the Israel-PLO of January 15, 1997; the Wye River Memorandum of October 29, 1998; and the Sharm el-Sheikh Agreement September 4, 1999.

Yasser Arafat's Fatah was the ruling party within the PA at this time, and remained so until the elections of January 2006. It had members that were Christian, Muslim (Sunni mainly) and secularist, and saw the new peace in relatively pragmatic terms. However, although it was formally willing to accept Israel's right to exist and to exchange land for peace, it never proved able to agree with Israel on three main issues: the status of Jerusalem, Palestinians' right of return and the issue of Palestinian sovereignty and independence.¹

As a result, the DOP agreement did not put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A number of secular factions remained anti-peace and anti-PLO. New, radical Islamist groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad actively carried on the struggle against Israel. Israel continued to expand its settlements and the Palestinians continued to carry out acts of violence and terrorism. The "peace process" was always a "war process" as well and the creation of Palestinian security forces in the Gaza and West Bank was as much a potential future threat as an ongoing effort to bring security to both the Palestinians and Israel.

Both sides sought peace and both made critical mistakes. Both in their own way worsened the plight of the Palestinian people, and helped create the conditions for a more intense and open form of asymmetric struggle. Whether Israeli rigidity and settlements, or the corruption and incompetence of the Palestinian Authority cause the Palestinians more suffering is moot. Both were deeply to blame.

Both sides failed fundamentally in delaying serious negotiations for a permanent peace, although for very different political reasons. The DOP has provided that Israel would retain responsibility during the transitional period for external and internal security and for public order of settlements and Israeli citizens but called for direct negotiations to determine the permanent status of Gaza

and West Bank. These negotiations on began in September 1999, and even a major effort by President Clinton at Camp David could not move them forward rapidly enough to avert new major clashes.

A new and far more violent Intifada that broke out in September 2000. In spite of various peace efforts -- most notably by the Quartet (US, European Union, United Nations, and Russia) in June 2003 to create creating a "roadmap" for a final settlement, the most that could be accomplished was a faltering series of ceasefires. The proposed date for a permanent status agreement had to postponed indefinitely.

Major clashes took place, and the new Palestinian security forces became involved along with radical Palestinian opponents of Israel like Hamas. The Palestinian Authority came under siege and in many ways ceased to function -- consuming large amounts of aid money but failing to provide anything approaching effective governance or even an honest accounting of its actions and expenditures. Meanwhile, Israeli settlements continued, and Israel moved to create security barriers that would separate Israel, "greater Jerusalem," and the territory it wished to keep on the West Bank from the Palestinians in both the Gaza and West Bank.²

The Death of Arafat and the Victory of Hamas: Redefining Palestinian Politics and the Arab-Israeli Military Balance

The death of Yasir Arafat in November 2004 triggered new hopes that the peace process might be revived, and a respected pro-Peace leader, Mahmud Abbas, was elected President of the Palestinian Authority in January 2005. Israel and the Palestinian Authority reached a new agreements on security issues, in an effort to move the peace process forward, as part of the Sharm el-Sheikh Commitments, in February 2005.

The Palestinian Authority remained corrupt and incompetent, however, and steadily lost Palestinian support. Israel and the PA remained at odds over how the peace process could be moved forward. Abbas had little to offer the Palestinians by way of peace incentives, and could neither effectively unify and rebuild the Palestinian security forces or offer honest and effective governance, economic hope, or security.

Israel continued to increase the size and are of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, created more barriers and walls, did little to show a peace would offer real hope of a successful Palestinian state, and focused more on unilateral separation than peace. In September 2005, Israel withdrew all Israeli settlers military forces from the Gaza and vacated and destroyed its military facilities. It did not, however, give up control over the Gaza's waters, airspace, or and access to the Gaza.

Israel did sign an agreement with the PA to authorize the reopening of the Rafah border crossing in Israel in November 2005. The agreement stipulated Egyptian and Palestinian control of the Rafah border with monitoring by the EU. It soon became clear, however, that Israel would take strong action against the Palestinians if there were evidence of arms smuggling or that they permitted Palestinians that Israel regarded as terrorists to enter the Gaza.

Moreover, many Palestinians saw the Israeli withdrawal as more than result of the continuing violence and attacks launched by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) than as a result of progress towards a meaningful peace. As was the case when Israel withdrew from Lebanon, many Arabs saw the withdrawal more as an Israeli defeat than an Israeli strategic choice. Palestinian anger was further fueled by the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements, the steady

deterioration of social and economic condition, and Abbas's ongoing failure to improve Palestinian governance.

The end result was a stunning shift in the Palestinian leadership growing out of the elections for the Palestinian national assembly on January 25, 2006. Hamas and its supporters emerged as the dominant political party in both the Gaza and West Bank in spite of Israeli threats, prior efforts by Abbas to gerrymander a Fatah/PLO victory, and US efforts to support pro-peace Palestinian candidates. Hamas had already won several local elections, but this time it won 76 out of 132 seat in the legislature versus only 43 for Fatah, which had dominated Palestinian politics since the 1960s.³

A largely secular and pro-peace Palestinian government was suddenly and unexpectedly replaced by a radical Islamist group whose charter still effectively called for Israel's destruction. Some leaders in Gaza and the West Bank did indicate that they would consider a mutual ceasefire. However, Hamas's formal leader, Khaled Meshal, who was based in Damascus, stated that Hamas would not abandon its struggle with Israel and would transform its armed wing into a national Palestinian army.⁴

The political and military map of both the future of the Palestinian's future and the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is now uncertain and may well remain so for years. It may also lead to a major redefinition of how Palestinian forces are shaped and defined. There is no inherent dilemma in labeling a resistance movement as either "freedom fighters" or "terrorists." History has consistently shown that activists can be both at the same time, and that democratic forces can be as ruthless in using terrorist and asymmetric means as authoritarian ones. History provides equal warnings that there is no way to predict how much given movements like Hamas and the PIJ will or will not moderate over time, or whether they will become more extreme and violent.

There is no doubt, however, that Hamas's victory is a further catalyst in a fundamental change in the Arab-Israeli military balance. For years, there has been the steady shift away from a focus on conventional warfighting between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, to a focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict has helped drive Israel's neighbors to maintain large conventional forces as a deterrent, but it has also increased their internal security problems. At the same time, it has interacted with the rise of Neo-Salafi Islamist terrorism and efforts to dominate the Islamic world. Like the interaction between Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran; the shifts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have become regional as well as internal. At the same time, the Palestinians have been driven primarily by local tensions and dynamics. They have never been anyone's proxies; they use as much as they are used.

The present size and character of the Gaza, West Bank, Israel, and Jordan are shown in **Figure 2**. These numbers provide a rough picture of both the different character of the nations and peoples involved, and of the disparities in living standards that help exacerbate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They also reflect the major demographic pressures on the Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank. **Figures 2-4** show these pressures will grow sharply with time. They challenge the ability to create a viable Palestinian state under the best of conditions, and help explain why Israel's efforts at separation are seen very differently from the Palestinian side than they are from the Israeli side.

The Changing Structure of Palestinian Authority Forces

The fact that the Palestinians do not have meaningful conventional forces is as irrelevant as the fact that they are not yet recognized as a state. The Palestinian Authority has been "proto-state"

since the Oslo Accords and even some of the most anti-Palestinian political leaders in Israel recognize the eventual necessity of giving it statehood. Both Israel's actions and those of the various Palestinian factions have demonstrated that the Palestinians have effectively been at war with Israel since September 2000.

The end result has been a grim asymmetric war mixing popular resistance with terrorism, and producing equal violence from Israel. So far, its pauses and ceasefires have simply been preludes to new outbursts of violence, and there is no guarantee than the future will be any better than the past.

Palestinian Authority Forces During the Peace Process

In order to understand this war in its necessary to understand both that Chairman Arafat never allowed the Palestinian security forces to be unified and effective before the new round of fighting began in September 2000, and that Israel had largely shattered the forces that were created by the end of 2002.

Arafat's "divide and rule" shaped the history of the Palestinian Authority security forces until Arafat's death. The PA security forces first acquired formal status in May 1994, when Israel and the PA signed the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. This agreement officially created the General Security Service (GSS), which included most of the PA police and intelligence organizations. In the process, the GSS came to coordinate ten different security and intelligence services.

A study by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy summarizes each of their respective duties before the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War as follows:⁵

National Security Force (Ouwat al-Amn al-Watani): Conducted most security missions along Area A borders and inside cities

Civil Police (al-Shurta Madaniyya): Main PA law-enforcement agency; also conducted riot control and counter-terrorist operations

Preventive Security Force (al-Amn al-Wiqa'i): Largest PA intelligence organization; plainclothes; involved in counter-terrorist and anti-opposition actions, and surveillance in Israel

General Intelligence (Mukhabbarat al-Amma): Official PA intelligence body; involved in intelligence gathering, counterespionage, and maintaining relations with foreign intelligence services

Military Intelligence (Istkhbarat al-Askariyya): Not recognized in the Oslo Accords; dealt primarily with anti-opposition activities; investigated other intelligence and security agencies

Military Police: Also unrecognized by Oslo; dealt with riot control, protected important people and facilities, oversaw prisons, and maintained "order and discipline" among the other security agencies

Coast Guard (Shurta Bahariyya): Located in Gaza; protected the PA's territorial waters

Aerial Police (Shurta al-Jawiya): Not recognized by the peace agreements; maintained the PA's helicopters

Civil Defense (al-Difa'a al-Madani): Fire department and rescue services

County Guard (al-Amn al-Mahafza): Unrecognized by the peace accords; provided security for county governors and settled local disagreements.

Arafat established two additional security organizations outside the GSS, which reported only to him. The Special Security Force (SSF) existed ostensibly to gather information on opposition groups in other countries, although some analysts speculate that it might have actually existed to monitor the other Palestinian security services. The Presidential Security Service, known as

Force-17, consisted largely of special-forces operatives from the supposedly defunct PLO special security organization. It retained its mission of protecting Arafat and other PA leaders and gathering intelligence about domestic opposition. Many of these organizations were restructured over the course of the war.

Experts believe these services grew to roughly 35,000 to 50,000 PA security, intelligence and law enforcement operatives by 1998.⁶ Even when the war began in September 2000, however, the PA security forces had only token strength as conventional military forces. They were also caught between the need to act as a counterbalance to the IDF and the need to establish control over movements like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

The Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian War

The IDF began its attacks on these PA security forces early in the Israeli-Palestinian War. By early 2001, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) had attacked PA security operatives and facilities in retaliation for Palestinian violence against Israelis. In response to a Hamas sponsored suicide bombing on March 28 near Qalqilyah in the West Bank, the IDF bombarded the bases and training camps of Force-17, Arafat's personal security force. Then in April, the IDF responded to Hamas mortar attacks by attacking PA police installations in the Gaza Strip on three different occasions. The IDF retribution served the purposes of not only the Israeli government, but of Hamas and its allies as well. Israeli attacks on the PA security infrastructure meant that Hamas faced a weaker opponent in its struggle to capture Palestinian public support.

The IDF steadily increased the intensity of these attacks during 2001 and early 2002, again in response to increases in attacks from militant Palestinians. These attacks took a serious toll on the capabilities of the PA security forces, as the following chronology demonstrates.

February 13, 2001- Israeli gunships kill a member of Force 17, Arafat's personal security force. Israel claims the man, Colonel Masoud Ayad, was a leader of the Hezbollah.

March 21, 2001- The Israeli army shells a Force 17 training base, killing one Palestinian officer.

March 28, 2001- In a Hamas suicide bombing two Israeli teenagers are killed near the Palestinian city of Qalqilya. In response, Israeli helicopter gunships bombard bases and training camps of Yasir Arafat's personal security forces. One member of the Force and two other Palestinians are killed.

April 6, 2001- Israeli helicopters fire rockets at Palestinian police installations north of Gaza City. At least four rockets are fired, damaging a two-story headquarters building and two other structures. Israel attacks after three Hamas mortar shells fired from Gaza landed near Netiv Haasara, an Israeli village next to Gaza.

April 10, 2001- Hamas continues to fire mortar rounds at Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip and inside Israel. The shellings do not result in any casualties. Israel responds by firing antitank missiles at Palestinian police posts in Gaza. The attack on one target, a Palestinian naval post, kills a lieutenant and wounds 7 police officers; the second strike, on a police headquarters in a refugee camp, wounds 10. In contrast to recent nighttime raids, these are daylight attacks without warning on occupied buildings.

April 21, 2001- Israeli tanks roll into the Palestinian-controlled town of Rafah and level a border police post before pulling out. There are no reported injuries.

May 13, 2001- Israeli helicopter gunships bombard Palestinian security targets across the Gaza Strip and naval boats strike at least eight Palestinian armored personnel carriers with rockets.

May 14, 2001- Israeli troops shoot and kill five Palestinian officers stationed at a roadblock in Beitunya, in the West Bank. The IDF says that the post served as a base for firing on Israeli bypass roads. Arafat describes the operation as a "dirty [and] immoral" killing of officers doing mundane, post-midnight guard duty while they were preparing a snack.

May 20, 2001- IDF tanks fire three shells at the home of Col. Jibril Rajoub, director of Palestinian security forces in the West Bank. Palestinians accuse Israel of trying to assassinate him, while the IDF denies aiming its attack personally at Mr. Rajoub, saying its troops had come under fire and responded by shelling “the precise source of the fire, which was definitely from the courtyard of Jibril Rajoub's house.”

August 9, 2001- Israel takes hold of and closes the East Jerusalem office of the PA. In Ramallah, F-16s flatten a Palestinian police station. Israel is retaliating in response to the bombing in Jerusalem.

August 14, 2001- Israeli tanks enter the West Bank city of Jenin, leveling the city's police station.

August 26, 2001- Israeli F-16s and F-17s destroy security installations in the West Bank and Gaza.

October 3, 2001- Israel responds by demolishing 7 Palestinian police posts in the Gaza Strip - nearby the Jewish settlement two gunmen had attacked the night before.

December 13, 2001- Israeli helicopter gunships shoot at Palestinian buildings in the West Bank and Gaza. A Palestinian police station in Ramallah is among the targets.

February 11-13, 2002 – In response to Hamas rocket attacks, Israel bombs PA security compounds in Gaza City. Searching for the manufacturing and launching sites of the rockets, the IDF initiates a military incursion into Gaza.

February 15, 2002 – Palestinian mines blow up an Israeli tank. Three crewmembers are killed in the explosion. This is the first time that one of Israel's highly sophisticated tanks is destroyed. Over the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza, Israeli jets attack a PA police compound.

February 20, 2002 – Israel initiates an attack on buildings belonging to the PA. Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah and the PA compound in Gaza City are attacked. Sixteen Palestinians are killed.

June 25, 2002 - Israeli troops seize control of Hebron. Israeli forces surround the governor's compound, arrest the leader of Palestinian intelligence, and exchange fire with PA forces. Four Palestinian policemen are killed.

December 4, 2002: Israeli helicopters fire several missiles at a room in the Palestinian Authority Preventive Security headquarters compound in Gaza City where Mustafa Sabah, a bomb-maker responsible for destroying three Israeli battle tanks and killing seven soldiers, is employed as a guard. Sabah dies in the assault and five others are wounded.

These IDF actions severely weakened the Palestinian forces.⁷ By April 2002, the Associated Press reported that the IDF had destroyed most of the 150 PA security facilities, leaving agents to “roam the streets, stay at home or work from tents.”⁸ According to PA Chief of Preventative Security Colonel Rashid Abu Shbak, by June 2003 three-quarters of PA national security officers were being held in Israeli detention camps and nine out of 10 of the security services offices had been destroyed.⁹ According to Dr. Gal Luft, by July 23, 2003, IDF operations had destroyed all the PA's aerial capabilities and left them with only minimal communications and land-based transportation equipment. The end result was that they had “no effective mechanism to coordinate military operations.”¹⁰

The Uncertain Size of Current Palestinian Authority Security Forces

This fighting continued well into 2004, and has made it almost impossible to estimate the present size of various Palestinian forces. The security forces of the Palestinian Authority took serious losses during the course of the fighting, as well as lost much of their equipment and facilities. Independent anti-peace groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad had also suffered losses, but were much smaller and covert forces than were far harder to attack.

An estimate and breakout of Palestinian forces is shown in **Figure 5**. According to the IISS Military Balance there were some 56,000 Palestinian Authority security forces in late 2005.¹¹ The Jaffee Center estimates that the size of the Palestinian security forces increased from 36,000 in

2000 to 45,000 in 2002. The Center estimated that in 2002, the Palestinian Authority had the following force strength: Public Security or National Security Force: 14,000. Coastal Police 1,000, Aerial Police 50, Civil Police 10,000, Preventive Security Force 5,000, General Intelligence 3,000, and Presidential Security Force 3,000. There were additional men in the Military Intelligence and Civil Defense forces.¹² According to the Jaffee Center the PA security forces numbers totaled some 45,000 in 2005, including both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.¹³

Efforts were underway to rebuild Palestinian Authority security forces, and give them effective leadership and integration, when the January 25, 2006 election occurred. Yasser Arafat's death in Paris on November 11, 2004 removed a political leader that had constantly played one element of the Palestinian security forces off against another, allowed widespread corruption and abuses, tolerated violence against Israel when this was a useful political weapon, and blocked US and other aid efforts.

Following his death, then Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and PLO Chairman, and then PA President Mahmoud Abbas attempted to bring some degree of unity to Palestinian forces and to bring about a cease-fire between the different militant organizations and the Israeli forces.¹⁴ They had significant US support in these efforts, but they largely failed. Palestinian Authority political leaders and heads of the security forces were too divided to allow decisive reforms in the PA forces.

On March 1, 2005, for example, Abbas publicly announced the Palestinian Authority's decision and readiness to restructure its security forces and to create a unified command structure at an international meeting in London.¹⁵ Unity was a key issue because Arafat, had created 14 separate units that Abbas said he intended to unify into three distinct divisions but never made serious efforts to reform..¹⁶

Despite such efforts by Abbas and the PA, however, the security situation in the West Bank and Gaza had deteriorated to the point by March 24, 2005 where members of the Palestinian Parliament openly urged the PA to immediately institute security reforms.¹⁷ Shortly after hearing the findings of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, MPs passed a resolution that criticized the heads of security for a "lack of attentiveness in taking action to stop the situation from deteriorating," and that also urged recently appointed Interior Minister Nasr Yussuf to "unveil his promised plans to rectify the lawlessness and reform the security services as soon as possible."¹⁸

The urgency of such reform had been made clearer a week later. On March 31, Palestinian militants in the West Bank town of Ramallah open-fired on Abbas' compound in response to the President's recent efforts to establish control in the area. This forced security officials to compromise with the militants. They allowed the reinstatement of many of the militants, who were former security officers, to their old units—with demotion of one rank.¹⁹

Abbas' plan to "integrate the fighters [militants] into official Palestinian security agencies...with the ultimate aim...of creating 'one law, one authority, one weapon'" remained at the core of his efforts before the January 25, 2006 elections²⁰ While the general Palestinian population largely supported the plan, the Israeli government opposed it, since the "integration proposal" would effectively allow individuals whom Israel considered to be "terrorists" to maintain arms under Palestinian law.²¹ Abbas, however, strongly disagreed with the Israeli government stance, and was convinced that it would be far more effective to "co-opt" militants as opposed to "go[ing] after the armed groups militarily."²²

Unfortunately for Abbas, there was also much disagreement among Palestinians militants, such as members of Al-Aqsa, regarding support for the integration plan since some perceived it as a means of undermining their long-standing political struggle.²³ Nevertheless, Abbas moved forward. In further efforts to improve security, Abbas fired West Bank security Chief Ismail Jaber and the local security chief in Ramallah, Younis al-Aas (two days after the incident at Abbas' compound in Ramallah).

Abbas announced that he would enforce a new law that required security personnel to retire at the mandatory age of 60—meaning many hundreds, and even thousands, of security officers (predominantly from Arafat's era) would be forced to retire in efforts to jump start the much needed reform.²⁴ By May 2005, efforts were already underway to retire 1,076 officers and additional 1,000 were scheduled to retire in a second phase.²⁵ Abbas also requested that MPs impose a law that only allowed commanders to serve in the same position for a term of four years. However, the proposal has yet to be voted on by the Parliament at the time of this writing. It was also opposed by most senior security officials.

Abbas continued with such reform efforts through the January 25, 2006 election. In fact, he planned to use a Fatah victory to disarm the militias and make further security reforms. In practice, the Hamas victory made such efforts as uncertain as future ceasefire plans. The various cease-fires between military organizations have had intermittent success. However, they have almost inevitably failed to provide enduring stability, and Israel has sporadically continued its policy of targeted assassinations while Palestinian militant groups have continued suicide bombings.

Palestinian Security Forces and Internal Security in Gaza and the West Bank

Abbas had good reasons to seek reform. The failings, repressiveness, and corruption of the Palestinian security forces have had a major impact on Palestinian politics since they were first created following the DOP, and were a significant factor in Hamas' January 2006 election victory. As is the case with all of the countries and entities that form the Arab-Israeli balance, the Palestinian security services have performed both a security function and acted as an instrument of repression.

There are various reports that either exaggerate or understate these abuses. The human rights report the US State Department issued in February 2005 summarizes the role of Palestinian security forces, and the Israeli response as follows:²⁶

The Palestinian security forces included the National Security Forces (NSF), the Preventive Security Organization (PSO), the General Intelligence Service, or Mukhabarat, the Presidential Security Force, and the Coastal Police. Other quasi-military security organizations, such as the Military Intelligence Organization, also exercised de facto law enforcement powers. Palestinian police were normally responsible for security and law enforcement for Palestinians and other non-Israelis in PA-controlled areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian security forces were under the authority of the PA. Members of the PA security forces committed numerous, serious abuses.

The PA's overall human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. There were credible reports that PA officers engaged in torture, prisoner abuse, and arbitrary and prolonged detention. Conditions for prisoners were poor. PA security forces infringed privacy and freedom of speech and press. The PA did not take available measures to prevent attacks by terrorist groups either within the occupied territories or within Israel. Impunity was a serious problem. Domestic abuse of women persisted. Societal discrimination against women and persons with disabilities and child labor remained problems.

...Violence associated with the Intifada has claimed the lives of 3,517 Palestinians, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), 1,051 Israelis, according to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, and 52 foreign nationals, according to B'tselem, an Israeli human rights organization that monitors the occupied territories. During the year, over 800 Palestinians were killed during Israeli military operations in the occupied territories, a total of 76 Israeli civilians and 4 foreigners were killed in terrorist attacks in both Israel and the occupied territories, and 41 members of the Israeli Defense Forces were killed in clashes with Palestinian militants.

... Torture by PA security forces reportedly was widespread. Documentation of abuses was very limited, due partly to the hesitancy of alleged victims to file or make public claims of torture or abuse against PA authorities. Palestinian security officers have no formal guidelines regarding the proper conduct of interrogations; most convictions were based largely on confessions

PA security forces detained persons without informing judicial authorities, and often ignored laws that protect the rights of detainees and court decisions calling for the release of alleged security criminals. At year's end, Palestinian sources estimated that between 250 and 300 suspected collaborators were held in PA prisons. Alleged collaborators often were held without presentation of evidence to a court and were denied access to lawyers, their families, or doctors.

...The body of law governing Palestinians in the occupied territories derives from Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian, and Egyptian law, and Israeli military orders. Laws and regulations promulgated by the PA also are in force. Israeli settlers were subject to Israeli law.

...The PA court system is based on legal codes that predate the 1967 Israeli occupation and Israeli military orders. A High Judicial Council (HJC) maintained authority over most court operations. State security courts were formally abolished in 2003. Military courts, established in 1995, have jurisdiction over police and security force personnel as well as crimes by civilians against security forces. The PA courts were inefficient, lacked staff and resources, and often did not ensure fair and expeditious trials. These problems predated PA jurisdiction, and were aggravated by lack of PA attention thereafter. The PA executive and security services frequently failed to carry out court decisions and otherwise inhibited judicial independence.

The ongoing violence adversely affected the PA administration of justice. Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 damaged the Court of First Instance and Conciliation in Ramallah and the PA's main forensic lab. Many police stations and incarceration facilities were damaged or destroyed. Travel restrictions, curfews, and closures significantly impeded the administration of justice.

Palestinian members of Fatah, Hamas, and PFLP attacked and killed civilians in Israel, Israeli settlers, foreign nationals, and soldiers. They used weapons designed to inflict casualties on noncombatants, such as suicide bombs, and fired area weapons such as rockets and mortars at their targets without regard for noncombatants. In addition, they often fired at Israeli security forces from civilian population areas, increasing the risk that Israeli return fire would harm noncombatants. The PA did not take sufficient steps to prevent terrorist attacks, enforce a ban on militant groups, or prevent such groups from seeking shelter in civilian areas. By year's end, some PA officials made statements questioning the utility of violence. During the presidential campaign, PA presidential candidate Abbas called the armed Intifada counterproductive to Palestinian interests.

According to the PA Ministry of Health, the Palestine Red Crescent Society, and B'tselem, at least 800 Palestinians were killed during the course of Israeli military and police operations during the year. The PA Ministry of Health estimated that approximately half of those killed were noncombatants. B'tselem reported a figure of 452 innocent Palestinians killed this year. The IDF stated that the majority of Palestinians killed were armed fighters or persons engaged in planning or carrying out violence against Israeli civilian and military targets. According to the PRCS, IDF operations resulted in injuries to approximately 4,000 Palestinians.

Palestinian Militant Organizations and Their Military Impact

Palestinian Authority forces, however, are only part of the story. It was Palestinian militant movements -- some independent and some affiliated with Fatah and the Palestinian authority -- that have opposed the peace and shaped Palestinian action during the Israeli-Palestinian wars. A

rough estimate of the size of the various Palestinian and Lebanese forces that can pose a threat to Israel is shown in **Figure 6**. The major active militant groups in the Gaza Strip and West Bank with paramilitary elements include the Fatah Tanzim, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Fatah's militant wing), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The US State Department summarized the recent activities of such groups as follows in its February 2005 country reports on terrorism:²⁷

The Palestinian Authority's efforts to thwart terrorist operations were minimal...The PA security services remained fragmented and ineffective, hobbled by corruption, infighting, and poor leadership. Following the November 11 death of PA Chairman Arafat, Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and then PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas engaged in an effort to convince militant Palestinian groups to agree to a cease-fire. Cease-fire talks were inconclusive by the end of 2004. Palestinian officials, including Mahmoud Abbas, and some Palestinian intellectuals have called for an end to armed attacks against Israelis.

...Palestinian terrorist groups conducted a large number of attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip in 2004. Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) — all US-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations — were responsible for most of the attacks, which included suicide bombings, shootings, and mortar and rocket firings against civilian and military targets. Terrorist attacks in 2004 killed almost 100 people (mostly Israelis, as well as a number of foreigners, including one US citizen), a decrease from the almost 200 people killed in 2003.

The October 15, 2003, attack on a US diplomatic convoy in Gaza that killed three Americans is the most lethal attack ever directly targeting US interests in Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza. The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), a loose association of Palestinians with ties to various Palestinian militant organizations such as Hamas, PIJ, and Fatah, claimed responsibility, although that claim was later rescinded. Official investigations continued and resulted in the arrests of four suspects. A Palestinian civil court ordered the four suspects freed on March 14, citing a lack of evidence. Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Arafat rescinded the order and kept the suspects in custody until Palestinian gunmen attacked the Gaza prison and released the four suspects on April 24. Since the April 24 incident, the PA has failed to re-arrest the four suspects or to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of the October 2003 attack.

Palestinian terrorist groups in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza continue to focus their attention on the Palestinians' historical conflict with Israel, attacking Israel and Israeli interests within Israel and the Palestinian territories, rather than engaging in operations worldwide. Israel employed a variety of military operations in its counterterrorism efforts. Israeli forces launched frequent raids throughout the West Bank and Gaza, conducted targeted killings of suspected Palestinian terrorists, destroyed homes — including those of families of suicide bombers — imposed strict and widespread closures and curfews in Palestinian areas, and continued construction of an extensive security barrier in the West Bank.

...Israeli counterterrorism measures appear to have reduced the lethality of attacks; continuing attacks and credible threats of attacks, however, show that the terrorist groups remained potent. Israel also took action in February to block what it labeled terrorist funding in two Palestinian banks. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Shin Bet raided the West Bank offices of the Arab Bank and the Cairo-Amman Bank, seizing almost \$9 million in cash from 310 accounts. Israeli law does not allow seizure of funds via correspondent accounts in Israel, and the Israeli Government claimed that the PA had failed to act on earlier intelligence. PA officials asserted that the funds belonged to reputable clients, with no connection to terrorism. The funds remain seized by order of an Israeli court.

Hamas was particularly active in 2004, carrying out attacks that included shootings, suicide bombings, and standoff mortar and rocket attacks against civilian and military targets, many of them joint operations with other militant organizations. Hamas was responsible for the deadliest attack of the year in Israel — the August 31 double suicide bombing of two buses in Beersheva that killed 16 people and wounded 100. Hamas was also responsible for an increase in Qassam rocket attacks. A rocket attack on Sderot on June 28 was the first fatal attack against Israelis using Qassam rockets. Two Israelis died in the attack. In September, two Israeli children were killed in Sderot from another Qassam rocket attack. In response to the continued Qassam rocket fire, the IDF launched a three-week operation on September 28, in which 130

Palestinians (among them 68 Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad militants) and five Israelis died, according to press reports.

...The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was active in 2004. The group was responsible for the November 1 suicide bombing at the Carmel Market in Tel Aviv, which killed three people and wounded 30. Palestinian Islamic Jihad conducted numerous attacks on Israeli settlements and checkpoints, including the April 3 attacks on the Avnei Hafetz and Enav settlements in the West Bank that killed one Israeli and seriously wounded a child.

...Fatah's militant wing, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, conducted numerous shooting attacks and suicide bombings in 2004. It was responsible for two suicide bus bombings in Jerusalem during January and February. The attacks killed 21 people and wounded over 110. Al-Aqsa also claimed responsibility along with Hamas for the March 14 suicide attack in the port of Ashdod. The double suicide attack killed ten people and wounded at least 15. The group also claimed responsibility for a suicide bomber attack that killed two people and wounded 17 at a checkpoint near Jerusalem on August 11. On May 2, Palestinian gunmen belonging to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and PIJ shot and killed an Israeli settler and her four daughters in the Gaza Strip. The group also claimed responsibility for a suicide bomber attack that killed two people and wounded 17 at a checkpoint near Jerusalem on August 11. Lebanese Hezbollah remained a serious threat to the security of the region, continuing its call for the destruction of Israel and using Lebanese territory as a staging ground for terrorist operations. Lebanese Hezbollah was also involved in providing material support to Palestinian terrorist groups to augment their capacity and lethality in conducting attacks against Israel.

The Palestinian Authority did make new attempts later in 2005 to limit such attacks, but its efforts were not satisfactory or successful according to the US and Israel.²⁸ Hamas did agree, however, to a cease-fire before the January 2006 elections on the grounds that it was preparing for the elections and did restrain its members from violent acts against Israeli targets.²⁹

The Differing Character of Palestinian Militant Groups

There are a wide range of Palestinian militant organizations. While some key groups - like Hamas and PIJ, have emerged as major rivals to the Palestinian Authority, other key groups - like Fatah Tanzim and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade - are closely tied to Fatah and the Palestinian Authority. Some of these movements are largely based outside the Gaza and West Bank, or are small and relatively ineffective. All, however, have had at least some impact on Palestinian politics, Palestinian security, and Palestinian relations with Israel.

Some organizations are more violent than others, a few are little more than political proxies for Syria, and some have not been active or effective for years. It is also be misleading to label most such groups as either "terrorists," "militants," or "freedom fighters." The difference not only is a matter of perspective, but also involves categories that can easily overlap. Most Palestinian militant groups do, however, attack Israeli and Palestinian civilians with the deliberate purpose of causing terror and using terror to get media attention.

As the following group-by-group descriptions show, different groups tend to use different tactics and methods of asymmetric warfare. Their weaponry, however, is changing. They now have some systems like mortars, a small amount of artillery, and Qassam rockets that they can fire across the security boundaries and barriers between the Gaza and West Bank and Israel and Israeli occupied areas. They are learning how to make steadily more sophisticated bombs and suicide devices. They have long had smuggling tunnels and other ways of moving equipment across the Egyptian-Gaza border, and some smuggling of arms and equipment does move into the West Bank. At least some infiltration and smuggling penetrates across the Israel security barriers and comes in by sea. The rise of Hamas to power may make it significant easier to move equipment into Gaza and lead to more tolerance of mortar and rocket firings and preparation of attacks.

Hamas or Harakat Al-Muqawwama Al-Islamia (Islamic Resistance Movement)

Hamas has become the leading a radical Islamic fundamentalist organization, and now the dominant Palestinian political party as well. Its name is an acronym for Harakat Al-Muqawwama Al-Islamia (Islamic Resistance Movement) and also means “zeal” or “courage and bravery.” Hamas’ foremost objective is a *jihad* (holy war) for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic Palestine “from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River.”³⁰ Hamas has stated that the transition to the stage of *jihad* “for the liberation of all of Palestine” is a personal religious duty incumbent upon every Muslim, and rejects any political arrangement that would relinquish any part of Palestine. Hamas’ ultimate goal is the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine.³¹

Hamas’ extreme views have long placed the organization in direct conflict with the State of Israel and its supporters. It has advocated and employed violence in pursuit of its objectives, not only against Israeli armed forces, but against Israeli civilians as well. Its views also conflict with those Palestinian factions affiliated with Yasser Arafat and the PA, which advocate the creation of a secular Palestine through the resolution of negotiations with Israel.

To achieve its objectives, Hamas has employed a variety of unconventional tactics, ranging from mass demonstrations and graffiti to roadside murders and suicide bombings. Its gradual escalation of violence has influenced the course of the Israeli-Palestinian War. Hamas remains one of the most politically powerful Palestinian militant factions, affecting the decisions of both the Israeli government and the PA. An understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian War is incomplete without an understanding of the motivations and actions of Hamas.

Hamas first became active during the early stages of the Intifada. It was formed in early 1987, out of the religious-social Al-Majama Al-Islami association in Gaza. Many senior members of Al-Majama formed Hamas, and used the existing infrastructure of Al-Majama as a basis for semi-covert activity once the Intifada began. Hamas then expanded its activity into the West Bank with at least some cells in Israel proper, becoming the dominant Islamic fundamentalist organization in the West and Gaza.

Hamas evolved as a loosely structured organization, with some elements working clandestinely, while others worked openly through mosques and social service institutions to recruit members, raise money, organize activities, and distribute propaganda. Its strength was concentrated in the Gaza Strip and a few areas of the West Bank, where it engaged in political activity, such as running candidates in the West Bank Chamber of Commerce elections.

During the period before the war, Hamas’ operations in Gaza and the West Bank consisted of a combination of regional and functional organizations. It had several identical, parallel frameworks that operated in each region. One framework, called Dawa (literally “call” or “outreach”), engaged in recruitment, distribution of funds, and appointments. Another framework, called Amn (“security”), gathered information on suspected collaborators during the Intifada. This information was passed on to “shock committees,” which interrogated and sometimes killed suspects. Amn became a key element in Hamas’ rivalry with the Palestinian Authority and in intelligence-gathering operations.

Hamas had a well-organized fundraising apparatus in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan, as well as outside the region. According to the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) in Herzilya, it also received considerable financial support from unofficial Saudi Arabian channels, the Iranian government, and other Gulf States. ICT estimates Hamas’ total yearly

budget tens of millions of dollars. Such ample funding is one of the principal reasons for Hamas' primacy among the militant Palestinian factions.³²

During the period between the Oslo Accords and September 2000, the paramilitary elements of Hamas played a major role in violent fundamentalist subversion and radical terrorist operations against both Israelis and Arabs. Its shock troops (Al-Suad Al-Ramaya – the “throwing arm”) were responsible for popular violence during the Intifada, and continued to play a role in violent opposition to the peace process. Hamas also had two paramilitary organizations for more organized forms of violence. The first was the Palestinian Holy Fighters (Al-Majahidoun Al-Falestinioun) – a military apparatus that included the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades. The second was the Security Section (Jehaz-Amn).

The Al-Majihadoun Al-Falestinioun was established by Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the future spiritual leader of Hamas, in 1982. It procured arms and planned an armed struggle against both Palestinian rivals and Israel. This activity was uncovered in 1984, and Yassin was sentenced to 13 years in prison, but was released shortly afterwards as part of the Jibril prisoner exchange in May 1985.

Yassin then resumed his effort to set up a military apparatus. He began by focusing on the struggle against “heretics” and collaborators in accordance with the view of the Muslim Brotherhood that jihad should come only after the purging of rivals from within. At the same time, he prepared a military infrastructure, and stockpiled weapons for war against Israel. Shortly before the outbreak of the Intifada, operatives were recruited to execute the military jihad and regular terrorist attacks. The new military apparatus executed a large number of attacks of various kinds, including bombings and gunfire, mostly in the northern part of the Gaza District.

Hamas' spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin retained considerable personal popularity among Palestinians.³³ His ability to raise millions of dollars in funds for Hamas and his virulent anti-Israel stance led some to fear that he would eventually rival Arafat for power over the PA, despite his frail health and physical disabilities.³⁴

The PA was careful to keep Yassin under close observation and scrutiny during the peace process. Following the signing of the Wye Accords, hundreds of Hamas activists were detained and Yassin was placed under house arrest in November 1998. This spurred an angry response from Hamas members and other Palestinians, who vowed violent retaliation against Arafat and the Palestinian Authority.³⁵ Although Yassin was released in late December 1998, relations between Hamas and the PA have remained strained.

The main function of Hamas' Security Section (Jehaz Amn), established in early 1983, was to conduct surveillance of suspected collaborators and other Palestinians who acted in a manner contrary to the principles of Islam, such as drug dealers and sellers of pornography. In early 1987, it began to set up hit squads, known as MAJD, an Arabic acronym for Majmu'at Jihad wa-Dawa (“Holy War and Sermonizing Group”). MAJD became the operational arm of the Security Section. Its purpose was to kill “heretics” and collaborators. Yassin instructed the leaders of these sections to kill anyone who admitted under interrogation to being a collaborator, and reinforced this instruction with a religious ruling.

After the outbreak of the Intifada, Hamas began to organize military actions against Israeli targets as well. The MAJD units then became part of the Al-Majahadoun network. At the same time, the military apparatus of Hamas underwent several changes as a result of preventive measures and exposure by the Israeli forces following major terrorist attacks. The military

apparatus formed the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades, which were responsible for most of the serious attacks perpetrated by Hamas after January 1, 1992. These squads were formed out of dozens of proven personnel from Gaza who later also began to operate in the West Bank. Palestinians from the West Bank were recruited to carry out attacks inside the Green Line. Since the peace accords, these groups have been formed into cells that sometimes recruit young Palestinians, and form smaller cells to carry out attacks and suicide bombings.

Hamas has long used its overt political operations to recruit members into the units that engaged in riots and popular violence. Those who distinguished themselves were then recruited into the military apparatus, which carried out attacks against Israelis and other Palestinians. There is no way to know exactly how many Arabs that Hamas killed in the years following the signing of the Oslo Declaration of Principles in September 1993. The Israeli government estimates that Hamas killed 20 Israelis and one Jewish tourist from the beginning of the Intifada (December 9, 1987) until December 1992, and assassinated close to 100 Palestinians.

This violence caused a considerable backlash within the Palestinian community during the time when the peace process still seemed likely to be successful, and led Hamas to limit its more violent actions. A combination of the Palestinian desire for peace, and the loss of jobs and income as a result of Israeli economic retaliation, led to a steady drop in Hamas' public support. Public opinion polls showed that support dropped from nearly 40% in 1993, to 18% in June 1995, and 11% in October 1995. As a result, Hamas began to conduct talks with the PA in the summer of 1995.³⁶ The outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War, however, reversed this trend. By late May 2001, Palestinian support for Hamas, which was responsible for the majority of suicide attacks on Israelis, rose to 18.5%.³⁷

Like the Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas maintained a distinction between the overt and covert aspects of activities of its various divisions. This compartmentalizing was principally for the purposes of secrecy and security, which was further achieved by limiting internal communication to encoded messages. These measures resulted in an internal structure that still remains unclear to outside analysts while debate continues among experts over the degree of overlap between Hamas' social and militant elements. It is clear that Hamas has strong civil elements that perform charitable roles and have little or no direct connection to violence. At the same time, it seems to have used its charity committees—and the ideological instruction, propaganda and incitement it delivers in mosques and other institutions—as a recruiting base for violence and terrorism. Moreover, parts of its religious and social network almost certainly provide moral and financial support for its militant operatives³⁸

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian War can be attributed, in no small part, to the actions of Hamas. As early as October 2000, Hamas leaders called for an escalation of the violence. On November 14, Sheikh Yassin urged Palestinians to “transform the Intifada into an armed struggle against the Israeli conquest.”³⁹ This statement preceded Hamas' first car bomb of the war by only eight days.

In October 2000, the PA released Hamas activists who had been imprisoned during the peace process, in order to placate Hamas and its growing number of supporters and increase pressure on Israel in order to gain greater concessions.⁴⁰ This had a significant impact on the fighting. Some of these militants later participated in orchestrated violence against Israel. Their release deepened Israeli suspicions that Arafat was at least a tacit supporter of terrorism and extremism.

Shortly after the activists' release, Hamas organized its first “day of rage” against Israel in the West Bank and Gaza. The “days of rage” appeared to increase Hamas support in the Gaza Strip.

Thousands of supporters marched in protests shouting militant slogans.⁴¹ In addition to building unity among ordinary Palestinians, Hamas also encouraged solidarity among the other extremist factions. On October 7, the Washington Post noted that Hamas, the Revolutionary Communist Party and even Fatah supporters were appearing at rallies together.⁴²

In addition, there is evidence of cooperation between the PA and Hamas during the early weeks of the war. On October 12, Arab mobs overran a Palestinian police station in Ramallah, where two Israeli soldiers were detained, ostensibly for their own protection. The mobs seized them, beat them to death, and dragged their bodies through the streets. Israel responded with an attack on PA security facilities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Shortly before the Israeli attack, the PA announced that at least 85 Hamas and PIJ militants had been released from jails. Some conflicting reports stated that it was intentional, because the PA was unable to guarantee their safety, and others stated that they escaped. Among those released were Mohammed Deif and Ibrahim Makadmeh, leaders of the Izzedin al-Qassam.⁴³

Hamas' role in organizing demonstrations became official by the end of the month. On October 25, 2000, the Washington Post reported that Arafat had allocated seats on a decision-making committee called the High Committee Follow-Up Intifada Nationalist Islamic Organizations to Hamas, PIJ and Fatah representatives.⁴⁴ A day later, Mahmoud Zahar confirmed this, stating that Hamas was designating times and places for street marches.⁴⁵ It is likely that this represented an attempt on Arafat's part to placate Hamas and its supporters. However, it also contributed to the spread of Hamas' brand of extremism from Gaza to the West Bank.

Hamas' tactics have changed over the course of the Israeli-Palestinian War. In the first weeks of the war, Hamas' activities consisted primarily of demonstrations and rallies, confined for the most part to the Gaza Strip. The largest of these initial rallies was in the Gaza refugee camp of Jebaliya on October 27, 2000. An estimated 10,000 Hamas supporters attended, reportedly led by masked men wearing white t-shirts reading "The martyrs of al-Qassam."⁴⁶

Hamas became more active in November 2000, with the first of a series of car and roadside bombs. On November 22, a powerful car bomb detonated in the northern Israeli town of Hadera, killing one and wounding 20. Though Hamas did not directly claim responsibility, it distributed a leaflet reading, "If Israel tries to kill any of the Islamic or national Palestinian figures, militants or leaders, the gates of hill [sp] would be opened for Israel and the price would be so high."⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, Israel responded a day later, with a car bomb that killed Ibrahim Beni Ouda, a leader of the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades, on furlough from prison.⁴⁸

Israel created its policy of "targeted killings" of Palestinian militants in response to such extremist Palestinian violence. Although other groups like the PIJ and Al-Aqsa Martyrs have also been targeted regularly by Israel, Hamas has borne the brunt of its attacks. Of the 52 Israeli targeted killings of senior Palestinian militants between November 2000 and the June 2003 hudna (cease-fire), 50% were successfully directed at Hamas activists. After the cease-fire dissolved in late August 2003, Israel continued to have success in thinning the leadership ranks of Hamas through "targeted" killings—including most prominently the assassinations of Sheik Yassin on March 22, 2004 and Abdel Aziz Rantisi on April 17, 2004.⁴⁹

Through early 2004, Hamas had typically responded to IDF assassinations of its members with deadly retaliatory attacks. As previously stated, Hamas had employed suicide bombings throughout the Oslo-Wye peace process. On March 4, 2001, Hamas unleashed its first suicide bomber since the start of the war in Netanya, where a member's self-detonation killed three Israelis, and injured

dozens of others. Hamas' use of suicide bombings has since become one of the defining characteristics of the war..

According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the beginning of the war in September 2000 through March 22, 2004, Hamas perpetrated a total of 425 terrorist attacks of various kinds which in total killed 377 Israelis and wounded 2,076 civilians and IDF personnel—including 52 suicide attacks that produced 288 of the deaths and 1,646 of the injured.⁵⁰ Thus, while suicide bombings have remained Hamas' deadliest tactic, the group has employed other tactics as well. On April 17, 2001, the Izzedin al-Qassam launched five mortar shells at the Israeli town of Sderot, near the Gaza Strip. The attack was allegedly in retaliation for recent targeted killings of Hamas leaders. The Sharon government believed the mortar assaults represented a serious and unexpected escalation. Sharon called the act a "major provocation," and seized Palestinian-controlled areas in the Gaza Strip for the first time during the conflict. The Israelis also rocketed PA security bases and divided Gaza into three parts, barring north-south traffic, a move that U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell deemed "excessive and disproportionate."⁵¹

Despite Israel's strong response, Hamas launched five more mortars at the farming village of Nir Oz on April 19, 2001 and fired shells onto a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem three months later on July 17. The mortar attacks were carefully orchestrated moves, designed to force Israel to take measures that would further inflame Palestinians and encourage them to strike at the PA, thus weakening Hamas' major rivals for control over the Palestinian populace. Israel again targeted at the PA due to Hamas' actions on May 18, after the Netanya shopping mall suicide bombing. Israeli F-16 warplanes used for the first time since the onset of the war, attacked PA facilities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.⁵²

Hamas' tactics changed again in early 2002. On January 24, Hamas spokesman Moussa Abu Marzook acknowledged that the group was developing a rocket (Qassam-3) with a range long enough to hit targets in the Jewish districts of Jerusalem from inside the West Bank. The Qassam-3 rockets were expected to have an eight-mile range, much longer than the 0.5 mile-range of the Qassam-1 and the 1.8-mile range of the Qassam-2.⁵³ On February 16, Hamas militants fired a Qassam-2 model into an open field near Kfar Azza. Though no one was injured, it represented an ominous new addition to Hamas' repertoire. On May 9, 2003 six more crude rockets, though apparently not the Qassam-3, landed in the vicinity of Sedrot in the Negev Desert, wounding a 10-year-old girl.⁵⁴

At the same time, Hamas was able to build-up Palestinian public support through its support of Islamic charities and social services. The PA had to slowly reduce its social services over the course of the war, due to an ever-shrinking budget, a weakening infrastructure, corruption, and poor leadership. Hamas, however, proved able to increase some of its activities and maintain most others. On March 2, 2001 the Associated Press reported that Hamas was believed to support several Islamic charity organizations in the West Bank and Gaza, including the Islamic Charity Organization in Hebron, which distributes food packages to destitute Palestinian families in the West Bank. Islamic charities continue to fill a growing need due to rampant poverty and widespread unemployment. In addition, Hamas also operates health clinics and kindergartens.⁵⁵

The end result was that the Palestinian Authority had to conduct an increasingly delicate balancing act between satisfying Israeli demands and placating Hamas. For example, while the PA released Hamas militants from jail on October 12, 2000, it began re-arresting them just four days later. At the same time, Fatah has never accepted Hamas, and despite their mutual dislike of Israel, Hamas and the Fatah are very different groups. Fatah is secular, advocates a nominally democratic

government in an independent Palestine, and for the most part, has been willing to negotiate with Israel to achieve its objectives. Hamas, however, is an Islamic fundamentalist movement. It supports the creation of an Islamic theocratic government in Palestine, and is unwilling to accept any long-term agreements or treaties that recognize Israel as a state deserving of land in what it regards as Palestine.⁵⁶

While Hamas won the January 25, 2006 elections, its ability to attract popular support has fluctuated with time. Its public support decreased dramatically during the Oslo-Wye period, but experienced a resurgence in popularity at the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War, while the PA's support diminished. This was due in part to Hamas' charitable social services, but also to the fact that it rejected negotiations, while Arafat was seen as placating Israel. An opinion poll by the West Bank's Birzeit University showed that support for Hamas and other Islamic fundamentalist groups by Palestinians rose from 23 to 26% between October 2000 and February 2001, while Arafat's Fatah dropped from 33 to 26% (margin of error 3%).

On June 16, 2001, Palestinian political analyst Ghassan Khatib said that Hamas had become part of the political mainstream, with 17 to 19% of Palestinians "hav[ing] confidence" in the group, compared to 10% during the Oslo period.⁵⁷ A May 2002 poll indicated that Hamas' approval ratings had increased to 25%, drawing ever closer to Fatah's 32%. Sheikh Yassin was ranked as the third most popular Palestinian leader,⁵⁸ reinforcing some pre-war fears that he might one day surpass Arafat in popularity. A Palestinian public-opinion poll conducted in early 2004 indicated that support for Hamas had increased to 30 % of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and thus "is increasingly seen as a rival to Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement."⁵⁹

Animosity between Hamas and the PA grew during the course of the war, due in large part to Hamas' unwillingness to cooperate with the PA's efforts to secure a lasting cease-fire with Israel, ease the IDF's pressure on the PA, and move back towards negotiations. On June 2, 2001, the day after a Hamas/ PIJ attack on a Tel Aviv discotheque, Arafat announced that he would encourage a cease-fire with the Palestinian militant groups. At least initially, Hamas seemed to agree to the cease-fire. However, later that same day, the group publicly renounced it. Sheikh Yassin said, "When we are talking about the so-called cease-fire, this means between two armies. We are not an army. We are people who defend themselves and work against the aggression."⁶⁰

The negative impact of Hamas on the PA, the refusal of Hamas to cooperate with the cease-fire, and Arafat's continued arrests of Hamas personnel following the June 1 discotheque attack led to new tension between Arafat's Fatah and the PA forces, and Hamas and its supporters. On August 23, 2001, Fatah and Hamas activists engaged in a shootout at a funeral in Gaza, leaving three Palestinians dead.⁶¹ On October 10, 2001, the PA police force, conscious of the negative effect a rally in favor of Osama bin Laden could have on world opinion, used clubs, guns and tear gas to battle hundreds of pro-bin Laden protestors in Gaza City. Most of these protestors were supporters of Hamas. At least three Palestinians were killed and many more were wounded.

The irony of the situation was that the PA became more active against Hamas, while Israel became more active against Arafat's PA. Fearing repercussions from the murder of right-wing Israeli Tourism Minister Rahavem Zeevi by the PFLP in late October, Arafat chose to ban the armed wings of Hamas, the DFLP, the PFLP and the PIJ. A high-ranking PA official said that the decision was made after it became obvious that the groups were giving Israel an excuse to destroy the PA.⁶² Each time Hamas and other factions committed attacks on Israelis, the PA suffered. Following the rash of Hamas suicide bombings on December 1 and 2, 2001, Ariel Sharon declared the PA a "terror-supporting entity" and launched three missiles at a PA security

installation in Arafat's West Bank compound. F-16s flattened the offices of the Preventive Security Services, though Hamas was not attacked.⁶³

The PA responded by arresting more militants. Sheikh Yassin himself was placed under house arrest. In a series of demonstrations, Hamas marchers demanded that the PA stop arresting their leaders. Riots broke out in Gaza City, leading to clashes between PA/ Fatah supporters and Hamas activists.⁶⁴ On December 13, Arafat ordered all Hamas and PIJ offices in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to be shut down.⁶⁵ When PA agents attempted to arrest Abdel Rantisi, PA and Hamas forces clashed once more, resulting in the deaths of six Palestinians. In order to "preserve Palestinian unity," Hamas announced a self-imposed cease-fire.⁶⁶ On January 9, 2002, two Hamas militants broke the cease-fire, when they killed four Israeli soldiers in a village near Gaza. Israeli Special Forces responded by killing four Hamas militants in Nablus. Hamas vowed "all-out war" against Israel on January 23, and Hamas supporters tried to storm PA jails in order to free Hamas militants. This led to even further clashes with PA security forces.⁶⁷

Hamas sometimes joined Israel in trying to remove Arafat from power. In May 2002, Hamas leaders claimed that Arafat could no longer lead the resistance against Israel because he was not capable of defending himself against U.S. and Israeli pressure. On June 3, in an attempt to rein in Hamas, Arafat offered the group positions in a new Palestinian Cabinet. Hamas promptly rejected the new Cabinet, saying it would not serve their goals.⁶⁸

On June 18, 2002, at rush hour, a Hamas suicide bomber blew himself up aboard a bus in Jerusalem, killing 19 people and injuring 74. As a result, on June 19, Israel said it would reoccupy the West Bank. In a leaflet, Hamas said it would wage a "war on the buses."⁶⁹ Fearing Hamas' actions, Arafat placed Yassin under house arrest once more.⁷⁰ Hamas accused the PA of serving the interest of the Israeli occupation and bowing to "Zionist-U.S. pressures." Between August 12 and 15, Arafat again made overtures to Hamas and other militant organizations to participate in the PA government. It was an attempt to prevent more suicide bombings. Hamas refused and rejected a cease-fire.

The tension between the PA and Hamas reached a new boiling point on October 7, 2002. In the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, a PA police colonel, Rajeh Abu Lehiya, was ambushed and killed by Hamas member Emad Akel, who was seeking vengeance for the death of his brother at the hands of PA riot police a year ago. Hamas sent in large numbers of militants to the camp to prevent PA police from taking action. Street fights broke out between Hamas militants and PA troops that lasted all day and resulted in the deaths of five Palestinians. Other Hamas members assisted in the killing and then protected Akel afterwards. Abu Shanab said, "He practiced the justice that was lost by the Palestinian Authority."⁷¹

On February 7, 2003, Hamas discussed succeeding Arafat's government. Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahar said that Hamas was in position to take over from the PA, "politically, financially, socially." Interestingly, he said that Hamas would take over by elections, not by force.⁷² Though Hamas and the PA have continued to abide each other's presence, their shared animosity and differing objectives do not bode well for future Palestinian unity.

When Arafat reluctantly appointed Abbas as his prime minister on March 19, 2003, Hamas said it would not cooperate with him. Hamas also responded negatively to the unveiling of the United States "road map for peace" one month later on April 30. Hamas and other militant groups said they would not disarm, as required by the document, and would not honor a cease-fire. However, the Abbas government announced that it would use persuasion, not force, to disarm the militants.⁷³

Public support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip seemed to diminish in response. On May 21, 2003, an estimated 600 Palestinians in the town of Beit Hanoun demonstrated against Hamas and other militant factions whom they felt caused Israeli incursions into their homes. On May 22, Abbas began conducting cease-fire talks with Hamas leaders. Eight days later, Sharon announced that he would ease Israeli restrictions on the West Bank and Gaza Strip if Abbas would crack down on militia groups. In doing so, Sharon placed Hamas in a position where it had to accept a cease-fire or be directly responsible for further violence against the Palestinian people. Moreover, Israel was successful in assassinating senior Hamas militants at an average rate of one a month during the first six months of 2003.

These pressures led Hamas and the PIJ to agree to a three-month cease-fire on June 29. They declared, however, that their observance of the cease-fire was contingent upon Israel abiding by two conditions. First, Israel had to halt all aggression against Palestinians, including demolitions, village closures, sieges, assassinations, arrests and deportations. Second, Israel was required to release all Palestinian and Arab detainees from prisons and return them to their homes. If Israel did not act in accordance with the conditions, then the cease-fire was officially over, and the militant groups would "...hold the enemy responsible for the consequences."⁷⁴

There are several reasons why Hamas agreed to the cease-fire., Rantisi said they agreed to do it "to prevent internal conflict."⁷⁵ However, participation allowed Hamas not only to challenge the PA's role as the sole architect of Palestinian diplomacy, but also to craft a document that served its own purposes. The three-month cease-fire gave Hamas an opportunity to regroup and recuperate from the constant Israeli retaliation of recent months. Furthermore, it could allow Hamas to portray Israel as the belligerent in the future. Any Israeli act that could be construed as aggressive could lead to a renewal of hostilities, which Hamas could portray as Israel's responsibility.

In any case, the ceasefire was limited in scope. On July 13, the PA began a campaign to disarm the militant groups. Hamas and the PIJ responded in a joint declaration, stating they would not surrender their weapons and warned Israel that attempts to do so could jeopardize the delicate truce. In addition, Israel continued its policy of targeting militant leaders throughout the cease-fire. And then on August 19, a Hamas suicide bomber detonated a device aboard a crowded Jerusalem bus, killing 18 people and wounding more than 100. The attack was publicly alleged to be in response to the recent Israeli targeted killings; however, a videotaped statement by the suicide bomber indicated that the bombing was actually in response to an Israeli assassination that occurred in June—long before the cease-fire began. Israel responded to the bombing two days later with the assassination of senior Hamas political activist Abu Shanab. The renewed violence crippled the cease-fire, and Hamas announced shortly afterwards that they would no longer honor the agreement. Hamas blamed Israel for "the assassination of the cease-fire."⁷⁶

Hamas did choose to participate in local municipal elections in the West Bank in December 2004 and in Gaza in January 2005. Candidates associated with Hamas but campaigning under different affiliations ran for office in 26 communities in the West Bank, and won approximately 35% of 306 races. According to Ghazi Hamad, the Editor of Hamas' weekly newspaper, *Ara Salah* "It was a very big percentage. . . . No one expected Hamas to take that percentage."⁷⁷ Such results reflect a voting population that is "disenfranchised by their leaders, frustrated by years of corruption and worn down by conflict with Israel."⁷⁸ According to Birzeit University political scientist Ali Jerbawi "People wanted change...They were tired of 10 years of negotiations [with Israel] that went nowhere. . . . Hamas was the political opposition, and people identified with the opposition, if not with the Hamas ideology itself."⁷⁹

Hamas also participated in the first-ever Gazan local elections at the end of January 2005—marking the first time Hamas openly campaigned for positions in Palestinian elections. The group obtained overwhelming support in Gaza where they secured 75 of the 118 council seats, while Abbas' Fatah and its allies won 39. Although the election was for less than half of the councils in Gaza, the results indicate the widespread support and clout Hamas has continued to maintain in Gaza. Hamas won further important victories in April and July 2005, when the second and third stages of local elections took place, and went on to win the legislative elections on January 2006.

Part of the reason for the success of Hamas is reflected in a broader-range public opinion poll conducted by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Politics can be as local in Gaza and the West Bank as in the US, and Palestinian relations with Israel and other countries were only part of the issues driving Palestinian perceptions. The survey found broad Palestinian willingness to compromise with Israel on a variety of issues, but it also found trends in Palestinian popular opinion regarding the operations of the Palestinian Authority, and Fatah versus Hamas, which do much to explain the results of the 2005 and 2006 elections:⁸⁰

Figure 1

Palestinian Public Opinion on the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, and Hamas

Palestinian Authority Governance and Legitimacy (in Percent)

	1996	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Support President	71	47	33	25	35	38	44
Adequate Quality of Democracy	43	21	21	16	19	23	35
Adequate Quality of Performance	64	44	40	32	37	23	41
Corruption a Major Problem	49	76	82	85	82	84	87

Support for Fatah versus Islamists (in Percent)

	1993	1996	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Fatah	41	55	37	28	28	26	28	39*
Islamists	23	13	17	26	25	30	32	34*

* After Arafat's death.

Source: Adapted from Khalil Shikaki, "Willing to Compromise, Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process," Washington, USIP, Report 158, January 2006.

Hamas has enjoyed considerable foreign support, particularly from Iran and Syria. The ties between Hamas and Iran developed gradually. Initially, the Sunni Hamas ignored or rejected the Iranian revolution as Shi'ite – although a few leaders of Al-Majama quoted leading Iranian revolutionaries – and focused almost exclusively on Sunni groups and issues. It also took a relatively ambiguous position on the 1991 Gulf War because of its dependence on rich Gulf donors and its rivalry with the PLO.

Iran actively courted Hamas after the 1991 Gulf War, and meetings took place between a Hamas delegation and Iran's foreign minister in October 1992. While it is unclear just how much Iranian support Hamas obtained, Hamas did set up a small office in Iran and its leaders visited there regularly. The leaders of Hamas also met regularly with the leaders of the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Iran seems to have provided Hamas with up to several million dollars a year from 1993 onwards, and some Israeli estimates reach as high as \$20 to \$30 million. In early 1999 Palestinian police reported that Hamas might have already received \$35 million to carry out sabotage operations against Israelis in the Gaza Strip.⁸¹ However, it is doubtful that Iran was able to provide such large amounts of arms and military training, and that the assistance and support it provided had costs this high. It is also doubtful that extensive cooperation between Hamas and Hezbollah existed in training or operations, although there certainly has been some coordination.⁸²

Cooperation between Hamas and the Hezbollah increased as the Israeli-Palestinian War continued. Iran has played a pivotal role in trying to unite Islamic forces in the struggle against the Jewish state. In late April 2001, "The International Conference on the Palestinian Intifada" was convened in Tehran, and was attended by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah, Khalid Meshal of Hamas, and the PIJ's Ramadan Shalah. At the conference, Meshal stressed the linkage of the brotherhood between the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements.

Hamas has also enjoyed considerable support from Syria, which included allowing Hamas to train and operate in Lebanon and providing it with logistical support and safe-havens.⁸³ The present status of Hamas' relationship with Syria has become less clear, partly because of the Syrian reaction to pressure from the United States. On May 3, 2003, Syrian President Bashar Assad ordered the closures of the offices of Hamas, the PIJ, and other Palestinian militant groups in Syria. The move was in response to pressure from the U.S. State Department, which threatened economic or diplomatic penalties against Syria if the Assad government did not act.⁸⁴ However, it is not apparent that the closures ended Syria's role in Hamas activity. A Western diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told the New York Times on July 14 that, "While there has certainly been a diminution of activity, there is still evidence that operational activity is continuing of a terrorist nature...As long as some of these leaders have a cell phone and a laptop, they will be able to operate."⁸⁵

As for the future, it is simply too soon to know whether Hamas will moderate to the point where any cease fires or participation in a peace process can be more than a tactic. The charter of Hamas effectively rejects Israel's right to exist, and Senior Hamas leaders rejected any compromise before and after the January 2006 elections. However, some Hamas leaders have repeatedly said they are willing to offer a long-term truce to Israel, and other Hamas voices were at least somewhat more ambiguous following Hamas's electoral victory.

An analysis by Louisa Brooke of the BCC notes that,⁸⁶

Abdul Aziz al Rantissi told the Israeli newspaper Haaretz (18.6.03) "No one can guarantee that Hamas will be able to bring about the land's liberation within 100 or 200 years. Without dramatic changes in the region, it will be impossible. We can't tell our people to continue in an unequal struggle. But we also can't tell them to give in.' This led him (Rantissi) to a view that has hitherto been associated with those defined as the movement's "moderates": If Israel would withdraw from all the land it captured in 1967, dismantle all the settlements and enable an independent Palestinian state, 'there will be an end to the struggle, in the form of a long-term truce.'

This echoes comments Rantissi made to the BBC in 2002, when he said "the main aim of the intifada (uprising) is the liberation of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, and nothing more. We haven't the force to liberate all our land. It is forbidden in our religion to give up a part of our land, so we can't recognise Israel at all. But we can accept a truce with them, and we can live side by side and refer all the issues to the coming generations."

Mahmoud al-Zahar, the top Hamas official in Gaza, told CNN's "Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer" that a "long-term hudna or long-term truce" is possible. He would not commit to negotiating with Israel and would not say whether recognizing Israel's existence is a long-term possibility.⁸⁷

Al-Zahar said if Israel "is ready to give us the national demand to withdraw from the occupied area [in] '67; to release our detainees; to stop their aggression; to make geographic link between Gaza Strip and West Bank, at that time, with assurance from other sides, we are going to accept to establish our independent state at that time, and give us one or two, 10, 15 years time in order to see what is the real intention of Israel after that....We can accept to establish our independent state on the area occupied [in] '67."

Zahar did not say how long an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza would be acceptable. Key conditions could allow Palestinians to give a "long-term hudna or long-term truce," and "after that, let time heal," he said. But asked about Hamas' call for Israel's destruction, Zahar would not say whether that remains the goal. "We are not speaking about the future, we are speaking now," he said.

Zahar argued that Israel has no true intention of accepting a Palestinian state, despite international agreements including the Road Map for Middle East peace. Until Israel says what its final borders will be, Hamas will not say whether it will ever recognize Israel, Zahar said. "If Israel is ready to tell the people what is the official border, after that we are going to answer this question."

"Negotiation is not our aim. Negotiation is a method," Zahar said. Asked whether Hamas would renounce terrorism, Zahar argued the definition of terrorism is unfair. Israel is "killing people and children and removing our agricultural system -- this is terrorism," he said. "When the Americans [are] attacking the Arabic and Islamic world whether in Afghanistan and Iraq and they are playing a dirty game in Lebanon, this is terrorism." He described Hamas as a "liberating movement."

Asked whether a Hamas-led government would cancel the security and civilian liaison offices and security coordination with the Israelis, Ismail Haniyah said: "Sir, there were agreements in history that were called the Sykes-Picot agreements. They divided the Arab and Islamic world into countries. However, we deal with these agreements as a status quo, but we do not approve of them. We do not approve of dividing the Arab and Islamic world. The same applies to the situation on the ground in the Palestinian territory, where an occupation is imposed. There is a reality imposed on the Palestinian people. We deal with this reality, but we do not recognize it. We deal with this reality, but we do not recognize its legitimacy. Rather, we employ the resistance, steadfastness and unity to expel the occupation, so that the Palestinian people would live freely and honourably."⁸⁸

On February 4, Mahmoud Abbas met with senior Hamas leaders (Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Zahar) for the first time to discuss the next cabinet. They told reporters they did not intend to recognize Israel, in spite of US and European statements they would cut off aid and a previous Israeli halt to funding the Palestinian Authority. Israeli sources indicated, however, that Hamas could raise some \$150 million a year and use it far more efficiently than the Palestinian Authority.⁸⁹

Islamic Jihad

Islamic Jihad has also employed unconventional tactics in the war against Israel. The PIJ, however, is more secretive than Hamas, and does not play the high-profile charitable and social role in Palestinian society that Hamas does. It does not operate schools, hospitals or health clinics, although it does give money to the families of militants killed in action.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad do share several similarities. Islamic Jihad's objective is to drive the State of Israel from land that it considers to be Palestinian territory. Both movements ultimately hope to construct an Islamic theocracy in Palestine, and both are committed to violence in order to achieve their objectives. Like Hamas, the Islamic Jihad's struggle is directed against both non-Muslims and Arab regimes that have "deviated" from Islam and which have attacked or suppressed the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹⁰ Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian War, the Islamic Jihad and Hamas have been allies and, on some occasions, collaborators in their conflicts with both Israel and the PA.

Islamic Jihad began as a radical, ideological offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, the original Sunni pan-Arab Islamist movement, and was formed in reaction to the Brotherhood's growing rejection of militancy. Unlike Hamas, however, Islamic Jihad is not simply a Palestinian group. Elements of the Islamic Jihad have appeared in almost all the Arab states and in some parts of the non-Arab Islamic world under various names. These groups have been influenced by the success of the revolution in Iran, and by the growth of Islamic militancy in Lebanon and Egypt. According to Israeli sources, the Palestinian factions of the Islamic Jihad are part of the Islamic Jihad movements that appeared in the Sunni Arab world in the 1970s. These movements are characterized by a rejection of the Brotherhood's "truce" with most of the existing regimes in the Arab world. They perceive violence as a legitimate tool in changing the face of Arab societies and regimes.

The Palestinian factions of the Islamic Jihad (known collectively as the PIJ) do see the "Zionist Jewish entity" embodied in the State of Israel as their foremost enemy and primary target. They see "Palestine" as an integral and fundamental part of the Arab and Muslim world where Muslims are "subjected" to foreign rule. The fact that Israel is perceived as foreign and non-Muslim allows the Islamic Jihad to use different methods of resistance than those adopted by similar groups operating against Muslim and Arab regimes. The PIJ calls for armed struggle against Israel through guerrilla groups composed of the revolutionary vanguard. These groups carry out terrorist attacks aimed at weakening Israel and "its desire to continue its occupation". These attacks lay the groundwork for the moment when an Islamic army will be able to destroy Israel in a military confrontation.

The PIJ movement has always been divided into factions. The element that has become dominant since the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO was originally named "Shekaki/Ouda," after its co-founders Dr. Fathi Shekaki and Abed el-Aziz Ouda. Ouda also served as the organization's spiritual leader. Shekaki and Ouda were both from Gaza, and founded their faction based on their exposure to similar political groups in Egyptian universities. They coordinated various groups in Gaza when they returned from their studies, and may have had some responsibility for a grenade attack on an Israeli army induction ceremony at the Western Wall in October 1986, that killed one person and wounded 69.

Both Shekaki and Ouda were deported from Gaza to Lebanon in 1988. They then reorganized their faction to establish a military unit to carry out attacks against Israeli targets, alongside the existing political unit. This unit seems to have played a role in an assault on an Israeli tourist bus in Egypt in February 1990 that killed nine Israelis and two Egyptians, and wounded 19. There is also evidence that they were responsible for killing two people and wounding eight in a knifing attack in Tel Aviv in March 1993. Around the time of the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO in September 1993, Shekaki used his close ideological and political ties with Iran to gradually push aside Ouda. He soon became recognized as the sole head of the group. He renamed the Syrian-based organization the Shekaki Faction and remained in Damascus serving as its undisputed leader until alleged Mossad agents assassinated him in Sliema, Malta on October 26, 1995.⁹¹

The PIJ made no secret of its commitment to violence after the Oslo peace accords or about its ties to Iran.⁹² It distributed anti-peace propaganda, material and tapes, and used the mosques as centers for anti-peace activity. It also established a newspaper called Al-Istiqlal, which appears in the area under the jurisdiction of the PA and is edited by Ala Siftawi. Shekaki often boasted of his ties with Iran — which, he said, were strengthened following his first visit to Tehran in December 1988. Unlike Hamas, his faction had close ties to the Hezbollah from the start.⁹³

Shekaki praised the Islamic Republic and its political and spiritual support of the Palestinian people's efforts to continue the jihad and to achieve independence. In 1994, however, he claimed that the PIJ did not receive Iranian military aid and did not have a base in Iran, yet he claimed that Iranian support for his organization and Hamas amounted to \$20 million a year.⁹⁴

The PIJ intensified the tone of its anti-Israeli statements after the murder of PIJ activist Hani Abed in Gaza on February 11, 1994. Shekaki said, "The continuation of the jihad against the Zionist occupation is our primary concern and the center of our lives".

The PIJ was less successful between late 1995 and the outbreak of war in September 2000, but it scarcely abandoned violence. Similar to Hamas, the PIJ also changed the character of its operations, focusing heavily on suicide bombers. Whereas Hamas began its campaign against Israel with organized demonstrations and car bombs, and later escalated to suicide bombings, an emphasis on the use of suicide bombings characterized the PIJ's operations from the beginning of the war.

Roughly one month after the war began, on October 26, 2000, the PIJ claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in the Kisufim settlement in Gaza that injured one Israeli soldier. The bombing marked the fifth anniversary of the death of Shekaki and was the first suicide bombing of the war. PIJ leader Ramadan Abdallah Shallah, a former professor from the University of South Florida, suggested that the bombing was "a new opening for suicide action..." and would "...be the beginning for more operations against Israeli soldiers."⁹⁵

On November 2, 2000, the PIJ demonstrated what was to become its secondary tactic of the war. A car bomb exploded in a Jerusalem marketplace killing, *inter alia*, the daughter of National Religious Party leader Rabbi Yitzhak Levy and wounding ten Israelis. Between November 2, 2000, and early October 2001, the PIJ claimed responsibility for at least five additional car bomb attacks in which two Israelis were killed and at least 110 were injured.⁹⁶ These attacks included a car bomb that exploded in Jerusalem's Talpiot area (the city's "industrial" zone where there are many nightclubs and dance bars) on March 27, 2000, a car bomb that exploded at the central bus station of Hadera on May 25, one that exploded outside of a Netanya school on May 30, and one that exploded in a residential area of Jerusalem on October 1, but caused no serious injuries.

In addition to suicide attacks and car bombs, the PIJ carried out other forms of attack. On May 27, a bomb exploded in central Jerusalem, containing several mortar shells, some of which were propelled hundreds of meters from the site of the explosion. The Israeli police conducted extensive searches for the shells, and found six mortars intact in a 300-meter radius. The Israeli police expressed grave concern, emphasizing the likelihood that such an attack could only have been possible had mortars been smuggled into the West Bank and Gaza from areas outside of Israel.⁹⁷

The PIJ reportedly has had little difficulty finding recruits for suicide bombings.⁹⁸ By 2003, a number of recruits had allegedly defected from Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. On January 26, 2003, Knight-Ridder reported that the new recruits could number from several dozens to several hundreds. According to Israeli officials, the increase in membership began after the Megiddo Junction attack on June 5, 2002, and resulted from the fact that the PIJ will not make long-term peace with Israel, but is less strict than Hamas. Another attraction was that the PIJ reportedly paid US \$5,000 to the surviving family members of suicide bombers, which on average was \$2,000 more than Hamas typically paid during 2002.⁹⁹

Despite Islamic religious constraints, PIJ suicide bombers have come to involve women. On May 19, 2003, a 19-year-old woman, Hiba Daraghme, detonated a bomb at a shopping mall in the northern Israeli town of Afula. Three people died and dozens more were wounded. This was the PIJ's first use of a female suicide bomber, which was particularly surprising due to the group's radical fundamentalist Islamic beliefs. After the attack, the PIJ distributed newsletters to universities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, praising its female fighters.¹⁰⁰ One PIJ trainer reportedly said, "Our women are no longer the type of women who cry or weep. We have martyrdom women now."¹⁰¹ The PIJ adopted the tactic because of its element of surprise, and its use marked a clear distinction from Hamas, which has long opposed the use of female suicide bombers.

The success of the PIJ's suicide attacks is another example of the impact of asymmetric warfare on the conventional balance of military forces. A quarter of a century of military and paramilitary training and "terrorist" training camps have had a limited impact on Israel. Untrained youths, however, had a major impact during the first Intifada. Since that time, the PIJ and Hamas have found that using Islamic organizations to locate idealistic "true believers," giving them a short indoctrination for preparation, and then sending them out on suicide missions, gives the Palestinian Authority and Israel far less warning than using trained personnel, and produces far more casualties and has a greater political impact. Like Hamas, its loose, decentralized, and compartmentalized organization lacks the transparency of the hierarchical structures of military and paramilitary groups and thus makes it more difficult for Israeli anti-terror units and the Palestinian security services to detect and penetrate those cells.¹⁰²

The PIJ has had a largely adversarial relationship with the PA. As mentioned previously, in the first few months of the war, Yasser Arafat attempted to placate the militant factions and encourage anti-Israeli demonstrations by releasing Hamas and PIJ militants from PA jails.¹⁰³ In October 2000, PIJ activists were granted representation in the PA High Committee Follow-Up Intifada Nationalist Islamic Organizations, which planned rallies in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰⁴

The Tel Aviv discotheque bombing on June 1, 2001, marked the first time that the PIJ not only had a dramatic impact on the war, but also on the PA. As a result of the deaths, injuries, and sheer terror of the incident, Arafat announced that he would attempt to enforce a cease-fire among the militant factions. While he had previously ignored Sharon's calls for a truce, the PA now began to arrest PIJ and Hamas supporters. On June 23, PA security forces arrested Sheikh Abdullah Shami, the PIJ's spiritual leader. PIJ supporters formed a human wall around Shami's house, delaying the arrest.¹⁰⁵

On November 4, 2001, the PA arrested PIJ militant Mahmoud Tawalbi in Jenin. The arrest set off protests by 3,000 Palestinians, who fired guns, threw grenades, and burned cars. The PA was forced to fight against its own people, who were encouraged by Hamas.¹⁰⁶ Throughout November and December 2001, the PA arrested Hamas and PIJ militants and the two sides clashed on several occasions.

The PIJ's relationship with Arafat's government worsened in 2002. This was caused in part by Israeli retaliation against the PA for PIJ actions. For example, on June 5, following the Megiddo Junction suicide bombing, Israeli troops stormed Arafat's Ramallah compound and destroyed PA buildings.¹⁰⁷ Four days later, PA security personnel again arrested al Shami, allegedly for criticizing Arafat in Palestinian newspapers.¹⁰⁸

The PIJ has expressed the desire to replace the Arafat regime. On January 24 – 28, 2003, PIJ representatives met with delegates from 11 other Palestinian factions in Cairo to discuss inter-

group cooperation and a possible cease-fire. They were unable to agree on the cease-fire but did agree to form a coalition, which could ultimately take over the Palestinian Authority.¹⁰⁹

On March 11, 2003, the PIJ dismissed the notion of a Palestinian Authority prime minister, saying it could never accept a post created under pressure from the U.S. and Israel.¹¹⁰ Following the introduction of the U.S.-drafted “road map” for peace on April 29, the PIJ also rejected cease-fire efforts. However, surprisingly, on June 19, PIJ and Hamas leaders met with Abbas to discuss a halt in the violence.

On June 25, senior PIJ militant Mohammed al-Hindi reported that Hamas had asked the PIJ to issue “a joint declaration which is based on a comprehensive three-month cease-fire.”¹¹¹ On June 29, both Hamas and the PIJ agreed to the temporary cease-fire, though both parties refused to surrender their weapons to the Abbas government on July 13.

Publicly, the PIJ stated that it agreed to the cease-fire because of Hamas’ requests.¹¹² However, at least three other factors seem to have influenced the group. First, a number of countries had become actively hostile to militant extremism and terrorist activity in the preceding months. This was reflected in both the U.S.-led coalition’s removal of the Saddam Hussein regime from power in Iraq and increasing U.S. pressure on countries known to support terrorism, such as Syria. Second, anti-militant protests broke out in the Palestinian village of Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip in May, following repeated Israeli incursions. The villagers blamed Hamas and the PIJ for the Israeli operation. This indicated a possible decline in the PIJ’s public support. Finally, both the PIJ and Hamas likely required a three-month period to recuperate from recent Israeli retaliation.

The PIJ initially adhered to the cease-fire agreement despite the Israeli assassination of the PIJ militant Muhammed Sider in Hebron on August 14. However, the PIJ followed Hamas’ lead, and withdrew from the truce on August 22, following the Israeli targeted killing of the Hamas senior activist Abu Shanab a day earlier.

The PIJ has benefited from continued foreign support. Iran is often perceived as its key foreign sponsor. Indeed, on April 24, 2001, representatives from Hamas, Hezbollah and the PIJ met in Tehran in a gesture of solidarity. According to the Associated Press, they issued a joint message to Israel: Expect combat, not dialogue.¹¹³ On July 18, 2002, the American Jewish Committee released a new report, stating that the PIJ was responsible for “Islamicizing” Palestinians and establishing a deadly relationship between Palestinians and Iran.¹¹⁴

Syria has also been a major supporter. When the PIJ joined in the protests of a Jordanian crackdown against Hamas in September 1999, it did so out of its office in Damascus and in cooperation with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah Intifada.¹¹⁵

On May 3, 2003, Syrian President Bashar Assad ordered the closures of Hamas, PIJ, PFLP-General Command, and other militant factions’ offices in Damascus. However, Western diplomats believe that the groups are still using Syria as a base for planning future terrorist activity.

The PIJ has a small membership base and support network compared to the Hamas but has nonetheless succeeded in executing many suicide attacks against Israelis, even inside Israel. The PIJ’s main areas of support are in the West Bank cities of Hebron and Jenin. It is believed that the group is trying to develop weapons capabilities similar to the Qassam rockets used in Gaza.¹¹⁶

Fatah Tanzim (“Organization”)

Fatah Tanzim (“Organization”) is the youthful paramilitary wing of Fatah. In 1995 Fatah created the Tanzim to counter the growing strength of the anti-PA factions on the streets. It was created in part from the remnants of Fatah militias from the Intifada known as the “Fatah Hawks.”¹¹⁷ Though the Tanzim supported Yasser Arafat and the PA, it has taken a “no-compromise position” on the peace process and supports a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood.¹¹⁸ It has participated in demonstrations as well as armed violence against Israelis throughout the war.

Many of its senior leaders participated in the Intifada in 1987. Fatah leaders have largely attempted to exclude Tanzim members from Fatah’s higher offices. Indeed, only Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti also holds a high office in Fatah.¹¹⁹

Tanzim cells, which are active in most Palestinian neighborhoods, reportedly take their orders from Tanzim’s commanders – not from Fatah or the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs insists that Arafat has active links with the Tanzim leadership, though responsibility for their actions cannot be traced to him. The Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot has reported that the Tanzim is financed directly by the PA, though this has not been reported elsewhere.¹²⁰ Tanzim’s strongest concentration is within the Palestinian universities, particularly in Bethlehem’s Birzeit and An-Najah universities.¹²¹

It is unknown exactly how many Tanzim members there were at the time the war began in September 2000. A 2001 United Press International report stated that the group had “...3,500 militants but no tangible military assets.”¹²² However, in October 2000, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs alleged that, “The Tanzim has tens of thousands of weapons of all kinds – from pistols to machine guns.”¹²³ While in 2001, Gal Luft alleged in the Middle East Quarterly that Tanzim possessed roughly 30,000 weapons.¹²⁴ The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) further stated that the group had stockpiled German MP-5 submachine guns, as well as assault rifles and anti-tank missiles.¹²⁵

If Fatah served as the “brains” of the initial uprising in late 2000, then the Tanzim served as the “fists.” The Tanzim took the leading role in organizing the first wave of hostilities against Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian War. Tanzim forces were initially led by Marwan Barghouti, who was also the leader of Fatah in the West Bank. The highly charismatic and popular Barghouti called upon ordinary Palestinians to rise up against Israel in protests and riots. Barghouti also attempted to coordinate early efforts between the various armed factions until the violence escalated beyond his control.

The Tanzim repeatedly organized “days of rage,” in which gun battles broke out between IDF soldiers and Tanzim militiamen. One Israeli official remarked that a pattern emerged in the Tanzim-organized street violence by October 2000: stone-throwing at day and “a full-fledged shooting war” at night.¹²⁶ Tanzim militants targeted both Israeli soldiers and settlements. Some reports suggested that Tanzim militiamen were interspersed with PA security personnel and the two organizations cooperated on attacks against Israelis.¹²⁷

Since the beginning of the war, the Tanzim employed two main tactics in its attacks against Israel – shootings and car/roadside bombings. From September 27, 2000, to January 1, 2004, the ICT counted 54 separate shooting incidents in which Tanzim militants attempted to injure or kill Israeli soldiers or settlers.¹²⁸ The group has also conducted bombings of Israeli cars and buses, though much less frequently. Unlike other militant groups, most of the Tanzim’s attacks have generally occurred within the borders of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The group has also

notably rejected the use of suicide bombings, which has become characteristic of movements such as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The Tanzim has become more violent during the course of the conflict. On April 15, 2002, Israeli forces arrested Tanzim leader Barghouti in Ramallah. In August, nearly four months later, he was formally charged with multiple counts of murder against Israeli civilians. The indictment accused him of heading Tanzim operations, as well as those of the West Bank Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Nevertheless, even in jail, Barghouti continued to play a significant role in the Israeli-Palestinian War by helping to negotiate the cease-fire between the various Palestinian militant factions, including the Tanzim, in June 2003. However, in May 2004 Barghouti was convicted in an Israeli court for the murder of five Israeli civilians and being involved in four terrorist attacks. On June 6, 2004 the court sentenced Barghouti to five consecutive life sentences plus 40 additional years in prison (20 for attempted murder, 20 for membership in a terrorist organization).¹²⁹

Tanzim has a membership that is made up of mostly adult Palestinian males between the ages of 25-30 within the Palestinian autonomous areas, 'graduates of the Intifada,' most of who are either university students or recent graduates. Its membership is supposedly in the tens of thousands with some of the Tanzim's leadership serving in the Palestinian security services as field commanders under Jibril Rajoub.¹³⁰

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades first appeared in September 2000, shortly after the Palestinian uprising began. It has since become one of the most active and violent militias in the Israeli-Palestinian War. The group is closely aligned with Fatah. Similar to Fatah, it is both secular and nationalist. Al-Aqsa activist Maslama Thabet has attempted to define the relationship: "The truth is, we are Fatah itself, but we don't operate under the name Fatah. We are the armed wing of the organization. We receive our instructions from Fatah. Our commander is Yasser Arafat himself."¹³¹

Like the Tanzim, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades reject concessions to Israel. It supports an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, as well as a right of return for Palestinians to their former homes in Israel. The Brigades believes that the use of violence, including terrorist activity, is a legitimate tactic for achieving its objectives. As an armed militia independent of the PA, the group serves largely the same role as the Tanzim, allowing Arafat and his allies to strike adversaries without being directly implicated. Based on this mandate, the Brigades' have carried out attacks against Palestinians as well as Israelis, with the targets ranging from those who opposed Arafat's rule, such as moderate journalists and politicians, to those suspected of collaborating with Israeli authorities.

Little is known about the Brigades' leadership and organizational structure. The group is composed of a network of cells in the main cities of the West Bank and Gaza. These cells include military units, which are responsible for carrying out anti-Israeli terrorist attacks, and security units, which are in charge of both planning these attacks and safe-guarding the group's internal security. The Brigades' main strongholds are in the West Bank cities of Nablus and Ramallah and the refugee camps in the surrounding areas.¹³² Its total strength in manpower and material is unknown. Israeli officials believe that Fatah and Tanzim member Marwan Barghouti originally provided leadership, before his arrest and later conviction. They also believe that the group's current executive high commander, Taufik Tirawi, has taken refuge in Arafat's Ramallah compound.

More is known about the Brigades' finances. The Israeli government has provided evidence that the PA provides financial support for the Brigades, paying members' salaries and providing weapons. On April 2, 2002, Israel released an invoice that was seized in Arafat's office during Israel's Operation Defensive Shield. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs had sent the invoice to General Fouad Shoubaki, the PA's chief financial officer for military operations. The invoice requested reimbursement for electrical and chemical components of explosives. It also asked for additional funds to construct bombs and to finance propaganda posters.¹³³

In early June 2004 the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades began threatening to break away from Fatah over accusations that Yasser Arafat and other top Fatah leaders had halted financial aid to the militia's members. This led a senior Fatah official in Ramallah to inadvertently confirm that Brigades members had been receiving monthly salaries from the Palestinian Authority. The Jerusalem Post quoted the official as saying, "We [(the PA) no longer] ... have enough money to pay them. Besides, we are under heavy pressure from the international community to cut off our links with the group."¹³⁴ On June 12, in response to the Brigades' potential mutiny, Arafat invited its members to be incorporated into various branches of the PA security forces. The group, however, rejected Arafat's offer. According to Nayef Abu Sharkh, one of the Brigades' West Bank leaders, they "feel disgusted and disgraced at belonging to a movement that is led by corrupt officials. We feel this way because we have been abandoned and neglected by the Fatah leadership."¹³⁵

Then on June 15, the Fatah Central Council decided to form a special committee of senior Fatah officials and cabinet officials to study the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades' demands for renewed financing, and in doing so for the first time formally acknowledged the Palestinian Authority's responsibility for the militia.¹³⁶ In early July 2004, the Brigades presented senior Palestinian officials with a 10-page formal proposal "outlining its demands and recommendations for participation in the government."¹³⁷ Specifically, the document called for "the expulsion and prosecution of government officials involved in corruption, a wholesale purge of relatives and cronies of senior officials from government payrolls and a halt to the practice of government officials monopolizing sectors of the Palestinian economy to 'line their private pockets.'"¹³⁸

Although the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades' manifesto was widely circulated among senior Palestinian officials, the Palestinian Authority did not provide them with an official response. Evidence indicates that Arafat chose to ignore their concerns and refuse their demands. On July 16, 2004, militants from the Popular Resistance Committees—including gunmen affiliated with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—temporarily kidnapped the Palestinian Authority's senior security chief in Gaza, Ghazi Jabali, in the attempt to draw attention to their allegations that he had stolen \$22 million in public funds. In response, Arafat fired Jabali and appointed his cousin, Moussa Arafat, to take his place. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades perceived the move as a clear indication that Arafat remained reluctant to "surrender some of his powers and reform a government system riddled with corruption."¹³⁹ Frustrated by Arafat's failures to address their concerns, Al-Aqsa gunmen in Rafah began shooting at uniformed Palestinian security forces soon after the announcement regarding Moussa Arafat's appointment.

Through early August 2004, Brigades members continued to play a prominent role in the uprising against Palestinian Authority corruption in Gaza. In addition to leading anti-corruption demonstrations and making numerous public statements calling for governmental reform, members' actions included exchanging gunfire with PA security personnel, conducting raids on PA security force offices, and preventing PA representatives from speaking at public engagements.

It is difficult to predict how the relationship between Fatah and the Brigades will evolve following Arafat's death. Nevertheless, it is likely that any lasting split will negatively affect the peace process since the PA would lose control over the Brigades' terrorist activities and as Abu Sharkh has stated, the Brigades "will not abide by any [cease-fire] agreement if they do not negotiate with us face to face."¹⁴⁰

The Brigades' combat tactics were similar to the Tanzim's throughout 2001. The group participated in shootings against Israeli soldiers and settlers, primarily within the West Bank and Gaza. However, in January 2002, the Brigades began what became a long series of suicide bombings. On January 27, the Martyrs' employed the first female suicide bomber in the war. The young woman blew herself up on a busy shopping street, Jaffa Road, in Jerusalem.

The Brigades grew increasingly more effective and violent in 2002. On August 17, the Washington Post reported that in the course of the previous year the Brigades had established the largest number of militant cells among the known extremist groups in the West Bank and had accepted responsibility for more than twice as many suicide bombings as Hamas. The Palestinian psychiatrist and civil rights activist Eyad Sarraj said, "[Al-Aqsa was] thrown into the competition of suicide bombing in Israel because they want the support of the public and they felt the public support swinging towards Hamas, so they had to do the same thing."¹⁴¹

This did not prevent some of the Brigades leaders from playing a role in trying to establish a ceasefire. On June 29, 2003, Mahmoud Abbas (with the help of Marwan Barghouti) concluded a cease-fire arrangement between Hamas, the PIJ and the militias aligned with Fatah, including the Martyrs' Brigades. The Brigades initially condemned the cease-fire, though it eventually agreed to a six-month truce (which was ultimately cut short as described earlier).¹⁴²

It became apparent in the weeks following the Brigades' signing of the cease-fire, however, that the militia was loosely organized and lacked the authoritative, centralized leadership necessary to ensure its members adhered to the ceasefire. For instance, the leader of the Brigades faction in Nablus stated that his specific group had not agreed to the cease-fire and was still planning attacks against Israelis. The Brigades' branches in Jenin and Qalqilyah also publicly announced opposition to the truce.¹⁴³ Hence, attacks by Brigades members continued throughout the cease-fire. In fact, Brigades operatives in Nablus murdered a Bulgarian worker that they believed was Israeli less than 24 hours after the cease-fire was signed.¹⁴⁴

After the cease-fire was terminated in late August, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades remained one of the most active Palestinian militant groups. According to the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism's Casualties Database, the Brigades was responsible for at least nine more terrorist attacks against Israeli military personnel and civilian settlers throughout the rest of 2003. These included three suicide bombings and six shootings that killed a total of nine Israelis and seriously injured another seven.¹⁴⁵

In 2004, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades continued to be one of the most active Palestinian factions conducting terrorist attacks against Israeli targets. From January—May 2004, the Brigades claimed sole responsibility for two suicide bombings and nine shootings that in total killed 18 people and wounded 83.¹⁴⁶ In addition, some of the most prominent Brigades operations in early 2004 were carried out in collaboration with other Palestinian militant groups not aligned with the Palestinian Authority. These four joint attacks—three suicide bombings, a suicide car bomb and small arms assault on the Erez crossing and a roadside shooting ambush—killed 33 people and wounded an additional 85 people.

As of early January 2005, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades had not unilaterally conducted a suicide bombing since April 17 and only three smaller scale strikes, shootings on July 6 and August 13 and a bus stop bombing on July 11, since April 25. The Israeli government claims the reduction in Brigades attacks against Israeli targets is due to increased border security brought on by the construction of the security barrier system and Israeli counter-terrorism efforts, mainly their targeted assassination policy. For example, between late February and late June 2004, the IDF killed most of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades leaders in Nablus.

On February 29, IDF soldiers fatally shot wanted Brigades member Muhammad Oweiss in a "capture or kill" raid on the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. Later that day, at Oweiss's funeral the IDF assassinated another wanted Nablus Brigades member, Rihad Abu Shallah. In another "capture or kill" operation on May 2, the IDF killed the group's senior military commanders in Nablus, Nadir Abu-Layl and Hashim Abu Hamdan, along with two other Brigades members.¹⁴⁷ On June 14, Khalil Marshud, the head of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Nablus, was killed in a targeted IAF helicopter gunship strike.¹⁴⁸ And on June 26, during a "capture or kill" raid on the Old City of Nablus, IDF soldiers killed Naef Abu Sharh, the military leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in the city.¹⁴⁹

Although Israeli efforts have had a significant impact on Brigades activities, Brigades' members such as Hani Uwaidah, the Al-Aqsa Commander in Tulkarm, have offered a different explanation. In mid-June he told the Jerusalem Post that the fact that "the PA stopped paying his salary a few months ago.... was the main reason why he and his friends had halted their attacks against Israel."¹⁵⁰ Since mid-June 2004 Members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades have also played a leading role in acting out against corruption in the Palestinian Authority. Thus, whether or not the downward trend in the Brigades' operational capabilities can primarily be attributed to Israeli counter-terrorism activities or internal Fatah-Brigades tensions—and whether it will continue to decline—remains to be determined.

Smaller Militant Groups

The US provides the following declassified intelligence data the size and activities of the smaller Palestinian militant groups in its annual country reports on terrorism:¹⁵¹

Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) a.k.a. Fatah Revolutionary Council, Arab Revolutionary Brigades, Black September, Revolutionary Organization of Socialist Muslims

The ANO international terrorist organization was founded by Sabri al-Banna (a.k.a. Abu Nidal) after splitting from the PLO in 1974. The group's previous known structure consisted of various functional committees, including political, military, and financial. In November 2002 Abu Nidal died in Baghdad; the new leadership of the organization remains unclear.

...The ANO has carried out terrorist attacks in 20 countries, killing or injuring almost 900 persons. Targets include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, moderate Palestinians, the PLO, and various Arab countries. Major attacks included the Rome and Vienna airports in 1985, the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, the hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in Karachi in 1986, and the City of Poros day-excursion ship attack in Greece in 1988. The ANO is suspected of assassinating PLO deputy chief Abu Iyad and PLO security chief Abu Hul in Tunis in 1991. The ANO assassinated a Jordanian diplomat in Lebanon in 1994 and has been linked to the killing of the PLO representative there. The group has not staged a major attack against Western targets since the late 1980s.

...Strength: Few hundred plus limited overseas support structure.

...Al-Banna relocated to Iraq in December 1998 where the group maintained a presence until Operation Iraqi Freedom, but its current status in country is unknown. Known members have an operational presence in Lebanon, including in several Palestinian refugee camps. Authorities shut down the ANO's operations in Libya and Egypt in 1999. The group has demonstrated the ability to operate over a wide area, including the

Middle East, Asia, and Europe. However, financial problems and internal disorganization have greatly reduced the group's activities and its ability to maintain cohesive terrorist capability. ...The ANO received considerable support, including safe haven, training, logistical assistance, and financial aid from Iraq, Libya, and Syria (until 1987), in addition to close support for selected operations.

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) a.k.a. PLF-Abu Abbas Faction

The Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) broke away from the PFLP-GC in the late 1970s and later split again into pro-PLO, pro-Syrian, and pro-Libyan factions. The pro-PLO faction was led by Muhammad Abbas (a.k.a. Abu Abbas) and was based in Baghdad prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

...Abbas' group was responsible for the attack in 1985 on the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro and the murder of US citizen Leon Klinghoffer. Abu Abbas died of natural causes in April 2004 while in US custody in Iraq. Current leadership and membership of the relatively small PLF appears to be based in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The PLF has become more active since the start of the al-Aqsa Intifada and several PLF members have been arrested by Israeli authorities for planning attacks in Israel and the West Bank.

...Strength: Unknown.

...Based in Iraq since 1990, has a presence in Lebanon and the West Bank.

...Received support mainly from Iraq; has received support from Libya in the past.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

...Formerly a part of the PLO, the Marxist-Leninist PFLP was founded by George Habash when it broke away from the Arab Nationalist Movement in 1967. The PFLP does not view the Palestinian struggle as religious, seeing it instead as a broader revolution against Western imperialism. The group earned a reputation for spectacular international attacks, including airline hijackings that have killed at least 20 US citizens.

...The PFLP committed numerous international terrorist attacks during the 1970s. Since 1978, the group has conducted attacks against Israeli or moderate Arab targets, including killing a settler and her son in December 1996. The PFLP has stepped up its operational activity since the start of the current Intifada, highlighted by at least two suicide bombings since 2003, multiple joint operations with other Palestinian terrorist groups, and assassination of the Israeli Tourism Minister in 2001 to avenge Israel's killing of the PFLP Secretary General earlier that year.

...Strength: Unknown.

...Location/Area of Operation: Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

...Receives safe haven and some logistical assistance from Syria.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)

The PFLP-GC split from the PFLP in 1968, claiming it wanted to focus more on fighting and less on politics. Originally it was violently opposed to the Arafat-led PLO. The group is led by Ahmad Jabril, a former captain in the Syrian Army, whose son Jihad was killed by a car bomb in May 2002. The PFLP-GC is closely tied to both Syria and Iran.

...Carried out dozens of attacks in Europe and the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. Known for cross-border terrorist attacks into Israel using unusual means, such as hot-air balloons and motorized hang gliders. Primary focus is now on guerrilla operations in southern Lebanon and small-scale attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

...Strength: Several hundred.

...Headquartered in Damascus with bases in Lebanon.

...Receives logistical and military support from Syria and financial support from Iran.

Palestinian Approaches to Asymmetric Warfare

The Palestinians have had far fewer opportunities than the Israelis to use new weapons and tactics. They have been tightly contained and pushed into a defense mode. As the previous discussion of Palestinian militant groups has shown, however, they have made some shifts in both their tactics and their equipment.

Suicide Bombings

The primary Palestinian counter to Israel's conventional strength has been suicide bombings: The same tactic hard-line Palestinian militants used to undermine the peace process before the Israeli-Palestinian war began. There have, however, been some changes. Five weeks after Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000 and the ensuing riots in the compound in Jerusalem's Old City, an additional element was introduced into the Israeli-Palestinian War in the form of car bombings and suicide bombings. On November 2, 2000, a car bomb explosion, near Jerusalem's popular downtown Mahane Yehuda market marked the beginning of a new wave of fatal bombings.

By early June 2001, extremist Palestinian groups carried out at least nine suicide and ten car-bombing attacks, and had left several explosive devices on roadsides. Their attacks killed a total of 51 Israelis and injured at least 630, not to mention the psychological damage of countless witnesses.¹⁵² While Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed responsibility for the majority of these attacks, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack in the center of Jerusalem on May 27, 2001. In addition, there were several car and suicide bombings for which responsibility has never been clarified due to that fact that either no group claimed responsibility, or for which several groups claimed responsibility.¹⁵³

The extent to which the Palestinian Authority encouraged, turned a blind eye to, or attempted to prevent suicide bombers from perpetrating attacks has been the subject of constant dispute since the start of the conflict. What has been verified, however, was that in the first days of the Israeli-Palestinian War, the PA leadership released a substantial number of prisoners known to have planned, or have been involved in, attacks including suicide bombings, against Israeli targets prior to the start of the war including suicide bombings.

According to Israeli sources, the released prisoners—dozens of Hamas and PIJ activists— included Muhammad Deif, one of the men responsible for several bombings in Israel; Adnan al-Ghul, a top bomb-making expert responsible for several suicide bombings that swept Israel in February to March 1996, killing 59 Israelis; and Mahmud Abu-Hannud, another wanted man whose whereabouts remained unknown. Israeli officials immediately charged that this mass release created an atmosphere for future bombings.¹⁵⁴

There are a number of possible explanations for this release. The most widely speculated has been that the PA released the prisoners for internal reasons—in order to unify Palestinians of various political streams in light of an anticipated long-term confrontation with Israel. Another explanation has been that it was done in order to increase the pressure on the Israeli public and leadership.

In any case, it is still unclear whether any bombings can be classified as an “official” Palestinian tactic. Much depends on the actual degree of coordination between the Palestinian leadership on the one hand, and the organizers and perpetrators of the attacks on the other hand. It is most often near impossible to determine the PA's role in such attacks since they are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to claim responsibility—at least to the international community.

Some analysts note that the number of suicide attacks declined after early June 2001, when international pressure on Yassir Arafat intensified following a suicide bombing in a Tel Aviv discotheque that killed 21 Israelis. At the time, Arafat called for an immediate ceasefire. Still others point to statements by Hamas and other organizations following that suicide bombing. Where such groups opposed the Palestinian Authority and stated that they would not adhere to a ceasefire and would continue with their attacks. Such analysts argue that these statements prove that Hamas, and other groups not associated with the PA, were defying Arafat's orders and thereby concluded that those organizations are not receiving orders from the PA, or might otherwise have grown more independent in the course of the Israeli-Palestinian War.

What has been clear during both the peace process, and throughout the fighting that has followed, is that anti-peace groups can successfully use suicide bombings for their own political and military purposes. Such bombings have given small Palestinian factions the ability to block or shatter ceasefires and peace efforts regardless of their size and political support.

The willingness of suicide bombers to die—and the willingness of those who sponsor, organize, and equip such bombers to sacrifice them—makes it extremely difficult to deter or defend against suicide attacks. At the same time, suicide bombings often succeed in causing physical destruction and even greater and more extensive psychological damage to their targets.

The IDF has tried a number of different solutions to suicide bombings, from closures to increased patrolling of border areas, and from large-scale retribution and assassinations to a policy of restraint. None has yet been fully successful, although a combination of such tactics and new barrier defenses has seemed to offer at least temporary reductions in the number and effectiveness of such bombings.

Mortars and Rockets

Although the IDF has been able to keep the Palestinians from obtaining conventional artillery, it has not been able to prevent them from employing other, less accurate forms of long-range attack systems. The Palestinians introduced two new elements into the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in early 2001—mortar and rocket attacks.

Initially, Palestinians mortar fire concentrated on IDF outposts and Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, but they eventually began reaching targets in Israel proper as well. On January 3, 2001, six mortar shells were fired at an IDF base near the disputed Shebaa Farms region on the Israel-Lebanon border. At the time, the IDF did not rule out that a faction supported by the PA was responsible for the attack, since the tactic was considered atypical of Hezbollah.¹⁵⁵

On January 30, 2001, Palestinian elements in Gaza fired mortars for the first time. A mortar landed on the roof of a house in a neighborhood close the Netzarim junction. The IDF established that standard 82mm Soviet mortars and improvised 60mm mortars were being used. They labeled such attacks a “new trend” in Palestinian warfare and “a clear escalation” in tactics. The 82mm mortars were believed to have been smuggled into Gaza from Egypt through underground tunnels near Rafah, or perhaps underwater by sea. The 60mm mortars appeared to be manufactured in the Gaza Strip, possibly with the help of Hezbollah. On June 21, 2001, a 120mm mortar round with a range of 4-5 kilometers—the largest type used since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian War—was fired on the Karni industrial zone. The mortar was also thought to have been made in Gaza.

The IDF attributed the introduction of mortar capability in large part to Massoud Ayyad, a lieutenant colonel in Arafat's Force 17 security force. Israelis suspected him of leading a Gaza-

based cell of Hezbollah, and assassinated him in Gaza on February 13, 2002.¹⁵⁶ While Palestinian mortar attacks have not caused extensive injuries or harm to infrastructure to date, they have acted as psychological weapons and have the potential to escalate a crisis. On April 17, 2001, for example, the IDF responded to Palestinian mortar fire targeted at Sderot—a town near the Gaza Strip and only a few miles away from a farm owned by Prime Minister Sharon—by mounting a 24-hour invasion of Palestinian-ruled areas in Gaza, destroying houses and military posts, and uprooting trees. This was the first time that mortars landed on a town in Israel proper.

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times on April 10, 2001 a Palestinian leader of a unit that carried out mortar attacks against Israeli targets described the rationale of Palestinian mortar attacks. Using his nom de guerre, Abu Jamal, the interviewee said, “it's true that it is not a very accurate weapon, but we don't actually care that it's not 100% accurate. Whether or not it hits the target, we want to create confusion and terror. We want the Israelis to think that their army cannot protect them.”¹⁵⁷

Mortars have been used in more direct attacks. For example, in central Jerusalem on May 27, 2001, 52mm mortar shells shot from a vehicle landed unexploded on a porch of a house and in a public park hundreds of yards away. While mortar shells had been used before in bombs, up until this point, such attacks had all taken place in or near the Gaza Strip. The mortars used in the May 27 attack were thought to have originated in the West Bank. This was a grave concern for Israelis, for they had long feared that extremist Palestinian groups in the West Bank might one day obtain mortars. Due to the proximity of Israeli population centers to the West Bank, they can be used to inflict casualties and damages with considerably more precision than rockets launched from fire points in Gaza.

In another mortar attack on November 24, 2001, one IDF reservist was killed and two other IDF soldiers were wounded when Hamas militants fired mortar shells at the Gush Katif community of Kfar Darom in Gaza. This marked the first fatal mortar attack since the war began. It was not until one year later, on December 2, 2002, that another mortar was reportedly launched. This time one Palestinian was killed, and nine others were wounded, when members of Islamic Jihad launched two mortars at the Erez industrial zone in Gaza—clearly revealing the inaccuracies of such weapons.

Palestinian militants began constructing crude unguided rockets in workshops throughout the Gaza Strip in early 2001. The initial model was designed and produced by Hamas and dubbed the Qassam-1, after Hamas' military wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades. The 79cm-long 60mm-caliber Qassam-1 had a 4.5kg warhead and a maximum range of 1.5-2 kilometers. The first Qassam-1 was fired on July 10, 2001, destroying an IDF bulldozer in the Gaza Strip. In October and November 2001, multiple Qassam-1 rockets were fired at the Israeli settlement of Gush Katif, IDF outposts around the Erez border crossing, and the town of Sderot in Israel, although none of these launchings caused any serious injuries or damage.¹⁵⁸

By early 2002, Hamas had developed and began production on an upgraded version of the Qassam rocket. The 180cm-long and 120mm-diameter Qassam-2 is capable of carrying 5 to 9kg of explosive payload and has an average range of 8-9 kilometers. The first Qassam-2 rockets were launched at Kibbutz Saad and Moshav Shuva on February 10, 2002. The relatively unsophisticated design of all Qassam rocket variants has made them fairly easy to produce using generally available components and makeshift facilities.¹⁵⁹

Although Hamas has been the principal manufacturer of Qassam rockets, both Hamas and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades members have carried out Qassam rocket attacks. Israeli

security officials allege that the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades has consistently supported Hamas' efforts with the tacit approval of the Palestinian Authority.¹⁶⁰ In addition, by the summer of 2003 the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad had developed and began launching its own type of rocket, called the Al-Quds, although these have been less effective than the Qassam series.¹⁶¹

As of late 2004, all rocket attacks had still occurred in or originated from the Gaza Strip, although evidence indicates that Palestinian militants have been trying to extend the capabilities to manufacture Qassam rockets to the West Bank for some time. For instance, a truck carrying eight Qassam-II rockets was stopped at an IDF roadblock southeast of Nablus on February 6, 2002, and two rocket assembly workshops were uncovered by the IDF in the Balata refugee camp outside of Nablus later that month.¹⁶² During an August 7, 2003 raid on the West Bank town of Jericho, IDF forces arrested eighteen Palestinian security personnel whom allegedly were setting up Qassam factories there.¹⁶³

In total, over 350 rockets were launched at Israeli targets in and around Gaza from mid-2001 to late 2004. Due to their simplistic design and haphazard construction however, the rockets have produced few casualties and little collateral damage. In fact, as of late 2004, only two rocket attacks have resulted in fatalities--June 29 and September 29, 2004 Qassam-2 rocket attacks on Sderot each killed two Israeli civilians.¹⁶⁴ Despite the minimal physical impact that launching rockets has produced, as in the case with mortar fire, Palestinian militants have continued to utilize this tactic due to the effect it has on the Israeli psyche.

The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, and election of a Hamas-dominated legislature in January 2006, did not change this situation. Neither has the creation of an Israeli "no go" for Palestinians in the Northern Gaza. The Palestinians continued to fire rockets into Israel. On February 3, 2006, for example, a rocket was fired from the Gaza that hit an Israeli trailer in the Negev, wounding three, including an infant. That same day, Hezbollah had fired mortars against an Israeli position in the Sheba Farms area along the Lebanese-Israeli border. Israeli replied with artillery and rocket strikes.¹⁶⁵

Political Warfare and Weapons of Mass Media

Palestinian tactics responded to the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War as much by political means as military means. Arafat sought to rebuild his image in the eyes of the Arab world and international community; maintain his influence over the Palestinian people; and survive Israeli military assaults. He fought back with both political statements and attempts to reform the Palestinian Authority.¹⁶⁶ On December 16, 2001, in a speech broadcasted on Palestinian television, Arafat called for "a complete cessation of any operation or actions, especially suicide attacks" which provides Israel with a pretext for "military aggression."¹⁶⁷ In this speech, Arafat repeatedly affirmed that the Palestinian Authority had always condemned suicide-bombing attacks.

This address marked the first time during the Israeli-Palestinian War that Arafat pleaded so broadly and visibly for an end to the violence against Israel.¹⁶⁸ However, it was scarcely an altruistic appeal. Arafat was responding to the IDF effort to isolate him—by making a public speech that sought to place him "above the fray" and removed himself as far as possible from accusations of being associated with terrorist networks. Arafat also acted due to increased pressure from the international community. In a meeting in Brussels on December 10, the EU's foreign ministers told Arafat that he must "arrest and prosecute all 'suspects' and appeal, in Arabic" for an end to the Palestinian's armed struggle.¹⁶⁹ If Arafat wanted to maintain some degree of European support—he had to comply.

Arafat also showed he could still do much to curb the daily fighting, ambushes, roadside booby traps, and suicide attacks against Israel.¹⁷⁰ As of December 21, 2001, Arafat detained at least 185 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members—although only five were estimated to be among the top 36 on US envoy General Zinni’s “most-wanted” list and the other 180 were low-level Hamas and PIJ members. Most of the 180 low-level militants were placed under “loose ‘house arrest.’”¹⁷¹ Then on December 12, 2001, Arafat shut down Hamas and PIJ offices.

Arafat, however, continued to mix politics with warfare. Only two days later, he withdrew the order. Moreover, he failed to confiscate the illegal weapons found in the hands of popular resistance committees, and Fatah-associated groups. There is also no evidence of a serious attempt to dismantle activities such as mortar-manufacturing factories and the smuggling infrastructure established across the Egypt-Gaza border.¹⁷²

This mix of political statements, arrests, and asymmetric warfare is typical of Arafat’s tactics in negotiating without abandoning armed struggle up to the time of his death. Arafat also responded to Israeli and international pressure on a number of occasions by making token or limited arrests; while many militants on the Israel and United States most-wanted list were able to escape Arafat’s law enforcement. It is likely that some were not arrested because Arafat’s forces were unable to operate effectively, in part due to the damage they had suffered from Israeli forces. In most cases, however, it seems more likely that Arafat responded to Israeli pressure by offering a slight “crackdown” on terrorism—enough to help bolster his international credibility and maintain his support at home among the Palestinian people.

More broadly, the Palestinian advantage in exploiting political warfare has had a powerful impact in international relations and the world media, but it also had limits. Palestinian suicide bombings, for example, have a major detrimental effect on the Palestinian image. For example, the series of Palestinian suicide bombings that culminated in an explosion in front of a Tel Aviv discotheque that killed 21 Israelis on June 1, 2001, drastically shifted the balance of world opinion in favor of Israel.¹⁷³ The Palestinians can exploit their “underdog” status when they are under attack by Israel, but become “terrorists” when they go on the offensive.

Palestinian Strategic Challenges

The most basic changes the Palestinians face is deciding on the strategy they wish to pursue in advancing the peace process and in their ongoing asymmetric war of attrition with Israel. These are not necessarily contradictory goals. Since the Oslo Accords, the Palestinians have consistently pursued both options at the same time, just as Israel has pursued both peace and settlements.

The contradictions and tensions in Palestinian and Israeli politics do, however, make any mix of Palestinian efforts based on attacks on Israel extremely costly, and may well trigger new Israeli efforts at security barriers, settlements, and expanding the territory Israel intends to keep. More broadly, the Palestinians face the following strategic challenges:

Creating a new political balance, new structure of government, and a new balance of control over Palestinian security forces as a result of Hamas’s victory in the January 25, 2006 elections;

Dealing with the hostile reaction to that victory from Israel and the US.

Deciding whether Hamas is willing to evolve into a political party that can advocate a meaningful peace process and some kind of accommodation with Israel.

Determining whether the new government can create unified and effective Palestinian security forces and the role they should play.

Finding out what new balance of financing and aid can be achieved to support the Palestinian Authority and its security forces as a result of Hamas's victory and Israeli and US threats to reduce or eliminate aid and financing.

Developing new political, aid, and security arrangements with other Arab states. These include security arrangements with Egypt, and security relations with Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria.

Dealing with the political, economic, and military impact of Israel's steadily improving security barriers.

Finding sources of advice, funding, and arms for its security forces.

Determining the extent to which militias and forces outside the Palestinian Authority security forces should now be integrated with the Palestinian Authority security forces.

There is no way to make an mid or long-term estimate of how well the Palestinians will deal with these security challenges. The short-term prognosis is clearer. Whatever happens, relations between the Palestinians and Israel will now be more troubled than before. Creating effective Palestinian security forces capable of supporting the peace process will be more difficult, and both sides will show even less trust in the other.

Figure 2
CIA Profile of Gaza and West Bank - Part One

<u>Category</u>	<u>Gaza</u>	<u>West Bank</u>	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Jordan</u>
Total Area (sq. km)	360	5,860	20,770	92,300
Land Area (sq. km)	360	5,640	20,330	91,971
Land Borders (km)	62	404	1,017	1,635
Egypt	11	-	266	-
Gaza	-	-	51	-
Iraq	-	-	-	181
Israel	51	307	-	238
Jordan	-	97	238	-
Lebanon	-	-	79	-
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	744
Syria	-	-	76	375
West Bank	-	-	307	97
Coastline (km)	40	0	273	26
Land Use (Percent)				
Arable	26.32	NEGL	17.02	2.87
Permanent Crops	39.47	0	4.17	1.52
Meadows & Pastures	0	32	7	9
Forest & Woodland	11	1	6	1
Other	34.21	100	78.81	95.61
Irrigated (sq. km)	120	-	1,990	750
Population	1,376,289	2,385,615	6,276,883	5,759,732
(% 0-14 years)	48.5	43.4	26.5	34.5
(% 15-64 years)	48.8	52.2	63.7	61.7
(% 65+ years)	2.6	3.4	9.8	3.8
Growth Rate (%)	3.77	3.13	1.48	2.56
Birth Rate (per 1,000)	40.03	32.37	18.21	21.74
Fertility Rate (Per Woman)	5.91	4.77	2.54	2.71
Net Migration Rate (per 1,000)	1.54	2.88	-	6.42
Death Rate (per 1,000)	3.87	3.99	6.18	2.63
Infant Mortality (per 1,000)	22.93	21.24	7.03	17.35
Life Expectancy (yrs.)	71.8	73.08	79.32	78.24
Ethnic Divisions				
Arab	99.4	83	19.9	98
Armenian	-	-	-	1
Circassian	-	-	-	1
Jew	(0.0)	17	80.1	-
Religion				
Christian	0.7	8	2.1	6.0
Jew	0.0	17	80.1	-
Muslim	99.3	75	15.9	92.0
Other	-	-	5.5	2,0-

Figure 3
CIA Profile of Gaza and West Bank - Part Two

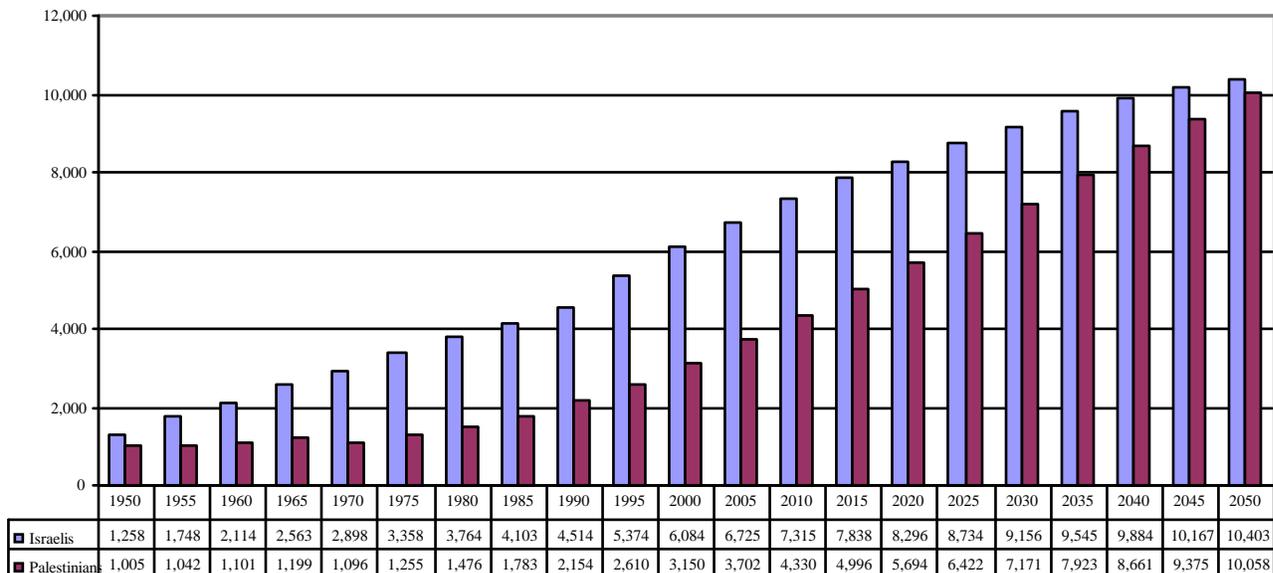
<u>Category</u>	<u>Gaza</u>	<u>West Bank</u>	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Jordan</u>
Literacy	-	-	95.4	86.6
Labor Force	278,000	614,000	2,420,000	1,460,000
Construction (%)	-	-	8	-
Agriculture (%)	11.9	9.0	2.6	5.0
Industry (%)	18.0	28.0	20.2	12.5
Commerce (%)	-	-	12.8	82.5
Other Services (%)	70.1	63	26.8	-
Public Services (%)	-	-	31.2	-
GDP (PPE in \$billion)	.768	1.8	139.2	27.7
Real Growth Rate	4.5%	6.2	4.3	5.5
GDP Per Capita (\$US)	600	1,100	22,200	4,800
Inflation Rate (%)	3.0	3.3	1.3	-
Unemployment Rate (%)	31.0---	19.9	8.9	15.0-30.0
Population Below Poverty Line (%)	81.0	46.0	21.0	30.0
Budget (\$B)				
Revenues	(.964-----)	.964	43.8	3.68
Expenditures	(1.34-----)	1.34	58.0	4.69
Trade (\$M)				
Exports	(270-----)	270	40,100	4,226
Imports	(1,952-----)	1,952	43,200	8,681
External Debt (\$M)	(0-----)	0	44,600	8,459
Economic Aid (\$M)	(2,000-----)	2,000	662-	500
Transportation				
Railroads (km)	0	0	647	505
Roads (km)	-	4,500	17,237	7,364
Paved (km)	-	2,700	17,237	7,364
Airports	2	3	51	17
Runways 1,500M+	-	1	13	6
Runways 3,000M+	1	0	2	7
Telephones	(301,600-----)	301,600	3,006,000	622,000
Cellular	(480,000-----)	480,000-	6,334,000	1,325,300
Internet Users	(145,000-----)	145,000	2,000,000	
Televisions	-	-	1,690,000	500,000
Stations	2	-	17	20
Radios	-	-	-	1,660,000
AM Stations	0	1	23	6
FM Stations	0	20	15	5
Short-wave	-	-	2	1

Source: Adapted from CIA, World Factbook, 2006, various country sections,

Figure 4

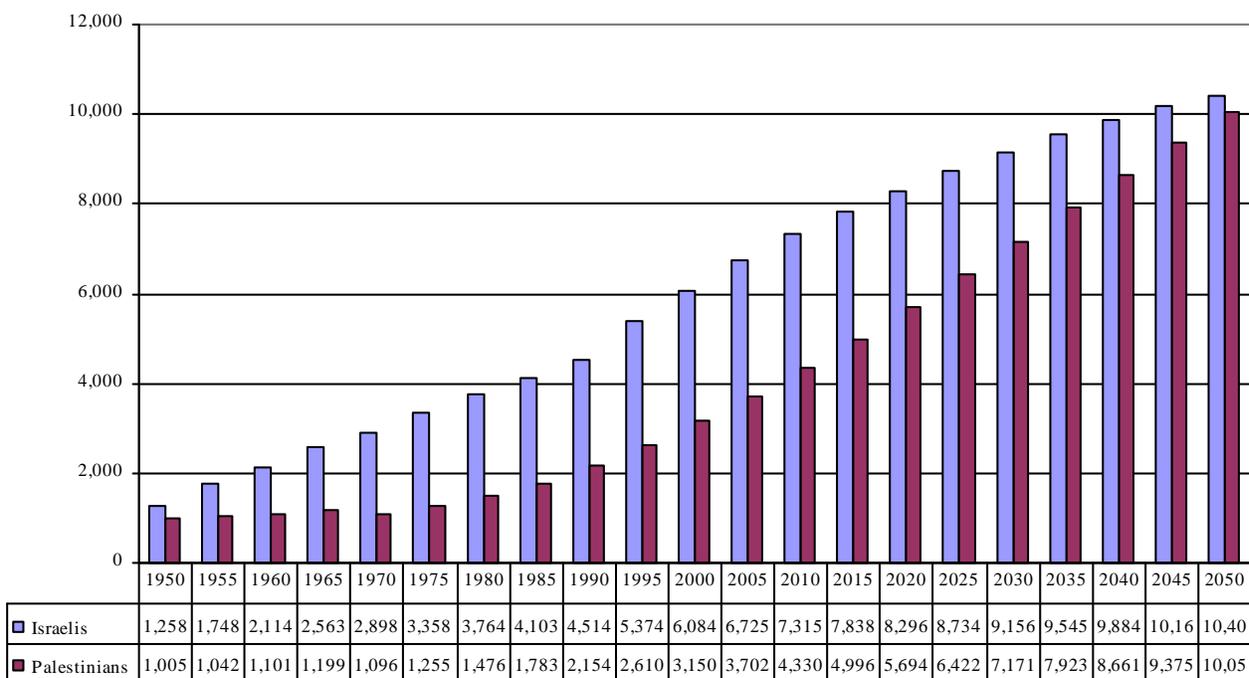
Palestinians and Israelis: Total Population in Israel, the Gaza, West Bank, and Greater Jerusalem: 1950-2050

UN Estimate (In Thousands)



Notes: i) Palestinian population is that of the occupied territories. It does not include refugees. ii) These projections are based on medium variant. Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>, January 31, 2006.

US Census Bureau Estimate



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base.

Figure 5

Military and Paramilitary Strength of Key Palestinian Factions and The Hezbollah at the start of the Israel-Palestine War

Palestinian Authority

29,000 Security and paramilitary pro-PLO forces enforcing security in Gaza and Jericho, including:

Public Security (14,000) – 6,000 in Gaza and 8,000 in West Bank

Civil police (10,000) – 4,000 in Gaza and 6,000 in West Bank

Preventive Security (3,000) – 1,200 in Gaza and 1,800 in West Bank

General Intelligence (1,000),

Presidential Security (500),

Military Intelligence (500), and

Additional forces in Coastal Police, Air Force, Customs and Excise Police Force, University Security Service, and Civil Defense.

Equipment includes 45 APCs, 1 Lockheed Jetstar, 2 Mi-8s, 2 Mi-17s, and roughly 40,000 small arms. These include automatic weapons and light machine guns. Israeli claims they include heavy automatic weapons, rocket launchers, anti-tank rocket launchers and guided weapons, and manportable anti-air missiles.

The PA wants 12,000 more security forces after further withdrawals. Israel had proposed some 2,000.

Pro PLO

Palestinian National Liberation Army (PNLA)/Al Fatah – 5,000-8,000 active and semi-active reserves that make up main pro-Arafat force, based in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen under the tight control of the host government.

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) – Abu Abbas Faction - 200 men led by Al-Abbas, based in Syria.

Arab Liberation Front (ALF) – 500 men led by Abdel al Rahim Ahmad, based in Lebanon and Iraq.

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) – 400-600 men led by Naif Hawatmeh, which claims eight battalions, and is based in Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) – 800-1000 men led by Ahmed Sadaat, based in Syria, Lebanon, West Bank, and Gaza.

Palestine Popular Struggle Front (PSF) – 200 men led by Samir Ghawsha and Bahjat Abu Gharbiyah, based in Syria.

Anti-PLO

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) – 500 men in various factions, led by Assad Bayud al-Tamimi, Fathi Shakaki, Ibrahim Odeh, Ahmad Muhana, and others, based in the West Bank and Gaza.

Hamas - military wing of about 300 men, based in the West Bank and Gaza.

As-Saiqa – 600-1,000 men in pro-Syrian force under Issam al-Qadi, based in Syria.

Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC)/Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) – 300 men led by Abu Nidal (Sabri al-Bana), based in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC) - 500 men led by Ahmad Jibril, based in Syria, Lebanon, elsewhere.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – Special Command (PFLP-SC) - 50-100 men led by Abu Muhammad (Salim Abu Salem) based in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) – 2,000 men, based in Syria.

Fatah Intifada – 400-1,000 men led by Said Musa Muragha (Abu Musa), based in Syria and Lebanon.

Hezbollah (Party of God)

About 300-500 actives with 2,000 men in support, Shi'ite fundamentalist, APCs, artillery, MRLs (107 and 122 mm), rocket launchers, recoilless launchers, AA guns, SA-7 SAMs, Anti-tank missiles (AT-3 Sagers, AT-4 Spigots).

Source: Adapted from US Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism, various editions; IISS, The Military Balance, various editions.

Figure 6
Current Palestinian and Lebanese Forces

Origin	Organization and Aims (Remarks)	Established	Estimated Strength	Status	Operates
Lebanon	Asbat al-Ansar Advocates Salafism, opposed to any peace with Israel	1990s	300	Active	Lebanon
Lebanon	Hezbollah (Party of God) • Islamic Jihad-Revolutionary Justice Organization • Organization of the Oppressed on Earth • Iran-style Islamic republic in Lebanon; all non-Islamic influences removed from area (Shi'ite; formed to resist Israeli occupation of south Lebanon with political representation in Lebanon Assembly).	1982	2,000+	Active	Bekaa Valley, Beirut, south Lebanon, Shebaa Farms
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade • Associated, though not officially backed, by Arafat Military offshoot of Fatah	2000	Not known	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Al Saika Military wing of Palestinian faction of Syrian Ba'ath Party (Nominally part of PLO)	1968	300	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Arab Liberation Front Achieve national goals of Palestinian Authority (Faction of PLO formed by leadership of Iraq Ba'ath party)	1969	500	Dormant	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) Achieve Palestinian national goals through revolution (Marxist-Leninist; splintered from PFLP)	1969	100+	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel

Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Fatah Tanzim Armed militia link to Fatah	1995	1000+	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hamas) Islamic Resistance Front Establish an Islamic Palestinian state in place of Israel	1987	Not known	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (IDQ) • Replace Israel with Islamic state in Palestinian Areas (Armed wing of Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hamas); separate from overt organization)	1991	500	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) • Destroy Israel with holy war and establish Islamic state in Palestinian areas (One of the more extreme groups from the Palestinian areas.)	1970s	Estimated 500	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) • Armed struggle against Israel (Splintered from PFLP)	1977	300-400	Dormant	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) Armed struggle against Israel (Marxist-Leninist)	1967	1000	Active	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel
Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC) • Armed struggle against Israel (Marxist-Leninist; Split from PFLP to focus on fighting rather than politics)	1968	500	Dormant	Palestinian Autonomous Areas of Gaza and Jericho, Israel

Notes:

- Group known to carry out suicide attacks

A—active

C—cease-fire

D—dormant (inactive for the past 12 months)

Source: Various editions of the IISS Military Balance, US, British and other experts

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