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THE PLO'S NEW POLICY: EVOLUTION UNTIL VICTORY?

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PREFACE

Yasser Arafat's decision in December 1988, to recognize Israel, accept U.N. resolution 242 and renounce terrorism was a dramatic move for the PLO. It resulted in the opening of a U.S.-PLO dialogue designed to further the peace process.

However, as Barry Rubin points out in this Policy Paper, Arafat's acceptance of U.S. conditions for a dialogue does not represent a categorical shift in PLO strategy. Rather, the PLO has adopted a policy of calculated ambiguity designed to avoid a choice between coexistence with Israel and pursuing its planned destruction in stages. Given the organization's traditional stance toward Israel, the U.S. has the task of convincing the PLO that ambiguity will not bring success.

A long-time observer of PLO strategy, Rubin provides a detailed analysis in this paper of the PLO's recent decisions and offers a serious assessment of the implications for U.S. policy. He argues that the United States should pressure the PLO to cease its armed attacks against Israel, end its talk of a multi-stage destruction, sanction elections and unambiguously recognize Israel's existence. Only then can the PLO prove that it has taken the steps necessary to make peace possible. In addition, Rubin – who was an observer at the critical PNC meeting in Algiers that adopted the new policy – has included a detailed annotation of the PNC resolution and declaration of independence.

It is hoped this work can serve as a guide and reference for the policy-making community as it faces the difficult task of responding to the issues raised by the changes in PLO policy.

Barbi Weinberg
President
June 1989

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PLO's steps toward recognizing Israel, renouncing terrorism and advocating a two-state solution are not a public relations ploy. But, by the same token, the PLO has not been transformed overnight. As a result, U.S. policy toward the PLO should be geared toward pressuring and maneuvering the organization into completing its evolution toward becoming an acceptable negotiating partner for Israel.

The PLO remains torn between seeking a two-state solution – a Palestinian state alongside Israel – or a two-stage solution using diplomacy as a tool to destroy Israel. Although the PLO has moved toward the former position, progress has been slow, ambiguous and inconsistent.

Given the PLO's internal politics, history and beliefs, its leadership has been tempted to keep open the options of claiming all of Israel and ordering terrorism. Yet no amount of international and Arab pressure can achieve any material gain for the Palestinians until Washington and Jerusalem are persuaded that the PLO has changed its goals and methods.

The United States should urge the PLO to: (1) Force its member groups to cease armed attacks on Israel; (2) Stop talking about a multi-stage destruction of Israel; (3) Gain a PNC and an Arab summit endorsement of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's statements recognizing Israel's right to exist and renouncing terrorism; (4) Begin a dialogue with Jordan in order to organize a confederation between the PLO and the Hashemite kingdom; (5) Accept elections in the territories.

There must be a protracted negotiating process in order to test the PLO's intentions, goals and ability to live up to its commitments. The more that the PLO moves in this direction, the more that it can expect from the United States and Israel.

I THE PLO'S STRUCTURE
   AND ARAFAT'S MANDATE

The PLO's structure and internal politics are key factors in understanding the organization's difficulty in making a complete transition toward a moderate, diplomacy-oriented policy. The fact that the PLO is an umbrella organization of competing groups, ideologies and constituencies has led Arafat to seek a least-common-denominator consensus in order to maintain unity. The PLO's dependence on Arab rulers who quarrel among themselves and try to control it, has reinforced Arafat's caution lest any Arab ruler become his exclusive patron or permanent enemy.

At the same time, Arafat has a tremendous amount of potential authority as the symbol of Palestinian nationalism, leader of Fatah (by far the largest PLO constituent group) and controller of a clear majority in both the Executive Committee and the PNC. His position was enhanced in April 1989, when the PLO Central Committee elected him president of the putative Palestinian state.

Still, as long as the organization sought total victory, symbolized by its slogan "revolution until victory," Arafat was willing to sacrifice moderation or the use of diplomacy in order to protect his internal and inter-Arab flanks. Verbal

attacks on the United States, calls for Israel's destruction and terrorist operations were quite acceptable if these actions served his more essential political purpose of mobilizing Palestinian and Arab support while maintaining unity and independence.

For almost a quarter-century after its founding in 1964, the PLO did not mourn lost diplomatic opportunities since compromise would have unacceptably diluted its program and long-term goals. During these years, attitudes and political relationships developed in the PLO which reinforced intractability. Arafat therefore remains constrained by his uncertainty about whether to compromise or make extremist demands, the need to achieve internal consensus and the PLO's fundamental world view.

Remarkably, even after his statements in Geneva recognizing Israel, rejecting terrorism and calling for a compromise, Arafat was able to maintain a large degree of ambiguity. Yet while Arafat can simultaneously imply a willingness to live in peace with Israel while speaking or acting in contradictory ways, this approach has reached its limit. The approach may yield public relations advantages but it cannot bring the Palestinians material benefits. To obtain the latter, the PLO must give the United States and, above all, Israel an incentive to negotiate a settlement with the organization. The fact that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government has a strong ideological propensity against any talks with the PLO makes this task far more difficult but no less necessary for the organization.

Arafat's mandate and the PLO's major policy shift are based on the decisions of the PNC's 19th session, November 15, 1988, in Algiers, Algeria. The meeting declared independence for a Palestinian state with undefined boundaries. The state was quickly recognized by most Arab states – but not by Libya or Syria – and a number of Third World countries. But Arafat did not win recognition from any West Europe government, and the U.S.S.R. recognized the declaration but not the state.

The PNC's political resolution was a reflection of the contradictory pressures on the PLO. It contained both radical and moderate elements: extremist rhetoric combined with qualified steps toward recognizing Israel and rejecting terrorism. (See Appendix for full text.) To gain a dialogue with the United States and improve the PLO's image in the West, Arafat stressed the latter while never openly contradicting the former. Other PLO officials and groups used the resolution's ambiguous language to justify less accommodating stances. This political line maintained internal unity but it also preserved U.S. and Israeli suspicions about PLO intentions.

While the PNC document contains a great deal of rhetoric, its formulations were carefully crafted to guide the PLO's actions and goals. The points in the document that are vague were written to reflect the limits of consensus on key issues: whether or not to recognize Israel, accept a West Bank/Gaza state as a permanent solution and renounce terrorism.

Since Arafat composed his own mandate on these issues, the document's ambiguity reflects both a personal ambivalence and a political need to appease rejectionist elements in Fatah and smaller groups. Although Syria and hard-line forces tried to pull Arafat in one direction, this time he felt greater pressure from his West Bank and Gaza constituents who were demanding tangible results from the PLO for the prolonged uprising they alone had initiated and sustained.

THE PLO AND THE PNC

In order to understand the PLO's political dynamics and the forces shaping Arafat's course, it is necessary to understand the movement's structure. Arafat is the PLO's chairman and leader. He has no "number two man" or clear successor. The PLO's ruling body is the 15-member Executive Committee, which was declared the Palestinian state's interim government at the 1988 PNC. Arafat controls an overwhelming majority in the Executive Committee with support from Fatah's representatives and pro-Arafat "independents." The Popular

Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Front have one representative each in the Executive Committee. Although the committee endorsed Arafat's declarations in Geneva, members from the PFLP, DFLP and PLF criticized them as being unauthorized and non-binding on the organization.

The PLO and the PNC were established in 1964. The PNC has 450 members, of whom 70 are heads of PLO offices and therefore under Arafat's control. In addition, about a third of the delegates represent the armed organizations which constitute the PLO. These include Fatah, led by Arafat; two Marxist groups: the PFLP, led by George Habash, and the DFLP, led by Naif Hawatmeh; a small faction of the PLF led by Muhammed Abbas, mastermind of the Achille Lauro hijacking; the Iraqi-controlled Arab Liberation Front, led by Ibrahim Hamad; and the pro-Moscow Palestine Communist Party.

The remaining PNC delegates and a number of Executive Committee members are "independents," appointed to represent Palestinian communities and organizations in different countries. These individuals are usually selected by Arafat and Fatah. This group includes a number of "secret" members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who have been blocked by Israel from participating in PNC meetings. Thus, Palestinians from the territories are underrepresented in the PLO leadership, which is mostly composed of pre-1967 refugees or emigres. This dominant group has been out of touch with the views and needs of those living under Israeli rule, many of whom are eager for a compromise settlement to end the occupation or the conflict.

Pro-Syrian groups, some of which are also backed by Libya, are not members of Arafat's PLO. These forces – including as-Saiqa; the Fatah-Rebels, led by Abu Musa; the Fatah Revolutionary Council, led by Abu Nidal; and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command, led by

Ahmad Jibril – oppose Arafat's leadership and policies. They continue to seek Israel's destruction and carry out terrorism against it. Damascus has killed and imprisoned Arafat supporters.

Damascus also retains some influence over the PFLP and DFLP, which are based there. Each of them criticized Arafat's new policy but remained a part of the PLO. If Syria decided that the peace process might succeed, it could pressure these groups to split from the PLO. The smaller groups oppose a provisional government because they fear that Fatah would dominate it and that Fatah's Central Committee, rather than the Executive Committee, would become the PLO's dominant body.

Internal politics, then, is a major factor affecting Arafat's policy. One of his top priorities is to discourage Habash and Hawatmeh from walking out of the PLO and to appease more radical elements of Fatah – the most important being PLO Foreign Minister Faruq Qaddumi – from joining them.

THE PLO'S CONSTITUENCIES

The PLO demands recognition as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people wherever they live. Most Palestinian Arabs do look to the PLO for leadership, and this relationship is sustained overwhelmingly by nationalistic fervor and intimidation. Palestinian politics are also complicated by geographic and ideological divisions.

Geographic divisions have split the Palestinians into five categories. Most of those on the West Bank live in the same towns and villages in which their parents and grandparents lived. In the past, West Bankers have been divided between those living in refugee camps and those who are city or town dwellers, between Muslims and Christians, and between rivaling clans and towns. These conflicts have disappeared during the *intifadah* but could re-emerge. West Bankers tend to have a more realistic understanding of Israel, the greatest

incentive for ending the occupation, a strong middle class and have more interest in gaining sovereignty over the West Bank than in conquering pre-1967 Israel.

West Bank leaders are unlikely to become independent of the PLO. But these figures – most of them urban, middle-class Palestinians from long-established families – have begun to play an important role as a moderating lobby on the PLO leadership in Tunis. These individuals, most notably Faisal Husseini, have urged a change in PLO policy, pioneered meetings with Israelis and have been more open to the idea of holding elections. In fact, they were the first to suggest elections, in January 1988.[1] If the PLO cannot meet the West Bank Palestinians' demand that a solution be found to end Israel's occupation, West Bankers might eventually seek alternative leaders.

Although Gaza residents have some views in common with Palestinians in the West Bank, there are three significant differences between them. First, most Gaza residents are refugees who live under terrible conditions and have little hope that their living conditions will improve. Gaza is so overpopulated that the area cannot be economically viable under any ruler. Second, a strong Islamic fundamentalist movement, which is not represented in the PLO or the PNC, is competing for the leadership of Gaza. Finally, while Gazans – like West Bankers – have a direct stake in ending the occupation, many are refugees who originally came from areas that became part of Israel in 1948. They therefore provide proportionally more support for radical fundamentalist and Marxist groups that hope to recover all of Palestine than do West Bankers.

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[1]In a Jan. 14, 1988, statement released by Palestinians in the territories, 14 points were listed as demands on the Israeli authorities, among them "the cancellation of all restrictions on political freedoms . . . making provisions for free municipal elections under the supervision of a neutral authority." Text in The Middle East Ten Years After Camp David, (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1988), p.493.

Palestinians living in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq come from the territory now comprising Israel and many live in refugee camps. Those in Lebanon have been radicalized by the civil war; Palestinians in the other two countries are tightly controlled by dictatorial regimes. Given their nationality and the direction they receive from radical Iraqi and Syrian rulers, these Palestinians contribute many recruits to anti-PLO and Marxist PLO groups. They are therefore more hard-line than residents of the occupied territories. They envision conquering pre-1967 Israel, rather than the West Bank for which they have no special feelings. Most top and mid-level PLO leaders come from this background.

Palestinians living in Jordan constitute about half of that country's population. Some of them have been economically successful and many are loyal to the regime. Even those who are sympathetic to the PLO do not want to jeopardize their well-being and stability. While supporting the creation of a Palestinian homeland on the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians in Jordan as well as members of Israel's Arab minority are hesitant to act in ways which might endanger their current status and privileges. As a group, Israeli Arabs are the most willing to accept Israel's existence.

In political terms, Palestinians include radical and moderate nationalists, Marxists, Islamic fundamentalists and supporters of various Arab regimes. The vast majority of them are pro-Fatah and are ideologically, if not programmatically, moderate nationalists. But violent rivalries sometimes break out among and within these camps over differing ambitions. The PLO's apparent unity may unravel quickly under continued strain or after the battle against Israel dissipates. For many years, Arafat's response to this competition was to avoid offending anyone irrevocably. This resulted in political paralysis. But the *intifadah* has began a new era for the PLO.

II THE PLO'S EVOLVING IDENTITY

Traditionally, as PLO policy has evolved, new tactics have been introduced without abandoning traditional goals. The PLO's objective has been Israel's destruction and replacement with an Arab-ruled Palestinian state. The refugees would then return to the lands populated by Palestinian Arabs before 1948. At first, this was to be accomplished by the Arab states' armies. By the late 1960s, the PLO saw itself as the catalyst or vanguard for Arab victory. Terrorism became a central element in the PLO's strategy. In 1974, the idea of diplomatic and transitional steps was accepted as a stage toward Israel's elimination. In 1988, a new position emerged that implied either a willingness to accept a compromise peace with Israel or using diplomacy to attain a total Palestinian victory in stages, depending on the speaker and the audience.

The PLO's relationship with the Arab states has also evolved. It was originally the creature of Egyptian President Gamal Abd al-Nasser, but was taken over by Fatah in 1968-69. Smaller groups, however, continued to be controlled or subsidized by Arab states. In 1974, the Arab League summit

conference in Rabat proclaimed the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinians.[1]

Arafat was careful, however, to present himself as part of an Arab consensus. Arab governments maintain some influence on Arafat by giving money to the PLO, sponsoring Palestinian groups, providing bases and facilities or by using anti-PLO violence. In contrast, the PLO's leverage over these regimes is minimal.[2]

The PLO, however, usually sets its own policy, as demonstrated on two historic occasions prior to the 1988 Algiers PNC meeting: at the 1968 and 1974 PNC sessions. In 1968, the Cairo PNC formally adopted the 1964 Palestine National Charter, rejected the 1947 partition of Palestine, rejected U.N. resolution 242, refused "categorically any negotiations" and called explicitly for Israel's destruction. The charter could be amended by a two-thirds vote of the PNC, but the 1988 PNC resolution neither endorsed nor explicitly revised it. A few PLO officials argued that the PLO's new policy superseded the charter, but a larger number said the charter was still in force. In May 1989, Arafat said during a visit to Paris that the charter had been "superseded" but not abrogated.[3] In fact, however, the language of the declaration of independence is ambiguous on the point.

The 1974 PNC meeting adopted a transitional program that called for establishing a Palestinian state on any territory taken from Israel as a first step toward Israel's ultimate destruction. As reiterated by a PLO resolution in 1977, the strategy sought

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[1]Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, The Israel-Arab Reader, (New York: Penguin, 1986), p. 518.

[2]A key source for the PNC resolution and Arafat's U.N. speech is the Sept. 9, 1982, Fez Arab summit resolution based on Saudi Arabia King Fahd's proposal. Text in Laqueur and Rubin, op. cit., pp. 663-65.

[3]Text in Laqueur and Rubin, op. cit., pp. 366-372. Arafat's statement is in The Washington Post, May 4, 1989.

"the realization of the Palestinian people's rights to return and self-determination within the context of an independent Palestinian national state on any part of Palestinian land, without reconciliation, recognition or negotiations, as an interim aim of the Palestinian revolution."[4] . This was the so-called program of "stages" because the creation of a Palestinian state was calculated to be but a first step toward destroying Israel.[5]

Although the charter was based on the belief that the PLO would achieve its aims through military conquest, the 1974 program calls for the elimination of Israel through the use of diplomacy. In this way the PLO would obtain an interim state in "part" of Palestine. Since 1974, some observers erroneously suggested that this plan was an acceptance of a "two state" solution. In fact, the PLO only began to cross this bridge in 1988.

Despite this theoretical commitment to diplomacy, however, the PLO showed insufficient flexibility in its attempts to build a basis for negotiations during the 1970s and 1980s. It discouraged efforts to amend U.N. resolution 242 in order to meet Palestinian criticisms (the "Franco-Egyptian plan"). The PLO spurned transitional arrangements for the territories that were proposed in the 1979 Camp David peace accords and in the 1982 Reagan plan. The 1983 PNC meeting was very anti-American, rejecting President Reagan's September 1982

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[4]Laqueur and Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 602.

[5]Asher Susser, a noted Israeli analyst of the PLO, summarized, "While adhering to the ultimate strategic objectives of the PLO, the 10-point program of 1974 included a significant departure from the [PLO] charter. The charter had regarded armed struggle as the only way to liberate Palestine; the 10-point program endorsed 'struggle by all means,' only 'chief of which' was 'armed struggle.' The PLO thus paved the way for politics, diplomacy and negotiations as legitimate means for attaining its objectives." Asher Susser, "Double Jeopardy: PLO Strategy toward Israel and Jordan," Policy Papers Series Number Eight, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1987), p. 12.

proposal. It called for increased armed struggle and saluted "the steadfastness of its people living in the areas occupied in 1948."[6]

Soon thereafter, however, the PLO began to seek an alternative strategy as a result of the its continued inability to end the occupation, its expulsion from Lebanon in 1982 by the Israeli army and because of a Syrian-backed internal revolt in 1983. At the 1984 PNC meeting in Amman, Jordan, King Hussein appealed for PLO cooperation with Jordan in order to find a diplomatic solution. The PNC's final resolution called for "a confederation between two independent states" of Palestine and Jordan. The following February, Arafat and King Hussein reached an agreement for a joint delegation to negotiate peace with Israel. Almost immediately, however, the PLO began backing away from its commitment due to a fear of Jordanian domination, the organization's inability to reach internal agreement on a course of action and because Amman opposed an independent Palestinian state. By 1986, the promising initiative was dead.

THE INTIFADAH

The Palestinian uprising on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which began in December 1987, was a pivotal factor for change in several respects. The 1988 PNC resolution called it, "The greatest event in the contemporary history of the revolution of the Palestinian people . . . It was a total popular revolution . . . which . . . confirmed the national unity of our people" and their support for "the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of our people, all our people in all places inside and outside their homeland." Nabil Sha'ath, head of the PNC Political Committee, said the PLO had "undergone a major transformation through the *intifadah*," which was "the real mother of the peace process," making possible a solution in

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[6]Text in Laqueur and Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 679-683. See in the same book, Barry Rubin, "United It Stalls: The PLO," pp. 683-686.

which both Israel and a Palestinian state would have legitimacy.[7]

The *intifadah* affected the PLO in several ways. It put the Palestinian problem on the world agenda and created sympathy for the Palestinians and their plight. The uprising was also the first mass activity in Palestinian Arab history, an upheaval in their own society. The fact that local residents spearheaded a united and successful struggle, and demanded some political action to end the occupation, forced the PLO to respond in order to retain its leadership. Finally, the reduced involvement of the Arab states narrowed the Arab-Israeli conflict to an Israeli-Palestinian one.

But this does not necessarily mean that the issue has been reduced to the question of the West Bank and Gaza. The *intifadah* generated unrealistic euphoria over the belief that a total Palestinian victory was possible. Part of the PLO's continued rhetoric often implied a claim to all of Israel as well as to the territories occupied in 1967.

The PLO never expected or sought the *intifadah*, having preferred a passive, steadfast population which followed orders and awaited liberation by the PLO. After the *intifadah* began, the PLO tried both to intensify and control it. The PLO first followed its old strategy of staging military attacks across Israel's borders and rallying the Arab states, but these efforts fizzled. The PLO was more successful in its efforts to give money and instructions to, and gain control of, the Unified National Command and local "popular committees."

These efforts to "consolidate the national unity" were made more difficult by the need to control a wide range of often spontaneous activities generated by the local populace – even by Islamic fundamentalist and pro-Syrian groups – rather than by the PLO hierarchy. The organization has not only worried

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[7]PNC political resolution, U.S. State Department translation; Nabil Sha'ath speech to the National Press Club March 16, 1989.

that the *intifadah* will end without gaining tangible U.S. and Israeli concessions, but also that it can control the situation. "We cannot stop the uprising," said Farouq Qaddumi, long-time director of the PLO's Political Department who in 1989 was named the Palestinian state's foreign minister. "Without the *intifadah* people have no ears to listen to the PLO."[8]

FACTORS BEHIND THE PLO'S NEW POLICY

PLO programs since 1974 have envisioned an end to the occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state without recognition of Israel. These ideas are now being re-examined. A June 1988 paper by Bassam Abu Sharif was outspoken in advocating a compromise peace with Israel. Arafat did not endorse this initiative but used it as a trial balloon for his own new approach. In contrast to Abu Sharif's explicit appeal for mutual conciliation, however, Arafat's concessions came in a grudging, ambiguous and piecemeal manner. This approach respected the constraints of Palestinian politics but, by the same token, defused Israeli and U.S. suspicions more slowly and in a much less complete way.[9]

Given the PNC's composition, Arafat had a built-in majority for his proposals. But while abandoning his traditional consensus approach at the 1988 PNC meeting, Arafat remained loyal to his least-common-denominator technique. By hinting

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[8]George Moffett, "PLO Offers New Ideas for Talks," March 24, 1989, *The Christian Science Monitor*, p. 3. A leading West Bank journalist writes: "One of the reasons for the success of the uprising has been that it shifted the focus of the Palestinian-Israeli struggle from the question of the PLO and terrorism to the question of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. The uprising accentuated the positive aspects of the Palestinian cause, rather than the negative. It allowed the Palestinians to take the initiative rather than react to the actions of others." Daoud Kuttab, "Will Arafat Back Elections?" *The Washington Post*, April 16, 1989.

[9]On the Abu Sharif paper and this debate, see Barry Rubin, "The PNC: A Declaration of Independence?" Policy Focus, Number Eight, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Nov. 1988).

at a recognition of Israel and a rejection of terrorism, Arafat caused the most radical groups in the PLO to oppose part of the resolution but he was careful not to go too far and provoke a walk out. These groups voted against the paragraph on U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, losing 253 to 46 with 10 abstentions, but then accepted the resolution as a whole.

The PNC's political resolution gave Arafat a mandate to use diplomacy in order to settle the conflict, if he so wished through a two-state solution. This necessitated a psychological change and political reassessment for an organization previously dedicated to total victory and Israel's destruction. The PNC meeting was only the beginning of this process and the PLO's subsequent, constant evolution has been slow and inconsistent.

In short, it is wrong to argue that the PLO has not changed or that it is perpetrating a hoax. But it is equally misleading to believe that the PLO has definitively abandoned its interest in destroying Israel – a goal which makes a diplomatic settlement impossible – or that it has already made the tough decisions required for peace. If a lasting solution is to be reached, the PLO must complete its evolution and, in doing so, convince Israel that the organization genuinely seeks an historical compromise that includes coexistence with Israel.

The PLO may be capable of fulfilling this task, but historically it has been largely frozen into an intractable policy due to PLO and inter-Arab politics. Since the PLO's 1982 defeat in Lebanon, its 1983 split and particularly since the *intifadah*'s outbreak, new factors developed which allowed a more, but not thoroughly, moderate policy to prevail. This moderation has produced significant change in PLO policy, allowing Arafat to take actions that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier and to meet the conditions for a U.S. dialogue. However, political realities remain influential and constrain moves toward compromise. The PNC resolution's use of phrases that have multiple meanings was designed to provide a script for

PLO politics and goals in order to bridge the gap between "reformists" and "hard-liners."

Trends pushing the PLO toward change include the following elements:

• Despite 40 years of Palestinian and Arab rejection and war against Israel, almost a quarter-century of PLO armed struggle, and the mass uprising of the *intifadah*, the Palestinian people have not received any tangible gains.

• The uprising has been unable to force or convince Israel to withdraw. PLO leaders now feel an urgency in achieving results because West Bank Palestinians are demanding that it do something to end the occupation. There has been an implicit threat that Palestinians in the occupied territories might generate their own leadership if no progress is made. Equally, if the PLO fails to take a promising initiative, this might lead to a collapse of morale and an end to the uprising. This challenge is pressing the PLO to develop a diplomatic option capable of ending Israel's occupation. The uprising might have an effect on the PLO similar to the 1973 war's impact on Egypt, which preserved an honorable Egyptian "victory" and allowed it a more flexible policy.

• The PLO knows that the Arab states have lost interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict and are unwilling to provide much financial aid, let alone go to war on the Palestinians' behalf. Indeed, Arab apathy was a factor prompting the territories' frustrated residents to launch the *intifadah*. Egypt has already made peace with Israel. President Mubarak acknowledged, "We fought for many years, but where did we get? . . . I am therefore not ready to take more risks. Moreover, wars have generally not solved any problem." Mubarak said that negotiations were the only solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.[10]

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[10]*Der Spiegel,* Aug. 29, 1988; Middle East News Agency, Jan. 24, 1989. Translation in FBIS, January 25, 1989, p. 12. PLO leaders became increasingly outspoken in claiming that the lack of funds from Arab

Egypt, the most important Arab state, pressed the PLO toward making a compromise peace with Israel, as did Jordan and Saudi Arabia. These states prefer a political settlement in order to avoid a destabilizing regional conflict. Arab rulers in the Persian Gulf worry far more about Iran than Israel. Syria and Libya support the anti-Arafat Palestinians. The PNC resolution lamely claimed that the Arab masses would force their rulers to help the Palestinians, but the PNC's political report admitted, "Arab momentum to back up the *intifadah* is still weak." Indeed, the declaration of independence was itself an affirmation of "local" nationalism over pan-Arabism.

• The USSR, the PLO's superpower ally, has actively urged a change in PLO policy, in part because Moscow seeks to be the co-patron of a political resolution, alongside the United States. West European sympathy for the uprising is premised on a PLO readiness to make peace with Israel.

In contrast, trends restraining the PLO from change – abandoning extremist rhetoric, limiting demands, compromising with Israel – include the following elements:

• There is genuine resistance in the PLO to moderation or diplomatic compromise. After all, the PLO is heir to 25 years of hard-line policies and 40 years of refusals to accept the existence of a Jewish state, let alone negotiate peace with it. Arafat and other leaders have long had maximalist goals and branded those advocating concessions as traitors.

It is a tempting tactic to convince the West that the PLO only seeks a state in the West Bank and Gaza while telling

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states crippled the *intifadah.* Abu Iyad commented that the uprising would like to wreck the civil administration "But . . . from where are we going to collect funds for 180,000 families when they enter endless disobedience? Where is Arab aid? . . . None of the Arabs have implemented the Arab decision to support the *intifadah* since the Algiers summit. No Arab regime has honored its financial commitments." *al-Thawrah,* April 22, 1989. Translation in FBIS, April 25, 1989, p. 3.

others – particularly its Palestinian and Arab constituents – that it still hopes to conquer all of historic Palestine. The national myth that the Arabs can and must reconquer Palestine has been a useful tool in mobilizing support and in inter-group competition. But this myth has also paralyzed the Palestinians into subordinating material gains to posturing. The PLO leadership is as much a prisoner as a manipulator of its dreams. In short, while many PLO leaders realize that the dream of destroying Israel and replacing it with a PLO-ruled state cannot be fulfilled, they are reluctant, for psychological and political reasons, to accept this conclusion and abandon their hope for an ultimate victory.

• The PLO uses a negotiating strategy based on weakness. The organization wants advance commitments for an Israeli withdrawal and the creation of a Palestinian state. By holding back what it perceives as its last card – a clearer, more consistent acceptance of Israel – the PLO is trying to be a tough negotiator. It has also consistently rejected any transitional negotiating stage that does not meet PLO demands in advance. This kind of strategy risks forfeiting current opportunities and produces a continued stalemate.

• Arafat's style is generally to maintain internal PLO unity and his militant image above any daring diplomacy. During previous negotiating efforts he frequently went back on his word. In 1977, the United States and Arafat agreed, through Egypt, that Washington would meet with the PLO if Arafat accepted U.N. resolution 242 with some specific reservations. Arafat reneged. In 1985, Arafat agreed to form a joint delegation with Jordan that could negotiate for a Jordanian-Palestinian federation to rule the West Bank and Gaza. Again, Arafat backed out. Arafat also came close to squandering the December 1988 diplomatic breakthrough with the United States by dropping, at the last moment, language in his Geneva U.N. speech that would have met Washington's conditions for a

dialogue.[11] He said the necessary words at a press conference the next day.

• The PFLP and DFLP, the second and third largest groups in the PLO, oppose a clear recognition of Israel and want to continue terrorist attacks against the Jewish state.

• Some Fatah leaders continue to adhere to the strategy of "stages" in which a Palestinian state could be used as a base for eventually taking all of Palestine. In the words of Fatah Central Committee member Abu Iyad, "The establishment of an independent state [is only a] short-term solution." The PLO's charter, he said, defines "the national borders of Palestine – north, south, east and west."[12] Thus, Arafat has worded every resolution and speech, including his Geneva U.N. address, so that he can interpret them to the radicals as being in line with their demands. Typical of this style was the May 1989 episode in Paris when Arafat used the French word *caduque* in describing the PLO charter. This word was then interpreted as having several meanings ranging from "null and void" to "outdated."

• The PLO is reluctant to show flexibility because many of its leaders mistakenly believe that a split can be caused between the United States and Israel and that the PLO can secure a state through U.S. pressure instead of through an agreement with Israel.

The events of 1987 and 1988, especially the *intifadah*, weakened the factors that traditionally restrained the PLO. Arafat showed more leadership than ever before. The balance of forces in the Arab world, which once pushed the PLO toward intransigence, now pressed it toward diplomacy and

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[11]See Barry Rubin, "The PLO's Intractable Foreign Policy," <u>Policy Papers Series</u>, Number Three, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1985).

[12]Kuwait News Agency, Sept. 1, 1988. Translation in FBIS, Sept. 2, 1988, p. 2.

negotiations. Arafat's interest in promoting a dialogue with the United States and his political gains in Western Europe make it more difficult for him to return to his former tactics. But the traditional constraints still dictate many of his actions. The PLO's transformation remains incomplete and its continued progress cannot be taken for granted.

Given this situation, the PLO's leadership has been tempted to blend moderation with extremism, seeking both a two-state solution and a two-stage solution. But this position maintains U.S. and Israeli suspicions and their unwillingness to make concessions to the PLO. While changes in the organization have been significant, further progress requires that the transformation continue. No amount of international or Arab effort can achieve anything of substance for the Palestinians until Washington and Jerusalem are persuaded that the PLO has changed its goals and methods.

THE PLO AND THE UNITED STATES

Central to the PLO's new strategy was an effort to meet U.S. conditions for opening contacts between them. Arafat had finally recognized that "nothing can get done in the region without the United States."[13] But he also saw this rapprochement as a solution in itself, believing that Washington would respond by pressuring Israel to meet the PLO's demands. Instead, as U.S. officials pointed out in the initial meetings, the PLO's real task is to convince Israel of its willingness to reach a stable peace settlement that would ensure Israeli security as well as Palestinian rights.

The conditions for U.S. contacts with the PLO were set by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1975. In a U.S.-Israeli memorandum of agreement, Kissinger said that the United States "will not recognize or negotiate with the PLO as long as the PLO does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council resolutions 242 and 338." Moreover this

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[13]Quoted in FBIS, Dec. 28, 1988, p. 1.

memorandum, and later the Camp David accords, conditioned any party's participation at a peace conference on "the agreement of all the initial participants." In other words, Israel was given a veto power over PLO participation.[14]

In later years, this stand was frequently reiterated by American presidents. In 1985, Congress passed, and President Reagan signed into law, a codification of Kissinger's 1975 commitments, adding that the PLO had to renounce the use of terrorism before the United States would "recognize or negotiate with [it]."

The U.S. strategy was designed to exclude the PLO as long as it followed a radical, terrorist policy and to try to use its leverage to push the organization toward a more moderate position. In diplomatic terms, such a posture was determinist since, without such a change in PLO behavior, no progress was possible. History has shown that this policy was successful. During the years that the PLO maintained an intransigent stance, it remained excluded and this was one of the factors that ultimately forced the PLO to revise its position. This revision then led to a rapprochement with the United States, enabling the United States to engage the PLO in a serious diplomatic process.

The United States was firm in demanding that its requirements were actually met. While calling the 1988 PNC resolution a step forward, the U.S. government deemed the resolution insufficient because it did not explicitly recognize Israel's right to exist and was ambiguous on terrorism and on U.N. resolutions 242 and 338. On November 26, 1988, Secretary of State George Shultz rejected Arafat's request for a visa to address the United Nations in New York because of the PLO's continued involvement in terrorism against Americans. At that time, the State Department issued a list of attacks

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[14]Text in John Norton Moore, The Arab-Israeli Conflict (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 1222.

perpetrated by elements of the PLO since 1985, including Arafat's Fatah organization.[15]

Given this decision, the U.N. General Assembly voted to meet in Geneva, Switzerland. Arafat secretly pledged to the United States that he would fulfill U.S. conditions in his December 13, 1988 address. But Arafat broke this promise and the United States said that his statement was unsatisfactory.

To avoid losing the opportunity, Arafat met the U.S. conditions at a press conference the next day. "Our desire for peace is strategic and not a temporary tactic," he said. He accepted U.N. resolution 242, the recognition of Israel and he renounced terrorism. Arafat concluded by saying, "We want peace . . . we are committed to peace and we want to live in our Palestinian state and let others live."[16] Shultz quickly announced that the U.S. conditions had been met and a U.S.-PLO dialogue began shortly thereafter in Tunis.

But the PLO still seemed to cling to three erroneous beliefs. First, that the United States would be forced by the uprising and international opinion to accede to PLO demands for a Palestinian state. Second, the PLO retained the illusion that U.S. pressure on Israel, instead of PLO efforts to persuade the Jewish state of its peaceful intentions, would bring results: "The so-called Zionist lobby has no influence on U.S. policy," Arafat said. "Israel implements what America says." In the words of PLO Executive Committee member Abdullah Hourani, "Let us face it, the party that decides . . . is neither us nor Israel. It is the two superpowers and the Security Council's permanent member states."[17]

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[15]For text of the State Department statement, see *The New York Times*, Nov. 27, 1988, p. A-5.

[16]Text from Voice of the PLO (Baghdad), Dec. 15, 1988. Translation in FBIS, Dec. 15, 1988, p. 3.

[17]"Year-Old Palestinian Uprising Will Continue — Arafat," Reuters, Dec. 9, 1988; al-Hourani interview in *ad-Dustur*, Nov. 17, 1988. Translation in FBIS, Nov. 17, 1988, p. 4.

Third, the PLO believed that it could continue using an ambiguous political line – seeking a loophole on the use of terrorism and pondering a multi-stage destruction of Israel – and still win U.S. concessions.

Such ideas could deadlock the dialogue and the peace process. In order to prevent this from happening, the PLO will need to shed these illusions and its policy of calculated ambiguity. And, as recent events have demonstrated, just as the United States was able to force the PLO to moderate its position, so too does it hold within its hands the levers that could make a further evolution in PLO policy possible.

III   A POLICY OF CALCULATED AMBIGUITY

The deliberate ambiguities and careful wording of the PNC resolution, Arafat's statements in Geneva and ensuing speeches by him and other PLO leaders reflect political issues which must be resolved in the diplomatic process.

Even after the United States concluded that Arafat had met the U.S. conditions for a dialogue at his Geneva press conference, PLO leaders cast doubt or reservations on such key issues as acceptance of U.N. resolution 242, rejection' of terrorism and recognition of Israel.

It would be incorrect either to read the PLO's behavior as a trick or to engage in wishful thinking about the organization's new-found moderation or pacificism. The mainstream of PLO strategy and doctrine still contains diverse elements which will require time, an internal struggle and a carefully calibrated U.S. policy to sort out.

RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL

Although Arafat recognized Israel in Geneva, he and other PLO leaders have only occasionally repeated such formulations. While recognizing that Arafat has embarked on a new course, one must retain some serious doubt about the PLO's beliefs, intentions and ability to deliver. Certainly, such perceptions have restrained Israel's leaders from negotiating with the organization.

Several PLO leaders portray the PNC resolution and Arafat's new policy as a way of obtaining a West Bank/Gaza state that would serve as a base for conquering Israel. For example, PNC Chairman Shaykh abd al-Hamid al-Sa'ih has noted that Islamic fundamentalists want "all [of] Palestine. We also aspire for the same objective [to] struggle until all of Palestine is liberated."[1]

The PLO obfuscates whether "Palestinian territory" refers only to the West Bank and Gaza or to Israel as well. Arafat told Time magazine, for example, that he wanted mutual recognition "between two states" and that "I am ready to sit in an international conference with the Israelis, no matter whom they send." But he added, "We are opposed to a Zionist state; Zionism is a racist movement, according to a U.N. resolution. We don't want a racist state in this area."[2]

Many other PLO leaders said that the PNC resolution, in Abu Abbas's words, "does not mean recognition of Israel's right to exist. It means nothing more than Palestinian readiness to fight the political battle." This view reinforces a concern that the PLO is using diplomacy as a tool for obtaining

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[1]*As-Siyasah*, Dec. 21, 1988, p. 18. Translation in FBIS, Dec. 23, 1988. p. 4. For a discussion of the problem of PLO ambiguity, see Robert Pear, "The PLO's Many Voices Differ About its Commitments to the U.S.," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1989.

[2]"Knowing the Enemy," Time, Nov. 7, 1988, pp. 47-48.

its maximum goals rather than irrevocably moderating those demands.[3]

On one notable day in December 1988, the director of the PLO's Political Department, Farouq Qaddumi, denied that the PNC resolution recognized Israel while the PLO's observer at the United Nations, Yaqub Terzi, asserted that it did.[4]

Many PLO officials interpreted the PNC resolution, and even Arafat's Geneva statement, as they liked, but rarely expressed a willingness to accept Israel's existence. Arafat continued to evince severe misperceptions about Israeli politics and policies. He referred to Israel's elected government as a "military junta" and claimed that the two blue lines on Israel's flag signify a claim to the "Euphrates and the Nile River." (The lines actually represent the traditional design of a Jewish prayer shawl.)[5]

The only part of the PNC resolution that referred to Israel used the following terms: "The occupation's crimes and its savage practices destroyed the Zionist claim that the Zionist entity was democratic. This lie misled world opinion for 40 years; Israel now appears in a true light: A fascist, racist, colonialist state based on the usurpation of the Palestinian land and on the annihilation of the Palestinian people. A state that threatens, launches attacks and expands onto neighboring Arab lands." (see appendix)

This characterization seems designed to delegitimize Israel's right to exist in the tradition of the U.N. resolution equating Zionism with racism. After all, if "the Zionist entity"

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[3]*As-Siyasah*, Dec. 5, 1988. Translation in FBIS, Dec. 7, 1988, p. 2.

[4]*The Washington Times*, Dec. 5, 1988, p. A-6.

[5]Interview, Vienna television, FBIS, Dec. 19, 1988, p. 7.

is "a fascist, racist, colonialist state" based on "usurpation" and "annihilation" its existence could not be justified.[6]

The PNC's declaration of independence carefully avoided recognizing Israel when it referred to U.N. resolution 181 of Nov. 29, 1947. The declaration noted that the resolution, "partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish," but brands that action a "historical injustice . . . depriving [the Palestinian people] of their right to self-determination." Thus, resolution 181 is still treated in language that resembles the PLO charter. The two-state proposal was said, historically at least, to contradict Palestinian self-determination which required Arab control over all of mandatory Palestine and no Jewish state.[7]

The declaration of independence continues by saying, "yet it is this resolution that still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence." In other words, the PLO accepts resolution 181 inasmuch as it provides a basis for a Palestinian Arab state but not necessarily as a juridical basis for a Jewish state.

Again, different PLO officials provide their own, conflicting interpretations. But this formula fulfills Abu Iyad's statement, "I did not say that the [Palestinian] state would be on the basis of partition. I only spoke about the part [of the U.N. resolution] that gave us legitimacy."[8]

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[6]Many passages in the political resolution are copied from Arafat's speech to the 1988 Arab League summit on June 9, 1988. Text in FBIS, June 10, 1988, p. 6.

[7]Quotations are from official PNC translations of the declaration of independence.

[8]Kuwait News Agency, Sept. 1, 1988. Translation in FBIS, Sept. 2, 1988, p. 3.

In short, the PLO has found ways to mitigate its recognition of Israel. The more radical leaders deny that recognition has taken place, while some mainstream figures suggest that official recognition can only take place after a Palestinian state is established.

According to this strategy, the occupied territories should be turned over to the United Nations, which would pass them on to the PLO so that the organization can create its independent state. The PNC resolution calls "on the United Nations to place the occupied Palestinian territory under international supervision to protect our masses and end the Israeli occupation."[9] Only then would this state formally recognize Israel, something that Arafat, as chairman of the PLO, was supposed to have done in Geneva in December 1988.

RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338

Similarly, the PNC's stand on the two key U.N. resolutions implied a qualified endorsement of them. U.N. resolution 242

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[9] The PNC resolution calls for, "Israeli withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories that it has occupied since 1967, including Arab Jerusalem [and] annulment of all measures of annexation and attachment and removal of the settlements that Israel has established in the Palestinian and Arab territories since the year 1967. An effort to place the occupied Palestinian territories, including Arab Jerusalem, under the supervision of the United Nations for a limited period to protect our people, to create an atmosphere favorable to ensuring the success of the proceedings of the international conference, the attainment of a comprehensive peaceful solution and the achievement of security and peace for all through mutual acceptance and satisfaction and to enable the Palestinian state to exercise its effective authority over these territories."

These concepts echo the June 1988 Arab summit resolution, text in FBIS, June 10, 1988, p. 12. Qaddumi summarized, "Withdrawal of Israel and [the] U.N. to take administration of the West Bank and Gaza should be implemented before going to the international conference. It is similar to the disengagement [between Israel and both Egypt and Syria] in 1973. Israeli withdrawal first, after that negotiations start." Arafat confirmed this strategy in his Geneva speech. Cited in James Dorsey, "PLO state to seek United Nations Birth," *The Washington Times*, Dec. 5, 1988, p. A-6.

of November 22, 1967, emphasizes "the inadmissibility of the.
acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just
and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in
security." It calls for "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from
territories occupied" in the 1967 war and cites the necessity,
"for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem [and]
for guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political
independence of every state in the area through measures
including establishment of demilitarized zones." U.N.
resolution 338 of October 22, 1973, called for a cease-fire in the
1973 war and implementation of resolution 242.

Most of the PNC debate was on this issue. The final
resolution said the basis for an international peace conference
would be U.N. "resolutions 242 and 338 and the assurance of
the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and,
first and foremost, their right to self-determination in
application of the principles and provisions of the United
Nations charter concerning the right of peoples to self-
determination."

In this context, Arafat accurately defined PNC acceptance of
resolution 242 as "conditional on three basic principles: a
Palestinian state, self-determination and the right of return."
Since the United States did not accept any preconditions, he
reworded his Geneva statement to avoid this formulation.[10]

But Arafat continued to demand U.S. and Israeli acceptance
of a Palestinian state as a precondition for PLO endorsement of
the U.N. resolutions. No less a figure than PNC Chairman al-
Sa'ih said, even after the Geneva speeches, that "If you read the
[PNC] political statement carefully, you will find that what
some term recognition of the Security Council's resolutions
and consequently recognition of the Zionist entity is untrue."[11]

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[10]"Arafat flew to Amman," Reuters, Jan. 6, 1989; Text of Sept. 14, 1988
speech in FBIS, Sept. 15, 1988. p. 6.

[11]Interview in ash-Sharq al-Awsat, Jan. 13, 1989. Translation in FBIS, Jan.
18, 1989, p. 5.

TERRORISM

After Arafat's Geneva statements and the beginning of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, Arafat's Fatah ceased its terrorist attacks on Israel. But other PLO groups, including the PFLP, DFLP and PLF, stepped up efforts to send terrorist squads into Israel. The PLO in Tunis justified these as examples of permissible "armed struggle." Arafat did not try to prevent them or criticize the people involved. Thus, the PLO's renunciation of terrorism remained questionable.

Moreover, after Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij suggested a one-year truce to facilitate negotiations, Arafat warned that anyone calling for an end to the uprising, "exposes himself to the bullets of his own people." Shultz complained that this fit "very badly" with Arafat's renunciation of terrorism.[12]

A PLO renunciation of terrorism was a principal U.S. condition for a dialogue. Beginning in the late 1960s, the PLO's member groups engaged in many acts of international terrorism. Although these tactics gained much attention for the PLO and the Palestinian cause, they antagonized the West and proved incapable of undermining Israel. At times, attacks were carried out under cover names such as Black September and Force-17, now known to have been Fatah operations under Arafat's control.[13]

In October 1985, PLF terrorists hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro and murdered U.S. citizen Leon Klinghoffer. President Mubarak pressured Arafat to issue the November 1985, Cairo declaration which promised that attacks

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[12]Glenn Frankel, "West Bank Mayor Drops Truce Call," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 4, 1989; John Goshko, "Arafat Threat Against Truce Advocates Hit," *The Washington Post.* Jan. 5, 1989.

[13]For an earlier example of the PNC's advocacy of armed struggle see the 1984 resolution. Translation in FBIS, Dec. 3, 1984, p. A-2.

would be carried out only in Israel and the occupied territories. Arafat pledged to punish PLO members who violated it, starting with those responsible for the hijacking. Yet he protected PLF leader Muhammed Abbas, who remains on the PLO Executive Committee.

Shultz said the U.S. government opposed the Cairo declaration because the United States could not accept Arafat renouncing "all terrorism except in Israel or the West Bank." U.S. Ambassador for Counterterrorism L. Paul Bremmer III said, "the U.S government has always considered politically motivated attacks against noncombatants anywhere – including Israel and the occupied territories – to be terrorism."[14]

The U.S. government has not defined as terrorism most of the incidents, like demonstrations and rock throwing, that have taken place during the *intifadah*. But the State Department listed 22 PLO terrorist acts that were carried out sometime between the 1985 Cairo declaration and March 1988, mostly bombing attacks, attempts to murder Israelis abroad or attempts at cross-border raids. Some victims were Arabs, such as cartoonist Ali Adhami who was murdered in July 1987, in London, after criticizing Arafat.[15]

U.S. complaints about PLO terrorist involvements include:

• Abdallah abd al-Hamid Labib, known as Col. Hawari, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by a French court in October 1988, for the April 1986 bombing of a TWA plane in which four Americans, including an infant, were killed and for attacks on U.S. facilities in Europe. Hawari has been

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[14]L. Paul Bremer III, "Countering Terrorism, U.S. Policy in the 1980s and 1990s," speech at The George Washington University, Nov. 22, 1988. pp. 10-11; Shultz quoted in Goshko, *op. cit.*

[15]See Robert Satloff, "Islam in the Palestinian Uprising," Policy Focus, Number Seven, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1988).

shielded from prosecution by the PLO, is a close aide to Arafat and leads the Special Operations Group of Fatah's Central Security and Intelligence Apparatus.

• The PLO tried to block U.S. efforts to extradite a Hawari operative, Muhammed Rashid, from Greece for the 1982 bombing of a Pan American plane to Hawaii in which a passenger was killed and 15 were injured.

• Force-17, Arafat's personal security unit, reportedly claimed responsibility for an abortive March 1988 bomb attack in Jerusalem that attempted to kill Secretary of State Shultz.

• The State Department announced that Arafat threatened to attack American targets in retaliation for the April 1988 killing of the PLO's Abu Jihad, deputy commander in chief of the Palestinian revolution.

• Muhammed Abbas, responsible for the kidnapping and murder of Americans, is a member of the PLO Executive Committee.

The PLO's stand on terrorism will be determined by its actual behavior. The PNC resolution endorsed "the right of peoples to resist foreign occupation, colonialism and racial discrimination, and their right to struggle for their independence." The resolution also "declares its rejection of terror in all its forms, including state terror," and its commitment to the November 7, 1985, Cairo Declaration.[16] ,

What this means in practice was best expressed by Abu Iyad in April 1989: "We in Fatah and the PLO never relinquished the *fedayeen* operations. However, we should

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[16]Fatah and DFLP terrorist squads were captured trying to cross Israel's northern border during the PNC meeting. (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 14, 1988, p. 5). Another indication of the PLO's attitude was the fact that Khalid Nasser was Arafat's personal guest at the 1988 PNC meeting while on trial in abstentia in Egypt for the killing and wounding of American and Israeli diplomats.

choose the appropriate time for these operations to serve the
PLO's political proposals. We do not call for fighting for the
sake of fighting. We call for operations that have weight and
significance. At present, we believe that the continuation and
support of the *intifadah* is better and stronger."[17]

In short, armed struggle, including actions described by
others as terrorism, is a tactic to be employed when useful and
appropriate. This is a very different formulation than the
commitment that the United States thought Arafat made at
Geneva.

The State Department concluded, in explaining its 1988
decision to deny Arafat a visa, "the PLO through certain of its
elements has employed terrorism against Americans. Mr.
Arafat, as chairman of the PLO, condones and lends support to
such acts; he, therefore, is an accessory to such terrorism."[18]
The U.S. position only shifted when Arafat said at his Geneva
press conference, "We totally and categorically renounce all
forms of terrorism including individual, group and state
terrorism."

Arafat said that any group engaging in terror, "shall be
expelled from the PLO ranks," although it seemed that he
would use the loophole of claiming any such acts were
legitimate strikes at military targets. To argue about definitions
of "armed struggle" and "terrorism," however, is beside the
point. PLO armed attacks jeopardize the peace process, make it
more difficult to negotiate, harden Israeli positions and
threaten the U.S.-PLO dialogue.[19] Thus, the PLO must control,

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[17]*al-Thawrah*, April 22, 1989, p. 2. Translation in FBIS, April 25, 1989, p.
4.

[18]Text in *The Washington Post*, Nov. 27, 1988.

[19]Interview in *al-Qabas*, Dec. 23, 1988, p. 19. Translation in FBIS, Dec. 27,
1988, p. 4. Abu Iyad defined the attack near Dimona, Israel, in which
three Israeli civilians were murdered on a bus, as a legitimate example
of armed struggle. *al-Ahram*, Feb. 14, 1989. Translation in FBIS, Feb. 22,
1989, p. 4.

expel or punish elements within the organization that seek through terrorism to undermine the peace process and Arafat's leadership. Ultimately, he cannot have it both ways.

It can be argued that all PLO statements other than Arafat's Geneva speech are irrelevant because they only express theoretical goals and reflect the views of individuals rather than PLO policy. According to this standard, the only important factors are that Arafat does not openly contradict his Geneva statement and that he retain a majority in the PLO Executive Committee. Although there is truth to this formulation, it does not completely reflect the way the PLO operates.

Rather, the more radical views within the organization – and Arafat's own contradi   ctory feelings – constrain his maneuvering room. These ambiguous and contradictory positions encourage Israeli skepticism and inflexibility. The PLO's continued hedging – it has declared a Palestinian state without defining its borders, sought a diplomatic settlement imposed on Israel by the United States and renounced terrorism without rejecting armed struggle – has made the diplomatic process and negotiating a settlement far more difficult and may scuttle them altogether.

Even Arafat sometimes expresses frustration at criticism which damages his diplomatic and public relations efforts. Due to "narrow-mindedness," he said, "the PLO is prevented from putting out feelers to counter those of the Israelis. . . . Does this not mean denying the Arab negotiator a maneuvering factor, thus leaving [the initiative] in the enemy's hands?"[20]

Arafat's reluctance to challenge the PLO's traditional, extremist position makes it more difficult to prepare the

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[20]*Al-Majallah*, April 5-11, 1989. Translation in FBIS, April 7, 1989, pp. 1-8.

Palestinians and the Arab world for a compromise peace. While Arafat's ultimate, irreversible commitment to a comprehensive settlement may develop gradually, and could be encouraged by positions taken by the United States and Israel, sooner rather than later he will need to confront the hard-line ideas within his organization and within himself.

THE PLO'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES

In addition to the PLO's immediate goal of "ending the Israeli occupation," the 1988 Algiers PNC resolution defines three ultimate goals for the Palestinian people: "achieving its firm national rights of return, self-determination and creation of an independent Palestinian state." Each point raises important issues for the negotiating process because the PLO's continued ambiguity on them makes a successful diplomatic process impossible.

"National rights of return" refers to U.N. resolution 194 of December 11, 1948, which states that Palestinian Arab "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return."

In the present context, this would require Israel to admit hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, mostly descendants of refugees, who oppose its very existence and would clearly threaten its security. This demand for "repatriation" (or ,"right to return") appears often in PLO speeches as a non-negotiable demand and implies an unwillingness to accept even Israel's 1967 boundaries. More moderate formulations suggest compensation as an alternative, but this is not part of official PLO policy.[21]

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[21]Muammar Qadhafi says, "When all Palestinians . . . living outside Palestine right now and . . . all inhabitants of Gaza Strip and West Bank are returned to their properties and homeland in occupied Palestine . . . there will be no more Israel." Interview with Barbara Walters, Jan. 23, 1989, transcript, p. 7. PLO statements, like that issued on Land Day,

The PNC inextricably linked "self-determination, and creation of an independent Palestinian state." The United States has hitherto viewed "self-determination" as a principle which could be fulfilled in other ways (autonomy, federation with Jordan) and argued that the final status of the West Bank and Gaza should be determined through negotiations.

PLO documents and statements have been carefully worded to give the impression that the organization is seeking a state only in the West Bank and Gaza, but usually without saying it. The 1988 declaration of independence, with its partial acceptance of the 1947 U.N. partition plan (see appendix) is also far more ambiguous about a two-state solution than has generally been recognized. Arafat's declaration that the PLO charter was *caduque* has similarly been given different interpretations.

Thus, while the PLO has been moving toward an historic decision to accept a West Bank/Gaza state in order to fulfill Palestinian requirements, the door has been left open to wider claims that the state could be used to subvert or destroy Israel.

Maximalist statements may merely be bargaining points, but if the PLO sticks to them the peace process will not advance. For example, the PLO's use of the phrase "self-determination" implies that the PLO will claim a right to represent Israeli Arabs and Jordanian Palestinians, which would threaten both countries' security.

The United States and Israel want Jordan to play a stabilizing role in an Arab-Israeli settlement and do not want a settlement that would destabilize Jordan. The idea of a completely independent Palestinian state, particularly one that

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continue to imply that Israeli Arabs are part of the Palestinian nation under "occupation" and that they should struggle to "shake the structure of the Zionist occupation off the land of Palestine." San'a Voice of Palestine, March 30, 1989. Translation in FBIS, March 31, 1989, pp. 6-8.

claims to represent about half of its neighbor's citizens, is not a cause for rejoicing in Amman.

But the PLO's ambiguous approach toward Jordan could produce an opportunity for a more successful peace process by ensuring a future Jordanian role in a West Bank/Gaza Palestinian entity. The 1988 PNC resolution affirms, "the privileged relationship between the two fraternal Jordanian and Palestinian peoples, and that the future relationship between the two states of Jordan and Palestine will be established on confederal bases," if the two sides so choose.

Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950 and ruled it until the Israeli victory of 1967. In 1972, King Hussein proposed a decentralized Jordananian-West Bank kingdom. But at the 1974 Rabat summit, the Arab world named the PLO the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people and Jordan had no choice but to acquiesce. Still, Jordan has periodically shown interest in regaining the West Bank. The 1982 Reagan plan advocated a "Jordanian option," as did Israeli Labor party leader Shimon Peres.

In a February 1985, joint communique, the PLO and Jordan agreed to a federation. This arrangement was agreed upon at a time of PLO weakness following its expulsion from Lebanon and a split in the organization. Jordan was able to demand a primary role in negotiations and a dominant role in the partnership. The PLO, however, backed out of the agreement and Hussein blamed Arafat for its failure. As late as April 1987, Hussein and Peres reached a secret, albeit still-born, accord on a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to negotiate with Israel. But Peres was unable to persuade Israel's national unity government to act on the proposal.

But support for Jordan among Palestinians in the occupied territories has steadily eroded since 1967: the younger

generation favors the PLO and supporters of Jordan have been intimidated. The uprising on the West Bank and Gaza has accelerated this trend, further undermining the influence of the traditionally pro-Jordan elites. On July 31, 1988, King Hussein cut a number of links with the West Bank. This decision created a vacuum and a challenge for the PLO, which the PNC meeting was largely designed to deal with. By declaring a Palestinian state, the PLO has opened a new era in the organization's relationship with Jordan.

Nevertheless, given Jordan's strategic interest in the West Bank and the fact that about half of its citizens are Palestinians, Amman cannot ignore the territory's fate. The PLO's talk of a special relationship shows its need for Amman's cooperation. The organization must keep the door open to links with Jordan in order to retain access to the Palestinians in that country and also because the PLO recognizes that it cannot achieve its objectives without Jordanian cooperation.

Thus, a major Jordanian role in the peace process seems inevitable and would encourage Israel to make compromises it might otherwise eschew. Jordan would not attempt to represent the Palestinians but could be a partner in a confederation. Jordan could take some broader responsibility for security or foreign policy in order to maintain the stability of any settlement and to prevent a radical, revanchist or Syrian takeover of the territory.

The U.S. position on final status has been to oppose an independent Palestinian state and a permanent Israeli occupation, stressing that direct negotiations should decide the terms of any agreement. In Shultz's words, "peace cannot be achieved through the creation of an independent Palestinian state, or through permanent Israeli control or annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. At the same time, each party is free to bring any position it chooses to the negotiating table. Israelis are free to argue for annexation. Palestinians are free to argue

for independence. The United States will not support either of
these positions during negotiations." President George Bush
spoke in similar terms in April 1989.[22]

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[22]Speech at a conference of The Washington Institute for Near East
Policy, Sept. 16, 1988. Text in U.S. Department of State press release No.
199, Sept. 19, 1988; Proceedings of the Washington Institute for Near East
Policy, Sept. 1988. Text of the Reagan plan is in Laqueur and Rubin, op.
cit., pp. 656-662. Tom Friedman, "Bush Sees Benefit in Shamir's Plan...,"
The New York Times, April 7, 1989.

IV CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The preceding analysis suggests several alternative scenarios for the PLO. Arafat could sanction West Bank/Gaza Palestinians to engage in steps that would reduce tensions and build confidence, and he could participate in pre-negotiations. These steps would narrow the gap between the contending sides. A particularly important act would be to have the PNC, in its next resolution, explicitly recognize Israel, a two-state solution and renounce terrorism. However, Arafat is more likely to want to maintain, for as long as possible, a maximum amount of ambiguity on issues like the theory of stages and armed struggle.

Arafat might conclude that because the pressures on him to act are so great, the opportunities for the Palestinians are so priceless and the costs of failure are so devastating, he must take dramatic steps to reassure the United States and Israel of his intentions. But if Arafat were to take such steps, he would have to be willing to clash with radical Palestinian forces.

A third possible outcome is that Arafat will stick to the PNC position, backing "armed struggle" and offering no flexibility. This strategy could bog down or even end the U.S.-PLO dialogue. It would convince leaders in both the United States and Israel that the PLO was unable or unwilling to make peace.

This might result if Arafat chooses to maintain a PLO consensus by refusing to challenge its most extreme elements, if he is unable to choose between compromise and militancy or if he miscalculates the U.S. role in the peace process.

Arafat's hesitancy can be attributed to the militant stand taken by the PFLP and the DFLP. These groups are under heavy Syrian pressure. For the time being, these groups have remained in the PLO while waging terrorist attacks, criticizing Arafat and opposing a provisional Palestinian government, including one that has West Bank independents as representatives. They believe that such a provisional government would embody a Fatah dictatorship. If Arafat goes too far toward moderation, Damascus could push the PFLP and DFLP to split the organization.

If these groups were to leave the PLO, however, the organization would lose a relatively small proportion of its base and be freed to adopt a more flexible position. The differences between Arafat, the United States and Israel – which are all opposed by Syria, the rejectionists and their terrorist operations – would be easier to bridge.

For its part, the Soviet Union has been unable to deliver Hawatmeh's DFLP, the PLO group that is most dependent on and closest in ideology to the Soviet Union.[1] By the same token, until Arafat exercises control over the PLO's constituent groups, it is unclear whether or not he can speak authoritatively for the entire organization. An equally important constraint on PLO flexibility is Arafat's misreading of U.S. policy.

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[1]See, for example, al-Anba, Feb. 1, 1989, in FBIS, Feb. 15, 1989, pp. 13-15. For a rare but perhaps pioneering critique of the DFLP by relatively moderate Executive Committee member Abu Mazin, see his open letter to Hawatmeh, in al-Anba, March 2, 1989, p. 28. FBIS, March 10, 1989, pp. 14-15. On DFLP conflicts and relations with Arafat see, for example, Middle East News Agency, April 2, 1989, translation in FBIS, April 3, 1989, p. 3; Baghdad Voice of the PLO, April 5, 1989, translation in FBIS, April 6, 1989, p. 11.

The U.S.-PLO relationship will be the key factor in determining which of the above scenarios prevails. If the peace process is to succeed, the United States will need to press the PLO to make a genuine, thorough transformation. It is necessary to make the Palestinians believe that taking such steps is worthwhile for them, but it is also vital to demonstrate to the PLO that ambiguity and the preservation of extremist aims, strategy and ideology is unacceptable. Only then can the weight of Syria and extremist Palestinian groups be countered. Only then can Israel be persuaded that there are viable alternatives to past PLO policy. Only then can the PLO show that it is capable of doing the things that are necessary to make a just and lasting peace. In this context, U.S. policy needs to focus on helping strengthen the leverage of West Bank and Gaza leaders who are a relatively moderate force in the PLO.

Clearly, Arafat does not understand the United States' determination to achieve these ends. There is evidence that he believes that steadfastness will preserve his diplomatic options and his "domestic" political ends – unity, consensus and the use of radicalism and demagoguery to mobilize the masses. Arafat argues that several factors will force the United States to accept PLO demands including the uprising, international support for the PLO and the end of the Iran-Iraq war which gives "the Arabs the opportunity to devote more of their attention to supporting the Palestinian people's cause." In commenting on former Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's view that the United States holds 99 percent of the cards in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arafat said that, "the opposite is true, because 99 percent of the cards . . . are in Arab hands."[2]

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[2]Voice of the PLO (Baghdad), Jan. 26, 1989. Translation in FBIS, Jan. 30, 1989, p. 6. The PNC resolution states: "The [Israeli] authorities with the American administration behind it cannot continue their policy of refusing to respond to the international will which is today unanimous on the necessity of holding an international conference for peace in the Middle East and of enabling the Palestinian people to obtain its national rights, with its right to self-determination and national independence in the forefront." Nabil Sha'ath comments, "The United States is a realistic country. The longer the uprising continues and the wider Palestinian peace movements spread or gain supporters in the world, the

The PLO equally argued that Israel is a U.S. puppet that must do what the United States commands. According to this conception, then, the PLO does not have to convince Israel that it is ready for peace and an end to terrorism. The PLO merely needs to use leverage on Washington. Therefore, Arafat said, "peace is not in Israel's hand but in the hand of the United States because Israeli decision-making is in Washington and not in Tel Aviv." Similarly, PLO leaders underestimate Israel's staying power, claiming that the state can be overcome by struggle alone.[3]

But Arafat is wrong about the balance of power. The United States is not going to split from Israel for the PLO's sake. The U.S.-Israeli relationship remains close. U.S. pressure will be used on Israel only if the American government believes that there is a viable peace process that Jerusalem finds unacceptable. In other words, only if the PLO makes an extremely attractive offer will the United States press Israel. In that event, however, Israel would be far more willing to respond favorably. In any case, U.S. leverage cannot force Israel into making decisions that its people and politicians believe will threaten their survival.

A political solution is not so urgent that the United States believes that it must make major concessions to the PLO. There is no prospect of a regional war; and the Arab regimes seem increasingly apathetic toward the issue. Although the Iran-Iraq cease-fire has given Arab regimes an "opportunity" to focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict, they have not. These countries have

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more the United States is forced to change its line." *as-Siyasah*, Jan. 30, 1989. Translation in FBIS, Feb. 1, 1989, p. 4.

[3]Interview, *al-Watan* (Oman), FBIS, Jan. 25, 1989. p. 4. PLO leaders mention such factors as Israeli political divisions, low army morale and strong international pressure on Israel for concessions. Yet if Israelis continue to deem their survival to be at stake, they can maintain unity. See, for example, George Moffett, "PLO Offers New Ideas for Talks," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 24, 1989, p. 3.

not even paid the subsidy for the uprising that they promised at the 1988 Arab summit. The Soviet Union will not sacrifice its improved relations with the United States, or its ambition to be a credible mediator, for Arafat's sake.

Arafat does not grasp what Sadat understood: that the United States was a necessary but insufficient mediator. The Arabs must overcome their psychological barriers and make strategic concessions in order to persuade Israel to give territory for peace. Arafat does not seem to understand that the United States cannot "spank" Israel for him. Washington will not sacrifice its alliance with Israel; and Israel will only make concessions that it deems are consistent with its security.

Thus, the Arabs must persuade Israel that they want peace in exchange for security. Although some statements by PLO leaders have been moderate, most are not and often do not represent PLO policy. More commonly, PLO leaders speak of a Palestinian state as the first stage toward Israel's destruction and claim "armed struggle" as a loophole permitting terrorism.

After the U.S.-PLO dialogue began, smaller PLO groups attempted to send armed guerillas into Israel from Lebanon. The PLO endorsed the raids as attacks on military targets. Israel viewed these as terrorist attacks whose intent was the murder of Israeli civilians. Indeed, the meaning behind the PLO's definition of armed struggle became clear when the DFLP described the Israeli agricultural village of Zarit – the object of one of its raids – as a military target. The United States stiffly warned that if such operations continued, they could be deemed violations of the PLO's no-terrorism pledge and lead to a suspension of the U.S.-PLO dialogue.[4]

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[4]DFLP in, "Guerrillas Killed as Radicals Keep up Attacks on Israel," Reuters, March 2, 1989. The U.S. position rejected attacks on military or civilian targets inside or outside of Israel. In a Feb. 28 briefing, the State Department spokesman called the attacks "contrary to the peaceful objectives of the dialogue."

The PLO was also initially unenthusiastic about Israel's suggestion that elections be conducted in the West Bank and Gaza. The organization feared that it might lose control over local leaders or that the uprising would collapse before the beginning of negotiations.[5] Some West Bank leaders who were eager to negotiate an end to the occupation and accept elections were subjected to PLO discipline. This may have happened in the case of Faisal Husseini, the leading pro-PLO activist in the territories, and in the case of Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij.

Consequently, the United States must continue to develop proposals that will test Arafat's capabilities and PLO intentions while pressing Arafat to make the advances that will bring material benefits to his people and organization.

• The first priority of the United States in its dialogue with the PLO was to end armed attacks against Israel which a State Department spokesman described as, "contrary to the peaceful objectives of the dialogue." It is an important sign that Arafat's Fatah group has not staged any attacks on Israel since the dialogue began, but Arafat cannot claim to lead the Palestinians if he rejects responsibility for controlling even the PLO.

When Qaddumi announces, "the PLO is not prepared to condemn operations which any Palestinian organization or faction undertakes," this hardly squares with a rejection of terrorism.[6] At a minimum, rather than endorsing attacks,

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[5]Abu Iyad said Israel spoke of elections to "divert people's attention . . . away from the intifadah" and divide Palestinians "among the candidates." After the 1976 elections, nine of the victorious "PLO candidates" were deported and others were attacked by Israeli terrorists. *al-Ahram*, Feb. 14, 1989. Translation in FBIS, Feb. 22, 1989, p. 10. For West Bank arguments for elections, see Kuttab, op. cit.; Sari Nuseibeh, *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 14, 1989, p. 6; Faisal Husseini, interview with *al-Fajr*, translation in FBIS, April 25, 1989, p. 34.

[6]David Ottoway, "U.S. Again Says PLO Violating Vow," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 1989; "PLO Says Not Responsible for Raids, Criticizes Europeans," Reuters, Feb. 28, 1989.

Arafat could criticize them as endangering his efforts to promote negotiations. He could also pressure or punish those involved in any future terrorism. The United States could propose a *de-facto* cease-fire in which PLO assaults from Lebanon and Israeli reprisal attacks would end. Arafat may find that it is difficult to confront the hard-liners but, as Abu Iyad said, "the test of courage is when such extremism is countered head on, rather than surrendered to."[7]

• The PLO must stop talking about a multi-stage destruction of Israel which often appears in its leaders' statements to Arab and Palestinian audiences. The PLO should instead repeat its recognition of Israel, acceptance of U.N. resolution 242 and its renunciation of terrorism. As Abu Iyad said in a videotape smuggled into an Israeli conference, "we must live with the idea of peace ourselves first if we are to transmit it to others . . . The ill feeling that has accumulated in the past cannot be destroyed overnight."[8]

• The PLO should be urged to sanction Palestinian involvement in free elections in the territories to select representatives who can take the first step in negotiations on the future of these lands. Presumably, most or all of these people will be pro-PLO. If the PLO position proves flexible and credible, these talks might ultimately become a bridge between the two sides instead of an effort to find an alternative leadership. By giving more leverage to moderate Palestinians in the territories, elections would strengthen moderate forces within the PLO. Although it completely rejected elections in earlier statements, by May 1989 the PLO seemed to be suggesting that elections might be acceptable if they were linked to a package peace proposal.[9]

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[7]Videotaped address by Abu Iyad to International Center for Peace in the Middle East symposium, Feb. 22, 1989.

[8] Ibid.

[9]See, for example *Ma'ariv*, Feb. 16, 1989. Translation in FBIS, Feb. 16, 1989, pp. 32-33. Those Palestinians who met with Israeli officials include

‚ • The next PNC meeting should unambiguously recognize Israel's right to exist, abandon the PLO's claim to all of Israel and renounce terrorism. If the charter is not abrogated, it must at least be superseded in terms clear enough to dispel skepticism in the United States and Israel which doubt Arafat's vague May 1989, Paris statements on the issue. An Arab summit endorsing the PNC's political resolution or, even better, Arafat's Geneva statements, would be particularly useful.

• Finally, Arafat should be urged to open a serious dialogue with Jordan to formulate a confederation proposal. The PLO says that it would implement such an arrangement only after obtaining a state, but the form of such a confederation could be clarified beforehand. Only Jordanian linkage to a future Palestinian entity or state could meet U.S. requirements for a stable settlement and Israeli demands for security.

In short, Arafat has the chance to show that he sincerely means that, "We are fed up with this bloodshed. We are looking to have peace for our children and also for their children . . . This is the historical chance. If we lose it, we are criminals."[10]

A protracted process is needed to test whether or not the PLO has changed and can take the necessary steps to make peace possible and meet Israeli requirements. A first stage would be to reduce tension and violence. The second stage would be to enact confidence-building measures in which Arafat would have to exercise control over the smaller PLO groups, allow elections and prove his peaceful intentions. In the third stage Israel would speak substantively to the elected leaders of the occupied territories, a group that would inevitably include PLO activists.

Husseini, Nuseibah Ziyad Abu Zayyad, Hanun Ashrawi, Ghassan Khatib, Sam'an Khuri, Dr. Mamduh Akkar and Khalil Mahshi.

[10]Interview with CBS television's "60 Minutes," Feb. 19, 1989.

A self-governing autonomy could be implemented as an interim step toward the final settlement. Security guarantees and Jordan's role in the peace process could be agreed upon during, and implemented after, the negotiating process began. The final stage would be direct negotiations, followed by an international meeting that would endorse the agreement. If the PLO is able to change its policy, goals and behavior, the outcome of negotiations should be an acceptable approximation of a benign interpretation of the PLO's currently expressed goals.

Unless the PLO makes further progress toward moderation and takes action to affirm its already promised changes, the U.S.-PLO dialogue will go nowhere and Israel, suspicious that the PLO intends to destroy the Jewish state, will remain in the territories. Consequently, the United States would have less incentive to place the issue on the front burner. If the PLO convinces Israel that it is ready for a lasting compromise peace settlement, Israeli policy would change and a new stage of the peace process would begin.[11] The U.S.-PLO dialogue will eventually either persuade the United States that the PLO is not yet serious about making peace, or persuade Israel that the PLO seeks a mutually acceptable compromise settlement. The United States should use the dialogue to encourage the PLO to make peace possible while testing its intentions and ability to deliver.

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[11]As *The New York Times* summarized an Israeli poll, "An overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews oppose peace negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization at this time, but more than half say they would favor talks later if the PLO were to further moderate its behavior." Joel Brinkley," Majority in Israel Oppose PLO Talks Now, a Poll Shows," *The New York Times*, April 2, 1989. The same survey showed that 62 percent thought that Israel and the PLO would be holding talks within five years and that 44 percent expected there would eventually be a Palestinian state.

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