

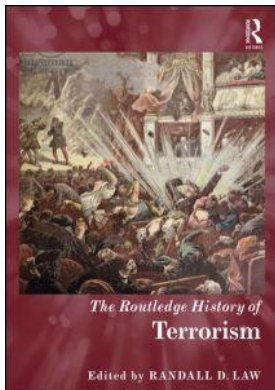
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### **Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization**

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## ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

*Boaz Ganor*

The state of Israel has dealt with political violence and Palestinian terrorism since its inception and even prior to its establishment. As one of the countries most affected by terrorism, Israel has become something of a test case and model for democratic countries dealing with terrorism. Israel was among the first countries challenged by a wide variety of terrorist attacks, including hijackings, explosions in crowded areas, hostage barricade situations, suicide attacks, and more. The scale of these terrorist attacks and the numbers of casualties have varied over the years, depending on the operational capacity of the Palestinian terrorist organizations and their level of motivation at a given time and the result of the regional processes and the interests of their patron states.

### **The challenge of terrorism in Israel after the establishment of the state (1948–67)**

The violent conflict between the Jewish and Arab inhabitants of Israel–Palestine started way before the founding of Israel in 1948. As a protest against the waves of Jewish immigration in the 1930s and following internal processes within the Palestinian population, a general Arab strike was declared in 1936. The end of the strike after six months marked the beginning of three years of violent rebellion against British rule and the Jewish population. The suppression of the rebellion by the British and World War II brought relative peace, which was preserved until November 1947. (For more on Mandatory Palestine before the creation of the state of Israel, see Chapter 12 by Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, “Britain’s Small Wars: The Challenge to Empire, 1881–1951,” in this volume.)

Immediately after the declaration of independence of the state of Israel in 1948, the neighboring Arab countries together with the local Palestinian community provoked an overall war against the newborn state. After the cessation of the hostilities, Israel had to deal with a new type of military challenge – the intrusion of *fedayeen* into Israeli territory. These were Palestinian refugees, terrorists, and criminals who infiltrated Israel for the purposes of agricultural cultivation, theft, robbery, looting, killing, assassination, and sabotage. From 1951 to 1955, more than 800 Israeli civilians and soldiers were injured by *fedayeen* penetrating the border (mostly from Jordan), with the casualty count rising every year.<sup>1</sup> These penetrations into Israel over the years challenged Israel’s sovereignty within its territory and tarnished the status quo Israel was attempting to achieve through stabilizing its borders.

Against this backdrop, the idea began to develop that there was a need to conduct offensive retributions against various targets in Arab countries, in order to alleviate, at least partially, the anxiety and low morale of Israeli citizens affected by the infiltrations. Thus, efforts were

directed towards deterrence and retaliation against Arab and Palestinian targets outside Israeli territory, consistent with the notion of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Initially, these operations were carried out by one local commander or another and were usually directed against Arab or Palestinian targets that had a direct or symbolic connection with the preceding attacks, or against the bases from which the attacks were launched.

In an attempt to formalize the sporadic Israeli military activity, in 1953 the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) established a military unit trained for special missions under the command of Major Ariel Sharon. This unit came to be called Unit 101. Its successes and Israel’s retaliatory actions strengthened morale amongst the Israeli public and IDF soldiers, who began to volunteer for the unit. Nevertheless, the activities of the *fedayeen* continued to expand every year. After several months of activity and dozens of reprisals, Unit 101 consolidated with the paratroopers’ battalion in early 1954. The Israeli retaliatory operations at that time were not necessarily designed to deter the *fedayeen* but to punish them and their supporters as an end unto itself.<sup>2</sup>

One retaliatory operation that drew widespread criticism and protest took place against the village of Kibiya on October 14, 1953. It followed a month of attacks on Israel that had killed twelve people, culminating two days earlier when infiltrators from Jordan threw a hand grenade into a house in the Jewish town of Yehud, killing a mother and her two young children. The response was immediate. Unit 101, reinforced by paratroopers, raided three Jordanian villages, including Kibiya, the main target of the operation since it was an established *fedayeen* base. The paratroopers blew up several houses and dozens of villagers were killed, despite claims by the force commanders that the residents had been warned before the attack.

The Kibiya operation was a turning point, spurring the Jordanian Legion into intensive efforts to curb infiltration: Jordanian forces in the West Bank were increased, more ambushes and patrols were carried out to prevent *fedayeen* infiltrations, orders were given restricting the activities of citizens along the border, and penalties were imposed for those who violated these orders.<sup>3</sup> In the years that followed, the number of thefts, robberies, and casualties along this border decreased.

The shock caused by the mass strike on Palestinian civilians brought on a gradual shift in the focus of Israeli’s retaliatory efforts, from civilian targets to military ones. Indeed, from the end of 1954, retaliation efforts focused on the bases and training facilities of the Palestinian organizations themselves and even more so on military and police installations of the Arab countries, principally Jordan and Egypt, which sponsored the *fedayeen* or allowed them to operate from their territory. It was at this time that Israel openly adopted the principle of placing the responsibility for the *fedayeen*’s activity on the shoulders of the Arab governments.

The Sinai Campaign marked the end of the first period of terrorism against Israel – that of the infiltration of the *fedayeen*. The war that took place between Egypt and Israel in fall 1956, during which Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, was coordinated both politically and militarily with Britain and France. The operation was designed to root out *fedayeen* bases in the Gaza Strip and prevent further acts of terrorism and sabotage in Israel’s south.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in the short period of occupation of the Gaza Strip in the months after the war, Israel located the terrorist bases in Gaza and neutralized them. In this respect, the Sinai Campaign was crowned with success, bringing a cessation to *fedayeen* operations against Israel from Egypt for nine years, until 1965.

On the other hand, the Sinai Campaign was one of the motives for the establishment of Fatah three years later by a number of Palestinian students in Egypt, headed by Yasser

Arafat. With Fatah's creation, terrorist activities against Israel took on another face: national terrorism carried out by Palestinian groups led by this new Palestinian national movement. Fatah proclaimed the operational strategy of "armed struggle" and refrained from adopting a defined social philosophy. The organization saw the question of the nature of the future state as an issue to be discussed only after the "liberation of Palestine." In the eyes of Fatah's founders, the goal of armed violence was the extermination of the military, political, economic, financial, and cultural institutions of the state of Israel, as well as the prevention of any possibility of a resurgence of a new Zionist society. Military defeat of Israel, in their view, was not the only goal of the Palestinian liberation war. The real purpose was "the abolition of the Zionist character of the occupied land (i.e., the whole territory of Israel); the eradication of the society."<sup>5</sup>

Fatah's strategy was based on two basic principles: the independence of the Palestinian national movement from any Arab rule, and the supremacy of the armed struggle as the only means of the liberation of Palestine. According to the founders of Fatah, the military failure of the Arab states in 1948 was due mainly to the prevention of the Palestinians from engaging in armed struggle to free their homeland.<sup>6</sup> The armed struggle, in their opinion, was intended to simultaneously serve three main goals of the liberation movement: to actively bring about Israel's destruction, to unify the Palestinian people and involve them in the liberation of Palestine, and to make the existence of the Palestinian people known and to demand a solution to their problems.

Fatah was aware that the destruction of Israel required massive force which could only be found amongst the regular Arab armies. Therefore, its leaders did not object to a conventional war but proposed that it be conducted in stages and be propelled by the action of the Palestinian masses as a "war of liberation."<sup>7</sup> Guerrillas would pave the way for the actions of regular units, but unlike the theory outlined by Mao Zedong, it would not be the guerrilla units themselves that would become more powerful, but rather the regular Arab armies.<sup>8</sup> Palestinian armed struggle would thus be used primarily as a catalyst for the war that would destroy Israel.

On May 28, 1964, the first Palestinian national conference convened in east Jerusalem (under Jordanian rule) and decided to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The conference, attended by 422 people, defined itself as the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and chose Ahmad Shukeiri as the chair of the PLO.<sup>9</sup> This body was intended to work with the Arab countries and to coordinate the political and military activities of the Palestinians.

At the first meeting of the PNC, the Palestinian National Charter was formulated, defining the Palestinian national identity and the borders of Palestine. The second paragraph of the charter stated that the borders of Palestine were the same as those under the British Mandate.

Alongside its political activity, the PLO also turned to the military arena and initiated the establishment of a "Palestinian Liberation Army" (PLA). Units of this army were established within the framework of various Arab militaries. Recruits came from among the Palestinian population, while training and operations were the responsibility of the "host" Arab army. PLA units were closely monitored by the Arab governments sharing a border with Israel and could not take any military action against Israel without their approval. In September 1964, the second Arab League summit officially recognized the PLO and approved the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Army.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of the PLO was an anathema to members of Fatah, as it represented everything Fatah had sought to avoid – the patronage of the Arab countries and the attempt

to use the Palestinian issue to further the interests of the Arab states (especially Egypt) – and did not adhere to the principle of the independence of Palestinian decision-making or the Fatah banner of “Palestinian revolution.”

Fatah and the radicals argued that since Palestinian organizations had no value without the actions of the *fedayeen*, a small core of Palestinian fighters should begin to fight immediately in small arenas: “The armed struggle is what will allow for the establishment of a Palestinian organization; it is not the organization that will allow for armed struggle. From the flames of combat real leadership will arise.”<sup>11</sup>

Terrorism against Israel was renewed in the mid-1960s. Fatah became operational and made its first attempt at an attack on January 1, 1965, on Israel’s National Water Carrier, under the name “al-Asifa” (“The Storm”). Despite disapproval from Arab countries (with the exception of Syria), Fatah continued its terrorist activities until the Six Day War (1967). The Arab countries, particularly Jordan and Egypt, tried to damage Fatah via propaganda but were unsuccessful. Gamal Nasser feared that Fatah attacks at this stage would lead to a loss of control over the course of events, so he issued an order to the Arab armies to view themselves as in a state of war with “al-Asifa.”<sup>12</sup>

After Fatah began carrying out attacks, Israel renewed its retaliatory actions in the Arab countries with the purpose of achieving an effective warning and deterrence policy, but again, as in the past, these messages did not appear to achieve their goal. Fatah’s terrorist activity was not stopped and in fact even increased. In 1965, connections were formed between Fatah and Syria, which, among other things, led to Fatah receiving modest amounts of weapons and explosives from Syrian military intelligence. In mid-1965, Arafat, Khalil al-Wazir, and other senior Fatah members moved to Damascus,<sup>13</sup> and from the beginning of 1966 Syria allowed Fatah terrorists to infiltrate into Israel via the slopes of the Golan Heights. The Fatah–Syria honeymoon was short-lived; already in mid-1966 tensions arose between the parties, manifested in arrests, defections, and murders which stemmed from the claim that the organization was not coordinating the attacks it carried out through the Syrian border with the Syrian leadership. However, the cause of the rift was actually the attempts by the new Ba’ath Party leadership to impose its authority on Fatah and make it a Syrian satellite.<sup>14</sup>

On the eve of the Six Day War, during the first half of 1967, there was a significant increase in the number of attacks carried out by Palestinian organizations (thirty-seven, compared to thirty-five in 1965 and forty-one in 1966). Thirteen infiltrations were carried out from Syria, thirteen from Jordan, and eleven from Lebanon. Only the Gaza Strip border crossing remained sealed.<sup>15</sup> Despite the rise in the number of attacks, Israel suffered no significant damage; the attacks were more of a nuisance than anything else.

### **The Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and their aftermaths (1967–80)**

The Arab defeat in the Six Day War and Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip reinforced the notion that the Palestinians were the only Arab actors that could preserve the violent conflict with Israel.<sup>16</sup> In December 1967, George Habash, a Christian Palestinian, founded the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The new organization adopted a rigid ideological approach combining Marxist–Leninist social and economic values and principles of popular resistance and armed struggle for “the liberation of Palestine and the destruction of Arab imperialism and Arab reactionism.” Since its establishment, the

PFLP has been careful to avoid total dependence on any country and has sought independence in decision-making on political, military, and organizational issues. Throughout the years, the PFLP advocated the overthrow of the Jordanian Hashemite regime and its replacement by a popular government sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. The establishment of the PFLP symbolized the beginning of a split amongst the Palestinians, which continued in the years that followed with the establishment of other organizations.

In October 1968, Ahmed Jibril left the PFLP due to personal rivalries with the organization's leaders. In an attempt to demonstrate his connection to the mother organization, Jibril called his new organization the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). Jibril, who had served as an officer in the Syrian army, had close ties with Syria, and the organization soon secured complete Syrian sponsorship. The PFLP-GC did not adopt coherent ideological positions on social and political issues, only the commitment to liberate Palestine through armed struggle.

In 1968, the Syrian Ba'ath regime established another organization, al-Saika. In this way, Syria sought to strengthen its influence on the Palestinian movement without it being considered an external intervention. In 1969, the Iraqi Ba'ath regime established the Arab Liberation Front as a counterweight to al-Saika and the Syrian penetration into the Palestinian arena. These organizations did not reflect the authentic interests of the Palestinians but were designed primarily to promote the sponsoring states' interests in the Palestinian arena.

In 1969, a faction led by Nayef Hawatmeh left the PFLP and established the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Over the years, the Democratic Front formed closer ties with Syria and Iraq and developed a close relationship with communist countries, in particular the Soviet Union.

The founding of numerous Palestinian terrorist organizations was not the only consequence of the 1967 Six Day War. A no less important development was Fatah's attempt to move the center of gravity of the armed struggle to the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip themselves. The presence of a million Palestinians under Israeli occupation allowed, in its opinion, for guerrilla activities along the lines of those formulated by Mao, with the troops coming from within the local population, as "fish in water." Paradoxically, the occupation allowed the Palestinians to take their fate into their own hands without being dependent on the auspices of the Arab countries.<sup>17</sup>

Immediately after the occupation of the territories, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan formulated the three basic principles that guided Israeli policy in the years that followed: minimal military presence in Palestinian towns and villages, minimal involvement of the military government in everyday life, and, above all, the "Open Bridges" policy that allowed residents of the West Bank to pass freely into Jordan and maintain family ties and commerce with neighboring Arab countries. In addition to these principles, Israel allowed residents of the territories to join the Israeli labor market. This policy almost completely eradicated unemployment in the territories and raised the average wage significantly. As a supplementary measure intended to demonstrate goodwill, the Israeli government decided to let Palestinian residents of the territories approach the Israeli Supreme Court of Justice asking to remedy problems with Israeli activities in the territories.

This policy led to the failure of Fatah's attempts to organize civil disobedience in the territories and mobilize the population for terrorist activities against Israel. In less than a year, Fatah forces in the West Bank suffered a serious blow, with most of their members arrested and imprisoned, killed in clashes with IDF commanders, or having fled to Jordan or

other Arab countries. The Palestinian public, moreover, refrained from cooperating with them. By the end of 1968, approximately 1,700 terrorists and collaborators were imprisoned in Israeli jails, and a year later this number increased to 2,800. By the end of 1969, 1,354 terrorists were killed in Israeli operations in the territories, and this number increased to 1,828 by the end of 1970.<sup>18</sup> As a result, Fatah dropped its idea of “self-liberation” in favor of the old familiar strategy of embroiling Israel in a war with the Arab armies.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, the relationship between Egypt and Fatah was strengthened at the end of 1967. Nasser had come to the conclusion that there was a need to reshuffle the PLO and replace Shukeiri. Therefore Arafat was appointed PLO spokesperson in April 1968. Fatah members were elected to senior positions in PLO institutions, thereby effectively allowing for the takeover of the PLO by Palestinian organizations, led by Fatah. The Palestinian Liberation Organization went from being a symbolic, futile framework to becoming an umbrella organization coordinating the military and political activities of all of the various organizations.

At the same meeting of the PNC, it was decided that changes should be made to the Palestinian National Charter in order to reflect the transformation in the character of the PLO. These changes included the addition of several sections emphasizing the exclusivity of the armed struggle as the way to achieve the national aspirations of the Palestinians. Article 9 of the Charter stated that “armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine,” and Article 10 added that “Fedayeen (Commando) actions constitute the nucleus of the Palestinian popular liberation war.” Article 21 stated that the Palestinian Arab people “reject all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine.”<sup>20</sup> At the PNC’s next meeting, Fatah’s takeover of the PLO was completed when Yasser Arafat was appointed PLO chairman.

Contrary to the Israeli policy in the West Bank of minimum military presence, it was decided that the opposite approach would be taken in the Gaza Strip with maximum IDF presence through the physical reinforcement of troops, multiple patrols in population centers, and, depending on the period, both a fixed and a temporary presence in the refugee camps. Nonetheless, one of the most prominent achievements of its Gaza policy was the continued enablement of Palestinians to work in Israel, despite repeated attempts by terrorist organizations to harm Palestinian citizens who did so. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan saw this as an important achievement and as proof that the PLO could not disrupt what was in the common interest of Israel and the Palestinian residents of the territories.<sup>21</sup>

Israel’s actions undermined the confidence of the terrorists, as they turned their natural environment into a potential threat. The most significant step taken was the decision to demolish dozens of homes in Gaza refugee camps. These measures were effective; the number of attacks in the Gaza Strip gradually decreased, and by mid-1972 terrorist activity in the Gaza Strip had subsided.

Following its failure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the PLO set more symbolic goals for the armed struggle. Fatah spokespeople repeatedly stated that their actions would be sufficient even if they were sporadic, as a symbol and a reminder of the Palestinian cause.<sup>22</sup> They explained to the Palestinian public that the terrorist attacks were intended to harm the Israeli economy by deterring tourists and disrupting trade in Israel but were above all designed to prevent Jewish immigration to Israel and encourage the emigration of Israelis back to their countries of origin; in other words, the goal was to make Israelis feel that life in Israel was intolerable.<sup>23</sup>

Toward this end, the PLO struck new targets in new locations. Therefore, in addition to their activities in Israel and along its borders, in the late 1960s the Palestinians began to hit Israeli and foreign targets abroad, in part to disrupt the relationship between Israel and other countries, as well as to cause harm to the Israeli economy.<sup>24</sup> In July 1968, an El Al plane en route from Rome to Lod was hijacked by a PFLP terrorist cell. The airplane and crew were held hostage in Algeria. Bruce Hoffman claims that this attack represented the beginning of the phenomenon of modern international terrorism as the objective of the hijacking was to make a clear political statement. Unlike earlier hijackings, this plane was selected because it belonged to the national Israeli airline and the terrorists realized that by putting civilians' lives at stake, they could attract the attention of the media.<sup>25</sup> The negotiations between Israel and the hijackers lasted two months, and the incident only ended when the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations threatened to boycott Algeria.<sup>26</sup>

The hijacking in Algeria was the first in a long series of operations against Israeli and Jewish targets outside of Israel, which at first were carried out mainly by the PFLP. The most notorious of these in the late 1960s and early 1970s were attacks against aircraft traveling to Israel. In February 1970, Ahmed Jibril announced his intention to stop the movement of aircraft into Israel, and on the 21st his accomplices planted explosives on foreign airlines making their way to Israel. One Swissair plane crashed, and forty-seven passengers, including fifteen Jews, were killed.<sup>27</sup> In September 1970, four planes belonging to foreign airlines were hijacked by the PFLP. Three were landed at Zarqa Airport in Jordan and the fourth in Cairo. After a short time, the planes were blown up in Jordan by the terrorists, although no passengers were killed. In response to the wave of attacks on the Israeli airline industry, Israel decided to take dramatic action in Lebanon. On December 12, 1968, IDF forces stormed the Beirut airport and blew up thirteen passenger planes belonging to Arab airlines. The retaliation was designed to cause heavy damage to Lebanon's aircraft industry while avoiding any loss of human life.

The PFLP soon acquired an international reputation for its "expertise" in aircraft hijacking. The terrorist organization claimed that the attacks on air and sea transport to Israel should not be considered attacks on civilians due to the militarization of Israeli society. Moreover, they argued, airports and harbors were used for military purposes, and El Al pilots were actually plainclothes military personnel, making them legitimate targets.<sup>28</sup> The wave of Palestinian terrorism outside of Israel naturally led to the capture and arrest of Palestinian terrorists in different countries. The hijacking tactic soon proved effective as a method to secure their release.<sup>29</sup>

The end of the terrorist attacks in the air in the early 1970s did not lead to the abandoning of Palestinian terrorist activities against Israeli targets internationally. Various organizations – such as Black September (a pseudonym for Fatah's overseas operations, which possibly worked in cooperation with the PFLP), Wadie Haddad's various PFLP splinter groups, and later Abu Nidal fractions – focused on carrying out attacks on Israel-related targets abroad, such as embassies, official Israeli representatives, and Jewish institutions.

One of the most nefarious attacks took place on September 5, 1972, with the murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. Despite the criticism voiced from all over the world following the brutal attack in Munich, it was an unprecedented media achievement for the Palestinians. An estimated 900 million people from at least 100 countries watched the events unfold on their TV screens. The brutal nature of the attack convinced many in the world that the Palestinians could not be ignored, and Yasser Arafat posited that perhaps it was not just a coincidence that eighteen months after the Munich massacre, as PLO chairman he



was invited to address the United Nations General Assembly. Soon after, the PLO was accepted as a UN Special Observer.<sup>30</sup>

Israel's policy in responding to attacks outside of its borders consisted of three main strata: offensive operations, defensive operations, and the development of skills to solve hostage crises.

*Offensive operations* The basis for this activity was the desire for revenge as much as deterring others from attacking Israel. These goals led to the use of Israeli targeted killings designed to cause panic among the heads of organizations and those involved in terrorist attacks, disrupt their operations and preparations, and deter them from carrying out further attacks.

*Defensive operations* Shortly after the wave of hijackings began, Israel invested large sums of money to secure El Al aircraft and protect its embassies around the world. Passengers now had to undergo extensive security checks, including luggage inspections, metal detectors, and questioning before boarding the plane. Security guards were positioned on the plane itself, in order to take on terrorists who had managed to sneak through the security mechanisms. Israeli security guards protected Israeli embassies around the world, and alarm systems were put into place. Israeli officials visiting foreign countries were escorted closely by bodyguards.

*Skill in solving crises* Terrorist attacks against Israel on foreign soil, particularly those involving bargaining, such as the hijackings, required Israel to train experts for solving such crises. Special units were established and trained to deal with such situations on short notice by using military action. At the same time, Israel formulated a tough policy (at least on a declarative level) that made clear its refusal to negotiate with terrorists and its unwillingness to make concessions in hijacking and bargaining situations.

In 1970, tensions in Jordan rose and peaked in September after the Democratic Front attempted to assassinate King Hussein. On September 6, the PFLP blew up three hijacked planes in Zarkqa, as described above, and at the same time the PLO declared the city of Irbid a "liberated area." On September 17, the Jordanian army attacked PLO outposts, first in Amman and then in northern Jordan. Hussein had to agree to a cease-fire and to the presence of the PLO in Jordan, as was dictated by the Arab leaders in the framework of the Cairo Agreement of September 27. But peace was not restored. Repeated fire between Palestinians and the Jordanian army in November 1970 were sufficient grounds for Jordan to embark on an extensive operation to re-establish law and order and to expel the PLO from, first, the major cities and then from all of Jordan. This military campaign against the Palestinian organizations in Jordan, colloquially known as "Black September," lasted until July 1971 and brought about the virtual elimination of their bases in the country.<sup>31</sup> Many militants were killed in battle, others were imprisoned, and the rest were expelled or fled from Jordan. These events led to the creation a few months later of Fatah's special force under the alias Black September, headed by Salah Khalaf. Black September concentrated on attacking Israeli, Jordanian, and Arab civilian targets around the world. The first attack that Black September claimed responsibility for was the assassination of Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal on November 28, 1971, when he was in Cairo for the Arab League summit. With the loss of the Palestinian terrorist organizations' stronghold in Jordan, their military forces moved to southern Lebanon to launch a new front against Israel's northern border.

The Yom Kippur War (1973) and its outcomes marked another change in the strategy of the armed struggle. Whereas the Palestinians had already recognized the fact that the armed struggle alone could not lead to the liberation of Palestine, after the war it was clear that they should also reconsider the strategy of armed struggle as a catalyst for an Arab war against Israel. The war proved that even when the Arab countries succeeded in catching Israel off-guard in a surprise attack, they still lost at the end of the day. Thus, pressure mounted from the residents of the territories to formulate a new strategy following the failure of the war. This, in turn, forced Palestinian leaders to consider the possibility of achieving their goal – the complete liberation of Palestine – in stages, step by step. Another factor was the PLO leaders' fear that if they did not take part in the political process that began with the postwar interim arrangements, Jordan would take their place as the representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>32</sup>

In order to ensure that the PLO would be integrated into any future negotiation, in June 1974 the Palestinian National Council adopted what was referred to as the “strategy of stages.” This strategy encountered strong opposition both from Arafat’s rivals in the PLO, and within the ranks of Fatah itself. Critics argued that even if it was not the intention at the outset, this strategy would eventually lead to a compromise that would be less than the liberation of all of Palestine, making it unacceptable. In their opinion, the strategy also contradicted the pillar of the Charter that held that the armed struggle was the only way to liberate Palestine. Those groups that opposed the PLO initiative formed a new Syrian-sponsored coalition dubbed the Rejectionist Front.

The PLO’s primary task was now to secure its status as the body authorized to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians and as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. At the Arab League summit in Rabat, Morocco, in October 1974, this notion won the support of Jordan. One of the direct results of the Rabat summit was the invitation extended to Yasser Arafat on November 13, 1974, to address the United Nations General Assembly. Arafat, who was wearing a gun and holding an olive branch, was received with applause and a standing ovation by members of the UN. This represented a high point in the international standing of the PLO.

On November 22, the General Assembly adopted UN Resolution 3236, recognizing the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people and granting the PLO observer status at the United Nations as the representative of the Palestinians. Six days after Arafat’s speech at the UN, four Israeli civilians were killed in an apartment building in Beit She’an. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a member of the Rejectionist Front, claimed responsibility for the attacks, stating that despite Arafat’s waving of the olive branch, the Palestinians had not abandoned their weapons.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, at the 13th Palestinian National Council it was announced that “the PLO is determined to continue the armed struggle along with the other forms of political and popular struggle.”<sup>34</sup>

At this point, it was clear to Fatah leaders that terrorist attacks abroad impeded their stated goals, as they damaged the PLO’s image in the eyes of the international public. Thus, in July 1974, the PLO took the decision to cease terrorist attacks abroad, a decision that applied to all PLO member organizations, including the PFLP. To substantiate this decision, the PLO announced in January 1975 that hijackers would be executed if their attacks caused any loss of human life and would receive a prison sentence of up to 15 years if there were no casualties.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, however, it was important for the PLO to clarify that this decision did not imply the cessation of the armed struggle and that it intended to escalate terrorist activities in Israel. Indeed, the list of terrorist attacks during this period is long and

the number of victims high, but Israel was successful in thwarting many attacks, often before they were carried out. Israel was also often successful in taking action for the release of hostages. The most well-known operation in this context was the release of the airplane passengers held hostage in Entebbe on July 3, 1976. The attack was on an Air France flight from Paris to Tel Aviv with many Israelis on board. In order to avoid an Israeli military takeover, the hijackers flew the plane to Uganda, a country hostile towards and far away from Israel. However, despite the distance and the objective difficulties, Israel conducted an extremely successful rescue operation and released almost all of the hostages.

After Fatah and the other Palestinian organizations moved to Lebanon following the events of Black September in Jordan, resources were allocated towards consolidating and buttressing their forces there. They established new, expanded military frameworks and recruited many Palestinians from the refugee camps in Lebanon. Palestinian organizations succeeded in penetrating the population by operating welfare institutions and paying salaries to Palestinians who served in the organizations' bureaucracies. Joining the ranks of the Palestinian organizations in Lebanon was therefore not only an expression of national aspirations but also a means of employment and livelihood. As far as the organizations were concerned, the paying of salaries ensured loyalty to the organization and its leader.

The strengthening of these Palestinian organizations created friction with other forces in Lebanon, most notably the Maronite Christians. In April 1975, these power struggles led to the outbreak of battles between the PLO and Maronite Christian militias around Beirut. These battles marked the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.

While the battle was waged in Lebanon, in early 1976 a rift developed between the PLO and Syria. Syria urged the Palestinian factions under their authority, chief among these al-Saika, to work alongside the Christians against Fatah. The entrance of the Syrian army into Lebanon at the invitation of the Christian leadership caused another rift among the Palestinian organizations. The alignment of Jibril's PFLP-GC with the Syrians in their conflict with the PLO in Lebanon during the civil war caused a split in the organization in April 1977. A number of its members, led by Mahmoud Zeidan and Talaat Yaqub, withdrew from the organization and set up a rival faction called the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF). The new faction did not adopt a defined ideological strategy, aside from adherence to the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle. Early on the PLF received the backing of Iraq, which supported the organization financially and helped it organize militarily.

The fighting in Lebanon ended following heavy pressure from the Arab states, which at the end of October at the Arab League summit in Riyadh and then in Cairo agreed on a timetable for the withdrawal of combat forces.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 and the peace process that led to the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt once again reshuffled the cards in the Middle East and led to the escalation of the Palestinian armed struggle. The Camp David Accords stated that within five years the residents of the territories would be self-governed and that afterwards a final settlement would be signed by all parties.

The peace process between Israel and Egypt was perceived by the Palestinian organizations as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause by the Arab countries and a serious threat to the future of the struggle. Opposition to the Israeli–Egyptian peace process, was, at least on the surface, shared among all of the Palestinian organizations and in fact led to the healing of the rift within the PLO and the return of the Rejectionist Front groups to it. The local leadership in the territories also disapproved of the agreement, and demonstrations were held in most of the universities there.<sup>36</sup>

The Palestinian struggle against the peace process focused on two areas: increased political pressure on the Arab countries, and the escalation of terrorist attacks against Israel on all fronts. In March 1978, a Fatah terrorist cell from Lebanon sailed to Israel and landed on the beach of Kibbutz Maagan Michael (next to the coastal highway). This deadly attack in the heart of the country, during which the terrorists seized a civilian bus and killed 36 people, shook the Israeli public. Israel's response to the so-called Coastal Road attack was not long in coming. Two days later, the IDF launched a large-scale operation in Lebanon ending with the occupation of areas south of the Litani River. After a stay of several months, the IDF withdrew from the conquered territory as part of an agreement that included the deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) south of the Litani River.

Despite the presence of UNIFIL and the South Lebanese Army after Operation Litani, the PLO continued to launch terrorist attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory. After Israel built a security fence and reinforced security measures along the northern border, Palestinian terrorists sought other ways to penetrate Israel. One of these was from the sea, and another, in the late 1970s, was via makeshift aircraft (hot-air balloons and motorized hang gliders).

The disintegration of the Lebanese central government and along with it the military and police forces following the civil war in Lebanon led to the division of Lebanon between various power players. The areas under Palestinian control included West Beirut and most of South Lebanon. In these territories, Palestinian organizations built infrastructure including regular military units, training bases, support units, militia forces, and civilian administrative offices that provided social, education, and healthcare services to their constituencies. Relatively soon, extraterritorial areas were created in which the Palestinians controlled traffic routes and Palestinian population centers, carried weapons openly, set up checkpoints on the roads, and in essence enforced their rule (similar to what they had done ten years earlier in Jordan). These autonomous regions formed a "state within a state" ruled by the organizations from their headquarters in Beirut. The accelerated building up of Palestinian military forces marked a new stage in the strategic development of the armed struggle – that of military institutionalization.

### **From the Lebanon War to the Palestinian "Intifada" (1982–91)**

The Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon during Operation Litani allowed Israel and its Christian allies to create a new reality, such that after Israel's withdrawal, the area was controlled by the Christians, preventing the return of the PLO. This is how the "security zone" came into being. With the bolstering of defense and deterrence mechanisms along the northern border, Israel was able to thwart many terrorist attacks by cells attempting to infiltrate into Israel. Even so, terrorist organizations quickly discovered that with artillery fire, they could strike northern Israeli settlements without physically entering the country and without risk of the attack being thwarted ahead of time. This recognition led to Palestinians arming themselves with mobile artillery weapons and preparing ammunition depots and supplies that would enable a drawn-out conflict with Israel.

In July 1981, hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians escalated when the Israeli Air Force attacked targets in Beirut and elsewhere deep inside Lebanon, and terrorists shelled all of the northern Israeli towns with artillery and Katyusha rockets. After ten days of fighting and following international intervention, mainly American (including direct pressure on Israel by suspending its supply of US F-16 aircraft), a cease-fire was reached.

The PLO used the year following the artillery battles to rehabilitate and strengthen their military forces in Lebanon, with particular emphasis on enlarging and optimizing its artillery systems based on lessons learned in battle. Thus, on the eve of the Lebanon War (1982), Palestinian military forces in Lebanon included approximately 15,000 people belonging to semi-regular battalions and brigades, as well as several thousand militiamen.<sup>37</sup>

Following the attempted assassination of Shlomo Argov, the Israeli ambassador in London (which was carried out by Abu Nidal's terrorist group, which was hostile to Arafat), Israel decided to end the cease-fire and ordered its air force to operate against Palestinian terrorist bases and forces in Lebanon. After a brief period of exchanging artillery fire with terrorists and semi-regular forces in Lebanon, the Israeli government decided to implement its plan to embark on an unprecedented ground operation against the Palestinians in Lebanon. On June 6, 1982, the IDF launched Operation Peace for the Galilee. The alliance of IDF forces with Christian units in the area of the Beirut–Damascus road led to the imposition of a blockade on West Beirut, which entrapped some of the leaders of the PLO and many terrorists. During this period, Christian militants penetrated to the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and killed hundreds of Palestinians. Israeli leaders were blamed for not anticipating and preventing this massacre, and an Israeli investigation committee brought the resignation of Ariel Sharon, the Israeli minister of defense. After two and a half months of the blockade, 8,000 Palestinians were evacuated from Beirut and taken to eight Arab countries: Syria, Iraq, South Yemen, North Yemen, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, and Sudan.

The IDF's occupation of southern Lebanon and the evacuation of Palestinian militants from Beirut dealt a fatal blow to the military forces of most of the organizations. Units were disbanded, their members were scattered in different countries, most of their weapons were lost, and morale was very low. After the war, attacks on Israel's border communities became almost impossible due to the retreat of the Palestinians from the northern border and the refusal of the Arab states bordering Israel to allow the terrorist groups to operate from their borders.<sup>38</sup>

Syria, which sought to exploit the results of the Lebanon War to take over the PLO, began to confine the movements of the Fatah operatives remaining in Lebanon and Syria, and for this purpose once again recruited pro-Syrian terrorist organizations. In addition, in May 1983, a faction in Fatah opposed to Arafat was established, led by several commanders of the forces in Lebanon who were close to Syria.<sup>39</sup>

Despite Israel's achievements in destroying the Palestinian military forces in Lebanon, the IDF was still entrenched in Lebanon, and hundreds of its soldiers had been killed and wounded. Shi'ite terrorist organizations, which had developed at this time, began to target the bases of the IDF and the multinational forces in Lebanon. (For more on Hizbullah and other radical Islamist groups during this period, see Chapter 18 by David Cook in this volume.) On January 1985, Israel began a staged withdrawal from Lebanon that was completed by June 1985 (except the "security zone" bordering Israel). The IDF withdrawal propelled the Palestinian terrorist organizations to bring their people back into Lebanese territory and rebuild their military infrastructure. This enabled them to resume their attacks and infiltrate into Israel through the security fence.

The PLO's military defeat in Lebanon spurred Arafat into vigorous political and diplomatic activity with the assistance and patronage of King Hussein of Jordan. In an attempt to arbitrate between the United States and the PLO, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak demanded that Arafat publicly denounce terrorism. Arafat agreed, and on

November 10, 1985, he declared in Cairo his condemnation “of all types of terrorism” but clarified that one must differentiate between terrorism and “legitimate armed struggle which every nation living under occupation is entitled to use.”<sup>40</sup>

One of the most significant Israeli offensives against terrorist organizations took place on October 1, 1985, when the Israeli Air Force bombed PLO offices and the Force 17 commando unit in Tunisia (approximately 2,500 kilometers from Israel). Ninety percent of the Hammam al-Shatt base on the Tunisian coast was destroyed, and sixty terrorists were killed and sixty injured.<sup>41</sup> This attack came a few days after Fatah’s Force 17 hijacked a yacht carrying Israeli tourists in the port of Larnaca in Cyprus and killed them, and a few months after Israel foiled an attempted terrorist attack by Fatah using the vessel *Ataviros* that was intended to land terrorists on the Tel Aviv coast to raid the IDF General Staff headquarters on Independence Day. The Tunisia operation reinforced three of Israel’s stated positions that reflected its policy with regards to the war on terrorism over the years. One was its reliance on the long arm of its air force, which allowed for effective and accurate strikes on specific terrorist targets. The second was the pursuit of terrorists wherever they were, and the third was the assignment of direct responsibility for terrorist attacks on the countries that offered terrorist organizations sponsorship and the use of their territory for the planning and carrying out of terrorist attacks.

Until the mid-1980s, the majority of the Palestinian population in the territories was not actively involved in terrorist activities against IDF forces and Israeli civilians. Terror in Israel and the territories was generally carried out by Palestinians recruited by organizations and who acted according to their instructions. These recruits were only a small minority of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza.

In late 1987, riots began in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an outcome of growing frustration from PLO failures and weaknesses. The violent street protests and occurrences of civil disobedience deteriorated rapidly into a wave of violence that was named the “Intifada” or the Palestinian Uprising. The violent demonstrations became more and more frequent and well attended and were accompanied by the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails. Despite the PLO’s attempt to present itself, in retrospect, as having initiated and directed the uprising in the territories, the Intifada actually broke out gradually as a result of local initiatives.

The uprising surprised the Israeli security forces, which were not prepared for it. IDF forces operated in the territories in small formations, equipped with firearms and a sense that their lives were in jeopardy. Consequently, in the first month of the uprising (December 9 to January 8), twenty-six Palestinians were killed, which caused the situation to escalate even more. A month or so after the riots began, the IDF changed its strategy, augmenting its forces in the territories and enforcing punishments such as curfews and administrative detention. The army was equipped with cold weapons appropriate for self-defense and close contact with the rioters, including steel helmets, tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons. Israel also started to operate special units that acted undercover amongst the crowds by adopting the appearance of Palestinians. However, none of these tactics were successful. The Intifada expanded, with violent protests spreading to all parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The issue of the popular struggle versus the armed struggle constantly hovered over Palestinian militants in the territories. Some Palestinian leaders saw the Intifada as a direct result of the armed struggle over the years, a complementary method designed to involve the masses in the armed struggle. Others saw the Intifada as an alternative to the armed struggle and stressed the need to maintain the popular struggle without terrorist attacks. The Intifada activists ignored the PLO’s instructions to use firearms and explosives.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, on the eve of the Intifada, the Palestinian Islamist movements Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad started to gain support among the territory's population. This was due in part to events unfolding in the Arab world, most notably the rise of Khomeini to power in Iran and the search for alternatives to the national-secular movement of the PLO.

During the six years of the Intifada, approximately 1,100 Palestinians and over 120 Israelis were killed.<sup>43</sup> Another 1,000 Palestinians were assassinated by other Palestinians as a result of internal rivalries or out of suspicion of collaboration with Israel. On April 16, 1988, against the backdrop of the Intifada in the territories, Khalil al-Wazir – “Abu Jihad” – Yasser Arafat's deputy and the head of the Fatah's military arm, was killed in Tunis. This killing was a milestone in the Israeli government's policy of targeted killings as part of its war on terror.

### **The Israeli–Palestinian peace process and its implications (1992–2013)**

The Intifada left its mark on the political scene as well. In July 1988, King Hussein made a strategic decision, the essence of which was Jordanian disengagement from the West Bank. In a speech to the Jordanian people, the king announced that he would “dismantle the legal and administrative links between the two banks,” in response to “the wishes of the PLO.”<sup>44</sup> After the 1991 Gulf War in Iraq, the United States was initiating a new political initiative to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The American initiative led to an international conference in Madrid in which Palestinian and Israeli representative held direct talks within the framework of a larger Israeli–Arab negotiation to achieve peace in the Middle East. The Madrid talks died out, but simultaneously a second track of peace talks that were held between Israeli scholars and PLO representatives in Oslo accelerated in 1992 after a government change in Israel in which Yitzhak Rabin replaced Yitzhak Shamir as the Israeli prime minister.

Over the next few years, several interim agreements were signed between the PLO and Israel, in which Israel gave the Palestinians control over more territory in Judea and Samaria as well as increased self-government. In exchange for this transfer of territories and autonomy, Israel repeatedly demanded that the Palestinians commit to stopping terrorist attacks on Israel, but the Islamist terrorist organizations continued to carry out attacks, while Arafat turned a blind eye or sometimes even encouraged them.

The signing of the Oslo Accords and then of the Gaza and Jericho agreements, the establishment of Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and the West Bank, and the entry of Arafat and his loyalists into the autonomous areas constituted an important landmark in Palestinian history. For the first time, the Palestinians had their own territory, with the understanding and the hope that after a few years of self-government, this autonomy would turn into sovereignty over an independent state. The PLO, which only three and a half decades earlier had been no more than a handful of people trying to convince the world that it represented a landless nation of refugees, had become the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the legal sovereign over their territory.

Trying to scuttle peace and reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians, the Islamist terrorist organizations Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad recommenced their terror attacks and began employing a new modus operandi – suicide attacks – which caused multiple casualties in Israel and spread fear and anxiety.

Arafat consciously gave ample support to the social, economic, and religious development of the Islamist terrorist organizations in the Palestinian autonomous regions. From time to time, he even made pacts with them regarding the use of or abstention from terrorism. These agreements allowed the Islamist organizations to continue to carry weapons and to operate within the autonomous regions, as long as they did not execute attacks that would “embarrass” the PLO leadership or allow Israel to place responsibility on the Palestinian Authority (PA). In other words, terrorist attacks were allowed if their perpetrators did not carry them out from those cities controlled exclusively by the Palestinian Authority, but rather from the territories controlled by the IDF, even if these attacks were organized, prepared, and controlled by officials of Hamas and Islamic Jihad residing in these cities.<sup>45</sup> When it was estimated that terrorist attacks would harm immediate Palestinian interests, Arafat communicated to the Islamist organizations that the damage caused by the attacks could outweigh their benefits and ordered them to refrain from attacks for a certain period of time. Arafat refrained from taking action to eliminate the military capabilities of these organizations. He never destroyed the operational infrastructures of terrorist organizations or their laboratories nor did he ban their illegal weapons; above all, he did not stop the incitement against Israel. Instead, Arafat chose to ignore the military buildup of the Islamist terrorist groups and even helped prepare them for the possibility of a conflict with Israel.

Israel’s withdrawal from the autonomous Palestinian areas severely limited the intelligence capability of the Israeli security services in the territories and made Israel largely dependent on the intelligence and security services of the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian intelligence officials generally refrained from giving Israel early information about plans for terrorist attacks, or any other intelligence information. Also, the Palestinians often did not use information that they received from Israel to thwart specific terrorist attacks.

In light of the Palestinian Authority’s conduct, the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist, and the establishment of the first Benjamin Netanyahu government in the late 1990s, the Oslo process dwindled as both sides exchanged accusations concerning responsibility for its failure. In Israeli elections in 1999, Ehud Barak won due in part to his promise to withdraw the remaining Israeli forces from Lebanon, a commitment he fulfilled in 2000. In an attempt to save the Oslo Accords and reach a permanent agreement that would end the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Prime Minister Barak met with Chairman Yasser Arafat under the auspices of US President Bill Clinton at Camp David in July 2000. These talks failed, and soon after, riots – dubbed the Second or “al-Aqsa” Intifada – broke out all over Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The supposed trigger for these violent events was the visit of opposition leader Ariel Sharon and his entourage to the Temple Mount. But according to Israeli officials, the Second Intifada was planned in advance by the Palestinian Authority with the purpose of dragging in the international community, particularly the United States, which, it was hoped, would force Israel to make concessions beyond those it had been prepared to undertake in the Camp David talks.<sup>46</sup> The al-Aqsa Intifada, which lasted five years, was significantly different from the First Intifada. Whether or not its outbreak was an initiative of the Palestinian Authority, the violence erupted after long-term and focused incitement by the PA aimed at stirring up the masses. Unlike the mass demonstrations that characterized the events of the late 1980s, most of the violence of the Second Intifada took the form of various types of terrorist attacks, most notably a record number of suicide bombings. For the first time in a decade, Fatah activists rather than the Islamist organizations led the Palestinian violence. During the conflict (September



2000–December 2005), 1,080 Israelis were killed in 25,375 terrorist attacks; 146 suicide bombings were carried out, killing 518 Israelis and injuring 3,350. The number of Palestinians killed during this period was 3,405.<sup>47</sup> One of the events that most shocked the Israeli nation at the beginning of the Intifada was a public lynching, filmed by television cameras, of two Israeli reserve soldiers who accidentally drove into Ramallah in December 2000.

After several meetings between Barak and Arafat failed to bring about a cease-fire, and following the early Israeli elections that brought Ariel Sharon to power, the debate in Israel over whether Arafat was responsible for the Intifada ended. Thus, in December 2001, after Israel killed the secretary general of the PFLP, Abu Ali Mustafa, and the Palestinians killed the Israeli tourism minister, Rechavam Zeevi, and following a series of suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa, Israel decided to cease all negotiations with Arafat and cut off contact with him; he had become, in the words of the Israelis, “irrelevant.”<sup>48</sup> This Israeli decision – combined with US pressure on Arafat and the September 11 attacks in the US which resulted in even lower tolerance of those involved in terror – led Arafat to declare a cease-fire. During this brief break from terrorist attacks, the Palestinian terrorist groups continued to arm themselves, and in January 2002, Israel intercepted the ship *Karine A* making its way from Iran to the Gaza Strip and carrying on board large quantities of advanced weapons for Fatah.

The cease-fire ended when, in mid-January 2002, Israel killed Fatah’s Raed Karmi, head of the military wing in Tul Karm. The violence and terrorist attacks resumed and reached a new peak in March 2002, when in that month alone, 133 Israelis were killed in terror attacks. Among the attacks that month was a suicide bombing on Passover Eve at the Park Hotel in Netanya, which caused the deaths of thirty Israelis who were celebrating the festive Passover Seder. This attack triggered a large-scale ground operation named Defensive Shield, in which the IDF reoccupied Palestinian cities in the West Bank. After a month and a half of fighting, the terrorist groups as well as the PA were disarmed, and many terrorists were caught and arrested. The Palestinian Authority lost its sovereignty over the cities and Arafat was placed under siege and isolation in Ramallah. The results of Defensive Shield led to a drastic decline in the number of terrorist attacks in general and that of suicide bombings in particular, until they essentially ceased a few years later. However, this decline in terrorism is also attributed to the physical security barrier that was built around the same time between the West Bank and Israel. The barrier includes a security fence stretching hundreds of kilometers, equipped with electronic sensors and a high concrete wall along part of it. The difficulties that Hamas and other terrorist organizations had in penetrating into Israel led these organizations to equip themselves with high trajectory weapons.

In light of the collapse of the Oslo Accords, the Saudis launched a peace initiative that was later adopted by the Arab League and that paved the way for the “Road Map” for resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict put forward by President George W. Bush in late 2002. Attempts to resume negotiations after Arafat’s death in late 2004 with his successor, Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen), were unsuccessful. Abbas, unlike his predecessor, wanted to reach an agreement to end the conflict with Israel, but, unlike Arafat, he lacked the leadership qualities, public support, control, and charisma necessary to enforce such an agreement on his rivals, the Islamists. Against this backdrop, the Israeli government headed by Ariel Sharon undertook a unilateral disengagement from Gaza in the summer of 2005, which included the withdrawal of IDF forces and the evacuation of all Israeli

settlements from the Gaza Strip. Hamas, which claimed that Israel's disengagement was a capitulation that stemmed from Hamas's terrorist attacks against it, translated these claims of victory into an electoral win, defeating Fatah in the Palestinian Authority's parliamentary elections in January 2006. The Hamas takeover of Gaza was completed after the elections with a violent military revolution during which Hamas militants slaughtered Fatah members and expelled them from the Strip. Mahmoud Abbas, with aid from Israel and generous international backing, consolidated his power in the West Bank and renewed security cooperation with Israel, bringing relative stability, improving the economic situation, and preventing terrorist attacks from the West Bank. The center of gravity of the struggle against Israel moved back to the Islamist organizations. This time, salafi Palestinian organizations inspired by the global jihad movement began operating in the Gaza Strip along with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. These organizations began firing rockets at civilian communities in southern Israel and sometimes even carried out terrorist attacks within Israel, either by infiltrating the border fence between Gaza and Israel, or by going from Gaza to Sinai and entering Israel from Egypt. This rocket fire has intensified over the years, both in terms of the number of rockets fired into Israel and the increase of their range. This prompted a number of large-scale IDF ground operations in Gaza, including Operation Hot Winter in February 2008, Operation Cast Lead in January 2009, and Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012.

### Conclusions

The scope, characteristics, methods, and theaters of terrorist activity against Israel were the result of processes that occurred within the Palestinian arena, such as internal and inter-organizational tensions and pressure from Palestinian society. At the same time, Palestinian terrorist activity reflected external influences such as pressure from sponsoring countries that utilized Palestinian terrorism to promote their interests, and, of course, Israeli counter-terrorism. Israeli action took the form of offensives against terrorist organizations, their facilities, members, and leaders, as well as diverse defensive operations and pressure against the terrorists and their supporters. These actions were designed mainly to reduce the terrorists' capabilities and maneuverability and in many cases achieved their goals. However, all attempts to deal with the motivations driving the terrorists through political processes aimed at resolving the conflict, especially in the case of the Oslo process, were unsuccessful and in some cases led to an escalation in terrorism against Israel. This failure to remedy the motivations for terrorism can be explained in several ways, but it would appear that one of the main reasons is the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in contrast to its name, has never been just a two-sided conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis. There have always been many players involved in this conflict – the Arab states, the superpowers, and other players whose conflicting interests influenced the positions of the two major players and often led to an escalation of the conflict.

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