

Palestinian National Security Options after Disengagement

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Executive Summary

Israel's evacuation of the Gaza Strip in September 2005 and the unanticipated parliamentary victory by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in January 2006 are related elements of a new security environment. Israel's unilateralism strikes at the heart of the PA's absolute reliance on negotiations as the key to independence. Hamas, on the other hand, views Israel's departure from Gaza as a victory for its strategy of "armed struggle".

Israeli doctrine is based on its ability to use superior military assets to act against Gaza when and wherever and with whatever instruments it chooses. In the new relationship with Gaza Israel is attempting to establish, Gaza becomes a foreign country rather than an unruly province of the IDF, where the rules of war, not the rules of occupation, prevail. Implicit in this concept is a grudging acceptance of the creation of a Palestinian military capability in Gaza of a kind Israel long opposed. Palestinian groups have not only increased the types and quality of their Gaza arsenals since disengagement, some of them continue to fire an array of missiles and mortars into Israel. Despite its preferences, the IDF has presided over the creation of a comparatively benign form of attrition on its border with Gaza.

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in September 2005 highlighted the paralyzing dilemma of the PLO and the PA under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. Abu Mazen lacks a mandate from his own public to outlaw actions of the armed resistance, even when they descend into terrorism, gang violence and hooliganism. If the PA has a security doctrine, it is one that has been turned on its head. It is precluded by design and function from defending itself and its people against Israeli actions. Palestinian security has been redefined to mean the suppression of Palestinian acts of violent resistance towards Israel.

Hamas opposes the PLO's core strategy of entering negotiations with Israel without reserving the option of the use of force. And it rejects the decision to elevate the resumption of talks as a strategic objective itself. As Israel's policy of unilateralism matured and its decision to retreat from Gaza was implemented, Hamas, along with many Palestinians, saw the organization's critical assumptions vindicated. Hamas' decisions to support the "*tadiya*", to contest national elections, and to explore conditions under which to engage Israel in negotiations are inter-related elements of a design borne of a changing environment sparked by the disengagement and the implosion of the PA. This trend suggests a willingness to employ more pacific instruments in the pursuit of national objectives of liberation and domestic rehabilitation.

Hamas' aspiration to recreate on the Gaza frontier the kind of relative stability that has characterized Israel's border with Lebanon also supports the evolution of understandings on the Lebanese model – "rules of the game" of the kind that have in fact evolved between Hamas and Israel since the September disengagement. Hamas is unlikely to accede to demands to dismantle the Palestinian capability to employ force. In its view the record of those Palestinian who have done so is not worth emulating. But just as it condemns Abu Mazen for embracing negotiations as a strategic option, it must be wary that support for the use of force not degenerate into an absolute value itself and an undisciplined preference for violence and terror for its own sake. The challenge is to craft a political and diplomatic framework in which tools other than force and violence become the effective option of choice for all concerned.

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Introduction

Israel's evacuation of the Gaza Strip in September 2005 and the unanticipated parliamentary victory by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in January 2006 are related elements of a new security environment. Israel is developing a defense concept and military deployment for Israel's territorial perimeter with Gaza that is no longer based on civilian Israeli settlement and direct physical control of Gaza and its border with Egypt. In its place, Israel now depends on perimeter security and the calibrated use of intensifying levels of airborne firepower and artillery to deter Palestinian violations of the border. The transformation has not been as radical in the West Bank. Nevertheless, construction of the security barrier and the creation of "hard borders" governing entry into Israel are visible manifestations of the most meaningful reassessment of Israel's traditional security doctrine for the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) undertaken since the 1967 conquest.

Notwithstanding the fact that disengagement is characterized by Israel's unilateral imposition of its preferences, Palestinians, even as the objects rather than the agents of this policy, are compelled to assimilate these changes into their own strategy of liberation. This is the case not only for the Palestinian Authority (PA) but also for other Palestinian organizations, especially Hamas. Israel's unilateralism strikes at the heart of the PA's absolute reliance on negotiations as the key to independence and sovereignty. Hamas, on the other hand, views Israel's departure from Gaza as a victory for its strategy of "armed struggle". The organization's

response, notably participation in recent national elections, is no less important to the region's future than the extraordinary policies initiated by Israel.

Part I: Israel: New Paradigm, New Rules

Gaza is Albania

For almost four decades Israel's defense doctrine in the Gaza Strip was based on the creation of a symbiotic relationship between Israeli civilian settlement and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Until Oslo, the IDF preserved a monopoly of force throughout and around Gaza. With the introduction of the Palestinian Authority, and notwithstanding its capabilities and those of other armed groups, Israel redeployed within the area in a manner that preserved the settlement enterprise and its overall strategic control of Gaza and its perimeter.

Challenges to this strategy undertaken by Palestinians during the first and second *intifada* role in the September 2005 introduction by Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon of a radically new doctrine. This doctrine has been defined as "separation" or "disengagement" and its unilateral implementation during the latter part of 2005 stood decades of Israeli occupation and security policy on its head. Settlements and the expansive IDF deployment and operational control within Gaza itself – the two key foundations of previous Israeli policy – are prominently absent from this new framework.¹ Absent too is an Israeli intention to exercise absolute control over those elements of Gaza's external perimeter not immediately adjacent to Israel. These include the Gaza-Egypt border, and prospective sea and air links. As a consequence, Israel in practice has surrendered its longstanding demand for Gaza's demilitarization as a feature of a negotiated

agreement – a key feature of the Oslo era – choosing instead to deploy deterrent, retaliatory, and special forces outside Gaza. In this sense, Israel’s territorial relationship towards Gaza now exhibits a greater similarity to the pre-1967 relationship to Gaza than to the 1967-2005 era of direct occupation.

Israel is not only separating itself from Gaza. It has also begun to separate itself from the West Bank, and to isolate Gaza from Israel and the West Bank as well. Israel’s modified surrender of control over Gaza’s international envelope is accompanied by increasing restrictions governing the operation of the various crossings between Israel and Gaza. Israel no longer sees any advantage to managing or confronting – in retail fashion – Palestinian life in Gaza. It prefers instead to establish increasingly restrictive controls on the movement of Palestinians, as well as goods and services, from Gaza to Israel and the West Bank. This concept has emerged incrementally over almost two decades to a point where a “hard” border, administered by Israel increasingly like an international crossing point, now limits, and frequently prevents, Palestinian passage from Gaza to Israel and the West Bank.²

New Rules of the Game

Israeli doctrine is based on its ability to use superior military assets to act against Gaza when and wherever and with whatever instruments it chooses. Unlike the situation on the border with Lebanon, and perhaps in part because of it, Israel is determined not to be deterred by a Palestinian capability, or to permit it to inhibit operational actions. This policy does not represent a new intention or capability, but in operational terms it is conditioned by the post-disengagement environment.

There is a new political-security dimension to this paradigm. In this context at least, Israel no longer relates to Gaza as an occupying power with a mission and accompanying deployment aimed at preempting challenges to its rule. Rather, and with some prominent exceptions³, Israel has embraced a classic, state-centric conservative doctrine and deployment that aims at protecting its territorial security by maintaining the integrity of the border against Palestinian attempts to breach it, demonstrating the ability to reply to Palestinian challenges to continuing occupation in the West Bank, and defining its response to Palestinian violations of the border as legitimate acts of self-defense⁴.

On the ground, the IDF has doubled its deployment around Israel's shared perimeter with Gaza and modernized the physical barrier separating the two. In late December 2005, in the face of rocket attacks near bases and strategic facilities (power stations) south of Ashkelon, Israel declared the creation in the Gaza Strip of a buffer zone in an area roughly defined by the three evacuated settlements along Gaza's northern border.

The truly new element in the post-disengagement era is Israel's effort to establish new rules of the game that aim at deterring Palestinian efforts to strike at Israel over, across, or under its shared border with Gaza. The border itself is meant to become a primary deterrent, and not only for Palestinians. In its physical existence the border becomes an obstacle. But it is also a representation of the new relationship with Gaza Israel is attempting to establish. Gaza becomes in the Israeli context, a foreign country rather than an unruly province of the IDF, where the rules of war and not the rules of occupation prevail.⁵

The unilateral nature of this new paradigm is the other, crucial element underlying its implementation. Israel rejects as useless previous negotiations to assure the border's pacification

anchored in an agreement with the PA under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). In the absence of this type of partnership, Israel and its Palestinian antagonists have adopted other, no less articulate means of communicating.

Creating Deterrence

Israel's strategic posture vis a vis Gaza rests on three main assumptions: 1) that the end of occupation in Gaza gives Palestinians a territorial asset that is worth protecting, and that the locus of Palestinian resistance to Israel will migrate to the West Bank ;⁶ 2) that Israel has the military capability to establish what outgoing head of the IDF Central Command Dan Harel described as a "balance of terror" similar in some respects to the situation on the Lebanon border – a military equation that will prevent Palestinian violations from Gaza of the border with Israel, and 3) that while Israel expects that Palestinians will cease violations of the border, it reserves for itself the right not only to exact a "price" for such violations, it is also determined to act with full freedom of action, in Gaza or the West Bank as it chooses, undeterred by Palestinian capabilities.

"Our answer," noted Harel, "must not be in response to one specific weapon or other, but in the creation of a much broader equation that may lead to the creation of a military potential there. However, like the northern border, it will never be manifested through long periods (of fighting) thanks to deterrence. Just like on the northern border with Lebanon, where a large reservoir of arms also exists. This is not going to be, in my view, a series of operations and responses, but rather, an attempt to create rules of the game based on deterrence."⁷

Implicit in this concept is a grudging acceptance of the creation of a Palestinian military capability in Gaza of a kind Israel long opposed. Until now Israel has sought to exercise stringent control over the types and quantities of weapons in the Palestinian arsenal, consistent with its view that the Palestinian entity be effectively demilitarized. In those negotiating frameworks still operating, such as the security sector reform track managed by the EU COPPS and U.S. Maj.-Gen. Keith Dayton, this attitude continues to inform policy. But Israel, as part of the doctrinal change accompanying disengagement, has accepted the development of a qualitatively different Palestinian military capacity in Gaza – an important point where Israeli and Palestinian policies converge – even as it is determined to deter and if need be to prevent its use. *Ha'aretz* correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on October 7, 2005 that, “From Israel’s perspective, the Palestinians can do whatever they want in Gaza, as long as they don’t fire Qassams.”⁸

The Failure to Establish Deterrence

But Palestinian groups – Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Hamas, the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (AMB), have not only increased the types and quality of their Gaza arsenals, some of them continue to fire Qassams and an array of missiles and mortars into Israel⁹, unfettered by the unilateral cease-fire, unchallenged by the PA, and undeterred by the disengagement or incrementally escalating Israeli military responses. To the extent that these attacks continue, regardless of their lack of success in inflicting material damage or human casualties in Israel, they represent a failure of Israeli efforts, increasing in their intensity if not, as yet, lethality, to suppress both the capability and the willingness of Palestinian organizations to use them, a failure which has prompted criticism within Israel of the

disengagement doctrine itself.¹⁰ They also establish a post-evacuation relationship between Israel and Gaza that evidences a greater similarity to the low-level attrition of the pre-1967 era than to one of crushing Israeli superiority leading to the deterrence preferred by Israel.

Having rejected the option of diplomatic engagement with the PA, Israel has employed vehement declarations and a growing range of military responses in its so far unsuccessful effort to compel Palestinians to cease the firing of rockets into Israeli territory. Unlike the situation with Hezbollah, Israel's policy considerations are not as yet constrained by concern about the capabilities of the Palestinian arsenal. Nor are they prepared to restrict their attacks to the source of fire.

New Rules of the Game – Operation First Rain

On September 23, 2005 an explosion during a victory parade organized by Hamas in Jabaliya Refugee Camp in Gaza caused 15 deaths and left 80 people wounded. Hamas, seeking to divert responsibility for the disaster, falsely claimed the explosion was caused by an Israeli-fired missile. In “retaliation” for this non-event, Hamas over the next two days fired 27 mortars into Israel, with 21 landing near the southern Israeli town of Sderot, wounding six Israelis. At least one rocket landed on a kibbutz southeast of Ashkelon, suggesting a capability to hit the nearby power station.¹¹ Islamic Jihad fired a smaller number of rockets in retaliation for Israel's killing of three operatives in Tulkarm.

Israel viewed this action not simply as a violation of the rules of the game it was seeking to establish, but also as an opportunity to deal a strategic blow to Hamas.¹² It mobilized forces around Gaza and conducted raids in the West Bank from September 22 to September 29 in which

415 Palestinians, 250 of them Hamas activists, were arrested. There were two objectives to this effort: to prod the PA, by forcing the Palestinian public to pay a price,¹³ into taking preemptive action against violations of the border (or to demonstrate its inability or unwillingness to do so), and to exact a price from the violators themselves. During the following days, Israel launched nine aerial attacks, killing seven Palestinians (three militants and four civilians, including a 15-year-old boy). The IAF rocket attacks targeted both moving vehicles (renewing the policy of targeted assassinations) and locations in Jabaliya Refugee Camp, Khan Yunis, the Al Akram Islamic School in the Al-Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City, and the main entrance of Beit Hanoun. Twenty Palestinians, including women and children, sustained injuries. Artillery was also used for the first time, in demonstrative targeting limited to open fields.¹⁴ IAF helicopters and F16 fighter jets, in fifty sorties on thirty targets, also fired on targets throughout the Gaza Strip including a building owned by the Special Office for Presidential Security in Tel Al-Hawwa in Gaza City; a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine office in Al-Bureij camp; and the main entrance to the north Gaza town of Beit Hanoun. The air strike caused an electricity outage across a large part of the northern Gaza Strip.

“The rules of the game have changed,” explained IDF head of operations, Maj. Gen. Yisrael Ziv on September 28, 2005. Israel’s action would be:

broad and continuous with no time limit or limit to power. The First Rain campaign was started following the firing of a Qassam on Sderot, which forced the IDF to clarify that things are not what they used to be. We won’t get into any fine analysis of which Palestinian organizations are recalcitrant and which are not. That is entirely the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority. It is their problem who is firing. The Palestinian people and the PA have to decide whether they are

masters of their fate or prisoners in the hands of Hamas and similar organizations.¹⁵

The new situation created by the disengagement was evident in the change in some key aspects of Israel's conduct of the operation. The IDF deployed around the border in a manner suggesting an armed incursion. A re-occupation of parts of Gaza, which would have violated both the strategic intent of disengagement, with its attendant domestic and international disadvantages, and the incremental nature of Israel's response to Palestinian violations, was not seriously contemplated. As Ariel Sharon explained, "We did not leave Gaza in order to return there."¹⁶ Nevertheless, Israel felt freer to target objectives that it had hitherto refrained from attacking. For example, a Hamas school and community center in Saja'iya, which had been deemed off limits before disengagement, was hit. Israel also made clear that the West Bank was not excluded from the menu of responses to violations of the border with Gaza.

The Israeli cabinet, meeting on September 25, approved in principal the creation of buffer zones within Gaza to distance rocket firings from the Israel as well as a renewal of targeted assassinations, despite conclusions that the policy was counterproductive. Notwithstanding Sharon's announcement that there was "no limitation regarding the use of all means to hit the terrorists," Israel's harsh response left many quivers in its arsenal.¹⁷ Artillery firings were meant as a signal rather than to inflict material damage and to impress an Israeli public that expected a pacification of Gaza after disengagement.¹⁸ The buffer zone, supported by a well orchestrated series of artillery firings would not be established until December 2005. Its establishment did not end the phenomena of rocket fire, but it did force a tactical change in the locations from which rockets were fired.

Critics of Israel's continuing inability to suppress the fire out of Gaza are often but not always represented among the opponents of the disengagement, some of them members of Sharon's party in the cabinet.¹⁹ They argue for the imposition of deterrence through overwhelming force, against Palestinian civilians if necessary. "Every Qassam rocket they fire means we hit one of their streets," advised Brig.-Gen. (res.) Zvi Fogel, "and we'll see what they have more of, Qassams or streets."²⁰

Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz refused to concede that Israel was no more capable of imposing its will after the disengagement than before. Nevertheless, he implicitly acknowledged that the Qassam firings symbolized a failure of Israeli efforts when he explained that Israel "will not permit the reality of what happened last weekend. They need to understand that there is a very big price to their aggressive actions."²¹

Hamas, whose actions violated its agreement with the PA to ban armed displays, announced on September 26 the restoration of its commitment to the unilateral cease-fire.

Mofaz declared that the Hamas decision represented the successful imposition of Israel's rules of the game.²²

In my opinion, they [Hamas] understood our message: that we have taken a determined decision to hit them, from the ground and from the air, and by targeted assassination. We do not intend to let them get away, until they understand our deterrent policy. This was our first test after disengagement, and in this test, our message must be unequivocal. If they continue, we will also increase the level [of our response]. If the leaders of Hamas continue to threaten the children of Sderot, we will send them to the place where Rantisi and Yassin can be found.²³

In subsequent months, something less than an uneasy, informal truce was maintained

between the two antagonists. “Israel is not ignoring the fact that there is a kind of cease-fire that has been kept more or less by Hamas,” explained Shlomo Brom, formerly chief of the Strategic Planning Division of the IDF. “There is a difference [between Hamas] and PIJ, which is not a party to the unilateral cease-fire and with whom there are no rules.²⁴ Concerning Hamas, we continue to destroy their operational infrastructure, but carefully so as not to give them an excuse – preferring to capture rather than to kill – to end the unilateral cease-fire. There are no operations with the goal of killing Hamas personnel.”²⁵ Indeed when a targeted assassination against an AMB militant also killed his Hamas companion, Israel made clear in its public statements that it had not intended the latter’s elimination. In an end of the year assessment, Israel’s security service held Hamas directly responsible for only one fatal attack during the year.²⁶

Hamas’ decision to formally, and for the most part operationally, maintain the unilateral cease-fire distinguished the organization from all other Palestinian organizations during the final months of 2005. By doing so it displayed a greater ability to maintain discipline in its ranks than did Fateh. In the aftermath of the September 2005 disengagement, Israel, in the face of continuing limited rocket attacks by militants from Islamic Jihad, AMB, and PRC, demonstrated an aversion to escalating²⁷ from merely disproportionate to crushing responses. Despite its preferences, the IDF oversaw the creation of a comparatively benign form of attrition on its border with Gaza.

Part II: The Palestinian Authority – Hardware without Software

Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in September 2005 has highlighted the paralyzing

dilemma of the PLO and the PA under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. Born of a popular Palestinian demand for the restoration of national sovereignty in all of Palestine, the PLO has seen its revolutionary readiness to establish a state in the Occupied Territories undermined by its own failings and thwarted by a more powerful adversary.

“[Israel] is seeking to impose a very dangerous option,” noted Abbas in a November 2005 speech marking the anniversary of a Palestinian declaration of independence in 1988, “and that is a long-term solution based upon setting up a state with provisional borders controlled by the Israelis, and divided by settlements into isolated cantons.”

He accused Israel of "a determination that Palestinians pass through a civil war" because of its insistence that negotiations cannot start before the disarming of militant groups.²⁸

Abu Mazen supported the view that the PA should secure a monopoly on the use of force. In his words, there should be “one regime, one legal weapon, and political pluralism.”²⁹

Less Than a State

Palestine is not a state. Notwithstanding Israeli efforts to impose an ersatz sovereignty on Gaza in the aftermath of its withdrawal, the PA lacks a recognized or exclusive role in ruling any part of the West Bank and even the Gaza Strip.

The PA is nevertheless expected to act like a state, albeit not an independent one. It has been charged with adopting an Israeli security paradigm as its own. If the PA has a security doctrine, it is one that has been turned on its head. It is precluded by design and function from defending itself and its people against Israeli actions. Palestinian security has instead been redefined to mean the suppression of Palestinian acts of violent resistance towards Israel, its

citizens, occupying forces, and settlers. And Palestinian security institutions are expected to assume this responsibility at a time when Israel mounts military operations with impunity and rejects the fundamental purpose of the PA as Palestinians themselves see it – to negotiate the terms of their liberation from Israeli occupation.

The PA is expected by Israel, the international community, and many of its own citizens to act like a state in exercising a monopoly of force in areas under its nominal control. However it is unable to provide for the welfare and safety of its citizens by actively defending against the existential threat posed by the Israeli occupation. Ahmad S. Khalidi and Hussein Agha in a forthcoming book write that the PA:

was never meant to be the vehicle for armed resistance or ‘national liberation’. The PA as such has no formal ability or mandate to take up arms on the Palestinians’ behalf, or to use force in defense of the Palestinian people against Israeli incursions or assaults. Indeed, far from using force in pursuit of ‘national liberation,’ the various post-1993 agreements with Israel have been predicated on the assumption that the main mission of the PA’s security forces is to interdict those formal or informal Palestinian bodies that may take it upon themselves to do so. To put it starkly, the PA is torn between reining in armed elements and thus providing security to its adversary Israel, and indulging those elements and thus participating in the struggle for national liberation. The non-official armed factions have therefore found a natural space to occupy in the Palestinian political spectrum, with the PA’s absence from the ‘liberationist’ domain.³⁰

The PA’s inability to provide security for its own people vis a vis Israeli actions and thus to establish a solid, consensual foundation for policing armed opposition to Israel has been further hobbled by the absence of an agreed doctrine defining *Palestinian* national security. Indeed it would seem that the idea of a national security doctrine for an entity that is not a state

and which lacks the instruments or territorial attributes of sovereignty is yet another example of the mismatch between responsibilities and capabilities that have cursed the PA. However, without a consensual and popularly accepted notion of what constitutes Palestinian security – described by one security official as the “software” establishing an overarching framework for action, there is no context for the PA’s use of force – employing the “hardware” in its arsenal – against threats to Israel and the hostile occupation it maintains or to maintain domestic tranquility. This is the dilemma confronting Palestinian representative institutions and resistance organizations alike.

A Failed Doctrine of Liberation

Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip put into stark relief an unpalatable reality for which the PA under Abu Mazen’s leadership has few solutions.

The Palestinian president is not a pacifist. Yet during his long membership in Fateh, he has never been a proponent of force as a vehicle for liberation and statehood. During decades when the idea of armed struggle captivated the movement, his was a lonely voice indeed. The decision of the PNC in 1988 to drop references to armed struggle was an important step on the road to the Oslo agreements, and more particularly the letters of mutual recognition exchanged by Israel and the PLO in September 1993.

Abu Mazen believes that “the use of force is counter-productive. Because of the imbalance of power, Israel is capable of responding to any level of force with much greater force. Therefore negotiations are the only rational alternative.”³¹

Abu Mazen’s view is widely reflected in the policies of the PA, but it is contested by an

increasingly active minority within Fateh. "Our dispute is not personal", noted Farouk Kaddoumi, secretary general of the Fateh Central Committee. "The man who organized the Oslo Accords is governing now, and he believes the Intifada is the wrong way, and that military resistance is wrong. There is a big difference between our two political ideologies." ³²

The PA has been unable to secure a negotiated end to occupation. This failure "is a strategic weapon in the hands of extremists," explained Col. Hazem Atallah, coordinator of an inter-ministerial team preparing a draft national security memorandum.³³

The failure of negotiations to produce liberation and the PA's rejection of armed resistance forced proponents of force as an instrument to end occupation to mobilize and act outside of the institutional structures of the PA. "Abbas' strategy," explained Ahmad Issa, a member of Preventative Security in Gaza, "is that negotiations are our only tool. The weakness of this strategy is that there is no alternative to this option if it fails. The strategy of Hamas is that armed struggle is the only way. Its main weakness is that the organization has no alternative if this option fails." The intifada," he continued, "was part of the negotiations."³⁴ For rejectionist organizations like Hamas and PIJ, this divorce from ruling Palestinian institutions, this method of "negotiating" with Israel, long preceded the Al Aqsa intifada. But for disaffected members of the security services, Fateh activists, and others, new formal and informal organizations, notably the AMB, evolved without formal institutional ties to the PA, or to Fateh. As a consequence, Palestinian armed opposition and terror, especially after September 2000, has been organized outside of formal and direct institutional control lacking any consensual objective or unifying strategy. The absence of structure contributed to an often anarchic degeneration into violence and terror for which Israel and the international community held the hapless PA responsible.

In December 2002, Sharon's cabinet branded the PA "an entity that supports terror." The following April, the IDF, in Operation Defensive Shield, formally re-occupied all areas under nominal PA security control (Area A). These two actions – one rejecting the PA as an acceptable partner, the other undermining its administrative and security *raison d'être* – emasculated the PA while striking the heart of the bargain with Israel supporting Abu Mazen's liberation strategy.³⁵

Sharon's embrace of unilateralism, motivated in part by the PA's failure to suppress armed opposition and terror against continuing occupation, represented an unambiguous repudiation by Israel of the PA's reliance on negotiations. The evacuation of the Gaza Strip was understood by Abu Mazen's most important constituency, the Palestinian public, as a victory for those who challenged the PA's rejection of armed resistance. Many of these elements considered themselves allied to Fateh, but all of them were arrayed to varying degrees against Abu Mazen's leadership, if only because of their continuing embrace of the merits of "armed struggle."

Gaza – A Problem not an Opportunity

The PA under the leadership of Abu Mazen has viewed Israel's disengagement as a problem to be managed, not an opportunity to be exploited – in part because evacuation was unilateral and not the result of negotiations, in part because Israel's withdrawal from Gaza is not absolute, and finally because the West Bank remains firmly in Israel's grip. Abu Mazen does not see the Gaza evacuation in the context of liberation, and therefore he is reluctant to see in the Gaza Strip today a new kind of territorial asset requiring a revision of the PA's traditional concepts, in both doctrine and operations. Indeed, were Abu Mazen to adopt such a view, as has Hamas in some important respects, PA efforts to police Palestinian violations of the border with

Israel might be more effectively pursued as part of a security doctrine that defined the Gaza Strip as liberated land deserving of protection from internal anarchy and external threat alike. In this critical sense, however, Gaza's status after Israel's disengagement has not merited changing a concept rooted in the PA's existing understanding of its ill-defined security objectives. So Gaza, like the West Bank, remains ineffectively defended by PA security forces from external or internal threats posed by Israel or militant Palestinians.

Partly as a consequence, the relevance of the Israel-Hezbollah equation to the Gaza-Israel border is also rejected. Israel has ended its occupation of Lebanon, while the occupation of Palestinian territories continues. Gaza, unlike Lebanon, is not a state. It lacks territorial depth and a reliable source or arsenal of weapons. The Qassam and similar primitive weapons simply cannot serve the same deterrent function as Hezbollah's more considerable armory.³⁶

A Monopoly of No-Force

Policies adopted by the PA before the January 2006 elections reflect the view that disengagement did not produce a material change in the manner in which the PA relates to the Gaza Strip or to those armed elements operating in it despite the operational advantages to PA forces that evacuation has produced. For example, the PA can field more forces in Gaza than in the West Bank, forces that enjoy far greater mobility and a popular preference for the cease-fire.³⁷ Yet Abu Mazen's response to Israeli violations of Gaza's territorial integrity remains rooted in familiar, ineffective appeals for diplomatic intervention.

While it may not have resulted in international acceptance of Israeli claims to have ended its occupation of the Gaza Strip, disengagement has fortified international efforts to demand of

the PA, particularly in Gaza, actions and authority that are the province of sovereign states.

“In every responsible country in the world, the only authority to use force belongs to the government,” noted US assistant secretary of state David Welch. “This is our expectation of what would happen with the Palestinian Authority; there should be no militias, there should be no terrorist organizations.”³⁸

The United States is not alone in the view that disengagement enables the PA to act like a state, in security and other dimensions, even in the face of the PA’s explicit rejection of this status, and even as the US and others reject a Palestinian right to act in a sovereign manner insofar as its defense or liberation of territory from continuing occupation.

Abu Mazen opposes continuing Palestinian violations of Gaza’s border with Israel as he does all manifestations of violent opposition to Israel. They are counterproductive operationally; they undermine his efforts to establish “One Gun, One Authority” – the PA’s monopoly on the use of force; and lastly, they contradict the *tadiya*.

Speaking in Gaza on December 10, 2005, Abbas said that it was “irresponsible” and “contrary to the interests of Palestinians to carry out acts of provocation against Israel.” Militant actions against Israel in Gaza Strip and the West Bank, he declared, were harming the Palestinian people by “provoking” Israeli military responses.

Security must prevail in this land and all armed displays must end. Those who are still doing them are working against their people. Our stance on the truce is clear, we want security to prevail and citizens to feel secure and free from any threats of Israeli aircraft raids.

We have agreed a period of calm, a continuous truce and consequently we have to keep it so that security can be completely reestablished and we are not

threatened by (Israeli) air strikes, artillery and missiles.

We have agreed one truce; therefore, we should continue with it. Anyone who commits acts of provocation against others, especially against Israel, should know that he is acting in an irresponsible way against the interests of his homeland and against the interests of his own people.³⁹

Efforts to translate such bold and forthright statements into an effective operational framework, however, have failed. There will always be those who are ready to take up arms against Israel. Jibril Rajoub, the former head of the PA's fledgling National Security Council, noted in an interview on *Al-Arabiyya*, December 25, 2005, "Yes, we support armed resistance in the occupied territories against the occupation," adding that the occupied territories comprise "the West Bank and East Jerusalem. . . . There are more than 400,000 settlers in the West Bank. We think the occupation, with all its symbols, is a target for the resistance. This has been our stand and will continue to be so."⁴⁰

The issue facing the PA is not that such sentiments exist, nor even that organizations tied to the ruling Fateh Party and the PA leadership continue to be well represented among these elements, but that the PA's doctrine of no-force is considered untenable by many, including those organizations like Hamas that have adopted the unilateral cease-fire. As a result, Abu Mazen lacks a mandate from his own public to outlaw actions of the armed resistance, even when they descend into terrorism, gang violence and hooliganism. In the face of Israel's rejection of the PA as a negotiating partner and its continuing armed operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, there is no consensus that protecting Palestinian national security requires a disciplined cease-fire or the maintenance of the sanctity of Gaza's border with Israel.⁴¹ The absence of such a

framework – the “software” that provides the national security context in which all official efforts to enforce its writ – undermines the commitment and effectiveness of PA policing.⁴²

“Security is the main tool for designing our future,” explained Ahmad Issa, “but we lack an official definition of what we mean by security. Do we need security for protecting the armed resistance against Israel or to fight against this resistance? We have to fight against the resistance but are there any guarantees that this will further our march towards independence? This is the core of the division within Palestinian society.

“There are no answers to the question of why we do what we do. This was the strategic failure of Oslo – the failure to establish an institutional framework in which security operates.”⁴³

Salah Tamari, head of the Bethlehem Governorate, explained that it is necessary to define the context – for Israelis as well as for Palestinians – in which force becomes an appropriate and legitimate option for national self-defense and liberation.

“The goal of the PA is to protect its political project, to make an agreement with Israel and to establish our state. We will uproot any violation, sabotage, or act of terror. We have to transform and redefine the meaning of resistance. It does not necessarily mean violence, but also steadfastness.” Yet Tamari acknowledged that, “the failure to protect and defend our people makes us look like a joke. In Bethlehem we [sometimes] have to shoot [at Israeli forces] or we lose credibility with our own people.”⁴⁴

“[Israel] has to pay a price if it hits us in the West Bank,” Tamari noted. “Military action should be morally acceptable and well-planned, with published, well-described motives. We don’t have this. The only capability Palestinians have developed is using humans and this is morally wrong. It tarnished our reputation and gave Israel an excuse to act against us, creating

havoc and fear which benefitted Israel.”

Palestinians, Tamari believes, also need to define for Israel rules of the game regarding the legitimate and effective use of force by Palestinians committed to a negotiated agreement.

“The first step before hitting back is to make [Israel] know that it did wrong. Then, when we strike back, they’ll know why.

“Credibility is important vis a vis your enemy,” he continued. “This does not mean that you have to be weak, but to establish animosity within the framework of respect. Credibility is the bridge to co-existence and friendship.”⁴⁵

III. Hamas at Center Stage

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) has emerged as a central factor in both domestic Palestinian life and in Palestinian relations with Israel. Its views concerning the definition and protection of Palestinian interests and the means it employs to end the occupation as a way station to the liberation of all of Palestine have moved from the margins to the center of the Palestinian and the international agenda. This interaction is dynamic. If Hamas’ appearance as a major player on the Palestinian scene has compelled friend and foe alike to take notice, it has also produced an ongoing debate within the movement about the continuing relevance of long-held ideological certainties in this new environment.

Hamas has been an important factor on the Palestinian scene since the late 1980s. Until the first intifada, Hamas’ predecessor was a docile branch of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, whose focus on personal status and social issues was facilitated by Israel, which sought to establish a pliable Islamist alternative to the secular nationalism of the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO). During the first Palestinian rebellion against Israeli rule that erupted in December 1987, it was transformed into Hamas – the multi-faceted Islamic resistance organization fighting a *jihad* to reclaim all of Palestine and winning the allegiance of increasing numbers of Palestinians. In the cycle of violence sparked by the massacre of 27 Palestinians by an Israeli settler in Hebron in February 1994, the organization embraced suicide attacks against Israeli civilians. During the al Aqsa intifada, popular support for this policy transformed suicide terror from its origins as little more than opportunistic revenge against Israelis into a strategy of resistance aimed at increasing the costs of continuing Israeli attacks against Palestinians. The last decade has seen the organization grow in influence and power to a point where it has eclipsed Fatah – the secular, nationalist party at the heart of Palestinian politics and resistance to occupation for the last four decades.

Liberation through Armed Struggle

During the recent election campaign, a five meter banner was strung by Change and Reform, the Hamas electoral list, across one of the Gaza Strip’s main thoroughfares. It read: “We Tried Ten years of Negotiations and Got Nothing, But in Five years of Struggle Look What We Achieved”.

Of the two important points thus declared, the futility of negotiations *as managed by the PA* and the utility of armed struggle as the most effective instrument of liberation are essential pillars of the organization.

The PA, explained Usamah Hamdan, Hamas’ representative in Beirut, “has no idea of what national security is. In the Oslo agreement, the PA was supposed to supply security for

Israel and Israel would give land and a Palestinian state. This did not work, and Fateh as a result is in shock and without direction.”⁴⁶

Hamas opposes the PLO’s core strategy of entering negotiations with Israel without reserving the option of the use of force. And it rejects the decision to elevate the resumption of talks as a strategic objective itself. As Israel’s policy of unilateralism matured and its decision to retreat from Gaza was implemented, Hamas, along with many Palestinians, saw the organization’s critical assumptions vindicated.

“We have always believed from the very beginning that any movement without an armed struggle will be a waste of time,” explained Mahmoud al-Zahar, one of the organization’s remaining founders. “When the Palestinians negotiated with the Israelis, they wasted our time and finances. When we took up arms and launched our armed struggle, we succeeded in less than five years to force the Israelis to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. This fulfilled everyone’s dream. It was resistance that put an end to their Zionist dreams to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. I think we have to benefit from this experience by applying it accordingly in the West Bank and other areas.”⁴⁷

Juxtaposed to this militant declaration is another message. It is clear but less explicit than the first, but far more surprising, imaginative, and nuanced— Hamas believes that Israel’s disengagement has liberated Gaza, opening a window to a better future. ⁴⁸

When Ariel Sharon announced the disengagement plan in February 2004, the Hamas leadership responded with alacrity. Almost alone among Palestinians, Hamas operated on the assumption that Sharon would implement his plan. Sharon’s unilateralism and his preference for a long-term interim agreement short of peace pose no practical or ideological problem for the

organization, which has long favored a similar concept – *hudna*.

Israel's retreat from Gaza without a Palestinian *quid pro quo* appeared to vindicate Hamas' liberation strategy, which even then was responding in imaginative ways to the changing realities on the ground.

Sheikh Yassin himself only days before his assassination by Israel in March 2004 implied that disengagement, once implemented, would endow Gaza with a status different than the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a change that would result in a Hamas decision to halt attacks from there against Israel, at least temporarily.

"The Israeli retreat from the Gaza Strip will not stop the struggle in defense of the homeland. Are we fighting only for Gaza? Where is Jerusalem? Where is the West Bank and the refugees and the holy sites? We may stop our attacks in Gaza temporarily, but the military struggle in the West Bank will continue."⁴⁹

By early April 2004, veteran *Ha'aretz* correspondent Danny Rubinstein reported that the Hamas response to disengagement signified a significant change of direction.

It is interesting to note the change in Hamas, which has until now not recognized the legitimacy of the PA because the latter draws its authority from the Oslo Accords, which Hamas denounces. According to the Hamas spokesmen, Sheikh Said Siam and Ismail Haniyeh, the change was brought about by the changed reality: In their opinion, Israel will withdraw from Gaza not because of a political agreement but as a result of the political and armed struggle that the Palestinians have waged against the Israel Defense Forces and the settlers. Therefore, they say, there will be a new reality in "liberated Gaza" - different from the reality created by the Oslo Accords. In their opinion, the new Gaza will be a more democratic

regime, with clean hands, that will uphold civil liberties. Under the existing reality, they say, Hamas boycotted the elections because they smacked of the Oslo Accords; in the new reality, they wish, and demand, to join in and decide on the form of government. They stress that the attacks on Israel will not stop, but do not deny reports that in August 2002, they reached an agreement in Cairo to keep civilians out of the conflict. This is generally understood to mean that the attacks will not take place within the Green Line.⁵⁰

Tools of Resistance

Hamas' decisions to support the "*tadiya*" or unilateral, temporary cease-fire, to contest national elections, and to explore conditions under which to engage Israel in negotiations are inter-related elements of a design borne of a changing environment sparked by the disengagement and the implosion of the PA. These decisions cannot be easily compartmentalized, and each has produced a cascading series of decisions and options that the organization is still sorting out. When considered together, this trend suggests a willingness to employ more pacific instruments in the pursuit of national objectives of liberation and domestic rehabilitation. This trend is not only conditioned by the maintenance of armed capability but prospects for diplomatic progress are arguably enhanced by the existence of a credible Palestinian defensive/deterrent capability also capable of imposing discipline within Palestinian ranks. The record of the last year suggests a disciplined adherence to such a path even when faced with Israeli actions that in the past would have produced a spiral of violence.⁵¹ Notwithstanding these changes, the organization insists upon conditioning its support for this path on its utility. There is no discernable intention to forego, as a matter of principle, the options of force or terror, or to undertake a formal, explicit repudiation of core elements of its ideological

and security doctrines, notwithstanding its evident operational readiness to do so.⁵² “Our goal,” affirmed Zahar in an October 26, 2005 interview in *Ha’aretz*, “is to protect our land, and if weapons serve this purpose, then they must stay.

Hamas views Israel’s departure from the Gaza Strip as a significant development. Zahar went so far as to describe the disengagement “the most significant event in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948.”⁵³

These are not idle words. They reflect a belief that the core of the conflict – the struggle for control of the land – remains the fulcrum of Hamas’ world view. Israel’s retreat from Gaza was indeed a remarkable event in the history of the conflict – the first time since Israel’s establishment where it evacuated troops *and settlers*, and surrendered territory to Palestinians.

The fact that the organization believes that Israel was compelled by force of arms to withdraw, a sentiment supported by Palestinian popular opinion, vindicates a strategic doctrine that places force at its center. It also provides a powerful incentive to maintain and expand such a capability in the West Bank as well as Gaza Strip, even in the context of the current tactical commitment to the unilateral cease-fire and the related political “charm offensive.”⁵⁴

The “Honor Agreement of the Palestinian Resistance Factions,” signed by Izzedin al-Qassam Brigade (Hamas) and Al Aqsa Brigades (Fateh) in October 2005, reaffirms the continuing centrality of arms – “in all forms and methods” – even in the context of the truce. The rehabilitation, improvement and expansion of the Hamas arsenal, in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is indeed what is currently occurring.

The organization has taken advantage of security lapses along the border with Egypt to import weapons and cadre. Tunnels from Gaza into Israel have been discovered and attempted

incursions by sea have been intercepted, although neither of these methods has been traced to Hamas. Israel believes that Hamas is developing a Qassam with a range of 15km, putting Ashkelon in range from Gaza, and main population centers and the international airport in range from the West Bank.⁵⁵ According to a study by an institution close to Hamas, technology and know-how for the production of mortars as well as rockets will be established in the West Bank.⁵⁶

The Hezbollah Factor

Hamas, even with its talk of “victory,” has a sober appreciation of the balance of forces that produced Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza.

The important thing is not the power of weapons, but the impact of the other side. Are our rockets like the Israeli atom bomb? The Qassams [fired] on the settlements and the tunnel operations were more effective against the Israelis than [Israel’s] destruction of houses and the uprooting of trees on the Palestinian people. Hamas understands that Israel left the Gaza Strip defeated but not entirely so. It was not a clear victory or total defeat for either side.⁵⁷

The organization rejects the claim that disengagement has ended Israel’s occupation, but it readily acknowledges that “a new situation” in Gaza has been established.

There is no intention to “escalate against the occupation here in Gaza in areas where Israel has evacuated,” explained Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zori. Palestinians “should not give Israel any excuse to hit Gaza.”⁵⁸

Notwithstanding its current commitment to the unilateral cease-fire, Hamas is evolving a

doctrine for the use of force – 1) to fortify the credibility of the calm, and 2) to supersede it should it lapse. In the Gaza Strip, the overall posture will be defensive, befitting both the recognition that Gaza has been “liberated”, decreasing potential returns on a more militant posture, the current lack of popular support for a more aggressive strategy, and the desire to keep Gaza out of the “game.”

Qassam rockets of increasing payload and range are set to be the signature weapon of this new era, as suicide bombers were during the last decade. Qassams, described by the al-Mustaqbal report as “the strategic weapon in the coming period,” aim primarily to establish deterrence and protect the gains produced by Israel’s evacuation. A Hamas spokesman confirms that the organization is “working on a deterrent.”⁵⁹ Should this policy fail, Israeli violations of Gaza’s territorial integrity, according to this model, will be answered in a cautious and measured fashion, harsh enough to deter or exact a price for violations but insufficient to “provoke the Zionist enemy and impel it to reenter the Gaza Strip.”⁶⁰

Circumstances in the West Bank are different from those in Gaza, and the evolving intent to make this area “the center of resistance” reflects this difference. There has been no Israeli evacuation from the West Bank, and there is no territorial integrity for Palestinians to defend. In short, according to Zahar’s assessment noted above, in the West Bank the struggle for control over the land continues unabated.

The separation barrier complicates access to Israel and thus limits (but does not prevent) the use of suicide or terror attacks there. Nevertheless it remains important for Hamas to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the barrier as well as a continuing capacity to extend a “long arm” into Israel. Improved Qassams and mortars can serve such a purpose. Within the West Bank

itself, a breakdown or episodic violations of the unilateral cease-fire may also feature more conventional guerilla actions against soldiers and settlers along roads, and at military bases and settlements, and long-distance shooting.⁶¹

Hezbollah's actions against Israeli forces occupying south Lebanon until its withdrawal in 2000 are identified as the inspiration for these latter options.⁶² The analogy with Hezbollah is a seductive one. To the extent that the Hezbollah model is seen as applicable in the West Bank, it suggests a targeted strategy of "quality" operations against soldiers and perhaps settlers as well. Israel's retreat from south Lebanon and Gaza are seen by many as similar, at least on a superficial level. Before the disengagement, head of Hamas' political bureau, Khaled Meshal, even warned that any part of Gaza still occupied by Israel after disengagement would become a "Sheba farms." Hamas' aspiration to recreate on the Gaza frontier the kind of relative stability that has characterized Israel's border with Lebanon also supports the evolution of understandings on the Lebanese model – "rules of the game" of the kind that have in fact evolved between Hamas and Israel since the September disengagement – rules that are no less clear even though they have not been explicitly negotiated around a table. A dynamic of this sort, strictly limited to Hamas and Israel, seems to have developed in the months since the unilateral cease-fire was announced. Admittedly, the current undeclared cease-fire between these two antagonists is due more to the unilateral cease-fire than to Israeli caution or Hamas' aspiration to create a deterrent balance between them – a balance that Israel opposes. But this fact does not challenge what has so far been a successful effort by both parties to establish, at relatively low cost in casualties and materiel, post-evacuation rules of the game.

Hamas has demonstrated a more disciplined commitment to the unilateral cease-fire than

all other Palestinian parties. Continuing Israeli provocations – including the arrest of hundreds of activists – have passed without response. Paradoxically, Hamas’ most significant violation came in response to a conflagration of its own making. Exploding ordnance at a Hamas rally in Jabaliya camp on September 23, 2005 resulted in large numbers of killed and wounded. Hamas blamed the incident on an Israeli attack, letting loose a barrage of Qassams into Israel. The fiction was quickly exposed, however, adding to the organization’s embarrassment. Israel’s aggressive military response over the next two days and its arrest of more than 200 West Bank activists left little doubt, in the first confrontation after disengagement, about its intention to dominate when challenged, and produced a reaffirmation of the organization’s commitment to the calm.

The incident was unacceptable to Israel and a demonstration of an atypical lack of discipline within the organization. Complications in the domestic Palestinian arena nor “freelancing” by Hamas cells,⁶³ however, could not be an excuse for the organization’s violation of the border and attacks upon Israelis.⁶⁴ Hamas’ reaffirmation of the unilateral cease-fire was a positive, if embarrassing acknowledgment of the price to be paid for breaking the rules of the game. Hamas’ move offered a welcome contrast to the simultaneous announcement by PIJ that it was no longer bound by its ever tenuous commitment to the *tadiya*.

IV. Post-Election Assessment

Hamas' religious extremism, its use of terror to weaken Israel, and its refusal to countenance Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem have made the organization anathema to Israel, the United States, and others who counted upon the Palestinian

political and security institutions created by the Oslo agreements to marginalize if not eradicate it. Hamas' overwhelming victory at the polls in January 2005 has placed the organization in a commanding position to run these very institutions, dealing the battered Oslo framework perhaps its most extraordinary blow, and enabling Israel to more easily maintain its longstanding rejection of the PA as a negotiating partner.

The scale of Hamas' electoral success surprised everyone, not least the Hamas leadership itself. Its victory has placed the organization in the international spotlight, rarely the best place to make considered and difficult decisions.

As it confronts the future, the organization is unlikely to repudiate doctrines which it believes have demonstrated their value and utility. These include first and foremost "armed struggle" against Israel's continuing occupation. Hamas is not alone in its view that force is an inalienable tool for nations or liberation movements. It is unlikely to accede to demands to dismantle the Palestinian capability to employ force, a capability it has long championed. In its view the record of those Palestinian who have done so is not worth emulating. But just as it condemns Abu Mazen for embracing negotiations as a strategic option, it must be wary that support for the use of force not degenerate into an absolute value itself and an undisciplined preference for violence and terror for its own sake. Its adoption of the unilateral cease-fire, its support for elections, its belief that Gaza is an attribute worth protecting, and an extraordinary suggestion by a top official that Hamas can be a "real partner" with Israel⁶⁵ manifest a readiness to negotiate an end to occupation.⁶⁶ The challenge, and it is not only Hamas's challenge, is to craft a political and diplomatic framework in which tools other than force and violence become the effective option of choice for all concerned.

Notes

1. Israel continues to exercise a significant degree of control over Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. This control has not been imposed unilaterally, but in the cases of Palestinian exit and entry at Rafah and Kerem Shalom, and the issuance of identity documents, for example, is a result of agreement with the PA.
2. “To a large extent, the Palestinians will pay for the freedom they obtained at Rafah with a tightening of the internal seige – and not only because the defense establishment will want to show who the boss is.” Meron Benvenisti, “The Rafah Precedent,” *Ha’aretz*, November 17, 2005.
3. Continuing targeted assassinations for example.
4. See for example the response of State Department spokesman September 26, 2005; “State Department Backs Israel's Retaliation to Qassam Attacks,” The Associated Press and *Ha’aretz* Service, December 27, 2005.
5. See *Ha’aretz*, “The State Responds to a Petition Against Assassination: The Laws of Occupation Do Not Apply to Gaza,” December 11, 2005.
6. “With the completion of the withdrawal from gaza, the principal sector of future conflict between Israel and the Palestinians will move north to the West Bank. The IDF will demand stabilization of its new line opposite Gaza and implement a new defense concept.”, *Ha’aretz* defense correspondent Amos Harel, “The IDF’s Principal front. will Move to the West Bank, *Ha’aretz*, September 13, 2005.
7. “Balance of Terror In Gaza?”, YNETnews.com, October 27, 2005.
8. Qassam is the generic name given to Palestinian rockets. Each of four Palestinian organizations calls them by different name: the Samud (Popular front for the Liberation of Palestine); Nasser (Popular resistance Committees); al-Aqsa (AMB); al-Quds (Palestine Islamic Jihad).
9. In 2004, 309 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israeli targets. In 2005, the number was 366.
10. “Bewitched Nation,” Israel Harel, *Ha’aretz* , December 29, 2005.
11. The IDF chief of staff, Dan Halulz, suggested Hamas was close to achieving a 15km range. *Jerusalem Post*, email p.10 sept 20, 26.
12. Amos Harel reported in *Ha’aretz* on September 29, 2005 that Israeli Military Intelligence believed that Hamas had suffered “strategic damage” as a consequence of its own miscalculations (the Qassam firings and the kidnap/murder in Ramallah).

13. Labor Minister Haim Ramon noted that First Rain “would cause the Palestinian civilian population to turn against Hamas,” www.gush.shalom.org, September 25, 2005.
14. Labor Minister Yitzhak Herzog did “not rule out the possibility that IDF cannon will shell Gaza.” *Ha’aretz*, September 26, 2005.
15. *Ha’aretz*, September 28, 2005.
16. Arutz Sheva News Service, September 25, 2005.
17. *Ha’aretz*, September 26, 2005.
18. “The Great Cannon Show,” Nadav Ha’etzni, *Ma’ariv*, October 30, 2005.
19. Minister of Health Danny Naveh, see *Ha’aretz*, September 26, 2005 report on cabinet meeting.
20. Arutz Sheva News Service, September, 26, 2005.
21. Interview with Shaul Mofaz, *Yerushalim*, September 30, 2005.
22. See “Military Intelligence: Escalation Causes Damage to Hamas,” Amos Harel, *Ha’aretz*, September 29, 2005.
23. *Yerushalim*, September 30, 2005.
24. In fact, in recent months a pattern of action has been established between the IDF and PIJ, featuring targeted assassinations and other actions against PIJ militants in the West Bank and Gaza to which PIJ responds with rocket barrages from Gaza. Note for example, the assassination of Luay Sa’adi and Majed al- Ashkar in Tulkarm that was followed by the launching of 25 Al Quds rockets on October 24, 2005.
25. Interview with Shlomo Brom.
26. The murder of an Israeli kidnapped from Mishor Adumim and taken to Ramallah to be held hostage to win the release of Palestinian prisoners.
27. It is too expensive to build, manufacture and deploy a system to intercept a simple, cheap, fast and close rocket in flight. The head of planning and strategy in the General Staff, Brigadier General Udi Dekel, said this week that when a Qassam-intercept system is developed, the cost of each intercept will be 1,000 times greater, in relative terms, than intercepting a Scud with an Arrow anti-ballistic missile. The Arrow is 10 times more expensive than the Scud, whereas the Qassam interceptors will be 10,000 times more costly than the rocket itself. In these circumstances, the previous chief of staff, Moshe Ya’alon, scoffed in the same aerial seminar mentioned above, it would already be better to supply the Palestinians with Scuds. The Qassam interceptor, which has not yet reached maturity, is liable to be a new version of the scrapped Lavi

warplane - which may be why the IDF has mixed feelings about its nonexistence. The Israel economy will buckle under the weight of such heavy armor, which, though it seems necessary, is in fact as superfluous and wasteful as placing a traffic cop in the seat next to the driver in every vehicle, even if the presence of traffic police on the roads could deter drivers and prevent accidents, Amir Oren, "A Waiting Game," *Ha'aretz*, December 30, 2005.

28. Reuters, November 15, 2005.

29. Quoted in Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies, August 28, 2005.

30. Khalidi and Agha, "A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine," Chatham House, p.87 (draft copy).

31. Interview.

32. *Al Ahram Weekly*, 8-14 December 2005, "Outside Looking In," Marian Houk.

33. Interview.

34. Interview.

35. In the new municipality building of Al-Khader, built with funds from the Japanese government, Adnan al-Sbeih, the municipal treasurer, secretary of the Agricultural Association for producing and marketing Al-Khader's grapes and a Fatah member, says the PA "exists only in name." He claims that nothing at all has changed in the last year. "Everything is closed. The wall is going up around us, taking what's left of our land." All aspects of life have to be coordinated with Israel, he says. And while Israel demands that the PA act against the armed factions, "a Palestinian security jeep cannot get from Bethlehem to Al-Khader," which has no armed PA police presence of its own, "without permission from Israel. The PA does not have the power to do anything. People are frustrated. Not so much with Abu Mazen, but with the occupation. What can he do when he himself is under occupation?", Elizabeth Kershner, "The Last Hope," *The Jerusalem Report*, November 13, 2005.

36. Interviews with Ziad Abu Amr, Salah Tamari, and Ghazi Hamad.

37. Interview Col. Hazem Atallah.

38. "Inter-Palestinian Controversy over Truce Heats up US Administration, Congress Weigh in on PNA, Hamas," Palestine Media Center, December 12, 2005.

39. "Inter-Palestinian Controversy over Truce Heats up US Administration, Congress Weigh in on PNA, Hamas," Palestine Media Center, December 12, 2005.

40. Mideastwire, January 2, 2006.

41. "After the Cairo agreement between the Palestinian political factions in March in which all factions recognized the existence of Israel, the truce was the starting point in a long process toward recognizing the existence of Israel. If the Israelis want to continue with occupation it will never assure security for them. An Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza that is not comprehensive -- that is without free borders, a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, an airport, a seaport -- means the Israelis are still occupying, and are a target for the Palestinian resistance, the very thing we are looking to get rid of." Interview with Palestinian National Security Advisor Jibril Rajoub, *Al Ahram Weekly* (Egypt), September 30, 2005.

42. "What seems to be from the outside a coordinated Israeli -Palestinian campaign to arrest the members of Islamic Jihad activists in the Palestinian Areas is actually exaggerated and non-existent. The truth is that the Palestinian Authority is more concerned about controlling its internal situation by checking cars that are stolen, unregistered and uninsured. Even in this campaign to establish law and order, the PA is being challenged by its citizens.", Hamas and Fatah – Outside and Inside, Hasan El-Batal, *Al-Ayyam*, December 10, 2005.

43. Interview.

44. Khalidi and Agha write that, "the PA has been totally incapable of defending its people in the sense of actively confronting Israeli armed actions or incursion onto Palestinian soil, or raising the cost of the occupation.", *A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine*, p. 89.

45. Interview.

46. Interview.

47. " Hamas: Negotiations: A Waste of Time," Motasem Dalloul, *Al Jazeera*, October 22, 2005.

48. " Hamas sees in the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip a national achievement by the Palestinian people. It is the fruit of the resistance and steadfastness of the Palestinian people. That is why Hamas is interested to see a full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip so the Palestinian people can enjoy freedom as a first stage on the path of liberating the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories," Ismail Haniyeh, *Bitterlemons*, July 25, 2005.

49. "Two for the seesaw - in Gaza," Danny Rubinstein, *Ha'aretz*, March 18, 2004, quoted from *Al Quds*, March 10, 2004.

50. " Hamas, A New Tune," Danny Rubinstein, *Ha'aretz*, April 13, 2004.

51. For example after the targeted assassination of 4 Hamas activists and the mistaken assassination of an activist in Jabaliya camp in November 2005.

52. "To discuss recognition of Israel, to discuss negotiation with Israel is nonsense actually, now," said Al-Zahar. "This is not serving the facts and this is a theoretical question serving nobody and wasting our time.", " Hamas Leader Says Charter Not the Koran: Group Could One

Day Recognize Israel,” Arnon Regular, *Ha’aretz*, September 22, 2005.

53. “ Hamas Cashes in on Gaza ‘Victory’”, Patrick Bishop, *Telegraph* (UK), August 27, 2005.

54. “Elections are Vital,” Ghazi Hamad, *Bitterlemons*, January 2, 2006.

55. There has been at least one rocket fired into Israel from the West Bank, although not by Hamas. “In one of the first Qassam firings from the West Bank into Israel, Palestinians fired a makeshift rocket last month toward an area on the Green Line opposite an Afula-area moshav, Israeli military sources said. The rocket fired from the northern West Bank was a cruder version of those launched in Gaza. It fell just short of the boundary between Israel and the West Bank, causing no damage or casualties.” *Ha’aretz*, January 1, 2006. Arutz 7 reported on December 12, 2005 that “Fatah said it fired a Qassam rocket last night at a town near Afula in the Jezreel Valley... The Al-Aqsa Brigades, the military arm of Fatah, released an announcement that on Sunday evening, a Jenin-1 Qassam rocket was fired towards an Israeli community west of Jenin.”

56. Al-Mustaqbal Research Center, as translated by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, www.intelligence.org/il.

57. Mahmoud Zahar, *Ha’aretz*, October 26, 2005.

58. Interview.

59. Interview.

60. Al-Mustaqbal, as translated.

61. Al Mustaqbal as translated. See also, “ The IDF’s Principal Military Front Crosses to the West Bank,” Amos Harel, *Ha’aretz*, September 13, 2005.

62. Al Mustaqbal as translated.

63. Zahar argued, for example, that the September 2005 kidnap/murder of an Israeli in Ramallah was undertaken without the Gaza leadership’s knowledge. He nevertheless defended it. “ Hamas’ Zahar: More Kidnappings if Israel Doesn’t Release Prisoners,” Arnon Regular, *Ha’aretz*, October 26, 2005. The murder was the sole fatal attack attributed to Hamas by Israel’s General Security Service (Shin Bet) during 2005. As reported in “Shin Bet: Palestinian Truce Main Cause for Reduced Terror,” Amos Harel, *Ha’aretz*, January 2, 2006.

64. Meshal’s warning that it would “increase its confrontation with Israelis inside Palestine,” made during a December 11, 2005 visit to Teheran raises similar doubts about the organization’s ability to discipline its commitments.

65. Interview with Usamah Hamdan.

66. General Udi Dekel, director of the IDF's Strategic Planning Division argued in a public forum in Jerusalem that a strong showing in the election would prompt Hamas to scale back its use of terror., reported in "Israel Moves to Create Gazan Buffer Zone," Ofer Shelah, *Forward* , December 30, 2005.