



The Paradox of
Israeli-Palestinian Security:
Threat Perceptions and
National Security vis-à-vis
the Other in Israeli
Security Reasoning

Netanal Govhari

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Introduction

This article tracks the historical development and evolution of the Israeli public and elite's threat perceptions and security doctrines and approaches to the conflict, as an evolutionary process from a multilateral perception (the perception of the conflict as a conflict with the 'Arabs'), to the bilateral perception (the recognition of a distinctive Palestinian national problem) and back to the multilateral one (by encapsulating the Palestinian issue in the Arab upheavals of the last decade). The paper also incorporates the Palestinian Authority's security forces build-up, its recent evolution of the main security approach towards Israel, the characteristics of the current Palestinian security apparatus and cooperation with Israel, and an appreciation of the Palestinian public perception towards it. This historic account, it is argued here, illuminates both the Israeli and the Palestinian (PA's) security paradoxes which stands as a fragile basis for the current extensive security cooperation between the parties. The conclusions are mainly directed to the Israeli audience, highlighting the need to break the boundaries of self-centred security perceptions, and dedicate a better and a more understanding appreciation of what Palestinian security means.

Israeli Security Evolution

Regional Conflict Perception (Towards the 'Arabs'), the Eastern Front, Defensible Borders, Settlements, and Linear Defence – the Era of Israeli Conventional Threats Perceptions

The regional dimension of Israeli perception of the conflict as a conflict with the general Arab world has always been profound, and it has had a great impact on the evolution of Israeli threat perceptions, and military and security doctrines (Rodman, 2001: 71). The Arab dimension, that has had Israel fighting six full-scale wars in the first half a century of its existence,¹ laced with Arab leader's and media discourses explicitly promising its annihilation, have contributed to the social construction of an Israeli collective memory and narrative that did not even recognise the existence of a distinctive Palestinian national identity and problem per se. As Shlomo Brom stated – paradoxically, Israel adopted the paradigm of Pan-Arabism. The Arab world was understood as one unitary actor that was artificially divided by the colonial powers into separate states that did not represent authentic and separate national movements, but one major ethnic group. In accordance, Israel did not accept the notion of Palestinian nationalism or identity in its first decades of existence, and even the consolidation of a Palestinian leadership was regarded as a pawn in the hands of the major Arab rejectionists, under the leadership of Egypt's Nasser, to Jewish existence in the region.²

1 Though some were directly related to Palestinian terror skirmishes harboured in Arab countries.

2 The best manifestation of this narrative was provided by Golda Meir's interview for Thames Television in 1970, where she contended that there is no Palestinian nation and that in mandatory Palestine there were only Arabs and Jews (minute 18:30), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3FGvAMvYpc>.

This narrative was better entrenched in the political and security echelons of Israel as long as the Arab world – as one unit – represented an existential threat to the country. The threat perception itself was that of conventional warfare with the Arab states, characterising Israel's first decades of existence. In that framework, the most significant military doctrinal emphasis was on the Eastern Front, whereby for the eastern Arab conventional armies, (namely – Iraq, Syria and Jordan), the West Bank served as a mountainous jumping board to attack Israel right at its narrow waist and strategic heart,³ cutting Israel in half and leaving it defenceless.⁴ Having no defensible borders in its narrow version, the state relied on the military principle of 'Pre-emptive Attack' – meaning, having a superior air force that would gain air control in case of a war and enable ground forces to progress safely, redeploying along defensible natural barriers (Weizman, 2004: 222).

With such a pre-emptive attack Israel entered the 1967 war during which it eventually conquered the West Bank from Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula (including the Gaza Strip) from Egypt. With the understanding that Israel would not always be able to intercept military amassing a few kilometres off the country's geopolitical core, the need to insure its defensible borders based on natural barriers that would be able to withhold conventional attacks, became paramount (Brom, 2007: 4). These natural barriers were – after Israel's surprising gains of the war – the Suez Canal and the Jordan Valley. The Israeli leadership, still preoccupied with conventional threat perceptions and with the early signs of what was to develop into the 'War of Attrition',⁵ was to take advantage of them, while also formulating a policy towards the Palestinian Arab population that have fallen under its control.

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- 3 That being the Gush-Dan area which constitutes the geopolitical core of the state, where approximately 70% of the state's population, economic activity and industry is located.
 - 4 An example of this was the Jewish fear of the 1948's stationing of Iraqi military forces in Qalqilya and Tulkarem.
 - 5 Where the Arab states turned to low-intensity warring along the new frontlines in order to gradually exhaust Israel.

Settlement construction has also played a significant role in the state's security doctrine since Israel's early days and the *Yishuv* era. In that sense, agricultural *Kibutzim* and other settlements served as population-based defensive strongholds that could help the country resist conventional attacks.⁶ This strategic thinking also characterised the Israeli leadership of the post-1967 era with the introduction of the settlement plan of Yigal Alon. This plan was part of Israel's security doctrine to strengthen the country's position for either the next round of conventional warfare, or a conflict resolution process with the Arab states (Ben Sasson-Gordis et al, 2017: 7). In that sense, the Israeli leadership did not envision permanent Israeli control over the whole West Bank territory but sought a solution that would encapsulate both geographic (maintaining defensible borders on the Jordan Valley) and demographic realisations (a solution to the Palestinian Arab population of this territory).⁷ Therefore, the main aspect of the Allon Plan was to populate only areas that were scarcely populated by Palestinian Arabs and mainly cement Israeli control over the Jordan Valley with the construction of agricultural settlements. In relation to the new demographic realisations of 1967, the preliminaries to the Allon Plan were characterised by the Israeli cabinet's contemplation between the 'Palestinian Option', i.e., the establishment of an autonomy, or eventually an independent Arab state in the West Bank that would be geographically encircled by Israel,⁸ and the 'Jordanian Option' – to hand over the control of the populated core of the West Bank territory back to the Hashemite Kingdom (that controlled it before the war), which would connect to the territory through a land corridor near Jericho and with this – constitute a peace agreement between the two countries.⁹ Either way, the Palestinian West Bank was to remain demilitarised, and the Jordan Valley was to remain Israel's

6 One example was the story of the Kibutz of Nirim that was established two years prior to the 1948 war and was able to stand against an Egyptian army force during the war.

7 And also, it is important to note, control over Jerusalem in its entirety.

8 This option was eventually denied by the Israeli cabinet.

9 The Israeli terms in the negotiations with King Hussein in September 1968 were the demilitarisation of the West Bank, the deployment of Israeli troops in the Jordan Valley, that Jerusalem would remain fully under Israeli control, and that a joint authority for the refugees problem would be established (<https://www.haaretz.com/1.4954947>).

defensible border, allaying Israeli fears of its own narrow waist and the threat from the eastern front.

The Haim Bar-Lev Plan, was the military counterpart of the Allon Plan for Israel's fortification of its 1967 new southern frontier's natural barrier, the Suez Canal. Bar-Lev, then the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), devised the fortification of a line of defence right on the eastern bank of the canal, relying on a defensive line formation. Just as the Allon Plan regarded the Jordan Valley, this was a military principle of 'Linear Defense' – meaning the intense fortification of a strong line of defence to prohibit a future Egyptian ability to manoeuvre into Israel. It was the period between this new situation and the trauma of the 1973 war, when Israeli security doctrine saw its next phase of development (Weizman, 2004: 222). Ariel Sharon,¹⁰ the only General to challenge the line doctrine of Bar-Lev, contended that a military cannot win a defensive battle on an outer linear line of defence, notwithstanding the natural barrier of the canal. The logic was that once a breach is made, the whole line renders useless. Instead, Sharon introduced the concept of 'Depth'. As opposed to the Linear defence doctrine, this idea was to construct 'a dynamic system of point-based defence in depth composed of a series of strong points (*Ta'ozim*), spread out on elevated grounds within the terrain on a series of mountain summits that dominated the canal plain. This construction would serve as a matrix of interlocking and connected strong points that could communicate and cover for each other, and flex and adapt better to new situations in the battlefield (Ibid: 223). But Sharon was dismissed, without implementing his plan to the southern frontier and the Bar-Lev Line was the principle that was constructed on the canal. The Bar-Lev Line succumbed to the Egyptian army on the

10 He was then the Chief of the IDF's Southern Command.

morning of the 6th of October 1973, the first day of Egypt's surprise attack. This was the break of the October War – a surprise attack by a coalition of Arab armies that have 'ringed Israeli existential threat bells' and was followed by political havoc in Israel, first signalling the demise of the longstanding Mapai/Labour party's dominance in the Israeli political establishment. Contrary to the outrageous public response of Israelis to the failure of the government in foreseeing and handling the events, Ariel Sharon – that have returned to the army for the war, broken the Egyptian line of defence, encircled the 3rd Egyptian army, and forced an Egyptian surrender – was publicly seen in Israel as the man who had saved the nation (Ibid: 224).

Tectonic Ideological Shifts and the Demise of Conventional Threats

The 'Jordanian option', to hand back the West Bank populated areas to Jordan, did not materialise,¹¹ but the ideological tectonic shifts in Israel were already in place and stimulated, to a large extent, by the 1967 and 1973 wars. One shift was the consolidation of a Palestinian national leadership, embodied in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), invigorated by Nasser himself, accepted by the Arab world and gradually, by the international community.¹² The second was the evolution of religious Zionism and the development of Gush-Emunim,¹³ and the third was the public outrage, spearheaded by Ariel Sharon's 'vociferous accusations against the military and political leadership and its policies...' (Kimmerling, 2003: 71). This culminated in Sharon's establishment of the Likud party, encapsulating the Revisionist Zionist ideology and 'the school

11 Although it was only finally relinquished in 1988, with the failure of the London Talks between Shimon Peres and King Hussein and with the Kingdom officially relinquishing its territorial claims on the West Bank.

12 The European Community (later to become the EU), for instance, have firstly changed the terminology of the 'Israeli-Arab' conflict to a conflict with the 'Palestinians', after the October War (Persson, 2017: 6).

13 This movement represented the merger between secular Zionism and Jewish Orthodoxy, partly based on viewing the 1967 victory as a divine intervention with which the Jews have been re-allowed to roam the biblical lands of their forefathers – Judea and Samaria / the territory of the West Bank and Jerusalem.

of thought that looked upon the establishment of a Palestinian state as an existential threat to Israel' (Brom, 2007: 8). This notion was exacerbated by the June 1974 Ten Points Programme accepted by the PLO in response to the new circumstances of the October War. The plan rejected the acceptance of UN Resolution 242 (that effectively marked the borders of the state of Israel) and called for an establishment of a Palestinian authoritative body and a phased struggle against Israel to liberate 'the whole of the soil of their homeland'. The document stated that 'once it is established, the Palestinian national authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries, with the aim of completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory, and as a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity'.¹⁴

1977 marked the 'Turnover' in Israeli politics. The Likud party won the elections for the first time, marking the new dominance of the right. What had also changed significantly by that time was the general security atmosphere that was at the basis of Israeli threat perceptions. The Arab states were looking inward, the ideology of Pan-Arabism was obsolete, the chances of an Arab war coalition against Israel had plummeted, and a historic peace agreement between Israel and Egypt materialised and was signed on September 1978. Paradoxically, this was the first ever Israeli recognition of the Palestinian problem per se, as the agreement mentioned that 'Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the Palestinian people should participate in negotiations on the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects'.¹⁵ Almost at the same time, Sharon had presented his successor plan to the Allon plan regarding the settlements strategy of the state. Establishing the idea that a thin line of settlements along the Jordan Valley would not suffice in

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- 14 The PLO's Phased Plan (9.6.1974), retrieved from REUT Institute, <http://reut-institute.org/data/uploads/ExternaDocuments/20041116ThePhasedPlan.pdf>.
- 15 BBC News, 'The Camp David Accords of 1979', http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1632849.stm.

terms of defence, he envisioned and invigorated the establishment of settlements on the high terrain of the West Bank and across east-west roads along strategic lines (Weizman, 2004: 225).¹⁶ This transgressed the basic idea behind the Allon plan to settle the strategic line of the Jordan valley which was also scarcely populated by Palestinians. As Eyal Weizman described, 'obsessively engaged with its old wounds, Israel replayed the battle of the canal-side, with the aim of perfecting techniques of fortification and defence, in slow-motion mode, in its now only remaining frontier, the hills and valleys of the West Bank' (Weizman, 2004: 224). This plan introduced Sharon's depth concept of defence to the West Bank territory, and it now had the new abovementioned ideological clients to materialise them. The official Israeli position regarding the West Bank and Gaza, was now the Autonomy Plan – safeguarding territorial claims, and bestowing autonomy to the 'Arab inhabitants' (using the terminology of Menachem Begin) of the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁷

Bilateral Conflict Perception (as Conflict with the Palestinians) and Non-Conventional Threats

It was mainly during the first Intifada, and the works of Israeli Revisionist historians,¹⁸ when Israeli public perception started changing towards recognition of the Palestinian national identity and problem (Coskun, 2010). 'What impressed Israelis most was the popular nature of the uprising', characterised by mostly unarmed mass protests. Gradually, more Israelis, in the public sphere and in the security community, embraced the idea that the Palestinian problem stood on its own, and that this was a problem

16 The main outcome of this plan is what is known today as the settlement blocks which stretch relatively adjacent but east of the Green Line.

17 The Autonomy Plan, Dec, 28, 1977, http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/asp/event_frame.asp?id=20.

18 Namely the works of Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, and Benny Morris.

for a political solution rather than a military one (Brom, 2007: 5).¹⁹ As mentioned above, these events were also accompanied by geopolitical trends more related to the broader regional arena. The demise of Pan-Arabism, the gradual decrease in the USSR's ability to militarily support these countries (until its final demise at the end of the 1980s), the peace agreement with Egypt, and operation Desert Storm, which significantly hampered the Iraqi military strength and diminished a main pillar of what Israel referred to as the danger from the 'Eastern Frontier'; all of these strategic developments contributed to a greater Israeli leap in the regional balance of power and to a shift in the Israeli security mindset. Israel now 'gained enough self-confidence to make territorial concessions and take riskier political initiatives, as the threat of Arab conventional forces had dissipated' (Brom, 2007: 6). Now, a new set of security threats gradually became more paramount – weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism/guerrilla warfare (Ibid: 6; Luft, 1999).

The exemplification of the latter was the 'Islamisation' of the Palestinian national struggle and the establishment of bomb making capacity. In the Israeli psyche, this new capacity turned what many perceived as a popular struggle into something much more belligerent, painful and graphic towards the mid 1990's – the suicide bombing campaign.

The Likud party, with Yitzhak Shamir as prime minister, refused to accept the Palestinian cause and the PLO as a distinctive national movement even after the PLOs' 1988 declaration,²⁰ also based on the argument that this development was part of the PLO phases strategy to eliminate Israel. But at the beginning of the 1990s, the Israeli public chose the alternative embodied in Yitzhak Rabin and

19 Six months after the start of the Intifada, Yitzhak Rabin, then Minister of Defense, explained in an interview in Israeli television that these riots were mostly a result of despair and frustration, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook7/Pages/322%20Interview%20with%20Defense%20Minister%20Rabin%20on%20Israe.aspx>.

20 This officially called for negotiations based on UN Resolution 242 (thus accepting the existence of Israel).

the Labour party that led to the Oslo process. This new leadership was also aware and alarmed by the evolution of Islamic elements within the Palestinian national struggle, namely Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, that were both born at the beginning of the Intifada to fight Israel and challenge the PLO and its alleged acceptance of Israel. These groups constituted the spoiler front in what was to develop into the Oslo process, initiating the era of suicide bombings at the beginning of the 1990s. With Yasser Arafat and the PLO's recognition of UN Resolution 242 and – (presumably by the Israeli leadership) the State of Israel, the principle leading the new Israeli government was 'peace before security', meaning a differentiation between the official Palestinian leadership (the PLO) and the spoiler factions (Hamas, Islamic Jihad), and the belief that a negotiated agreement with this leadership could bring peace and an end to violence. A peace agreement would terminate the reasons for terror and would also facilitate the Palestinian Authority to take control of these new-born spoiler factions. This led to the Oslo process and the establishment of an interim self-governing Palestinian Authority that would assume extensive political and security control over parts of its territory for a five years interim period, which will come to an end with a final status agreement.

The Militant Islamic Factions of the Palestinian National Struggle

In light of the changing Israeli threat perceptions and the PLO's presumed recognition of the state of Israel, the trade-off, in terms of security, that Rabin's government of 1992 saw in the Oslo process

was that a Palestinian self-rule authoritative body would be able to better maintain law and order in the Palestinian territories, and better quell the rise of Islamic fundamentalists in the interim period of trust building, before a negotiation process for conflict resolution would take place. An example of this perception can be seen in Rabin's interview on Israel's channel 1, where he contended that the Palestinian police would be able to fight Hamas more effectively and without the restraints placed on Israel by its human rights NGOs and judicial system (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 12). On the Palestinian side, Hamas constituted itself as a strong opposition to the PLO. Formally presenting its charter in 1988 in opposition to the PLO's recognition of Israel's existence, Hamas derived from Islam the objection to any compromise over any part of mandatory Palestine.²¹ In 1991 Hamas officially established its military wing Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades (Schanzer, 2008: 48), and it gained much respect on the Palestinian streets since its first appearance in the first Intifada. This appearance is viewed by scholars as the 'outbreak' in the Islamisation of the conflict, but it surfaced after a long period of religious-political revival in the Palestinian territories and especially in the Gaza Strip. This revival process was most profoundly pioneered by the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and the Mujama Al-Islamiya that were, since the early 1970s, concentrated on social, educational and welfare programs, with relative support by the state of Israel (Levitt, 2006: 24; Schanzer, 2008: 33).²² This long-term endeavour included continuous Da'wa, and was invigorated, since the early 1980s, by the inspiration and funds that were coming in from the new-born Islamic Republic of Iran (which had sought to export the Islamic revolution), and other donors from the Gulf region (Schazner, 2008: 34). Nonetheless, it established institutions including hospitals, orphanages, mosques,

21 Hamas introduced an Islamic interpretation to the national struggle, viewing the whole of mandatory Palestine as a Waqf; a charitable endowment by god to the Muslims of Palestine. Hamas' covenant outlined that 'Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it...'. Hamas Covenant, Retrieved from, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

22 Generally, Israel supported any 'extracurricular' activity that did not include violence and sought to weaken the power of the PLO which until Oslo was considered a rejectionist terror organisation.

schools, banks, clinics, libraries, and a dividend paying welfare institutions network (Schanzer, 2008: 38) that contributed much to the social welfare of the Palestinian society. By 1990, having been militarised, Hamas was illegalised by the Israeli authorities, and the Israeli policy was to crack-down on the organisation and the other Islamic factions. Arafat, having witnessed Hamas's growing strength and legitimacy, invited them to join the PLO, but they remained separated over the PLO's willingness to negotiate with Israel. Some argue that it was the inner legitimacy challenge imposed by Hamas that made Arafat seek strong international legitimacy as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, pushing him to attend the Madrid conference and consequently embark on the Oslo process. When Arafat came back to the territories on July 1st 1994, he had already promised this international recognition, but he knew that he would face a great challenge back home (Schanzer, 2008: 35-43). The tectonic ideological shifts within the Palestinian society were also already in place. Direct clashes had already taken place in the summer of 1992 (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 12) and the tension increased with Arafat's comeback of 1994, and with the establishment of the PA and its security forces in May 1994 (Luft, 1998: 3).²³ These tensions made him allow his new-born security forces to act more freely against opposition activists, including a campaign of massive arrests and preventative actions and it culminated in Black Friday in November 1994, where the Palestinian civil police force shot at Hamas demonstrators outside a Gaza city mosque, killing thirteen demonstrators and wounding around two-hundred, thus creating an uproar in Palestinian society (Ibid: 12). It is in this context that the Israeli leadership was willing to 'keep on negotiations as if there were no terror attacks, and fight terror as if there were no negotiations'. In February 1995, after

23 As commissioned by the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza and Jericho Area.

another wave of Hamas' suicide attacks in Israel, Arafat established the State Security Court that would have extended judicial power to handle the violent opposition to the Oslo process. Allegedly, only this convinced Prime Minister Rabin to follow through and sign the Oslo II agreement (Ibid: 13).²⁴ This was also the context in which the Israeli political leadership was turning a blind eye towards Arafats' constant violations of the Oslo agreements (as will be elaborated below), for as long as it delivered on the containment of the Islamist rejectionist groups (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 12).

But this became one of the greatest periods of insecurity on the Israeli streets, characterised by a growing capacity by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad to execute suicide bombings into Israel. This era was the greatest political-ideological strife between Left and Right in Israel, culminating in the assassination of the prime minister. To be sure, the ideological rift concerning the idea of 'greater Israel' and Judea and Samaria, as opposed to a recognition of Palestinian national aspirations – played a major role, but the name of the game within the Israeli public political debate was 'security', and Rabin was accused of being played by Arafat and putting more Israeli lives in danger. Rabin was succeeded by Shimon Peres, but by 1996 the sharp contrast between the Oslo policy and the increasing terror-violence led the majority of Israelis to choose the concept of 'Security before Peace', chanted by Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud party, that promised to block Oslo II objectives (Fawcett, 2013: 260-263). This marked the unwillingness amongst Israelis to 'risk their short-term security for what seemed to be a dubious promise of better future security' (Brom, 2007: 7).

24 Demarcating between areas A, B and C and enabling the establishment of the PA's control over Area A (the seven Palestinian cities) and Area B (Ibid).

Bilateral Engagement – Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF)

Building the Palestinian Security Forces, 1994–2000

The first stage of the establishment of the PA and the PASF was Yasser Arafat's return with members of the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) to the Gaza strip and Jericho to substitute Israeli forces.²⁵ Though aware of Hamas' established presence in the streets and in people's hearts, Arafat and his colleagues were accepted jubilantly by the crowds, and were viewed 'as the first stage of Palestinian self-determination and, eventually, statehood' (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 1). Soon thereafter, this force was to be judged by Israel on its ability to counter acts of terror amidst the peace process, and by Palestinian society, on its ability to live up to being the symbol of national pride and self-rule.

The accords established the security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and the IDF. The Joint Security Committee (JSC) was the highest liaison office hovering over the two Israeli-Palestinian Regional Security Committees (RSC) in the West Bank and Gaza. These committees were in charge of the ten District Coordination Offices (DCOs) that were the lower level of coordination mechanism. They were staffed by Palestinian and Arabic-speaking IDF officers and were in charge of sharing information and solving security problems before they reached the political level. The second cooperation mechanism was the joint patrols in which Israeli and

25 Implementing the Cairo Agreement of establishing the first stages of Palestinian autonomy.

Palestinian policemen patrolled the 'seam zones' between Israeli and Palestinian control together. Though this mechanism did not serve a strategic security goal, it was perceived as a trust building mechanism for what would continue as an Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation.

On the other hand, Arafat's conduct was quick to raise doubts within the Israeli security establishment, as intelligence on profound violations of the Oslo restrictions concerning the security forces was flowing in in greater numbers from the mid-1990s onwards. Violations involved the number of security officers serving the force;²⁶ the number of branches allowed;²⁷ the shift in the security forces' training programmes into military oriented practices; and the number and types of weapons acquired by the PA. The Israeli security establishment also paid attention to a tunnel smuggling infrastructure that was established between the Gaza strip and the Sinai; a developing capacity within the Palestinian territories for weapon manufacturing; and also to a myriad of instances of ammunition being stolen from Israeli military installations, making their way to the PA.²⁸ It was estimated that the PA was able to acquire anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry, and to dramatically surpass the qualitative and quantitative thresholds of the agreements regarding armament. These developments raised questions within Israeli security echelons on whether the Palestinian Authority and the new security services were not building themselves as an army, rather than an internal security policing force, as the accords elicited (Luft, 1998: 15-27).

Arafat was the commander in chief of the security forces and this period of construction was identified by his will to safeguard

26 While the Oslo accords allowed for 30,000 to serve, many estimates attested that this number had long been surpassed, with most estimates claiming it has reached between 35,000 to 50,000 (Luft, 1998: 15; Le More, 2008).

27 It reached 15 by 2004 (Tartir, 2015: 4).

28 One widely publicised example was in February 1997, when a former IDF scout was arrested after stealing a military vehicle loaded with arms and ammunition, including anti-aircraft shoulder missiles. His investigation revealed that the weapons were directed to the Palestinian security forces (Luft, 1998: 27).

his absolute power. His method was a divide and rule type of management which included keeping a heterogenous group of top generals that reported exclusively to him.²⁹ Arafat also employed the conduct of patronage (Tartir, 2015: 4; Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 8), exceeding the number of operatives to create personal loyalties, blurred chains of command, competing fiefdoms and unclear functions. This meant that Arafat was able to maintain himself as the sole arbiter between the different forces comprising his security service, and they never had a clear security strategy, a formal chain of command or any cohesive function. On the contrary, Arafat's strategy kept the different branches and their commanders as rivals, often culminating in armed clashes. These commanders also employed patronage and personal loyalties, affecting both the cohesion of the forces and their inclusiveness (Ibid). These proliferation, nepotism and corruption dynamics that were deepened by the abovementioned violations of the Oslo agreements (namely, the dramatic exceeding of the number of security bodies and the people recruited, and the extensive acquisition of weaponry) have also created a 'gun culture', 'whereby it was common to see men in plain clothes walking the streets with a gun on their side, ready to be used for the resolution of any small problem' (Lia, 2006, in Tartir, 2015: 4). There was a plethora of armed militias, often in direct conflict with one another, and they were all affiliated to Arafat as the Bureaucratic and charismatic centre of power. By 2001, the Palestinian territories were one of the most policed and armed regions in the world, with a ratio of one 'security officer' for every fifty citizens (Luft, 2001), but there was never a true monopoly established over the means of power inside the territories (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 13).

29 They were PLA veterans that have returned with him from abroad, Fatah activists that also came from abroad, and grassroot Fatah activists that have gained political power in the territories (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 8).

With relation to Hamas, Arafat failed to live up to Israeli aspirations of a crack-down. Wary of internal civil strife, especially after events such as Black Friday,³⁰ and the fear of being characterised as Israel's collaborator, Arafat maintained a somewhat balanced relationship with Hamas characterised by a carrot and stick approach that was aimed at accommodating Hamas into his grand cause. The PA acted against Hamas,³¹ but on the other hand, let their social institutions stay open, released prisoners, and constantly called for dialogue (Rubin, 1999: 125-132). Though not on par regarding the policy towards Israel, both Hamas and the PA refused to view each other as enemies, at the time.

The establishment and conduct of the Palestinian security forces had its own impact on the already complicated perception of Israel towards the PA. A new complication took place in September 1996, with Prime-Minister Netanyahu's decision to open the Hasmonean Tunnel for tourists, located underneath the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, which led to the eruption of violent riots spreading from Jerusalem and Hebron to the rest of the West Bank and Gaza. This was the first time the Israeli military found itself confronting Palestinian security officers that were joining the crowds and using live ammunition. As Gal Luft explained, 'these violent events took the IDF commanders by surprise. The switch from rubber bullets to live ammunition was a new situation and reality sank in; it was no longer a riot, it was armed warfare'. The toll was 69 Palestinians and 14 dead Israeli soldiers, and though the events were perceived by Palestinians as a victory in terms of morale and strategy,³² the IDF initiated a phase of modification in its military plans to deal with future armed violence in the Palestinian territories (Luft, 1998: 21-22). This was followed during the second half of the 1990s by more and more accounts

30 This crisis also exposed an internal dispute within the Palestinian security establishment concerning the approach towards opposition movements. This event, according to Luft, even made Arafat establish a new special security force to scrutinise empathy for the Islamic cause within the Palestinian security forces (Luft, 1998: 13).

31 Implementing conducts such as raids and imprisonment.

32 Morale because of the death toll the Palestinian security forces had inflicted on the Israeli army, and strategic as it was perceived to push Netanyahu out of the stalemate and presumably brought him to sign the Hebron Accord in the Washington Summit (Luft, 1998: 22).

addressing the PA's abovementioned violations of almost every aspect of the Oslo agreements regarding security. For many Israelis the major argument that was made by the Right during the suicide bombings era, was now more consolidated – that the PA was not to be trusted and that weapons that Israel delivered were now being turned against it. When the violence of the second Intifada broke, these developments enabled the military elite, and subsequently the political elite, to maintain that Arafat had been planning his war all along, even as he was receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, and that the Al-Aqsa Intifada had been planned in advance.

Israelis and Palestinians differ on explanations regarding the causes for the outbreak of violence, but it nonetheless developed into an armed conflict, totally different in nature from the 1987 Intifada. It would go on to characterise all future collisions between the parties.

Israel and the PA in the Armed Warfare Era – the Upheavals and Breakdown of 2000–2007

The Al-Aqsa Intifada was the culmination of a constantly deteriorating security and political environment since the signing of the Oslo agreements. From Arafat's perspective, violence in the armed form that his security forces were able to engender, especially during the Hasmonean Tunnel riots in 1996, did produce diplomatic gains, embodied in the 1997 and 1998 Hebron Agreement and Wye River Memorandum. Ehud Barak, the leader of the Labour party that was elected to succeed Netanyahu, reinvigorated hope amongst the Israeli public that a resolution was possible. The IDF, by its side,

already affected by the 1996 events and by the already existing accounts of the PA's arms violations, was preparing itself for the end moment of the five years interim period (marked by the Oslo process for May 1999). It designated the year of 2000 as a possible 'decisive year' with high odds of violence, and reconstructed its military plans, equipment, and training (Eiland, 2010: 28) with the knowledge that it would, from now on, deal with armed forces.

With the breakout of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli government sought a policy of military restraint in its reaction to the happenings as it also viewed the violence as part of the parties' diplomacy. Therefore, the negotiations continued amidst the breakout of violence.³³ This meant that the government still believed that diplomacy could result in an agreement that would bring an end to violence. In accordance, it ordered the IDF to conduct a policy of containment and de-escalation. That is, to use a degree of force that would enable the protection of Israeli lives but not one that would escalate violence and hamper diplomatic efforts (Bar-Siman-Tov et al, 2005: 19; Eiland, 2010: 29). By most accounts, such as the Mitchel Report and the political echelons of Barak's government, the IDF did not implement the dictates of the political level, often directly violating its instructions (Bar-Siman-Tov et al, 2005: 22).³⁴ According to these accounts, the IDF was using excessive force in the initial phase of the Intifada.

At the initial stage, Palestinian security forces involvement in the events was of a more personal and sporadic nature, but it nonetheless had further ramifications for Israel's approach towards the PA. The first incident came on September 29th when a Palestinian police officer killed his Israeli counterpart during a joint patrol in Qalqiliya, bringing an end to the joint patrol mechanism. The second one was

33 The last time the parties met was between 21-27 of January 2001 in Taba, during which the parties agreed that this was the closest they have ever come to a peace agreement (Pressman, 2003: 9); See also- Akiva Eldar, "The Peace That Nearly Was at Taba", Ha'aretz, Feb, 14, 2002, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5279753>.

34 This was accompanied by the then Chief of Staff of the IDF, Shaul Mofaz, and Deputy Chief of Staff, Moshe Yaalon, directly engaging with the Israeli media claiming that the violence was a pre-planned devised move by the PA. See *Million Bullets in October*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQr7MDWNUPE>.

when two Palestinian police officers were involved in the Ramallah Lynch of two IDF reservists (an event that was enshrined as an iconic image in Israeli collective identity). By the end of this incident, Israel firstly employed aircrafts in bombing Palestinian police premises and other PA institutions. This quick escalation of events, and the eventual failure of negotiations, led to a merge between the military and popular sentiment and the political leadership on both sides. Barak embraced the IDF assessment that violence was a pre-planned act by Arafat, and Arafat engaged in full financial, organisational and discursive support of the terror attacks against Israel (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 20; Tartir, 2015: 5). The parties were at war with each other.

Operation Defensive Shield was triggered by a terror attack in the Park Hotel in Netanya on Passover evening, after a year and a half during which the Israeli security establishment was not able to thwart suicide bombing campaigns raging both in the territories and within Israel proper. The plan sought to regain control of all Palestinian cities in Area A,³⁵ and conduct an extensive counter-terror campaign to dismantle the terror infrastructure. As had already been started in Barak's term, Ariel Sharon and the new Israeli government did not differentiate between Palestinian militant groups and the PA forces themselves. The Palestinian Authority's infrastructure was severely hit and the Palestinian security forces were – after the operation – practically decimated in terms of physical resources and infrastructure, though their organisational structure remained (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 22-23).

Although the PA still had areas of control (such as in Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho), there was a power vacuum that was soon filled

35 That were put under PA control with the Oslo II agreement.

by non-statutory forces. They were mainly comprised of the different armed wings of political factions that now became the real power in the West Bank (Ibid: 23),³⁶ but they also included other informal bodies (Tartir, 2015: 7-8).³⁷ This also meant that a greater presence and incursions by the IDF were also apparent as part of the long-term Israeli plan of hitting the perpetrators of terror at their source.

It was the election of Mahmoud Abbas as the successor of Arafat, that led to the Palestinian Authority's new security reasoning. Abbas' doctrine included two elements that were considered a change in perception. The first was a zero violence approach as the only way of achieving political gains. The second was the 'One Authority, One Rule, One Gun' policy which illustrated the need to reimpose the PA as the monopoly for the use of force within the territories and the need to strengthen public law and order. This new approach was also previously designated as a prerequisite by an increasingly engaged international/donor community, voicing a more direct and demanding approach. The Mitchel report, published amidst the violence in April 2001, was the first international voice urging the PA to establish a clear and unchallenged chain of command for the security forces under its grip. Greater international pressure was attributed to the approach of the Bush administration and the Quartet, in the context of the post-September 11 era, which introduced a new doctrine of a Performance-based Road-Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, shortly named the Road Map. The main idea was that Palestinian institutional build-up, reform and proof of ability, was a precondition for a final status resolution (Tartir, 2015: 7; Tocci, 2013: 34). The Task Force on Palestinian Reform (TFPR) was established in 2002 in order to monitor and assist the PA with this new directive.³⁸ In this climate, Abbas signed

36 The main ones being Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas), Al-Quds Brigades (Islamic Jihad), and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Fatah).

37 Such as camps' popular committees, gangsters and criminal groups, private security companies, tunnel lords, families and clans, etc.

38 The task force, comprised of the Quartet, Japan, Norway, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), was to support reform measures in the areas of financial accountability, Market economics, civil society, public administration and civil service, local government, elections and the judiciary (Le-More, 2008: 159).

a ceasefire with Ariel Sharon on February 8th, 2005 and the road for a process of a security sector reform was now more open. In March, the US established the US Security Coordinator Office (USSC)³⁹ and in January 2006 the EU established its Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS).⁴⁰

Abbas had initiated the reform process,⁴¹ but the political instability did not stop at this stage as the year of 2005 and subsequent years have seen Israeli disengagement from the Gaza strip, Hamas' victory in general elections (2006), and subsequent tensions that have brought the armed takeover of the strip by Hamas' forces (2007), splitting the Palestinian political structure into two polities.

Rethinking Redeployment and Concessions, Fearing the Arab Uprisings and Encapsulating the Palestinians in the 'Region' – Israeli Bilateral and Regional Perceptions in the Current Era

For the Israeli psyche, the current situation in the Gaza Strip is a grim example of why Israel should not redeploy military control. From an Israeli perspective, the redeployment from the Gaza Strip and its evacuation of 8,000 settlers was another example of Israel's longstanding ability to make tough decisions for peace that have been answered with greater Palestinian belligerence and enmity, and, with a much worst situation for the citizens of the strip. Only a few months after the disengagement, Israel was already forced to deal with rocket attacks, and with the kidnap of an Israeli soldier, from within Israel proper. The disengagement, that enabled Hamas

39 Its mission was to establish a reformed training apparatus for the Palestinian security force, assist and advise on security issues and policies, and engage Palestinian and Israeli stakeholders from the security establishments to facilitate better understanding and cooperation between them (ibid).

40 With the purpose of providing strategic advice, training, technical support and capacity building in the areas of ministry of interior and civil police reform and with the strengthening of the rule of law (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 46).

41 With a decree to unite all the security forces into three branches and under the ministry of interior (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 25).

to violently consolidate its power in the strip and gradually evolve into a semi-military force, with Iranian support, corresponded with the exact process that followed the Israeli disengagement from the south of Lebanon, leaving Hezbollah to evolve as well and to eventually force Israel into another undesired military conflict in 2006.

The regional developments and instability of the Arab uprisings, have also left their mark on Israeli threat and security perceptions. In 2011, Israeli policymakers expressed their worries regarding the unknown course of events that would steer the regional revolutions, especially in Egypt. The threat, in terms of national security, is that these revolutions would give rise to something that would eventually force Israel into a multifront war (considering that Hamas-led Gaza and Hezbollah already constituted two potential fronts) (Klein-Halevi, 2011). The vivid potentiality of that forecast has grown in significance in-light of the more recent Iranian involvement in Syria. Israeli leaders have now openly voiced concern on that matter,⁴² and the IDF itself is already a few years into preparation for this possibility (Lappin, 2018).

Israeli perceptions have also been shaped by the abovementioned historic evolution vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Since the disillusion from the Oslo Process, a more worrisome general Israeli perception regarding conflict resolution was shaped, with the ‘spoiler camp’ (that is based on a security argument) revolving around two main ideas – a) that a peace agreement would not mean the end of enmity, but give birth to an extremely hostile, armed and irredentist Palestinian state that is bent on destroying Israel; and/or b) that this future country will be a ‘dysfunctional state’, that is not economically

42 See for instance, remarks by Israeli defence minister in Stuart Winer, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/liberman-in-next-war-israel-will-face-fighting-in-north-and-south/>.

or politically viable, and that it will not be able to contain its problems within its own borders (Brom, 2007: 12). In a current situation where Israel is preparing for a multifront war, either of these eventualities would give birth to a new and frightening strategic security environment vis-à-vis Palestine – the build-up of an unsupervised Palestinian military force that would turn against Israel or arm terror-groups for this purpose (Wilkenfeld, 2015: 26-27); the build-up of military installations that would prohibit Israeli forces from moving through the West Bank in an emergency that requires Israeli deployment on the eastern front; or the takeover of the West Bank by Hamas (or a different militant Islamic group) that will turn the West Bank into a rocket launching-pad on the rest of Israel. These are the reasons why the 50 year demand for the demilitarisation of the West Bank and Israeli insistence that a peace agreement would still have to include continued military presence, are both still viable in the Israeli demand list.

The regional atmosphere has also presented opportunities for Israel.⁴³ But the fate of the Gaza Strip and the Arab upheavals, and the new unsteady regional environment, have also enabled new emphasis on some of the threat perceptions and security doctrines that otherwise could have been obsolete. An example is the renewed fear of the fate of the Hashemite Kingdom (of which around 70% of the population is Palestinian) and the current reconstitution of Iran as the threat from the eastern front. These stand in the current Israeli demand to preserve its presence in the Jordan Valley, even in the framework of a conflict resolution with the Palestinians. Another example is the general perception that aligns settlements with security. Contrary to the professional security establishment of Israel, the Israeli public usually does not differentiate between

43 Such as what seems to be an ever-closer relation with the Gulf states and particularly Saudi Arabia.

civilian presence and military presence. The settlements behind the Green Line, and especially the settlement blocks, are viewed by many Israelis as the 'flak jacket of Israel's heart', even though there is a growing consensus in the Israeli security establishment that settlements (those that are beyond the blocks) are a burden for the security forces (Ben-Sasson-Gordis et al, 2017).⁴⁴

Recent events and perceptions serve as another layer on top of a historic set of security and doctrinal reasonings and they are invigorated by the political elite. In a recent interview at the Economic Club of Washington D.C, Benjamin Netanyahu has yet again expressed the current Israeli discourse in-regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

'I want a solution where they have all the powers they need to govern themselves but none of the powers that would threaten us. What that means is that whatever the solution is, the area west of the Jordan River, that includes the Palestinian areas, would be militarily under Israel... Israel must have the overriding security responsibility for the area west of the Jordan River. Does that comport with full sovereignty[?], I don't know, but it's what we need to live. And in this area...full of failed states, [where] states have collapsed, it is very important that Israel be the power responsible for security because otherwise everyone collapse, the Palestinians collapse... [and] every area that we left militarily – militant Islam came in'.⁴⁵

This type of speech,⁴⁶ coupled with Netanyahu's tendency of showing on a map the vast swaths of Middle Eastern lands struck with turbulence, proclaims, in other words, that the problem in

44 This is because the historic doctrine of populated settlements as part of the country's defence establishment is not viable anymore, and civilian population centres are now viewed solely as civilian assets that require the military's protection, thus forcing the military to extend its reach and muscle (Ibid).

45 The Economic Club of Washington, D.C., 2018 (March, 07), *H. E. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel* (minutes 28:00), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FKUVRxZqcl.

46 That characterises the Israeli government's references to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the beginning of the Arab upheavals.

the region is larger than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now enveloped in a new regional environment of uncertainty, state-failure, and the rise of militant Islam – an uncomfortable environment that does not allow Israeli concessions and military redeployment. From a political, discursive point of view, this perspective is a tool to further allay political will for a conflict resolution. Through this prism, regional happenings merely serve as a proof that Israel does not lie at the heart of the chronic threats and instabilities in the Middle East. Rather, it is the by-product of problems that are endemic to the region and that have exploded over the past few years, revealing the root causes behind discontent and suffering in the Arab world.

Here lies the main argument of this paper, that while security has become a pillar in the Israeli collective identity, Israelis fail to thoroughly consider the evolution of Palestinian security of the last decade. The disillusionment from the peace process, the current 'regionalisation' of the Palestinian problem (encapsulating it in the general regional upheavals), and the fear that concessions would only make things worse, has strengthened the propensity for conflict management rather than a conflict resolution. Here also lies the importance of Israeli appreciation of how security looks from the perspective of the PA, and the understanding of the Palestinian security paradox vis-à-vis Israel.

Incorporating an Appreciation of Palestinian Security

*Alignment of Security Reasoning? 2007–2018:
Hamas, Law and Order, and Security Cooperation*

The takeover of the Gaza strip by Hamas was a wakeup call for the PA. Mahmoud Abbas immediately dismissed Hamas members of government and declared an emergency government led by Salam Fayyad. From then on, the PA saw Hamas as a threat doomed to be forcefully encountered and thus, better converging with the Israeli view. Moreover, with heavy U.S. and international assistance, they embarked on a major security sector reform agenda that most accounts recognise as the starting point of the true professionalisation era of the Palestinian security forces (Tartir, 2015; Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018).

From this year on, the objectives of the PA were better crystallised as a full-fledged crack-down on Hamas (on both military and civilian apparatuses); a removal of the non-statutory armed forces and different gunmen that characterised the anarchy of the post-Al-Aqsa Intifada; the proliferation of public order and the reassertion of the PA's central authority through a united and viable security force. The rationale was to end 'security chaos', to secure the regime's preservation and to pave a constructive, internationally accepted way towards statehood. As depicted by Salam Fayyad, the policy was now to build institutions of a modern state, enhance personal security and establish monopoly over the use of force, and with

this regain the international community's and Israel's confidence, neutralise a key Israeli argument against statehood and thus pave the way for independence (ICG, 2010: 4). Fayyad shared the 'security first' approach; underlining the rebuilding of the security services in a professional manner, to prove that Palestinians are credible partners for peace and able to govern themselves despite the existence of the occupation (Tartir, 2015: 11). This sense of urgency was met with the same approach by the donor community, and the PA now embarked on a security sector reform process aimed at re-establishing a professional and a de-factionalised national force (ICG, 2010: 3). The security force's infrastructure were established and structural and organisational capacities were upgraded, with the USSC's deep involvement, devising the educational and training apparatuses and providing financial and technical support for both training and equipping of the security forces (Ibid: 10).

Beginning in late 2007, grand campaigns were taking place in Nablus, Jenin, and Hebron districts (Ibid: 8) to enforce the PA's control, take outlaws off the streets, confiscate illegal arms and establish the security forces' presence. With regard to Hamas, a thorough counter-offensive took place (allegedly with the cooperation of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades). They engaged in dismantling Hamas' armed cells, arresting Hamas members, purging the security and governmental echelons from suspects of Islamic affiliation, and shutting down Hamas affiliated civil society organisations ('from media centres to charities') (Ibid: 6). With regard to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an amnesty programme, in association with Israel was introduced in order to encourage disarmament of the militants. Militants that agreed to give up

their arms and refrain from violence were taken off Israel's wanted lists and some were also incorporated into the security services. By accounts of the International Crisis Group in 2010, the programme, according to both Israeli and Palestinian figures, has shown significant results in demobilising the force (Ibid: 6-7). But recent accounts have indicated that the brigades have not been disabled, and are active in many areas (refugee camps in particular) as will be further elaborated below.⁴⁷

Current Security Situation in the West Bank

30,000 men serve in the Palestinian Authority security services today. The force is ordered in eight branches: the National Security Force, the Civil Police, the Presidential Guard, the District Coordination Office, Military Intelligence, Preventive Security, General Intelligence and Civil Defence. Derived from the transformative events that have led to the emergency government, the force is still currently engaged in three main pillar activities: a continuous anti-Hamas campaign, preservation of law and order, and maintaining a security cooperation with Israel in a non-violence policy (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018).

Hamas' presence in the West Bank is nothing compared to a few years ago (Ibid). By 2010, it was claimed to have no visible presence and ability to function as a political party (ICG, 2010: 8), and the regime's self-preservation policy against Hamas is still paramount (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 57). According to Al-Omari and Zilber, Hamas's organised strength lies, these days, primarily in its traditional West Bank strongholds of Nablus, Hebron, Silwad, and,

47 Traditionally affiliated to Fatah, the relationship between the PA and the AAMB's is fundamentally different than the PA's relations and policy towards other militant factions.

to a lesser degree, Jenin (ibid: 58). But Da'wa networks and media driven incitement efforts emanating from Gaza remain, and so do the effects of Israeli military engagement and blockade on the Gaza Strip. While the risk that Hamas poses to the PA is not of military nature, the ideological danger still exists. However, Israeli security sources do indicate the continuous attempts by Hamas to establish its infrastructure in the West Bank (Shabak, 2015a; Shabak, 2015b). Numerous accounts by Israeli news agencies have indicated that according to Nadav Argaman, the current head of the Israeli General Security Service, some 148 Hamas cells were foiled in the West Bank in the year of 2016. This according to Argaman, demonstrated Hamas' efforts in establishing its presence, and even attempting a take-over of the West Bank.⁴⁸ A useful cover of Hamas' (and Islamic Jihad) significant presence in both political and armed forms, was given by Ohad Hemo, the Israeli reporter that visited the Jenin refugee camp in late 2015, where he also recorded an armed conflict between the PA security forces and the refugee camps' militants. The incident occurred during a local rally that was organised by affiliates of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah, relating to tensions in the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Disrupted by the PA forces, the incident evolved into an armed conflict, with the militants of all factions working together, and the residents referring to the PA as 'collaborators with the occupation', 'traitors', the 'Israeli Army' and 'Dayton Force'⁴⁹, manifesting much resentment towards the PA.⁵⁰

In terms of law and order, The abovementioned example from Jenin's refugee camp illustrates the will of the PA to continue enforcing its law everywhere in the West Bank (including the refugee camps) but reveals two problems that will be further discussed here. Overall, public order (that was virtually non-existent after the

48 Ari-Gross, J. (2017). "Shin Bet Warns Hamas May Be Plotting West Bank Takeover – Report". The Times of Israel, Dec, 24, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/shin-bet-warns-hamas-may-be-plotting-west-bank-takeover-report/>; See also- <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Shin-Bet-foils-Hamas-cell-in-the-West-Bank-478569>; <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/shin-bet-accuses-turkey-of-facilitating-hamas-money-laundering-1.5810563>.

49 Referring to Keith Dayton, U.S. Security Coordinator between 2005 and 2010, that developed the training processes of the reformed PA security forces.

50 Hemo and Castro. (2015). "A Rare Documentation: Clashes in the Jenin Camp" [in Hebrew], Haadashot-Online, https://www.mako.co.il/news-world/arab-q3_2015/Article-cdcfa239a17df41004.htm.

Al-Aqsa Intifada) was restored in major cities, and profound work has been done in removing armed militiamen from the streets, as already indicated in 2010 by the ICG (ICG, 2010: 7). This was also indicated by Al-Omari and Zilber's new research, which pointed out the general public's appreciation of the restoration of public order, in comparison to the post-Al-Aqsa Intifada time (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018). However, the PA is far from having been able to eliminate all vestiges of illegality, criminality, and armed militias in the territory under its control. Just as exemplified in the Jenin camp, the PA is still hesitant, for operational and political reasons, to fully establish order in many of the West Bank refugee camps and inner cities, often described as extraterritorial "no-go zones" and "soft spots" for PA rule. Except Jenin's camp, particular camps include Balata (Nablus), Qalandiya (Ramallah) and Dheisheh (Bethlehem) (Ibid: 56). These camps also illustrate a grim picture regarding arms proliferation and, from a more political background, a growing rift within the current leadership of the PA itself and the rest of Fatah elements in these areas. The most profound example is the political and military prowess of Jamal Tirawi in the Balata refugee camp, allegedly aligned with Mohammed Dahlan in direct opposition to Abbas himself, in the internal political friction of the party. In recent years, Nablus and Tulkarem have also seen direct battles between the PA security forces and Fatah elements (Inbari, 2016a; Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 56).

A more pessimistic view regarding the PA's ability to rule is disseminated from research centres such as the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA). Pinhas Inbari contends that these descriptions of friction and inability of the PA to reassert full control over the territory, are actually part of a larger process

of dismantlement of the PA itself, which are prevalent in many other areas, such as Hebron, where apart from a growing Islamist inclination (Hizb Ut-Tahrir in particular), the Tribal Council and the clans/families have filled the void left by the Fatah and the PA (Inbari, 2016b).⁵¹ Dismantled or not, it is in these areas of power-vacuum where racketeering, drug smuggling, and weapons trafficking flourishes (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 56).

These problems yet again put the spotlight on trust and the degree of cooperation between the PA and Israel. Some foreign and Palestinian officials maintain that this inability of the PA to enforce its rule derives from lack of capacity due to overly stringent Israeli restrictions – in particular, regarding armoured vehicles, body armour, and advanced weapons. Israeli officials, in response, maintain that the question is one of political will, given that many of the existing gangs are affiliated with the Tanzim and include retired or dormant members of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The Tanzim is still viewed as Fatah’s “strategic reserve” in any armed or popular struggle, whether against other Palestinian factions or Israel. Al-Omari and Zilber contend that this is part of the ‘rules of the game’ between the PA and the militias – the militias may be necessary to maintain Fatah’s elite status, but they cannot be turned on the PA or precipitate too much anarchy. Through a mixture of persuasion and coercion, the Tanzim has been kept in check and left to its small fiefdoms (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 56), and Fatah, in its various forms, continues to control the refugee camps. Yet again, the indications of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and other militias acting hand in hand against the PA, and prospects of a growing tension surrounding future Fatah ‘succession wars’ might illuminate why murkier views exist.

51 It has also underlined that all three Fatah strong-men of the Hebron area, namely Jibril Rajoub, Nabil Amro and Abbas Zaki, have all moved to Ramallah as part of the allegedly fight over succession of the Fatah and PA leadership (Ibid).

Another problem that have been raised by Al-Omari and Zilber is the security void that exists in the areas that are under Israeli security control. According to this view, these areas are subjugated to Israeli strict interest with direct counter-terrorism, leaving a void in terms of civil order that is being taken advantage of by criminal networks that proliferate drugs and illegal arms, and facilitate the percolation of societal insecurity amongst the Palestinian residents of these areas. According to the polls of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) that compared security perceptions in the West Bank, it was apparent that Area A residents feel significantly more secure than residents in Areas B and C, including H2 Hebron and East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, that are under Israeli security control, and they made clear the need for law enforcement by the side of the PA (PCPSR, 2016). A telling example was the April 2015 establishment of three Palestinian police stations in Al-Ram, Abu-Dis and Biddu, all towns on the outskirts of Jerusalem, formally under full Israeli security control. These areas, along with other villages north and south of Jerusalem, were long neglected by Israel with respect to policing and law enforcement. Such no-man's lands between Israeli and PA control became havens for criminal activity, replete with drug dealers, arms merchants, car thieves and prostitution rings (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 76). Reports and polls have indicated that the establishment of the Palestinian security forces in these areas have resulted in positive impact on the local population, and in high levels of public confidence in the forces (Ibid). Developments such as these are of course subjected to Israeli consent and regulation regarding the PA's ability to establish policing forces and the amounts of weapons and personnel that these establishments can hold, but it is crucial to understand that

they can make a significant difference, at least in terms of providing the society with law and order. This turns the attention to the security relations of the PA and Israel.

Considering relations with Israel, while Yasser Arafat never truly relinquished the use of force as an option even as he negotiated with Israel, Mahmoud Abbas has consistently eschewed violence as a political tool. The Palestinian security force was, and remains, at the vanguard of this new strategic approach (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 38). 'The Palestinian security force has overwhelmingly maintained its cohesion, discipline and professionalism' (Ibid: 78), even amidst high tensions. That is also true regarding security cooperation between the parties. There is continuous security dialogue and intelligence sharing. This includes constant contact and face to face meetings on regional and district levels between IDF and PASF officers, that maintain discussions on shared security hazards and interests. Information regarding Hamas and Islamic Jihad flows both ways.⁵² Security coordination facilitates de-confliction between the parties during Israeli operations in the West Bank, allowing the IDF to use much less forces than it previously needed, and to decrease physical friction with Palestinian society. The PASF is also active in riot control, on both passive and active preventive action, aimed at prohibiting riots from turning violent. A telling example of the PA's ability to provide law and order and maintain a non-violence policy is the security forces rescues of straying Israelis, that have mistakenly entered Palestinian areas. During 2016 alone, over 400 Israelis have been rescued by the Palestinian security forces. In 2017 the number was 500 (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018b). The most recent, and publicised account was that of a Palestinian police officer that rescued two Israeli soldiers

52 A recent example was the PA's intelligence that assisted Israel with tracking down the Hamas cell responsible for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in June 2014 (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 60).

that mistakenly entered Jenin in February 2018. A rifle that was stolen from the soldiers was also, later, apprehended by the PASF.⁵³ According to Zilber, the Palestinian security establishment and its cooperation with Israel is also the most crucial factor for the recent years' relative calm in the West Bank and the fact that riots have not gotten out of control and escalated into violent clashes (Zilber, 2015).

Figures in the Israeli governmental echelon of recent years shows lesser degrees of appreciation, though most have indicated that the developments that the PASF has been through are significant and meaningful. Former security minister, Moshe Yaalon contended in 2014 that notwithstanding the improvements that characterised the reformed Palestinian security forces, the IDF has been working around the clock to uproot terror infrastructure in many Palestinian areas (Yaalon, 2014: 8). Israeli officials interviewed by the ICG in 2010 indicated that these improvements are appreciated but still need to be regarded in proportion to their relative success (ICG, 2010: 10). More recently, in response to Abbas' declaration of security cooperation suspension during the tensions surrounding Trump's Jerusalem declaration, current defence minister Avigdor Lieberman proclaimed that a suspension of security cooperation by the PA will hurt the PA itself more than it will hurt Israel, indicating that it is a Palestinian need first and foremost.⁵⁴ More hawkish accounts emanating from the settler movement, such as the one represented by Naftali Bennet, actually object to enlarging security cooperation and PA security control, claiming that it signifies the 'outsourcing of Israel's own security' (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 77). In the same spirit, the former defence minister Moshe Yaalon has claimed that 'from a security standpoint, the PA is not a reliable neighbour that Israel can rely on' (Shragai, 2015).

53 Staff, T. (2018). "Palestinians Return Rifle Taken from Soldiers During Jenin Riot", Feb, 13, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-return-rifle-taken-from-soldiers-during-jenin-riot/>.

54 Issacharoff, A., and Staff, T., (2017). "Lieberman: Israel Can Manage Without Palestinian Security Cooperation", July, 23, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/liberman-israel-can-manage-without-palestinian-security-cooperation/>.

Yet again, it is this security standpoint that needs to change to incorporate a better appreciation of the Palestinian perspective.

Society, Security and Legitimacy – the Palestinian Public and the PA's Security Evolution

The political and security turbulences that have characterized the region since the 1990s, and the gradual disillusionment with the peace process and a general fatigue that has resulted, to some extent, in the propensity to manage the conflict rather than solve it, are all part of the reason why the Israeli public in general is not entirely aware of the PA's security cooperation with Israel, nor of the deeper societal foundations of the current situation. The disillusionment from the aspirations of the Oslo era and the peace process has also taken place on the Palestinian side. The deteriorating political and security situation that have followed through the first Intifada introduced new physical and socio-economic ramifications, and the signing of the accords only marked the interim period until a final status resolution was to be made. These interim agreements which Palestinians saw as a process that would lead to nationhood, resulted in a stalemate and an interim reality that in many respects continues to this day.

The first crucial ramification of the first Intifada was the alteration of Moshe Dayan's previous policy of 'open borders' between Israel proper and the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza (Berda, 2006: 5).⁵⁵ By 1991, all Palestinian workers and visitors needed personal permits to enter Israel. Predicated upon security

⁵⁵ This policy was introduced in 1972, five years after the military occupation of the 1967 war (ibid).

measures, this policy was under sole prerogative and scrutiny of the Israeli security establishment,⁵⁶ and turned Palestinian workers entrance to Israel into a complex bureaucratic process. Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari's research on the detainees of the first Intifada has indicated that the uprising was not steered by the elites of the Palestinian national movement. Rather, it belonged to the downtrodden, work-weary people, who were mostly sustaining families (Schiff and Yaari, 1990: 21). Since Oslo, the freedom of movement and economic resilience have only worsened for many Palestinians (Pressman 2003; Roy, 1999).

The Oslo accords also created the current division of the West Bank into areas A, B, and C. There are currently 169 Palestinian enclaves cumulatively constituting areas A and B. Commuting between them usually requires crossing area C, which is under sole Israeli control (IPF, 2017: 12). The continuous growth in settlement construction (throughout the Oslo era as well), notwithstanding the disengagement plan that dismantled all of the Gaza Strip settlements plus four settlements in the northern West Bank,⁵⁷ is also playing a physical and a psychological role. Mobility in the West Bank is still hindered by settlements, bypass roads, closed military zones and other measures that prevent the smooth flow of people and goods. More, Area C, which in many cases entails lands that are privately owned by Palestinians, is where much of the Palestinian cultivations are located, and it is mostly Area C which prohibits the natural growth and expansion of Palestinian cities, in need of new housing, municipal areas, and industrial zones.

56 Mainly the Israeli civil military administration and the General Security Service (Ibid).

57 Namely Ganim, Kadim, Homesh and Sanur.

Israeli human rights organisations such as Yesh-Din, also point out the daily occurrences of ideologically-motivated violence towards Palestinians and their property, in what is often termed ‘price tag’ activities. These activities include acts of violence, damage to property, takeover of Palestinian land, and other offenses, usually taking place on Palestinian farmlands and outskirts of Palestinian villages. Responsible for maintaining law and order under both Israeli and international law, Israeli law enforcement authorities manifest ‘extreme incompetency’ in investigating and addressing this trend, with only 1.9% of complaints filed by Palestinians resulting in actual convictions. The IDF in these cases remains idle (Yesh-Din, 2018), while Palestinian security forces remain out of the picture. Another factor worth noting are the continuous Israeli incursions into Palestinian territories for counter-terror purposes. While security imperatives dictate such activities from an Israeli point of view, it is crucial to understand that these engagements are still a source for societal insecurity among Palestinians.

For these reasons, regardless of the fact that better security for Israel translates in most cases to alleviation in checkpoints, closure policies, and incursions – for the Palestinians, the dominant political reality is still Israeli military rule, and this factor still shapes Palestinian threat perceptions. One example of this is the PCPSR’s poll indicating that a majority of Palestinians believes that Israel’s long-term aspiration is to annex the lands occupied in 1967 and expel their population (PCPSR, 2017). It is in this context that the Palestinian Authority and its security forces operates from its establishment to this day, in what is considered an anomaly of a state-building process with no state in hand, and in a general political atmosphere of no optimistic prospects of achieving one.

It was as early as the late 1990s were some public circles already regarded the PA as Israel's collaborator in response to events such as Black Friday and mass arrests of opposition factions (Luft, 1998: 12).

On the one hand, the policy of strengthening law and order, and alleviating the 'security chaos' and 'gun culture' of the post-Intifada era, has translated into greater public perceptions of personal and family safety (PCPSR, 2017). As early as 2010, interviews that have been conducted by the ICG in all major Palestinian cities, indicated that personal security has been upgraded and that citizens appreciate the security forces confrontation with 'criminals and thugs' (ICG, 2010: 7). But paradoxically, as the PA's security reasoning changed (after Abbas came into office and Hamas took-over the Gaza Strip), and the professionalisation and reform agenda progressed, so did the deterioration of the PA's public legitimacy. Recent local and international attention to civil society has indicated a growing culture of fear among the population with regard to the Palestinian security sector (Wilkenfeld, 2015: 11). Prospects of human rights violations, embodied in excessive use of violence, ill-treatment and torture, arbitrary detention, political imprisonment and intimidation by the security forces have been documented by numerous organisations (Tartir, 2015: 12; Wilkenfeld, 2015: 11). As articulated by a report of the Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)- 'Broad swaths of civil society protest what they see as a campaign of intimidation targeting critics of the PA and bemoan what most Palestinians consider the creation of a "police state". This internal disaffection is perilous at a time when Palestinian security cooperation with Israel is on full display, and scepticism and cynicism toward the diplomatic process and

prospects for a peace agreement remain high, identifying what established and acceptable practices in the provision of security consistent with modern security forces would be expected of the Palestinian security sector by Palestinian civil society' (Kristof, 2012: 13).

The reform building measures, directed by Mahmoud Abbas, and the performance-based road map of the international community did not translate into better conditions regarding the prospects for actual establishment of this Palestinian state, nor did it materialise in Palestinian 'good governance' and democracy. Rather it is more broadly viewed by the Palestinian public and many Palestinian academics as the entrenchment of authoritarianism (Sayigh, 2011: 21; Mustafa, 2015). This is also linked to the non-violence policy and security cooperation with Israel. Policies of cracking down on freedom of expression and protests against Israel, the security forces deconfliction and collaboration with IDF forces, and high monitoring of society as part of preventative action, are regarded by many as the criminalisation of resistance (Tartir, 2017), appearing more as what Palestinians define as a 'perpetration of the occupation' than the protection of the Palestinian people's security.

These trends illuminate the security paradox as far as the PA is concerned: while security cooperation with Israel is profound, the prospects for the achievement of the political goal on which the whole policy is based, namely getting closer to achieving a Palestinian state, has turned murkier. With regard to the Palestinian security forces, Al-Omari and Zilber have done well in articulating this paradox. In 2009, after the new and reformed training apparatus of the Palestinian security forces was initiated, the U.S. Security

Coordinator Keith Dayton has proclaimed: 'what we created...are new men...and these young men, when they graduate, and their officers, believe that their mission is to build a Palestinian state' (Al-Omari and Zilber, 2018: 43). The political stasis surrounding the peace process put the security forces tactical and operational achievements under a question mark. Under a stasis and a status-quo, Israeli-Palestinian security coordination comes under constant political criticism in Palestinian society. The PASF does not operate in a vacuum. With peace talks stalled and no genuine political horizon visible, many Palestinians simply do not buy the claim by General Intelligence head Majid Faraj that the PASF is a force for stability 'that should lead us to our independence' (ibid: 74-75).

The most significant Palestinian threats, interests and perceptions arise from the current ramifications of being a non-state actor under military rule. For that reason, an official Palestinian national security doctrine was never formulated. But security, just as in the Israeli case, has become an inherent part of Palestinian identity. For them, it is partly about their national dignity and ability to take control of their own fate as a nation by achieving sovereignty and being able to exempt themselves from future threats of being subjugated to military imposition mainly from Israel but also any other source. As articulated in the Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine, written by Hussein Agha and Ahmad S. Khalidi in 2006, 'at the most basic level, Palestinian national security must provide for the physical safety and welfare of the Palestinian people inside and outside its territory' (Agha and Khalidi, 2006: 7). For a non-state actor, it is intractably linked to societal psychological and material basics of being free from arbitrary acts by Israel.

Conclusions – the Israeli and Palestinian Security Paradoxes and the Way Forward

Security has been an inherent part of Israeli identity since the inception of the state. Responding to both regional and local political shifts and imperatives, Israel has moved from rejection of the Palestinian national struggle in its first decades, to its acceptance during the 1990s, bearing the fruit of the creation of the Palestinian Authority and its security forces. Notwithstanding, further historic events and changes in perceptions have thwarted the resolution of the conflict. The bilateral historic relations between Israel and Palestine have left an interim reality, where a significant part of Israeli public opinion views the establishment of a Palestinian state as a threat. Other developments, and more recently, the regional developments of the Arab upheavals allowed for further processes of conceptual ‘regionalisation’ of the conflict, and reinvigorated some historic security doctrines, discursively putting the Palestinian national struggle under one umbrella of regional turmoil. This is in sharp contrast with Palestinian developments and evolution in terms of security, which have presented an impressive degree of security cooperation and a non-violent approach, and have literally saved Israeli lives. Therein lies the Israeli security paradox – that while security is such a strong part of Israeli identity, the Israeli collective fails to appreciate the current Palestinian threat perceptions and security reasoning, nor does it appreciate the profound security cooperation that marks the era of the current Palestinian Authority’s leadership. Israel accepted Palestinian nationalism but remains in an interim conceptual reality that is based on a security need, of course, but also on the unappreciation of societal and self-rule imperatives by the side of the PA and the

Palestinian society. Incorporating these imperatives, such as the need to strengthen Palestinian law and order (specifically in areas of Israeli security control), the need to strengthen the PA's ability to enforce a monopoly over the use of force, and the need to inhibit Palestinian development and self-rule on its national territory, are all needed to alleviate this paradox and facilitate a better and a more constructive reality on the ground.

The Palestinian Authority has exemplified a shift in its security approach vis-à-vis Israel, seeking a non-violence policy on its way to statehood (as opposed to Hamas' agenda), going through a profound process of reform, establishing a security force that proliferate law and order for Palestinians, and saving Israeli lives. But this whole evolution is predicated upon the question of national dignity and the prospects of achieving nationhood, and thus, the reform and professionalisation process is paralleled with the deterioration of this force's very legitimacy. In comparison, while Israel's security reasoning is state centric, meaning, security in terms of preserving the state, the Palestinian security reasoning is centred on non-statehood, meaning that its only viability is that it leads to better security and welfare for its people, and ultimately – to statehood.

To be sure, Israel and Palestine have not yet truly recognised each other's right for a sovereign nation-state in the region and the intractable issues of the conflict remains. But it is here that a constructivist approach is needed. The question is how – through the prism of security – the deeds that are being made in the interim reality can kick-off a process that might push the parties a stride away from enmity. Israelis tend to frequently ask whether or not

there is a viable partner for peace. This remains an important question, but another question that should be asked is whether or not it is possible to better construct this partner. This marks a need for a conceptual change that true progress would not be achieved on the negotiating table but rather in the constant, day-to-day policy that reflects a clear strategic engagement with the 'other'. A strategic engagement that takes into account dignity and self-rule.

Israel has to make publicly clear, in both discourse and actions, that notwithstanding its own religious historic connection to this territory, it regards the West Bank as part of the national territory of the Palestinian people, with no intentions of annexation and dispersion of its people. By the same token, Israel has to adequately address the 'Price Tag' phenomenon and in general outlaw activities by extreme ideological factions in the West Bank. Especially in areas that are under Israeli security control, a better appreciation of Palestinian society's need for law and order is needed, and a policy of enabling the PASF to work in more areas that are prone to outlaw activity should be implemented. This is not to be viewed as the 'outsourcing of security' by Israel, but as providing societal security in areas that are already neglected by Israeli authorities and at the same time – enhancing the PA's legitimacy and ability to provide safety for its people. Recent developments as in the Jerusalem area should provide an example of why such measures are positive. Expanding Palestinian sovereignty into parts of Area C to enable economic and municipal natural growth is also crucial from the perspective of dignity and self-rule. Palestinian natural growth has exhausted all available space that is not Area C and it is crucial that Israel enables such growth. Such plans that also take into consideration Israel's security needs can be found in the Israel

Policy Forum's '4% plan' of 2017 (IPF, 2017: 16-19). Such policy by Israel would not only address critical societal problems, but also signal that Israeli control over Area C may be durable, but it is not permanent – alleviating a Palestinian fear of having remained in what is referred to as a 'Bantustan' state.

These recommendations are only some that could be drawn from the security perspective outlined above. The crucial thing for Israel as the strong side in the conflict, is to prove to Palestinians that the policy of security cooperation and non-violence pays off. The pay-off lies in the alleviation of the interim ramifications of the peace process that constitutes the current reality. Addressing these issues and understanding the security paradoxes of the Palestinian Authority and Israel, should facilitate the construction of a better reality for future negotiation processes, and for the intractable issues of the conflict which seem impossible to solve in the current atmosphere.

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