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Hamas Searches for a New Strategy

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THE HAMAS LEADERSHIP is currently engaged in an unpublicized reassessment of its policies in light of the recent mini-war with Israel. Many among the movement's top echelon have apparently concluded that the overall strategy pursued since their Gaza Strip takeover in June 2007 is no longer viable, sentencing Hamas to remain locked up within a 360-square-kilometer enclave, effectively contained by its neighbors—Israel and Egypt—and barred from meaningful activity in the West Bank. This quiet internal debate had, in fact, begun even before the latest round of fighting in July-August 2014, but it acquired a sense of acute urgency following the outcome of Protective Edge operations.

Unpublicized though the discussions may be, they have entered the public domain through an open exchange of contradictory statements following remarks by Hamas senior leader Mousa Abu Marzouq suggesting the possibility of direct negotiations with Israel.¹ In a September 10 appearance on al-Quds TV, Abu Marzouq said, “If the situation remains as it is now...Hamas could find itself forced to [engage in talks]...” Such a statement amounts to an admission that, from Hamas's perspective, the status quo has become untenable, calling for dramatic measures.

The surprising statement seems to indicate, further, that at least some Hamas senior officials are toying with resurrecting the old hudna (armistice) conceived

by the movement's founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who saw the possibility of a long-term arrangement with Israel ensuring calm in return for major political concessions, but still excluding the notion of peace or recognition. Nevertheless, Hamas has officially distanced itself from the opinions expressed in Marzouq's interview, even as Marzouq himself has refused to retract his comments. This back-and-forth comes amid the predictable barrage of victory pronouncements by every last one of Hamas's many spokespeople and the constant stream of arguments seeking to prove Hamas won the battle.² A lone voice urging self-criticism, reprimanding the movement for being “dragged” into war and committing the mistake of

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extending it for fifty-one days was that of commentator Salah al-Nuami, a well-known Hamas writer.³

Whatever the outward claims, Hamas's Executive Council (the new name for its Political Bureau) and the wider shura, or consultative, council are taking a hard look at the realities faced by the group. General satisfaction with the "steadfast" performance of the military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, does not ameliorate the severe crisis in which Hamas now finds itself. Closed discussions in both Gaza and Doha, Qatar, where Hamas's top leader, Khaled Mashal, and a few of his lieutenants reside, have yet to produce an agreed new agenda. The deliberations, meanwhile, have focused on a broad appraisal of last year's experience and a review of longstanding priorities. Although quite careful not to publicly expose their disappointments regarding the August 26 ceasefire deal, Hamas leaders are determined to maintain their basic ideological platform while seeking different methods to advance their cause.

Military Tactics

On the military side, Hamas now realizes the risks associated with using dense Gaza population centers as a shield against the Israel Defense Forces. While still acknowledging the benefits of such tactics in complicating IDF targeting of Qassam Brigades units, the group has awakened to their limitations for extended battle. Foremost among these risks is the inevitable suffering inflicted on inhabitants. By the end of Operation Protective Edge, more than 400,000 Gazans had been displaced and some 1,300 noncombatants killed.⁴ On top of this, about 20,000 housing units were destroyed or severely damaged.⁵

Gaza's local Hamas leadership, aware of the humanitarian crisis and under growing pressure from residents, pushed Mashal to accept a ceasefire long before he himself was willing to drop his preferred terms in return for cessation of hostilities. Mashal was thus forced to accede to the Egyptian initiative he had been rejecting for seven weeks. The ceasefire document, for its part, did not incorporate any of Hamas's initial conditions, such as construction of a seaport, reconstruction of the Rafah airport, or unrestricted traffic between Gaza and the West Bank. Marzouq himself admitted that "it was not possible to achieve more at this stage."⁶

Thus, the declared attempt by the military wing, in coordination with Mashal, to openly confront Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu with a tough dilemma—an extended, ever-expanding war of attrition or a major, risky ground offensive—in order to extract concessions met with failure. The Israelis chose to stick to a cautious line of action by relying on airstrikes and a very limited ground operation to eradicate the scattered attack tunnels leading into Israel, well short of being dragged into a lengthy search-and-destroy mission in the narrow streets and alleys of Gaza's towns and refugee camps. Hamas, with its gradually depleting weapon stockpiles, simply realized it could not afford to prolong its exchange of blows with the Israelis. And Hamas blinked first.

The main conclusion for Hamas, therefore, is that beyond the bombastic rhetoric about the "success of the resistance,"⁷ its military strategy has proven self-defeating. This strategy allowed the Qassam Brigades to steadily lob rockets and mortar shells into Israel, but not to the point where the Israelis would yield to the demand to "lift the siege." The lesson learned in the aftermath of Protective Edge is that hiding behind civilians—or often under them in deep bunkers—is bound to compel Hamas sooner rather than later to seek an unconditional ceasefire. By comparing the IDF's attacks to German actions during the Holocaust and depicting Netanyahu as a "Jewish Hitler,"⁸ Hamas leaders are clearly trying to convince their critics—mainly in the Arab world—that they simply had no choice but to consider their civilians' suffering and withdraw from the battlefield.

The immediate response offered by Hamas leaders to this setback was to suggest, as Ismail Haniyeh put it, a "doubling of the Muqawama [military wing] budget." This would mean a concentrated effort to invest in more advanced rockets, preferably with sophisticated guidance systems that would seek out holes in Israel's Iron Dome air-defense system. "Doubling the military budget" may also indicate an intention to reconstruct the attack tunnels into Israel, destroyed during the campaign, and possibly to upgrade the drones and augment commando units such as the Nukhba force. Clearly, the crowded Gaza Strip does not offer Hamas the option of moving into open areas, where anyhow its members would be more exposed to Israeli attacks.

In any event, Hamas does not now, or in the foreseeable future, have the necessary funds to recover its losses from the fighting, let alone significantly improve its arsenal and order of battle. One should note that roughly 70 percent of the group's rocket-production facilities and workshops were hit, with damage requiring extensive effort to reach prewar rocket-assembly levels of about a dozen M-75 long-range rockets a month.⁹ Smuggling of rockets—either from Iran or Libya—has been effectively stopped by the Egyptian Second Army units deployed along the fourteen-kilometer-long Sinai-Gaza border. Almost all the 1,800 tunnels previously operating there have been closed down. And Hamas now possesses only about a quarter of the 9,000 rockets in its prewar inventory.

It should be noted that the Iranians have made a series of public promises to compensate Hamas for its losses, but the transfer of weapons to Gaza has now become almost impossible given Egyptian measures on land and the Israeli naval blockade at sea. Over the last year, almost no rockets were smuggled into Gaza and the current deployment of ten Egyptian battalions—with the Israelis' blessing—in northeastern Sinai will probably ensure that weapon trafficking through the few remaining tunnels will be prevented, or at least minimized.

Even in the unlikely scenario that the Iranians eventually devise a clandestine route to supply weapons to Gaza, Tehran's first priority would certainly be to rearm its favorite proxy, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), whose military capabilities were severely degraded during the war and whose leaders were the first to call for a speedy ceasefire. The severe losses inflicted on PIJ, including close to 130 fighters killed, represented a major blow to a decade-long and very costly endeavor by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to turn this organization into a credible competitor to Hamas.¹⁰

In their current deliberations, Hamas leaders are obviously fully aware that even if they were allowed to proceed unhindered in reconstructing their forces, such a goal would take at least several years to accomplish. One comparable example: digging the thirty-two attack tunnels leading from Gaza into Israel and destroyed by the IDF required a continuous effort of three to five years, involving many hundreds of

workers with an investment, according to some estimates, amounting to a fifth of the Hamas annual budget. From now on, Hamas will face serious difficulties in trying to dig new tunnels undetected by the IDF, as substantial Israeli intelligence assets including new technologies are being allocated to this task.

A principal lesson drawn by at least some Hamas leaders is that they cannot afford to contemplate another round of fighting—beyond scattered short skirmishes—over the next few years. Thus, Hamas is careful to avoid issuing threats of resuming hostilities. The group feels it must settle for what Mashal has described as the new strategic equation—a “balance of insecurity” in which civilians on both sides of the fence remain under constant potential threat of enemy fire. This formula, adopted only following Protective Edge, is intended to explain away the nature of the expected long period of calm without reaching any new formal arrangement. According to Hamas, it would not be Israeli deterrence that keeps the quiet but rather a mutual sense that civilians will be paying the price for any ceasefire violations.

In the same way that Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, expressed regret over igniting the 2006 war with Israel, a chorus of Hamas leaders is now persistently denying that the fighting was caused by the group's decision to fire rockets into Israel. Instead, they say, the casualties were the result of a premeditated Israeli attack.

What, then, about the future of the resistance, Hamas's *raison d'être*? Here, the group is trying to develop a new game plan.

Farewell to 'Fortress Gaza'

The tendency among most in Hamas's leadership councils is to finally accept that Gaza offers only limited opportunities for escalating the struggle against Israel. The IDF has a relatively successful record of containing threats emanating from Gaza, whether by land, air, or sea. Furthermore, the Hamas weapon of choice—rockets—has so far failed to penetrate the Iron Dome batteries, whose number will be rapidly growing. The Military council members are thus convinced by now, contrary to their previous expectations, that Gaza cannot alone serve as a solid base for the “liberation” of Palestine. Mashal himself has already

admitted in public that Gaza cannot—and therefore would not—serve as the springboard for an offensive against Israel. He has explicitly stressed the far greater importance of the West Bank and east Jerusalem for any military undertakings. This statement reflects a recognition of the limited opportunities offered by Gaza for future military assaults intended to challenge Israeli superiority.¹¹

Hence, one perceives Hamas's willingness to relinquish its seven-year-old strategy based on the belief in "fortress Gaza"—the conviction that absolute priority be accorded to ensuring the group's power monopoly in Gaza and strengthening its control over what the Palestinian Authority (PA) officially views as its hijacked "southern provinces." The steady deterioration of Gaza's economic situation, which has reached destabilizing proportions, was a major factor in Hamas's questioning the wisdom of retaining sole responsibility in the Strip,¹² considering the recent negative trend in Hamas's popularity.¹³

For Hamas, the concentration on fortress Gaza has meant relegating the West Bank to a secondary rank and persisting in a sort of cold war against the PA. Efforts to resuscitate Hamas's military, and political, infrastructure in the West Bank never ceased but received insufficient attention and funding. Hamas was prepared to absorb recurrent arrests of its activists in the territory by the Israeli Security Agency (ISA), or Shin Bet, and the PA's security organs. Many Hamas leaders in the West Bank who spent time behind bars have complained privately that the movement's West Bank branch has been sacrificed to Gaza's advantage. These leaders were advocating rapprochement and compromise with PA president Mahmoud Abbas while their Gaza counterparts kept abusing him. A few of Hamas's West Bank leaders, for example, maintained quiet contacts with Abbas even as he lambasted their colleagues in Gaza and referred to Mashal as a "peacock." Thus, in the years following the IDF's 2002 Defensive Shield operation, Hamas networks in the West Bank were severely disrupted, production lines of suicide bombers were uncovered, and political activity was banned. The movement entered semiparalysis and suffered defections of prominent leaders.¹⁴

Now Hamas is prepared to give up its monopoly

of governance in Gaza through some system of power sharing with the PA. In return, Hamas aspires to receive a much wider scope for operating in the West Bank.

The tradeoff suggested by Hamas in discussions allows the PA to assume responsibility for government services in Gaza and would tolerate reemergence of Fatah activities there. This is the price for opening the West Bank's gates to a reorganized Hamas, including permission for political mobilization, which will also serve as a cover for resurrecting underground military networks. This new Hamas policy was recently demonstrated by the September 25 Cairo agreement with Fatah—the latest in the series of "reconciliation" accords that invariably fail to get fully implemented.¹⁵ In this agreement, Hamas recognized the PA as the sole government in Gaza and the only address for the Strip's expected reconstruction program.

In May 2014, Hamas agreed to the formation of a National Reconciliation Government that did not include a single Hamas representative, clearly indicating its tactics had begun to change even before the summer flare-up. For a short while, this step allowed Hamas to resume holding relatively large-scale rallies and demonstrations in the West Bank. PA security organs at times also turned a blind eye to covert Hamas efforts to recruit youth to newly established military cells. This effort was, and still is, masterminded by Sheikh Saleh al-Aruri from Turkey, with the tacit consent of Turkish intelligence—and is coordinated by a secret "West Bank team" based in Gaza and composed of other Hamas prisoners released from Israeli jails as part of the Gilad Shalit deal, such as Aruri himself, along with prominent military figures such as Abdul Rahman al-Ghneimat and Mazen al-Fuqaha.

Under this team's guidance, Hamas has embarked on a significant effort to stage terrorist operations against Israel from the West Bank in the hope of destabilizing the PA and disrupting its security cooperation with Israel. It has been striving to create "defense committees" in the refugee camps where PA security organs enjoy hardly any control, or none at all. One such operation resulted in the kidnapping and murder of the three Israeli teenagers on June 12, 2014, as carried out by a Hamas cell in Hebron financed by the military wing in Gaza. Other attempts were foiled

by the ISA, which captured, for example, an extensive network, led by one Riad Nasser from Ramallah, comprising ninety-three members spread all over the West Bank, which was planning a series of attacks against the PA as well as Israel, probably simultaneously, aimed at boosting the Qassam Brigades' standing in the region. Abbas viewed this plot as a serious threat and confronted Mashal about it.¹⁶

By now, the Hamas leadership has concluded that large-scale resumption of terrorist operations from the West Bank is a very risky endeavor, due to good ISA intelligence coverage of the area, nightly IDF arrests of newly established cells, and close surveillance by the PA intelligence agencies. Hamas realizes that any chance of reinstating its military presence requires a drastic change in the West Bank political environment. To ignore this reality would mean continuing to invest substantial sums of money that do not bear fruit. The group's leaders cannot translate their large following and support in the West Bank into operational networks, let alone resume recruiting suicide bombers or start assembly workshops for homemade rockets. Thus, Hamas cannot rely on its West Bank military arm, which in the past has caused many more Israeli casualties than those exacted by the Hamas in Gaza.

These risks aside, Protective Edge has given an extra push to Hamas's determination to regain a military foothold in the West Bank. Hamas, with this in mind, is perfectly willing to let the PA run the Gaza administration, including taking full responsibility for provision of services, humanitarian aid, and any future reconstruction and development program. Hamas does not object to Egypt's demand that PA security personnel (a thousand or more) would be stationed along the Gaza-Sinai border, including the Rafah terminal, and probably also at the crossing points to Israel. (Hamas leaders are eager to increase the number of crossing points from Israel, at least by reopening the Karni terminal, since they feel the Kerem Shalom crossing cannot alone handle all expected traffic). Still, Hamas should be expected to drive a hard bargain in the hope of establishing some joint supervisory body with the PA to oversee Gaza and allow its uniformed personnel to participate in monitoring the crossings. Hamas will insist, for example,

on integrating officers of its own Internal Security Apparatus in any PA security setup in Gaza.

Even given Hamas's general willingness to cede powers to the PA, the group must still decide how much power to give up. A major hurdle concerns the fate of 43,000 Hamas government employees, who are not accepted by the PA as a legitimate part of the public sector and therefore do not receive salaries from the PA treasury. While Hamas apparently prefers a partnership arrangement in Gaza, enabling it to maintain some grip on the different ministries, Abbas insists that he cannot tolerate a "shadow government" that would allow Hamas to maintain *de facto* control. It remains to be seen how flexible Hamas will prove in pursuit of such a partnership, but Hamas may well exercise a degree of flexibility to accommodate Abbas. It is obvious to the movement's leadership that Abbas will keep refusing an offer that makes the PA just a "contractor" for rebuilding Gaza with no real authority there.

At any rate, numerous obstacles line the path to implementing Hamas's new strategy. As long as Abbas insists on the formula of "one government, one law, one policy," Hamas will be faced with what it considers an unacceptable set of conditions: to accept Abbas's policy of rejecting violence and seeking a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, at the same time, to give up its "right" to decide whether to trigger a new round of fighting with Israel or engineer more terrorist attacks, thus forcing the group to abandon the sacred tenets of "resistance." Hamas further would be challenged with the need to abandon many of its loyalists, recruited to the Gaza government's public sector, and lose important sources of income from trade and taxes.

All these issues are major hurdles obstructing Hamas's intention of enacting the Lebanese model for the Palestinian arena: an arrangement by which Hamas—copying Hezbollah's example—would become partner to a coalition government, obtaining a sort of veto power over crucial decisions and acquiring influence in the state's security organizations, while keeping its own private army outside the PA's control and pursuing its own military policy. PA officials are fully aware of this scheme and are, so far, determined to foil it.

Back to the Arms of Iran?

Some Hamas leaders, however, seem to have already despaired over the prospects of the “Lebanese model.” As an alternative, some Hamas military commanders, as well as political leaders such as Imad al-Alami and Mahmoud al-Zahar,¹⁷ are now advocating a speedy shift in Hamas’s regional alliances. They argue that Mashal and his supporters committed a serious blunder by removing Hamas from the “Axis of Resistance,” comprising Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah. Betting on what then seemed like the Muslim Brotherhood’s rising tide, Mashal refused to offer public support to his hosts in Damascus and their Shiite backers over the country’s civil war. He hoped, in turn, that Egypt under then president Mohamed Morsi would more than compensate Hamas, the Brotherhood’s Palestinian incarnation, for the loss of Iranian and Syrian backing. Hamas moved from Damascus to Doha, and financial aid from Iran was almost completely stopped. The agreement for military assistance by Hezbollah was suspended. Now, according to Mashal’s critics, Hamas is faced with a hostile Egypt and growing resentment from Arab Sunni regimes, and it cannot rely solely on funding from Qatar or, to a lesser extent, Turkey.

Had Mashal moved his headquarters from Damascus to Beirut, instead of Doha, claims Zahar, Hamas would be better positioned now to resume its close partnership with Iran and its clients. In short, more and more voices in Hamas are urging a reassessment of the group’s regional links, mainly seeking to reestablish a close relationship with Iran in the hope that its star will keep rising.¹⁸ Hamas leaders are obviously not holding their breath about the Muslim Brotherhood’s chances to bounce back in Egypt or elsewhere. Rather than sticking by their comrades in other Brotherhood branches, they prefer reverting to their sponsors in the Resistance Axis, who are openly hostile to the Brotherhood.

If these members of the Hamas leadership were to bring Mashal on board—or even topple him, a subject of constant internal rumors—such a step would inevitably mean suspension of all reconciliation moves with Fatah and a return to the Gaza fortress strategy. It would also mean acute financial constraints for the Hamas government and difficulties as the group’s

military wing seeks to rebuild. Thus isolated in the Arab world, the group would further have to contend with a tight siege by Israel and Egypt. Such a prospect explains why most members of Hamas’s Executive Committee are inclined to keep seeking some accommodation with Abbas. This approach is supported by the Muslim Brotherhood elsewhere in the region.

Most among the Hamas leadership, especially in the West Bank, are content with making substantial concessions to the PA, including empowering Abbas to negotiate with Israel—as long as it does not require Hamas to change its own opposition to peace—and transferring governance in Gaza to Abbas’s representatives. Their main line of argument in the internal debate has been that the key objective at this stage should be reaching an understanding on holding presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible. Hamas, they claim, is bound to regain whatever ground ceded to the PA through the ballot boxes. Even if Hamas does not win such elections—as suggested by at least one poll¹⁹—it would certainly obtain at least 40 percent of the votes, thus becoming a significant player within the PA. Hamas would also keep up the pressure to join the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the hope of taking over one day the institution recognized as the “sole representative of the Palestinian people” and thereby modifying its platform. This course of action would require Hamas to accept secondary status in a Fatah-dominated PA, adhering to an extended period of calm, all in the expectation of doing well in elections and beyond.

Internal Hamas deliberations are slow affairs, with consultations among the scattered members of the ruling bodies, including prisoners in Israeli jails, involving cumbersome communications through different emissaries. All along, emphasis is placed on efforts to reach as wide a consensus as possible. Personal rivalries and factional divisions are prominent, as illustrated during the lengthy debate on when to reach a ceasefire during the last conflict.

Everybody in Hamas, though, accepts the present urgency of regrouping in the West Bank and relinquishing direct responsibility for the Gaza population, allowing a few years of calm for the military wing to recover from its losses. The group’s leadership has

no evident appetite for resuming hostilities any time soon, and is resolved to discourage any attacks by other organizations. To this end, Hamas maintains a daily dialogue with PIJ, the Popular Resistance Committees, squads of ex-Fatah fighters, and also Salafi-jihadist groups in Gaza.

In the West Bank, signs suggest that Hamas is taking a wait-and-see approach, instructing dormant cells to restrict their activities to “popular protests” rather than terrorist operations. This policy may change on short notice once it becomes clear whether the Hamas-Fatah negotiations have produced any understandings.

Recommendations

Hamas’s emerging strategy poses a serious long-term threat to both Israel and the PA and, of course, to the prospects of fresh peace negotiations. With its new game plan, the group aspires not only to consolidate the Hamas terrorist infrastructure in Gaza but to expand it in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. As for the welfare of Gaza’s inhabitants, Hamas is trying to rid itself of this financial and administrative responsibility by shifting the burden to the PA. Such a move would permit Hamas to go underground and concentrate mainly on military buildup, coupled with political attempts to capture the PLO and grab power in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). These steps would provide Hamas with a PA shield for its terrorist arms, and the group could simultaneously enjoy independent funding from Iran and Qatar or both.

Yet Hamas’s predicament also presents opportunities to keep degrading its military potential and political clout. Completely encircled in Gaza, substantially weakened in the West Bank, isolated from much of the Arab world, and agonizing over its financial constraints, Hamas could be further squeezed and pressured through a series of policies that should be embraced by Israel, Egypt, and other anti-Muslim Brotherhood Arab powers with support and coordination from the United States and European Union. Such measures should include:

- Upholding the current U.S., EU, Israeli, and Egyptian courts’ designation of Hamas as a

terrorist organization so as to make financial transactions with the group illegal, bar it from PA elections, and disrupt its political mobilization. At the same time, new presidential and PLC elections should be encouraged following the still-unscheduled convening of Fatah’s Seventh General Conference.

- Mobilizing international support to demand Hamas’s disarmament as a condition for any contributions by donor states toward a major reconstruction and development project in Gaza. Such a demand stands a chance of gaining wide acceptance not only in the West but also in several Arab states, Russia, and China.
- Insisting that apart from urgent humanitarian aid to Gaza inhabitants, any major program for reconstruction and development of the Strip will be carried out by the PA government in conjunction with the United Nations and other international agencies. Hamas must be prevented from diverting funds and materials for its own use.
- Putting forward the condition that the PA’s security, immigration, and customs personnel take over the Gaza side of the crossing points to Egypt and Israel, with the ultimate goal of having PA security units deploy not only along the Gaza-Sinai border but also along the fences between Gaza and Israel.
- Establishing a reliable and elaborate supervision mechanism to prevent Hamas from exploiting the flow of building materials, pipes, and other dual-use equipment for military purposes. Such a mechanism may be set up by upgrading the pre-war system managed by UN special emissary Robert Serry. One should not harbor any illusions that this mechanism can become perfectly foolproof, but past records suggest that proper inspections can indeed be fairly effective.
- Encouraging the PA to adhere to its current position that most of the 43,000 government employees recruited by Hamas since 2007—especially in the police and security branches—will not be incorporated into a renewed PA-run public sector in Gaza. Hamas should bear the burden of dealing with the remaining employees.

- Reestablishing gradually the PA's intelligence and security operations in Gaza as branches of the Ramallah government's security agencies. This will certainly require reenlisting many former security officials who served prior to 2007 and kept getting PA salaries even though they were instructed to stop showing up for work. An important note is called for in this context: many of these Fatah security officers are followers of Muhammad Dahlan, the ex-security chief in Gaza who later fell out with Abbas, sought refuge in the United Arab Emirates, and was sentenced in absentia to two years in prison. Reconciling the two personalities seems impossible today, but the UAE and Egypt should be encouraged to get Dahlan to signal to his Gaza supporters to go along with such a plan.
- Maintaining close Egypt-Israel-PA coordination on all matters affecting Gaza, with the backing of the United States and EU. Such cooperation will allow strict control over Gaza's borders, exchange of intelligence, and coordination of aid supplies with most Gulf states.
- Exercising pressure on Qatar to stop financing Hamas—particularly its military wing—outside the channels to be established by other donor countries.
- Insisting that in order to join the PLO, Hamas must accept its declared platform, including the Oslo Accords and the two-state solution.
- Pursuing even closer cooperation between Israel and the PA, and also Jordan, in combating Hamas's military wing in the West Bank. The many ways in which PA security could be improved include following up arrests with thorough investigations, trials, and convictions.
- Mobilizing U.S., EU, and NATO pressure on Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan to shut down the activities of Hamas's West Bank headquarters on Turkish soil.

A combination of these measures carries the promise not only of preventing a Hamas revival but of cornering the movement in a manner that could threaten its future aspirations. In spite of its relative popularity among Palestinians, Hamas faces growing resentment

in Gaza and a lack of enthusiasm in the West Bank for its repeated calls for a third intifada. As illustrated thus far, the movement is now split between opposing currents and confronts severe problems in managing Gaza. The road ahead may well hasten a gradual decline in Hamas's power and cohesion. Its political options are limited, contributing to internal divisions and further isolation from outside supporters. Over time, a process leading to a weakened Hamas may pave the way for new opportunities to advance an Israeli-Palestinian compromise.

Notes

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