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Inside the PLO: Officials, Notables and Revolutionaries

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The Middle East peace process now hinges on the PLO's willingness to sanction a dialogue about elections and interim arrangements between Israel and the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. Whether the PLO is capable of doing so, thereby foregoing—at least temporarily—a public role in the process, is uncertain. Much will depend on the PLO's own internal politics and its relations with the Palestinians in the territories. This paper will examine the internal factors that shape PLO decision-making and strategy, thus influencing its ability to make peace on terms that are conceivably acceptable to the United States and Israel.

PLO leaders are well aware that the *intifadah* and the dialogue with the United States present them with great opportunities that must not be lightly forfeited. Yet the PLO also worries that it might be trapped into betraying its cause, losing forever the chance to create a Palestinian state or being excluded from a political settlement. Moreover, the PLO's need to unify its diverse constituencies and member groups handicaps its ability to achieve material gains for the Palestin-

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLO leaders are well aware that the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the current diplomatic environment, offer an unprecedented opportunity to make material gains for the Palestinian people. The PLO's internal structure, however, constrains its ability to take advantage of the situation.

Three problems tend to paralyze the PLO: the weakness of Yasser Arafat's leadership, constant conflict among member groups and the diversity of its constituencies. Arafat finds it hard to formulate a new line that would facilitate the peace process or persuade Israel that the PLO is sincerely seeking a genuine two-state solution. Leaders in different Palestinian groups—including Arafat's own Fatah—hold views often at odds with Arafat. Compared to Palestinians in the occupied territories, those outside are reluctant to abandon their claim to all of Israel in exchange for a West Bank/Gaza Palestinian state.

Local Palestinian leaders in the West Bank and Gaza are also divided. While the relatively conciliatory "notables" cannot negotiate a separate solution, they form a useful lobby to press the PLO to more moderate positions and can be valuable intermediaries in the peace process. But the United States must also press Arafat to control PLO hard-liners, clarify his own stand and accept a peace plan on terms conceivably acceptable to the United States and Israel, including a process of elections and a transitional stage leading to a final settlement.

ian people.¹ Three particular issues are essential here:

Arafat's Leadership Style. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has been reluctant to go beyond the consensus in the PLO and Fatah or to use his authority to impose a new consensus. Thus, in late 1988, Arafat structured his policy shift in a way ambiguous enough to be accepted by most PLO members on the basis of their old beliefs. Further, while he met U.S. demands for a dialogue, he has not gone far enough to produce a fundamental shift in U.S. or Israeli attitudes toward the PLO. This reality serves only to deadlock negotiations. Arafat alone can make the PLO take the necessary steps to achieve a compromise peace with Israel. To do so, however, would require Arafat to abandon the technique of avoiding splits in the PLO that brought him where he is today at no internal political cost.

The PLO's Anarchic Internal Politics. It is hard to forge a consensus for a workable peace policy among largely autonomous PLO leaders, groups and constituencies. Even with the ambiguity that sustained the historic policy shift of 1988–1989, the PLO consensus was stretched to its limits. Some cadre oppose Arafat's policy outright; even more back the current course because they interpret it as a strategy leading to Israel's destruction.

The Continued (though improving) "Second-Class" Status of West Bank/Gaza Palestinians in the Movement. While the *intifadah* may have made West Bank/Gaza Palestinians a vanguard, they still have only limited influence on the PLO's Tunis headquarters and are still only one—and not necessarily the most influential—of several PLO constituencies. Their leaders are also divided into two distinct segments: "new notables" and "*intifadah* revolutionaries." The Tunis-based PLO simultaneously (and correctly) claims the support of these Palestinians and distrusts them, jealously watching for signs of independence or even autonomous activity. In general, then, the PLO cadre and constituencies outside the West

Bank and Gaza, tend to take a harder line and still have proportionately more decision-making weight than those in the occupied territories, who tend to favor a compromise negotiated settlement.

PLO policy underwent important shifts after the *intifadah* began in December 1987. The November 1988 Palestine National Council declared an independent Palestinian state and implied, without definitively stating, the recognition of Israel and acceptance of U.N. resolutions 242 and 338. In a December 1988 Geneva press conference, Arafat went further toward recognizing Israel, accepting the two resolutions and renouncing terrorism. This step produced a U.S.–PLO dialogue and an intensified peace process.²

Fatah's fifth congress, held in August 1989, was meant to consolidate the group's line around Arafat's "peace initiative" and to strengthen his control. On one level these aims succeeded. The meeting made Arafat president of Fatah's Central Committee, created a small political bureau to set policy and placed more of Arafat's men on the new 21-member Central Committee. Some effort was made to expand participation by West Bank/Gaza Palestinians in the leadership by promising them three seats on the Central Committee and more places on the 111-member Revolutionary Committee.³

At the same time, a number of delegates took extremely radical stands, rejecting Arafat's policy or, more commonly, giving it a hard-line interpretation. A third of those elected to the Central Committee are not automatic Arafat supporters. Hard-line criticism was a nasty shock for the leaders. However, they should have expected this since the leadership had done so little to persuade the cadre to accept Israel's right to exist or to reject terrorism. Similarly, the United States should not have been surprised because the tough language was parallel to what PLO leaders had been saying in public statements during the preceding nine months.

The Fatah meeting's final resolution demonstrated Arafat's continued priority for satisfying hard-liners instead of giving Israel an incentive to negotiate with him. It made no mention of recognizing Israel or rejecting terrorism, advocating instead "the intense pursuit of military action and of all forms of struggle to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian soil."

Bassam Abu Sharif, a PLO spokesman, was correct to comment that "the Fatah statement should not be scrutinized linguistically and grammatically, but should be seen from its general tendency." Yet this "general tendency" illustrates why the PLO has found it so difficult to function in the diplomatic process.⁴

The PLO's policy stems, of course, partly from its fear of being displaced as the "sole, legitimate representative" of all Palestinians. Neither the United States nor Israel accepts this principle. Thus, Fatah's resolution called for a struggle against any efforts to weaken or create substitutes for the PLO. The PLO fears, as plots to bypass the PLO, elections (even if it nominated the candidates), Israeli negotiations with West Bank/Gaza Palestinians and any intermediate stage that does not accept an independent Palestinian state in advance. While there is a real material basis for these concerns, the PLO's approach also bars ways by which Israel could realistically be persuaded to accept it as a negotiating partner.

In the summer of 1989, Egypt produced 10 points (the PLO called them questions) designed to clarify Israel's elections plan and ensure the occupation's eventual end. Designed to win U.S. and Israeli acceptance, this proposal provided for no direct PLO role and made no mention of an independent Palestinian state.

Egypt's intention was to let the political process gradually lead in that direction. Pre-election negotiations conducted by PLO appointees would make possible an election that pro-PLO elements would win and that ultimately

would be followed by an Israeli withdrawal that might result in a Palestinian state or Palestinian-Jordanian federation.

Arafat's willingness to accept this kind of gradual, evolutionary approach to negotiations is one of the central issues in the peace process today. Will he be able to employ his power to sanction the start of a workable political process, one that allows Palestinians from the territories to engage Israel in a dialogue about elections, an interim settlement and, eventually, the end of the occupation? Outside observers might expect Arafat to undertake such a creative and flexible bargaining posture with little trouble. But, for reasons outlined below, this is difficult—though not impossible—for the PLO and Arafat to do.

Arafat Unbound?

A frustrating problem in dealing with the PLO is that, in a real sense, it lacks its own identity and remains a loose coalition whose material strength rests with the individual member groups. The PLO's main asset is Arafat's charismatic leadership and an ability to present itself to the outside world as the Palestinians' sole, legitimate representative. Whatever the PLO's success at gaining hegemony among Palestinians, however, it has not become a cohesive institution. This shortcoming makes it very hard for the PLO to maneuver successfully in establishing a framework for peace talks or to become a partner in a negotiating process.

For the member groups, with their own political stances and military forces, the PLO is a sometimes flimsy and often unwieldy umbrella. The masses may identify with the PLO, but most cadre are affiliated with a group.

"The truth is," commented Faruq Qaddumi, director of the PLO Political Department, "that Fatah is the backbone of the Palestinian revolution and . . . it is the main party shouldering the main responsibility, but that does not mean that

we are trying to take exclusive control. We have partners . . . and the independents. All of them together form a broad front.”⁵

But that broad front only functions smoothly if policies are made on a basis that all can be persuaded to accept. Except by cajoling, example and threat to resign, Arafat has lacked real, direct control over the constituent groups. Even in Fatah, his authority over factions and powerful individuals has been less than complete. Thus, while the PLO boasts of its “democracy” and pluralism, these characteristics can be serious drawbacks at a time when an unambiguous political line is needed.

Given this situation, the key political question is when or whether Arafat will assert himself to make bold decisions, imposing difficult choices on the PLO. This kind of decisiveness will be necessary for the peace process to succeed. Yet the very characteristics which served Arafat in the past, handicap him in his drive to secure a state. Historically, he survived and preserved the PLO’s independence by a political timidity and ambiguity which let him unite Palestinian groups and prevent irreconcilable disputes with Arab states. Otherwise, those dissatisfied could walk out of the PLO, while disgruntled Arab states had the option of franchising Palestinian dissidents (as Syria, Libya and Jordan have done) or withholding aid. Therefore, Arafat accepted constraints and avoided confrontation when possible, keeping power by using it sparingly.

Arafat’s insecure, diffident personality is quite different from the macho, dominating type of leader so common in the Arab world. Arab society prizes unanimity and since Arafat cannot impose it, he often bows to preserve it. Arafat’s, and the PLO’s, desire to be leader of all Palestinians makes them obsessively seek 100 percent support from all their constituencies.

Thus, Arafat’s style of locomotion is like that of the inchworm. First he moves cautiously for-

ward, then he consolidates his position by retreating a bit and then he finally drags the rest of the organization part of the way forward. In practice, this technique allows the PLO and Fatah to argue that Arafat has persuaded Western governments and media that he has gone much further than he has actually done. Yet after a while, the West becomes frustrated when Arafat is unwilling or unable to close the gap between its expectation and his policy.⁶

Arafat controls the PLO through independent, not Fatah, members in the Executive Committee and the PNC. The independents, who mostly come from middle class backgrounds similar to those of the West Bank/Gaza notables, are the most moderate force in the PLO, compared to the more radical professional revolutionaries in Fatah and other armed groups. Ideology *per se* has not caused problems in the organization since Arafat demands only acceptance of his straightforward nationalism. Yet a number of members on the Central Committee of Fatah, his own group, are often critical of his leadership on strategic and tactical issues.

The PLO’s basic governing consensus rests on the November 1988 PNC resolution, not on Arafat’s more forthcoming statements in Geneva. The June 1989 Arab League meeting and the August 1989 Fatah congress endorsed the former but remained silent on the latter. But the United States deemed the PNC resolution insufficient for opening a dialogue with the PLO as this document did not recognize Israel, unambiguously endorse U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 or reject the use of terrorism.

Thus, the PLO has no consensus on the positions which the United States assumes underpin the dialogue. The United States chose to believe that the PLO had accepted the conditions, while the PLO chose to believe that the United States was offering it a state and a direct role in negotiations. It is not surprising that misunderstandings and trouble ensued.

Still, to achieve a breakthrough for peace would require Arafat to change his approach. To use his heightened international standing and reap benefits from the *intifadah*, Arafat would have to use his status as acknowledged symbol of Palestinian nationalism and his backing from the masses, independent activists and most Arab states to support an unambiguous two-state solution achieved through a gradual, phased process. He must then pull Fatah into line and, finally, use force or persuasion to coopt, divide, isolate or repress factions and Islamic fundamentalists who oppose further moves necessary to reach a compromise peace with Israel. All successful nationalist movements have been able to impose such centralization. For Arafat, this route has risks but is also the only one that promises the rewards he claims to seek.

Yet, such a policy does not necessarily coincide with the PLO's standpoint or with Arafat's personality and practices. Arafat can arguably do what he wants, but there is much he chooses not to do given his reading of the situation and PLO internal politics. While PLO strategy is based on a logical sequence of decisions, this logic is generated by the PLO's own history and priorities.

The PLO's World View

Interviews with PLO leaders in Tunis show that they hold several ideas which make the peace process more difficult. While these concepts may not correspond to objective circumstances, they seem nonetheless deeply and sincerely held. This gap between perception and reality is precisely the problem. The PLO has a legitimate concern about the preference of Israel and the United States to exclude them from negotiations and to avoid the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Yet the PLO's challenge is to alter this situation, not complain about it. From this standpoint of setting an effective policy, several of the PLO's perceptions have been quite flawed:

- PLO leaders argue that by accepting the three U.S. conditions for a dialogue—recognition of Israel's right to exist, acceptance of U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 and rejection of terrorism—the PLO qualified itself to gain U.S. support for an independent Palestinian state. This is quite different from the U.S. interpretation which sees the new position as only the first step in a diplomatic process. The PLO argues that it has already done what is necessary to obtain a state or at least to secure a clear guarantee that this will be the outcome of further negotiations.

- PLO leaders expected to receive a state because they thought that the United States would grant them one and then force Israel to agree. Believing Israel to be a U.S. puppet, the PLO argued that the United States would force Israel to do its bidding unless thwarted by a conspiracy involving the Zionist lobby. Ironically, these same PLO leaders always upheld their own independence of decision-making and would ridicule the idea that they could be ordered around by the USSR, Syria or Saudi Arabia. But the PLO's misconception has real policy consequences. Since its leaders feel no need and make little effort to show moderation in order to convince Israel to change its policy, the PLO is neglecting one of its most fundamental tasks.

- PLO leaders agree that the new U.S.–Soviet detente was a principal factor prompting them toward a policy change. They argue that U.S. support for Israel was mainly conditioned by Cold War needs. "International detente has diminished Israel's strategic value," explains Qaddumi.⁷ The reduced U.S.–Soviet conflict presumably makes it far easier to divide Washington from Jerusalem. U.S. policy, however, seems more influenced by the opposite argument: the Cold War's decline lessens its need to woo the PLO or Arab states from the pro-Soviet camp.

- By late 1989, the PLO seemed to be adopting a new paradigm: that the United States had

never intended to grant the Palestinians a state but was merely trying to divide the PLO from Palestinians in the territories. U.S. policy was seen as totally biased toward Israel and based on a conspiracy organized by Henry Kissinger and his disciples—a cabal of Jews in the administration—acting contrary to the true wishes of President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker! To counter this supposed trap, the PLO had to show its own indispensability to any political process by rejecting a role by West Bank/Gaza Palestinians as “stand-ins” for the PLO in negotiations or elections. Thus, the PLO rejected Mubarak’s plan and Baker’s proposal for a U.S.–Israel–Egypt summit to plan Israeli-Palestinian meetings.⁸

Arafat and other PLO leaders are torn between the political situation’s opportunities and the limits imposed on them by the PLO’s internal politics and their own historical vision. The historical vision that guided them for three decades suggests that time and history will eventually bring total victory. Israel must disappear because it is anachronistic and inevitably at odds with regional realities. If the Arabs cannot destroy Israel by military force or subversion, it will collapse from internal weakness, economic nonviability, withdrawal of U.S. support or Arab population growth. Since the immediate situation is not so promising for this triumph, one can make some compromises and rationalize them as tactical (i.e., to better subvert Israel) or strategic (in the belief that Israel will self-destruct or be conquered by the next Palestinian generation).

This situation has important ramifications. First, PLO leaders can make contradictory statements based on which issue, and audience, is uppermost at any given moment.

Second, they have not been forced to make a definitive choice between “active” and “passive” policies to subvert Israel, though some irreversible determination can be expected to occur if the peace process goes far enough.

Third, the PLO’s historical vision partly counters the uprising’s pressure for a political settlement. No matter how bad things appear, they may be better in the future. As Arafat likes to argue, the PLO has survived many predictions of its demise.

Thus, it remains politically acceptable, if factually questionable, to think that an escalation of struggle can resolve the PLO’s dilemmas. “I believe that the *intifadah* will force Israel” to change its policy, argues one PLO leader. “The maintenance of the current PLO policy and the continuation of the PLO’s firm strategy will force Israel and the United States to accept the Palestinian peace initiative.”⁹

The PLO Executive Committee

Arafat controls the PLO Executive Committee, the PLO’s highest organ, primarily through the backing of independents. But he cannot depend on its support under all circumstances. Differences among PLO leaders, who are bound by a common cause and have worked together for 30 years, should not be overestimated. Yet a major reason why they are able to maintain unity is that they avoid decisions that, while making progress possible, would also produce internal disputes.

Of the Executive Committee’s 15 members, only three—Arafat, Qaddumi (Abu al-Lutf) and Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin)—represent Fatah.¹⁰ Each member of this trio represents a different tendency: Arafat’s main faction, the hard-liners and the “left,” respectively.

Qaddumi, a founder of Fatah and chief of the PLO’s Political Department, is a hard-liner who would prefer to avoid any compromise on the PLO’s goal of conquering Israel. While Qaddumi is personally very popular, Arafat has had success in limiting his operational power. Thus, since Qaddumi was unenthusiastic about the U.S.–PLO dialogue, he was replaced on the PLO delegation to the talks by the Political Depart-

ment's director-general, Abu Jabber.

Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin) has been close to Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) in Fatah's "left" and has sometimes opposed Arafat. In 1988, however, both men backed Arafat's new line. Abu Mazin became one of Arafat's most trusted advisers and seems to be a relative moderate within the context of Fatah.

If his own Fatah colleagues have sometimes given Arafat problems, delegates from other PLO groups have been a constant source of trouble. Five members of the Executive Committee come from these smaller, generally more radical, factions.¹¹

Abu Ali Mustafa (Mustafa al-Zibri) represents the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Marxist-populist group led by George Habash. The PFLP, the PLO's second-largest group, has frequently opposed Arafat's policy, periodically freezing active involvement in the PLO. The PFLP's criticism has not been limited to words. For example, it was behind the 1986 assassination of Zaafar al-Masri, the Arafat-backed mayor of Nablus. The PFLP voted against the key provisions of the November 1988 PNC resolution, openly rejects Arafat's Geneva statements, continues terrorist attacks against Israel and maintains close relations with Syria. If Arafat were to make the clear statements and concessions necessary to achieve peace, the PFLP would almost certainly suspend its participation in the PLO.

Yasser abd al-Rabbu, representative of the more orthodox Marxists of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), has, despite his affiliation, become a close adviser to Arafat. Thus, Arafat made abd al-Rabbu head of the delegation to the U.S.-PLO dialogue. The DFLP's Tunis office seems to have become almost an honorary branch of Fatah, sparking rumors of tension between abd al-Rabbu and Naif Hawatmah, the DFLP's leader.¹²

Of all the PLO groups, the DFLP has the closest ties to the Soviet Union. More problematic for Arafat, the DFLP also maintains close ties to Syria and continues to sponsor terrorist attacks against Israel. Its Marxist-Leninist ideology makes it especially suspicious of the United States. The small DFLP cadre on the West Bank, like the larger PFLP group there, does not always follow Fatah's lead. Moreover, Hawatmah views himself as the Palestinian Lenin and Arafat as a bourgeois leader. While the DFLP's support has been helpful to Arafat, he cannot fully depend on it.

Abd al-Rahim Ahmad of the Iraqi-controlled Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and Palestine Communist Party leader *Suleiman Najjab* also support Arafat in the Executive Committee, while remaining outside of his control. Moreover, they represent foreign influences—Iraqi and Soviet, respectively—which could intrude on Arafat's and the PLO's independence.

Ironically, Arafat's most reliable supporter in the Executive Committee among the non-Fatah groups is *Muhammad al-Abbas* (Abu al-Abbas) and his tiny splinter faction of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF). Abu al-Abbas, notorious in the West as the architect of the 1985 Achille Lauro hijacking, is a particularly thuggish personality. His continued presence on the Executive Committee depends on Arafat's suffering and, hence, on Abu al-Abbas's willingness to support Arafat.

The radicals worry about Arafat being too soft, making concessions with no concomitant gain. They are locked into doctrines which deem revolution and violence the necessary underpinning of political success. Fatah radicals, the PFLP and the PLF still aim to destroy Israel and see this as a realistic goal to pursue. They mistrust the United States as an imperialistic, reactionary enemy inevitably opposed to pan-Arab, Palestinian and socialist goals. And the PFLP, DFLP and PLF also continue terrorist attacks on Israel which Arafat, for internal political rea-

sons, will neither punish nor condemn, in contradiction to the U.S. conditions he promised to meet.

Aside from Abu Mazin and Abd al-Rabbu—whose full backing for Arafat is recent and perhaps transitory—Arafat's ruling majority on the Executive Committee rests on the seven independent members. Only one of the Committee's members, *Muhammad Milhem*, a West Bank mayor elected in 1976 and expelled by Israel in 1980, lived for any length of time in the occupied territories, a sign of how little represented that constituency is in the PLO leadership. In the 1970s, he was involved in Palestinian-Israeli dialogues and even toured the United States under the auspices of Israel's dovish Peace Now group. Based in Amman, Milhem heads the PLO's Occupied Homeland Affairs Department and is responsible for smuggling money into the territories to finance the uprising. Thus, he is a link between PLO headquarters and Palestinians in the territories.

Other reliable supporters for Arafat are people with no political base of their own. *Elias Khouri* is a Christian minister and the Committee's only non-Muslim. The rest are PLO technocrats or bureaucrats: *Jawad Ghusayn*, head of finance and the Palestine National Fund; *Abdallah Hourani*, in charge of information; *Mahmud Darwish*, an ex-"Israeli Arab" poet and cultural chief who lives in France; *Abd al-Razaq Yahya*, the PLO's representative in Jordan; and *Jamal Sourani*, a veteran PLO negotiator and legal expert.

Arafat may prefer to confront the Executive Committee with a *fait accompli*, but it is harder for him to make a real policy change if faced with its opposition.

Fatah's Central Committee

In theory, Arafat's domination of the PLO is based on his control of Fatah; in practice, he has often found it easier to win the Executive Committee's support than that of the Fatah

Central Committee. This is largely because the Executive Committee's independents are middle class figures who owe their careers to Arafat, while Fatah leaders tend to be revolutionary politicians influenced by radical nationalist ideology.

The August 1988 Fatah meeting in Tunisia elected 18 members, half of them new. The incumbents included Fatah's delegates to the PLO Executive Committee: Arafat, Qaddumi and Abu Mazin. The most important other member is *Salah Khalaf* (Abu Iyad). A founder of Fatah and leader of its "left," Abu Iyad once criticized Arafat's more flexible diplomatic moves, particularly the 1983 visit to Egypt (excluded from Arab ranks because of the Camp David Accords) and the 1985 agreement with Jordan to form a joint delegation for negotiations with Israel. By 1988, however, Abu Iyad had switched to Arafat's side.

Four Central Committee members are relative hard-liners: Qaddumi; *Muhammad Gheneim* (Abu Maher), Fatah's representative in Kuwait; *Salim Zaanun*, its delegate to the Gulf; and Brig. *Muhammad Jihad*, a former Palestine Liberation Army officer who briefly joined the Syrian-sponsored revolt against Arafat. *Intissar al-Wazir* (Um Jihad), Abu Jihad's ambitious widow, sometimes opposed Arafat's will (most notably over control of finances for the *intifadah*). Three others—Abu Mazin, Abu Iyad and *Abbas Zaki*, PLO director of Arab and foreign relations—supported Arafat but had their own quasi-factional loyalties that might alter their future positions.¹⁵

Again, these people cannot be accurately described as opponents of Arafat, but they could cause trouble if he goes too far toward compromise. Their idea of "too far," however, might be the minimum steps necessary to succeed diplomatically. Still, Arafat showed at the congress that he could exact a price for criticism. The only active Central Committee member not re-elected was the PLO's envoy in Saudi Arabia, Rafiq Natcha (Abu Shaker), who voted against

the PNC political resolution in November 1988 and made a speech criticizing Arafat's policy at the Fatah meeting.

The other 10 members are reliable Arafat supporters. Three of them are close advisers: *Khalid al-Hasan*, *Hani al-Hasan* and the PLO's representative in Tunisia for 15 years, *Hakam Balaoui* (Abu Marwan). The rest of Arafat's backers are members of the security, diplomatic and bureaucratic apparatus.¹⁴

Arafat's hand is particularly strengthened by the fact that he is the PLO's unquestioned leader. There is no clear successor as head of the PLO or of Fatah. Although Abu Iyad is considered to be the second most important individual leader, he lacks the following, universal acceptability and organizational skills needed to head the PLO. If anything were to happen to Arafat—his fear of assassins may be exaggerated, but he was born in 1929 and is quite overweight—both the PLO and Fatah would suffer internal strife and serious damage. Their very survival as united groups would be at stake.¹⁵

Several of Arafat's aides influence his thinking. In addition to being Fatah Central Committee members, the al-Hasan brothers and Balaoui have Arafat's ear. *Akram Haniyah*, owner of the pro-PLO East Jerusalem newspaper *al-Sha'ab*, is the West Bank deportee closest to Arafat.

Rivalry between *Bassam Abu Sharif* and *Ahmad abd al-Rahman* for control of the PLO's information/media apparatus provides some insight into the debate in Arafat's inner circle. Abu Sharif, the most openly moderate PLO official, is the source of most of the PLO statements explicitly advocating peaceful coexistence with Israel. An ex-PFLP radical, Abu Sharif seems a sincere convert to a compromise solution. At the same time, this stance fits well with his job of improving the PLO's image in the West and Western media. Whether or not Abu Sharif's moderation is for propaganda purposes, he is neither a top policy-maker nor a PLO leader.

In fact, Abu Sharif is the most unpopular PLO official in Tunis. Executive Committee member Abd al-Rahim Ahmad commented, "Bassam Abu Sharif does not represent anything in the PLO [and the PLO has often denied his words] through its official spokesman. Bassam is more a journalist than a PLO official. He resorts to press sensations which I believe do not benefit our struggle or cause." The importance of Abu Sharif and his opinions are often exaggerated in the West.¹⁶

Abd al-Rahman, in contrast, remains the PLO spokesman and editor of its official magazine, *Filastine al-Thawra*. Thus, Abd al-Rahman is at least as important as is Abu Sharif and his views receive more attention in the Arab world. Arafat seems to be using both men for his own, dualistic, purposes. In contrast to Abu Sharif, however, Abd al-Rahman is a virulent hard-liner, as his editorials show. Despite Arafat's strong support, Abd al-Rahman failed in his effort to be elected to Fatah's Central Committee. On the other hand, no one even considered Abu Sharif for such a position. The two men's functions indicate a differentiation between the PLO's audiences in the West and in the Arab world. The diversity of views within the PLO's leadership and the inconsistencies of individual leaders partly reflect the sometimes conflicting pulls of the PLO's different constituencies.

The PLO's Constituencies

The PLO represents four main constituencies, each with somewhat different interests. In order of relative power they can be categorized as follows:

1. Refugees from what is now Israel who left during the 1948 war and mainly live in Lebanon and Syria, with important groups also in Kuwait and Iraq;
2. Refugees from 1948 living in the West Bank and Gaza;

3. People native to the West Bank or Gaza;

4. Israeli Arabs (i.e., Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948) and Jordanian Palestinians.

Group 1 is more likely to favor making all of Israel into a Palestinian state or at least advocating a "right of return" which would let them go back to subvert Israel from within. Group 3, while expressing solidarity with Group 1, is much more willing to accept a West Bank/Gaza state as a permanent solution to the conflict. Group 2 has mixed interests. Having lost their homes in 1948, they are closer to Group 1, but as current residents of the West Bank and Gaza, they have more in common with Group 3.

Group 4 is split between a few radicals (including some Israeli Arabs in the PLO hierarchy like Imad Shakur and Muhammad Darwish) who support a maximalist solution, and a much larger group willing to accept a two-state settlement (including PLO Research Center Director Sabri Jiryis). The PLO has campaigned hard in recent years, however, to organize Israeli Arabs in a more radical direction. Concern that the PLO will seize the loyalty of the roughly 50 percent of Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin is a major factor compelling Amman to participate in the peace process and have its interests represented in any final settlement.

The PLO's three main demands fit perfectly with its diverse constituencies and thus are hard to modify or abandon:

The right of return is a demand for the PLO's prime constituency of 1948 refugees, particularly those in Lebanon and Syria, who want to return to homes in what is now Israel and to destroy that state even within its pre-1967 boundaries.

Self-determination is directed at Israeli Arabs and Jordanian Palestinians. It poses an implied threat to the sovereignty and security of

Israel and Jordan since Palestinians there could presumably decide to be incorporated into a Palestinian state extended to their current places of residence.

Israelis view both positions as endangering their existence. Demands to allow hundreds of thousands of hostile Palestinians into Israel and to accept a PLO state intent on subverting 17 percent of Israel's population and key parts of its territory discourages them from negotiating with the PLO.¹⁷

An independent Palestinian state is for West Bank/Gaza Palestinians, especially appealing to those who are not refugees, who want to be free from occupation and to have some form of national sovereignty.

The PLO insists that these constitute non-negotiable principles and its leaders are very conscious of the need to avoid an appearance of "selling out" any constituency's demands lest this split the people and movement. Giving up one or two of these goals is no mere matter of bargaining but of fundamentals. Yet to obtain an independent state the PLO would probably have to give up the right of return and self-determination at an early stage.

In this context, the leaders and masses of the West Bank and Gaza are only one group whose rights and interests do not necessarily take precedence over those of other constituencies. Tunis is psychologically and geographically distant from the occupied territories. PLO leaders rarely have personal contact with the key figures there; few West Bank/Gaza cadre play an important policy-making role in Tunis. Thus, while the West Bank/Gaza constituency has become more important as a result of the *intifadah*, it remains less influential than might be expected. The concerns of West Bank/Gaza notables to end the occupation as quickly as possible and to accept a West Bank/Gaza state even if it involves considerable concessions, do not dominate PLO counsels. The greater realism toward Israel's

strength and legitimacy held by many (though by no means all) of the more moderate activists in the territories does not necessarily filter through the fax machines in the PLO's Tunis offices.

While one's place of origin does not always determine political views, even among PLO leaders there seems a difference in perspective between those coming from Nablus and those who have memories of pre-1948 Haifa or Jaffa. The constituency factor may not be deterministic, but it makes PLO policy-making harder and forces leaders to straddle different points of view.

In short, there are four internal factors which make the PLO's participation in a successful peace process more problematic:

(1) Arafat's hesitant leadership; (2) The wide autonomy enjoyed by member groups; (3) The powerful positions held by hard-liners in the PLO and Fatah, and of hard-line ideas among even relatively moderate leaders; (4) The dissonant objectives of different PLO constituencies.

These problems can be overcome only if Arafat acts decisively, implementing a more moderate line in rhetoric and practice, and if forces in the PLO press for a compromise solution. External players like Egypt, the United States, Jordan and the USSR could have some effect, but a major role in this regard rests predominantly with the West Bank/Gaza Palestinians.

Notables and Revolutionaries

The *intifadah* represents, for the first time in their history, an attempt by people in the West Bank and Gaza to take control of their own fate. While they have a broader identity as Palestinians, Arabs and (in most cases) as Muslims, residents of the occupied territories also possess their own particular interest. They daily face Israeli occupation. In the past, this status brought

some benefits, particularly economic ones, which created a symbiosis with Israel encouraging the middle class and workers to be relatively passive. In the present situation, continued occupation, frustration and the *intifadah*'s strife and suffering give them incentives to resolve the conflict.

There are two apparent ways to reach a solution. The first is to make a political deal, based on negotiations with Israel; the second is to try to intensify the uprising to a point where it forces an Israeli withdrawal. The former option is favored by the new notables and meets their interests; the latter is more in line with the views and interests of the revolutionaries. But as time goes on and a true unilateral victory for the *intifadah* becomes increasingly remote, the masses may move toward the former stand.

Those West Bank and Gaza Palestinians who work in Israel are the most important potential allies for the new notables. While Gaza is generally more radical than the West Bank, it is also more dependent on income earned from work in Israel. Attempts by militants to stop this traffic put them in conflict with Palestinian workers, a situation which Israeli policy tries to intensify by, for example, giving entry cards to workers with a clean record. A similar conflict between masses and revolutionaries exists in regard to schools. Parents want schools to remain open and thus discourage activists' efforts to make them centers of agitation or rioting. Still, in spite of these incentives, none of these groups would negotiate with Israel without support from the PLO in Tunis. To understand this, it is necessary to describe the leadership groups in the occupied territories.

The New Notables

The scions of powerful West Bank and Gaza families have historically become mayors, council members and officials. These offices provided them with great influence through their power to do favors for clients in interactions with the government. Despite nationalist rhetoric,

this essential link continued under Israeli occupation. The collaboration of local elites is one of the main reasons why the territories were relatively quiet and cooperative for two decades.¹⁸

This same class, however, also produced the nationalist leaders. Sons of the old effendis received modern educations and were influenced by Western culture and ideas. This altered their political allegiances. During the 1960s, the older generation of notables tended to be pro-Jordanian; the younger generation became Marxists or Pan-Arab nationalists. The latter were lawyers, doctors, pharmacists and teachers who supported the Ba'th and Communist parties or the Arab National Movement. But the longer-term change from pro-Jordanian to pro-PLO politics was a generational battle inevitably won by the younger people.

While often deriving their influence from wealth, personal connections and patronage, the new notables gained individual influence from education and technical skills. Gradually, the PLO imposed a new basis of group solidarity. By the 1980s, the young notables favored a separate Palestinian nationalism and supported one of the PLO groups, receiving in return its political patronage. Simultaneously, they usually found it possible to be in the good graces of the Israeli authorities.¹⁹

The new notables come from well-established families, mostly in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus or Gaza City. They are rooted in their own society though they know Western culture and the English language well enough to establish good relations with American diplomats and journalists. As cosmopolitan Arabs, they fear and hate the Islamic fundamentalists; as members of the middle class, they dislike violent revolution; as traditional rulers of the West Bank and Gaza, they fear the PLO as an intimidating force and potential ruler even while extolling it as their leader. They support the *intifadah* but are nervous about the militant young street leaders.

Given the PLO's assets of legitimacy, patronage and intimidation and their own ineptness at mobilizing a mass base of support, the notables' room for political maneuvering is very limited. They cannot seek independence under their own leadership or undertake separate initiatives to negotiate with Israel.

But they can act as intermediaries between Israel, the United States and the PLO. And they can lobby with the PLO-Tunis to change its policy. In fact, the PLO's 1988 turn was much influenced by pressure and pleas from the territories. As a West Bank notable put it, "This new policy, that is the Palestinian moderation, stemmed from the occupied homeland and not from the Palestinian leadership [i.e., the PLO]. The Palestinian leadership merely sought and achieved harmony with our people when it had announced its new stands and decisions."²⁰ Thus, while the notables cannot make a deal on their own, they can greatly facilitate one.

Some notables have important political connections with the *intifadah* and Tunis; others exercise no power but are pro-PLO and work to affect U.S. policy and perceptions. The most active of these individuals are well known, though their motives and roles are not often analyzed. In Gaza they include *Fayez Abu Rahme*, head of the bar association, Abu Jihad's brother-in-law and one of the members of a proposed Palestinian-Jordanian negotiating delegation accepted by Israel in 1985; *Dr. Zakariya al-Agha*, chairman of the Gaza Medical Association; *Dr. Hatem Abu Ghazala*; lawyer *Zuheir al-Rayess*, a veteran nationalist and pre-1967 PNC member; *Khalid al-Kudra* of the bar association; *Asad al-Siftawi*, a somewhat independent-minded Fatah supporter; and *Khayder Abd al-Shafi*, the leading leftist in Gaza who was once physically attacked by the fundamentalists.

The most significant West Bank new notable is *Faisal al-Husseini*, director of the Arab Studies Center. His family is the most important in modern Palestinian history: his father was the

main Palestinian military commander of the 1948 war and his uncle was leader of the Palestinian Arabs from the 1920s to the 1950s. Husseini has been periodically arrested by Israel but has also been met by high-ranking Israeli government officials. He uniquely combines notable status with excellent PLO and *intifadah* connections. At some point, however, Husseini's charisma may convince the PLO-Tunis that he threatens their monopoly on leadership.

Though unimportant in Palestinian politics, the articulate *Sari Nuseibeh* has become the favorite young notable of Western journalists. He is a philosophy teacher at Bir Zeit college and the son of a former Jordanian defense minister (who had been an aide to Faisal al-Husseini's uncle). Nuseibeh studied at Cambridge University. An advocate of coexistence with Israel, he tried to teach at Hebrew University before Palestinian radicals made him quit. He opened a press agency that was closed by the Israeli authorities. But radicals still suspect him as being too moderate. They once beat him up because of his contacts with Israelis and, in July 1989, accused him of embezzling *intifadah* funds.

Radwan Abu Ayyash, head of the Palestinian journalists association, often speaks for the pro-PLO notables. He comes from a poorer, refugee family. East Jerusalem newspapers subsidized by the PLO or Jordan communicate the current political line and debate. *Hanna Siniora* the Christian editor of the pro-PLO newspaper *al-Fajr* (and a proposed negotiator accepted by Israel during the 1985 PLO-Jordan initiative) is vocal. The writer *Daoud Kuttab* (and his lawyer brother Jonathon) help spread the notables' views to the West. *Ziyad Abu Ziyad*, editor of the Palestinian Hebrew-language newspaper, *Gesher*, is active on the Israeli front.

Some new notables are teachers affiliated with leftist groups, though the Communists and DFLP are, by Palestinian standards, relatively moderate on Arab-Israeli issues. A good example is *Ghassan al-Khatib*, a lecturer at Bir Zeit

college and a communist from a leading family. *Hanan Ashrawi*, dean of arts at Bir Zeit, has been active in U.S.-oriented information activities.

Finally, there are a few traditional pro-Jordanian notables who now form the most moderate wing of the notable leadership. Foremost of these is *Elias Freij*, the Christian mayor of Bethlehem and *Said Kan'an*, a Nablus businessman.

These new notables dominated the list of West Bank/Gaza figures allegedly suggested by Egypt in October 1989, to hold meetings with Israel on Mubarak's 10-point plan. Those mentioned were Freij, Abu Ayyash, Kan'an, al-Husseini, Abu-Rahme, Jamil al-Tarifi (former deputy mayor of al-Birah), Siniora, al-Siftawi, Ghassan al-Shakah and Mansur al-Shawwa. These last two men came from leading families in Nablus and Gaza, respectively. All of them are pro-PLO notables (though Freij and Kan'an have links to Jordan) who would presumably be acceptable to Israel as negotiators. But the two deportees allegedly suggested to represent "outside" Palestinians—PLO Executive Committee member Milhem and Arafat adviser Haniyah—would cause more problems.²¹

When permitted by Israeli authorities, some of these notables travel to Cairo or elsewhere to carry messages and meet PLO officials. As a group, the notables believe that Egypt is playing a productive, moderating role on the PLO leadership.²²

Israeli leaders from both the Likud and Labor parties are eager to meet with notables to show their own constituents (and the Americans) that they are trying hard and making progress in finding local interlocutors. Some Labor party leaders acknowledge that the notables can be considered the "inside branch of the PLO," but believe them to be more flexible and hope they can be split away from the Tunis leadership.

For their part, pro-PLO notables participate in such meetings to strengthen their own cre-

dentials, gather information and encourage momentum in the peace process. They do, however, seek sanction for such conversations from Tunis. Arafat and Fatah back such meetings but more extremist groups (mainly the PFLP) brand such contacts as treasonous and threaten those involved.

Thus, in July 1989, Jamil Tarifi, a lawyer and Fatah supporter, met Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. The Israeli government publicized the encounter to show it was negotiating with local Palestinians; the PLO in Tunis said (and Tarifi confirmed) that it had given approval for this meeting in order to show that it controlled the local Palestinians. The PFLP distributed leaflets saying that Tarifi's fate would be the same as that of Zaafar al-Masri, whom it had murdered in March 1986.

Given the enormous differences in background, interest and politics, the *intifadah* revolutionaries—the uprising's actual field leaders—would not be likely to follow the new notables in any independent diplomatic initiative.

The Intifadah Revolutionaries

While the notables come from the urban middle class, the *intifadah's* field commanders are often from peasant or refugee camp families. The refugees, roughly 20 percent of the West Bank's population and 65 percent of Gaza's, who were previously excluded from political power, have often become the *intifadah's* vanguard.

These cadre received their political formation in the high schools and colleges which grew rapidly during the occupation. Teachers preached nationalist and radical ideologies and many pupils spent more time on political activities than on studies. The educational process also let students see their own society in a detached, critical manner. This experience gave an alternative hierarchy and path for advancement (through formal training rather than

inherited status) for those previously excluded from power.

There is some generational, as well as class, aspect to this distinction between the young notables born in the 1940s and 1950s, and revolutionaries born in the 1960s. Having grown up under Israeli rule, the latter were freed from some aspects of traditional society. Working in Israel made them less subject to the traditional patronage system that had dominated the employment structure. Lacking experience with Jordanian rule (1948-1967), these younger people do not identify with the Amman regime.

The *intifadah*, then, is not only a revolt against Israel but also against the existing Palestinian social structure. In any struggle between nationalists and social revolutionaries, however, the former are far stronger. Fatah's broad nationalism remains dominant, though even it contains fundamentalist elements.

While the *intifadah* itself is largely spontaneous in origin, the leadership cadre is the product of intensive youth-organizing efforts by the PLO and Islamic fundamentalists in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, these cadre developed a group loyalty over several years. The more senior among them were involved in terrorist activities and often spent some time in prison, where their organizing activities continued.

In theory, the *intifadah* reflects the epitome of Palestinian unity. In practice, however, it reproduces the PLO's structure. Thus, the National Unified Command of the Intifadah is a coalition of Fatah, the PFLP, the DFLP and the Communists. Each of the quartet has its own youth and trade union groups. The fundamentalists issue their own proclamations and call their own strike days. While the unity displayed has been impressive, PLO efforts to deny internal conflicts contain a strong element of wishful thinking. The killing of even a single notable by the fundamentalists or the PFLP could set off a major bloodletting, divide the *intifadah* and

destroy Palestinian unity.²³

Still, the *intifadah* activists know the importance of organizational unity, remain strongly loyal to the PLO and are unlikely to make any claim to independent leadership. They have always followed orders, determining the tactics of the uprising rather than its ideology or strategy. They lack both the inclination and the political base to challenge the Tunis headquarters. The fact that no one *intifadah* leader or hero has emerged in the West Bank or Gaza stems from the PLO's determination not to allow any competing leadership in the territories.²⁴

However, since their political formation and strength come from the *intifadah*, the revolutionaries are apt to favor its continuation. They have not known their elders' years of frustration and disillusionment and thus overestimate the possibility that continuing the *intifadah* can lead to victory. The fact that many of them come from refugee camps and are more likely to want a Palestinian state including ancestral homes in Israel, also makes this group more radical than the notables.

The notables, who worry about chaos and dwindling funds, and the masses, who have families to support, are less likely to remain active and optimistic. The former wish to retain wealth and power and the latter need to work in Israel. These considerations make them more willing to compromise. Still, the powerful sanction of group solidarity or occasional physical intimidation by radicals or even mainstream PLO cadre can keep them from openly dissenting or "dropping out."

Conclusion

If the PLO does not produce a peace proposal appealing enough to Israel and the United States to promote serious negotiations, the *intifadah's* momentum and international sympathy for it might be lost. But if Arafat does take a

clearer stand—accepting a two-state solution or allowing West Bank/Gaza Palestinians to take the lead in negotiations instead of insisting on direct PLO involvement at this stage—it might split the Palestinians. Arafat's usual tactic of ambiguity only freezes the status quo. Facing such dilemmas in the past, Arafat chose to keep the radicals happy.

The answer for Arafat would be to assert himself and galvanize support from the West Bank/Gaza notables and masses. In this sense, he could use elections to his advantage, making them a referendum for his slate of candidates and marginalizing the fundamentalists. But the PLO leadership does not really trust the notables and fears that the United States and Israel will use them to circumvent the PLO and even to continue the occupation.

West Bank/Gaza Palestinians are the Palestinian sector most moderate and willing to compromise but are incapable of launching an independent initiative. The notables are timid, have only limited control of the *intifadah* and no organized following. This situation may only change after a long era during which "inside" Palestinians conclude that the PLO is unable to negotiate an end to occupation. Even then, a separate insiders' initiative is unlikely. The PLO would retain enough power to prevent it, while leftist and fundamentalist groups would be determined to block such "treason."

What is possible, however, is for the notables to act as a lobbying group in the PLO. In this sense, they would not necessarily constitute a permanent alternative leadership but a moderate lobby in the PLO that could also act as an intermediary to allow the sides to test mutual intentions.

In effect, this is the role they are given by U.S. policy, Israel's elections proposal and Egypt's 10-point plan. By pressing the PLO-Tunis for an initiative to blend with the elections idea, by urging it to be more forthcoming toward Israel

and by assuaging Israeli fears, the notables could play an important role in the peace process.

But it would be dangerous to overestimate their power. For example, whether or not Nuseibeh participated in the organization of the *intifadah*, he is still a relatively unimportant figure. His Westernized persona makes it easy for him to communicate with the foreign media but, by the same token, also means that he is distrusted by the uprising's actual field commanders. Thus, excessive contact with notables, whose wishful thinking and propaganda activities coincide, makes it easy to overestimate the uprising's and the PLO's strategic moderation and tactical flexibility.

The *intifadah* can continue for a long time but the potential for division among Palestinians or a breakdown of active resistance is also quite real. Although PLO leaders fear that the *intifadah* might collapse, they may still engage in wishful thinking that time favors them. Internal politics also constrain bold action. For Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Syria, and (to a lesser extent) those in the West Bank and Gaza, the "right to return" to Israel proper is non-negotiable. The Marxist and Islamic fundamentalist groups generally oppose compromise and will use any apparent concessions on Arafat's part to challenge his leadership.

Arafat might be able to break out of this paralysis but his own preferences and political situation make this more difficult than it might seem from looking at purely external circumstances. The different priorities of Palestinian groups tend to deadlock. PLO leaders want to be assured that negotiations will inevitably produce a state which they, not the "insiders," will rule.

Arafat's constant reiteration of the "Algerian model" illustrates his view that the "outside" leadership must dominate the movement and, eventually, a Palestinian state by imposing itself on the local people. In Algeria, a government

and army in exile returned to take over the country upon independence. Those who had actually battled the French inside Algeria ended up with little power; some were imprisoned and others assassinated by the new regime. Other examples of "outside" groups dominating "inside" groups include Vietnam (the Hanoi government over the National Liberation Front) and Taiwan (Chinese mainlanders over Taiwanese). In a PLO-led state, the notables might retain their wealth but it is hard to believe that people like Husseini, Nuseibah, Siniora, *et. al.*, would have any but minor posts.²⁵

Still, Arafat is more likely to prefer the notables to the revolutionaries as his local agents. The notables' political vulnerability and personal timidity make them more dependent on Fatah. The revolutionaries' belief that the uprising can succeed without diplomatic concessions may feed their extremism; their tactical role in leading the masses may build their ambitions. The new notables have no such illusions.

Thus, while the notables may seem more independent of the PLO in the short-term, in the long-run they can be politically more congenial for Arafat and less threatening to his own leadership. Arafat is not a social revolutionary but a bourgeois nationalist. The rivals he must eventually destroy or coopt—lest they destroy him—are leftists or fundamentalists. Arafat would thus find the notables more congenial than the *intifadah* revolutionaries.

The U.S.-PLO dialogue is Arafat's main diplomatic asset. If the *intifadah* levels off or diminishes (it will not disappear entirely) amid growing intra-Palestinian violence, the elections option becomes even more attractive for the "inside" Palestinians.

In addition, the PLO's tendency toward internal paralysis increases the importance of Egypt's role. Egypt was largely responsible for making possible the U.S.-PLO dialogue—guiding and pressuring Arafat toward the Geneva break-

through—and it developed a 10-point proposal when the PLO proved incapable of creating a feasible response to the May 1989 Israeli elections plan. Egypt's strategy, at minimum, allows the PLO the public relations advantage of not seeming responsible for vetoing progress. At best, it makes possible Israeli-Palestinian talks leading to elections.²⁶

The United States has an important role to play in moderating the PLO's policy. To do so, it must show Arafat that time is not on his side, that the United States has no compelling reason to grant him concessions, that he must persuade the Israelis of his peaceful intentions and that his employment of double-entendres will not confuse Washington. The U.S.-PLO dialogue should be used to put these messages across. The idea that Palestinians in the territories are going to force Israeli withdrawal is already clearly out of the question. The United States needs to show Arafat that it will not be the *deus ex machina* for achieving that end for him.

It is in U.S., Israeli and even Arafat's interest that the United States press him to bring the smaller PLO groups into line, particularly on ceasing terrorism. Allowing Arafat to escape responsibility for the use of terrorist tactics by the DFLP, PFLP and PLF would be a mistake for U.S. policy. Washington should always state publicly that if Arafat is to be dealt with as leader of the PLO he must apply his renunciation of terrorism to all PLO member groups.

Indeed, constant U.S. pressure is imperative to give Arafat an incentive to move further in dealing with his own hard-liners; U.S. rejection of ambiguity is necessary if Arafat is to understand the need for clarity. Such a strategy is also needed so that the United States can show Israel that it is not going to be abandoned or be asked to take risks on the basis of vague PLO promises.

In the final analysis, the future of the conflict and peace process will be largely influenced by Arafat. His policy will determine whether or not the PLO can ultimately gain direct participation in peace negotiations and some form of Palestinian state. To make such an outcome even feasible, he would have to abandon parts of the PLO program seeking to destroy Israel in stages. He would have to overcome or outmaneuver factions of the PLO—as well as part of his own thinking—which aim at that result. And, finally, he would have to persuade a large portion of Israel's leaders and public of this transformation. This is no easy task, but it is far simpler, and potentially more rewarding, than the PLO's traditional policy of endless, fruitless revolution toward illusory total victory.

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ENDNOTES

1. Obviously, Israeli and U.S. opposition to an independent Palestinian state or to direct PLO participation in negotiations affect the PLO's stance. We are, however, concerned here with the much less explored question of PLO policy. Moreover, it would be wrong to conclude that an absence of concessions from others is the sole reason for the PLO's positions.
2. The development of PLO policy itself is discussed in the author's *The PLO's New Policy: Evolution Until Victory?* (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), Policy Paper No.13.
3. This group, yet unnamed, could have as many as 11 members but was expected to have five. Similarly, there have been rumors, but no definite selection, of the three additional Central Committee members. It appears, however, that they will not necessarily be from the West Bank or Gaza.
4. Interview in *al-Anba*, August 21, 1989. Translation in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS), August 25, 1989, p. 3. Abu Sharif argued that the meeting endorsed the PNC's November 1988 resolution. But Fatah's delegates voted almost unanimously for it at the PNC meeting. And, of course, Arafat's Geneva statements, not the PNC resolution, was the basis for the U.S.-PLO dialogue. The Fatah congress rejected Israel's elections plan, reiterating a demand for U.N.-run elections only after Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories.
5. Interview with *al-Majallah*, August 30-September 5, 1989, pp. 22-23. Text in FBIS, September 7, 1989, p. 2.
6. Arafat's initiatives have met with mixed results in the face of internal PLO politics. In 1983, he visited Egypt despite heavy criticism from other PLO leaders. In 1985, he made an agreement with Jordan, then backed down due to pressure from the PLO Executive Committee. In 1988, he engineered the PNC resolution, then met U.S. conditions in Geneva. But he let PLO leaders interpret the PNC resolution as they pleased and finessed the Geneva statement by rarely referring to its principles and by not incorporating them into official PLO documents.
7. Interview in *al-Qabas*, October 3, 1989. Translation in FBIS, October 5, 1989, p. 2.
8. Arafat developed this thesis publicly in interviews: *al-Akhhbar*, September 22, 1989, pp. 3, 8. Translation in FBIS, September 25, 1989, pp. 1-5; *al-Ra'i*, October 10, 1989, pp. 1,16. Translation in FBIS, October 11, 1989, pp.4-6. Arafat suggested that The Washington Institute's 1988 report, *Building for Peace*, was the key element in this conspiracy.
9. Muhammad Milhem, interview in *al-Anba*, September 19, 1989. Translation in FBIS, September 22, 1989, p. 7.
10. A formalist but useful discussion of PLO structure is in Sami Mussalam, *The PLO* (Brattleboro, Vt: Amana Books, 1988).
11. The relationship of these smaller groups to Arafat, as well as the role played by Abu Iyad, was analyzed in the author's *The PLO's Intractable Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1985), Policy Paper No.3.
12. Fluent English enhances abd al-Rabbu's Western media contacts while, ironically, his Marxism helps him understand Western thinking. PLO sources claim abd al-Rabbu's central role in the U.S.-PLO dialogue originated since he was the only Executive Committee member in Tunis during the December 1988 breakthrough.
13. The anti-Arafat revolt's leader, Abu Musa, was a Central Committee member who left in 1983, criticizing PLO incompetence and corruption. High PLO officials said that Arafat opposed the election of Intissar al-Wazir and Muhammad Jihad.
14. The others are PLO security man Hayil abd al-Hamid (Abu al-Hul); Palestine Liberation Army officer Col. Nasr Yusef; Subhi Abu Kersh (Abu Monzer), former aide to Abu Jihad and deputy PLO representative in Saudi Arabia; Sakhr Abu Nazr, secretary of Fatah's Revolutionary Committee; Ahmad Khouri (Abu Ala), director-general of the PLO economic department which runs its company Samod; and Attaieb Abderrahim, PLO envoy in Yugoslavia.
15. The only past likely successor was Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), an able and energetic organizer of PLO armed and terrorist actions and Arafat's right-hand man. After he was killed (probably by an Israeli hit team) in April 1988, Arafat chose no new head for military/terrorist operations against Israel.
16. Interview in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 3, 1989, p. 5. Translation in FBIS, October 11, 1989, p.11. See also Abdullah Hurani's comments, *al-Majallah*, October 3, 1989, pp. 26-27. Translation in FBIS, October 3, 1989, p. 3. Nabil Sha'ath, who lives in Egypt, seems a parallel case to that of Abu Sharif. For another example of a PLO denial of an Abu Sharif statement, see FBIS, September 13, 1989, p. 7.
17. Jordan has the same problem with self-determination. Referring to a U.S. report about 1,236,000 Palestinians in

Jordan, Crown Prince Hassan commented, "From our perspective [these] Palestinians are Jordanian citizens." Speech to The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 12, 1989.

18. In Arab society, a "notable" is a leading member of a wealthy family. Their money comes from owning land and their power from paternalistic relations with large numbers of peasant tenants and borrowers. In the West Bank and Gaza, strife between these two classes has been relatively limited partly due to kinship relations between the groups' members. Financial and political power was enhanced by the notables' services to the governments which ruled the land: the Ottomans, British and Jordanians (or, in Gaza, Egypt).

19. On the West Bank elites' evolution, see Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1988) and Moshe Maoz, *Palestinian Leadership on the West Bank* (London: Frank Cass, 1984).

20. Interview in *al-Ahram*, September 10, 1989, p. 5. Translation in FBIS, September 13, 1989, p. 8. It says something about notable-PLO relations to note that the individual making that bold statement did so anonymously.

21. Lists, which should not be regarded as authoritative, were published in *al-Ra'y al-Amm*, September 26, 1989, pp. 1, 19. Translation in FBIS, September 28, 1989, p. 2; *The Washington Times*, October 5, 1989, p. A-10. The Times list was slightly different. The Likud may reject those who live in East Jerusalem, a group including Siniora, al-Husseini and others.

22. For example, the visit of Ghassan al-Shakah, Jamil al-Tarifi and Radwan Abu Ayyash noted by the Middle East News Agency, September 26, 1989. Translation in FBIS, September 28, 1989, p. 2.

23. Shortly after Israel reopened West Bank schools in July 1989, parents and fundamentalists opposed a National Unified Command strike call. In general, the PLO portrays internal disputes as being created by Israel. "The enemy security services and media are trying to separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip in a studied and

systematic way to create confusion based on the peculiarity of the economic and demographic status of the Gaza Strip," complained the Voice of the PLO (Baghdad), October 4, 1989. Translation in FBIS, October 5, 1989, p. 1. Arafat criticized internal conflict in the Gaza Bar Association, "We will not allow the Zionist enemy to pour its fire on our small wounds. We will not give the enemy . . . the opportunity to infiltrate through our passing disputes to fragment our strong national unity." October 4, 1989. Translation in FBIS, October 4, 1989, p. 4. Abu Sharif blamed Israel for the murders of collaborators and said that four of those killed were local *intifadah* leaders. *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 17, 1989. Translation in FBIS, September 22, 1989, pp. 4-5. PLO leaders and West Bankers were well aware that the 1936-1939 revolt was largely destroyed by inter-Palestinian bloodshed.

24. Israeli deportations also removed field leaders but these men were not elevated to top leadership positions in Tunis. Arafat tried to make the late Abu Jihad, who was wholly loyal to Arafat in life and now no longer a potential rival, the hero of the *intifadah*.

25. The Zionist model was the reverse: inside forces, led by David Ben-Gurion, took control from outside forces, led by Chaim Weizmann. The likely relationship of PLO "inside" and "outside" forces might be similar to the experience of SWAPO (the Southwest Africa Peoples Organization) in Namibia. As SWAPO began taking power for the transition to independence, "Few party leaders who stayed inside the country have been given responsible jobs. . . . After nearly 30 years abroad Mr. [Sam] Nujoma [SWAPO's president] hardly knows the country he may soon govern. . . . 'When I left Windhoek it was a little village; now it is a little New York,' remarked one of the returning exiles." *The Economist*, "Return to an unknown Namibia," September 23, 1989, p. 45.

26. Cairo has a great interest in finding a diplomatic solution. Successfully resolving the conflict would make Egypt's relations with Israel a tremendous asset, allow Egypt to be patron of the Palestinians, isolate Cairo's enemies (particularly Syria) and guarantee the country's role as leader of the Arabs, among other benefits. Egypt has come to play the role of trying to "deliver" the PLO, formerly expected of the USSR.

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