Changing the Status Quo: What directions for Palestinians?

Final Report

Khalil Shikaki

May 2016

The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR)

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This initiative has been organized in cooperation with the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre and the Netherland Representative Office in Ramallah.

Author

Khalil Shikaki is the director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (Ramallah). He is also a senior fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University. He finished his Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University in 1985, and taught at several Palestinian and American universities. Since 1993, Dr. Shikaki has conducted more than 200 polls among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. His research has focused on Palestinian state building, public opinion, transition to democracy, and the impact of domestic Palestinian politics on the peace process. He is the co-author of *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), with Abdel Monem Said Aly and Shai Feldman. Other recent publications include "The Future of Israel-Palestine: a One-State Reality in the Making," *NOREF Report*, May 2012;"Coping with the Arab Spring; Palestinian Domestic and Regional Ramifications, " *Middle East Brief*, no. 58, Crown Center for Middle East Policy, Brandeis University, December 2011; and *Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Public Imperative During the Second Intifada*, with Yaakov Shamir, Indiana University Press, 2010.

Dr. Shikaki is the author of PSR's 2014 report on "The Likelihood, Consequences and Policy Implications of PA Collapse or Dissolution: The "Day After" Final Report:" http://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/finalreport.pdf

Preface:

Given the current stalemate in Palestinian-Israeli relations and the potential for wide-scale escalation in the near future, PSR has conducted a 6-month policy research on new directions for the Palestinians. The research sought to explore Palestinian discourse on the best means to move forward. Five short policy papers, written by senior Palestinian experts and academics, explore various approaches and directions for the PA to take (see list of papers and authors at the end of the report). All these directions are currently part of the Palestinian public and elite discourse. Each paper describes a specific approach, outlining its potential impact on the Palestinians and Israelis and exploring its contribution to a more effective Palestinian strategy to end the occupation. Each approach therefore represents a component in a larger proposed strategy. The five papers were reviewed and discussed by a core group of 20, a "Core Expert Group," made up of the five authors and fifteen reviewers and discussants. The discussion of the papers took place in six closed workshops attended by experts, policy makers, academics and activists. An open conference was organized on 29 February and was devoted to a discussion of all five papers.

This final report provides a political context and summarize the main findings of the research and the proposed strategy and its five components. The report examines the overall policy implications for the PA and the PLO. It is based on the five policy papers as well as the discussion and contents of the workshops, background research, elite interviews, and public opinion surveys. The discussion among the core expert group was very vibrant and insightful; for that, PSR wishes to express its appreciation for all members of the group (see list of names and affiliations at the end of the report) for the time and effort they have devoted to this work. However, the discussion among the members of the core group indicated at times serious differences of opinion. In this light, it should be made clear that this report does not necessarily represent the views of every single member of the core expert group. It only represents the analysis and the assessment of its author based on the reports, the discussions and the interviews.

PSR is also grateful for the support of the *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre* (NOREF) and the *Netherland Representative Office* in Ramallah without which this project would not have been possible. But it should be made clear that this support does not in any way mean an endorsement, on the part of these two organizations, of the content of the five papers or this final report.

PSR

Executive Summary:

Palestinians are frustrated with the current status quo in Israeli-Palestinian relations and the inability of their leadership to take bold action to change direction. They demand the adoption of a strategy of total political confrontation. These are the conclusions of a 6-month policy research on new directions for the Palestinians. The research findings, comprised of five short policy papers and a final report, was debated by a core expert group made up of twenty academics and former and current policy makers and activists. The papers were reviewed and discussed in closed workshops and a public conference during the period between October 2015 and March 2016.

The Palestinian frustration stems from a solid conclusion that Israel has no intention, or motivation, to end its occupation of the Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the belief that PA/PLO policy has so far been totally inadequate to meet the challenges arising from this conclusion, and the belief that despite their good intention, the international community is utterly unwilling to force Israel to act in accordance with international law. The frustration with the leadership of President Mahmud Abbas and the PLO Executive Committee stems from a deeply held belief that the PA president is reluctant to make a true departure from the current inadequate policies. The current PA flirtation with various international measures--the French Initiative, the Quartet anticipated report, and a possible UNSC resolution on settlements-- is not seen as a sign of policy departure; rather, it is seen as a sign that the PA is looking for a crutch to justify lack of a self-help initiative. The elite and the public demand such a departure, one that transforms PA policy from cooperation, coordination, and limited diplomatic skirmishes with Israel to a strategy of total political confrontation. The proposed strategy entails not only ending various facets of cooperation and security coordination with Israel, but also organizing and leading a popular non-violent resistance and fully embracing a local boycott and an international BDS campaign. Demands are also made to change Palestinian negotiating position with Israel from one that places a sole focus on self-determination and independence to one that focuses *also* on demand for internationally-enshrined civil and human rights, regardless of the end game, two states or one state. Only in the context of such a fundamental policy departure by the PA and the PLO can this strategy see a place for unconditional resumption of negotiations, in bilateral or multilateral forms. Advocates of the new strategy believe that the risks involved in such a departure are enormous. To reduce the risks, they emphasize the need for a graduated step by step process, one that begins with small measures in all aspects and components of the new direction and tailor policy to cope with challenges as they emerge, including those that might present a serious threat of PA collapse.

The Palestinian-Israeli peace process that started with the Oslo Agreement in 1993 witnessed a major transformation in 2000 in the aftermath of the collapse of the Camp David negotiations and the eruption of the second intifada. In the West Bank, the past decade has been characterized mostly by relative calm in Palestinian-Israeli relations as a new Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, sought to restore law and order, disarm armed factions, reestablish civil and security coordination with the Israeli side, and return to peace negotiations. But the post intifada efforts to revive negotiations, most notably the Annapolis process during 2007-08 and the Kerry mission during 2013-14, failed to deliver an agreement. Indeed, by 2013, gaps in the negotiating positions of the two sides, which gradually narrowed between 2000 and 2008, widened considerably leading to the termination of Kerry's efforts in early 2014.

Failure and absence of bilateral negotiations, an Israeli turn to right wing politics and the expansion of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, three major eruptions of war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and continued Palestinian internal split and

loss of electoral legitimacy have contributed to the consolidation of occupation and a gradual disillusionment and radicalization among Palestinians. They have also complicated Palestinian search for a clear and unified strategy for ending Israeli occupation and building a viable Palestinian state.

Today, question marks are raised regarding (1) the viability of bi-lateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and (2) the feasibility of the two-state solution. In the midst of the gloom, and as a result of recurring failures in negotiation, the Palestinian drive to internationalize their conflict resolution with Israel has gained significant momentum, particularly since 2014. Indeed, internationalization of the conflict has become the cornerstone and the flagship of Palestinian strategy to end occupation and gain independence. For its part, civil society has been engaged for years in an effort to panelize Israel for its continued occupation and violation of international law through calls for local and international boycott, disinvestment, and sanctions (BDS). Moreover, since October 2015, Palestinian youths have taken to the street to confront Israeli soldiers at checkpoints and dozens of youths carried out stabbing attacks that has led to rising Palestinian and Israeli casualties.

Most Palestinians believe that military occupation, with its settlement expansion, is sustainable only because Israel's cost-benefit calculation favor's continuation of the status quo. They therefore conclude that Palestinians must resort to all available means to impose costs on Israel thereby changing its calculus. Since the Palestinian leadership under President Mahmud Abbas has shown that it is determined to prevent any eruption of violence-- viewing armed attacks on Israelis as detrimental to Palestinian interests with potential catastrophic consequences for the well-being of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories-- other alternative directions have come under review.

There are two options that are currently viewed by the Palestinian leadership and public as unacceptable: maintaining the status quo and resuming negotiations without a freeze on settlement construction or clear and acceptable terms of reference. On the other hand, internationalization of the conflict is favored by the PA leadership as it imposes diplomatic costs on continued occupation by reliance on international law and UN institutions. But many Palestinians believe that reliance on international diplomacy alone is likely to prove ineffective, as it did in many previous occasions, due to US use of its veto power and the failure of the international community to consider the imposition of sanctions on Israel. Those skeptics call for additional measures that go well beyond diplomatic skirmishes with Israel, measures that entail a much wider political escalation in Palestinian-Israeli relations. In this regard, five additional approaches, or directions, have been the subject of Palestinian public and elite discourse. They can all be viewed as various facets of a strategy of political confrontation, one that takes the PA away from its current civil and security cooperation and coordination with Israel and plunge it into a large scale political confrontation entailing elements from all five approaches. Each proposed approach capitalizes on one or more resource or asset they believe the Palestinians have: public rejection of the status quo and motivation to challenge it at a heavy cost, willingness to provide Israel with a market for goods and services, willingness to cooperate with Israel to prevent violence and ensure quite, demography, international support/legitimacy, and ownership of the only true key to Israel's legitimacy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds.

The first approach calls upon the PA and civil society to design and adopt a clearly outlined and thought-out popular non-violent campaign involving large scale popular demonstrations that seek to express opposition to occupation, dismantle army-erected checkpoints in the West Bank, and block main roads and facilities used by Israeli settlers and army. A second approach calls for a systemic boycott campaign, at the local and international, government and popular levels that targets settlements in its first stage but ultimately escalates into a full scale boycott of the state of Israel. This approach seeks full coordination and harmonization with the international BDS

movement. A third approach calls for a gradual termination of security coordination with the Israeli army thus withholding Palestinian cooperation in preventing violence and thereby forcing the Israelis to invest greater resources in achieving that goal. Furthermore, without security coordination, in which the Palestinian security services facilitate Israeli military incursions into the areas of the West Bank designated by the Oslo agreement as "A," i.e., under full Palestinian civil and security control, such incursions might become costly. Various versions of these approaches, with varying degrees and scopes, have been tried in the past.

A fourth approach calls for a new and more innovative approach, one in which the Palestinians embrace a rights-based approach, one that wages a campaign that seeks to insure full individual rights for Palestinians. While this might be labeled a "one-state" approach, it in fact does not advocate a clear end-game and does not call for changing Palestinian negotiating position from a two-state to a one-state orientation. It also does not call for the dissolution of the PA. This new approach seeks to force Israel and the Israeli public to contemplate more seriously the consequences of continued occupation and subjugation of the Palestinians. In this view, the Israelis, who constantly emphasize the Jewish character of their state, would soon find it in their best interest to negotiate a two-state solution rather than give the Palestinians equal rights or impose an apartheid regime on the Palestinian population.

A final possible direction argues in favor of a return to direct bi-lateral negotiations while simultaneously pursuing the internationalization, popular resistance, boycott, rights-based, and other approaches. In this context, a Palestinian return to the negotiating table would be more effective this time because the simultaneous adoption of these other approaches can serve to increase the costs of continued Israeli occupation. To consolidate this message, the negotiation approach also entails an outreach plan to explain Palestinian positions directly to the Israeli public.

Public support for these five approaches varies. Support is high for popular resistance, boycott, and termination of security coordination. Nonetheless, by end of 2015 and early 2016, armed resistance emerged in the eyes of the public as the most effective means of achieving national rights. Moreover, a large majority of the public believes the PA is not serious about taking any major confrontational measure against Israel. A majority of the public rejects the idea of abandoning the two-state solution and embracing equal political rights for Jews and Palestinians, as presumed in the one-state solution, and a similar majority remains opposed to the idea of unconditional return to the negotiating table. More importantly, a clear majority views negotiations with the Netanyahu government as useless. In light of this prevailing perception, most Palestinians view the French proposal for an international conference on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in summer 2016 as another futile effort destined to fail. While most Palestinians are in favor of an international framework to resolve the conflict, a conference lacking the resolve to impose sanctions on those who violate international law is seen by most of the elite as a diversion preempting a much needed Palestinian initiative to embark on a confrontational strategy against Israel.

Three domestic conditions are viewed by the elite as posing serious impediments to the development of a confrontational strategy. The most serious is the belief that the PA president is not seriously contemplating such a dramatic departure from current PA practices, that he is too reluctant to rock the boat or take bold steps, and that his concerns about succession distract his attention. Fatah-Hamas conflict and the continuation of the West Bank-Gaza Strip split is seen as another impediment discouraging Fatah and Abbas from taking potentially destabilizing steps that might create a vacuum for Hamas to fill. Finally, the PA's lack of electoral legitimacy is seen as destructive to the ability of the president, Fatah and all other factions to mobilize and organize Palestinian masses against occupation.

But advocates of the various directions among the Palestinian elite acknowledge also that potential risks and pitfalls related to the various approaches might also make it difficult for the PA and civil society to embark on the road of political confrontation with Israel. For example, a popular peaceful campaign can easily, as in the past, turn violent and out of control and could soon turn into a third intifada. Concern has also been voiced by some elite members and those in the business community about the likely impact of the boycott on the Palestinians. Given Palestinian total dependence on Israeli economic and administrative measures, a comprehensive boycott campaign might become more costly for the Palestinians than the Israelis. Some, particularly within the PA security elite worry that an end to security coordination might dramatically increase the chances of Palestinian-Israelis armed clashes during incursions into "A" areas of the Palestinian territories and might make it extremely difficult for Palestinians to deliver security and enforce law and order in "B" and "C" areas of these territories.

One of the most significant aspects of Palestinian discourse on the costs and benefits of the various directions revolves around the concerns that an abrupt or sharp departure from the status quo might threaten the survival and viability of the PA. For example, some argue that the Palestinian leadership is unlikely to take serious steps, such as the termination of security coordination or suspension of other Oslo obligations, as long as it believes that such measures might bring about PA collapse. Questions are also raised about the willingness of the Palestinian public to participate in any massive popular resistance campaign at a time when there is a large barrier of distrust and lack of credibility between the public and the PA. On the other hand, it is feared that the PA, with its twin concerns about loss of control and PA collapse, might discourage such popular resistance because it does not trust the public's commitment to non-violence and the tremendous discipline it requires.

In light of the French efforts to hold an international conference on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, there is concern among the public and the elite about the efficacy of the whole internationalization efforts and those efforts that seek a return to negotiations at a time when the international community and the Middle East region are preoccupied with other more pressing issues. An overwhelming majority of the public believes that the Arab World has abandoned the Palestinians and that Palestine is no longer its principal cause. Moreover, it is believed that the international community and the major international players, due to the historical legacy and/or domestic considerations, cannot or will not impose sanctions on Israel or press it to respect its obligations under international law and that the US will continue to use its veto power to shield it from international censure.

The choices for the PA leadership are therefore not easy. To reduce the risks involved in a confrontational strategy, the debate on new directions highlighted the advantages of gradualism, starting with small steps and tailoring each confrontational approach into small measures that can be more easily implemented. Gradualism makes it easier for the PA and the Palestinian public to cope with the likely costs and risks and learn to adjust expectations along the lines of a prolonged conflict. It can also help restore some of the currently absent public confidence in the PA and its leadership. By demonstrating resolve, the PA leadership might regain credibility at home and abroad, even among the Israelis. Gradualism might also provide space for the international community to step in and show greater resolve and determination to end the conflict.

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Introduction:

From the beginning of the Oslo process in 1993, the Palestinian-Israeli peace process has been overwhelmed by obstacles. Violence, settlement construction, abandonment of obligations, and shifts in the domestic environment of Palestinians and Israelis have each played a role in derailing all efforts to end the conflict. The Oslo Accords created the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994, a measure that was seen by the Palestinians as the first step towards the end of Israeli occupation and the building of a Palestinian state. Despite its limitations, the PA was seen as the midwife for independence and sovereignty. Optimism about ending the conflict was high and support for mutual reconciliation was vast.

But as they approach the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation, and twenty-three years after the signing of the Oslo agreement, Palestinians have concluded that the Oslo process is no longer able to deliver independence or end of occupation. In fact, they believe that Israel has consistently and deliberately violated the most consequential of its own obligations under Oslo: Israeli army redeployments and transfer of territorial control and jurisdiction to the PA, respect for PA jurisdiction in the areas under its full control, freeze of settlement construction, and Palestinian free movement inside the West Bank and safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As a result, the Palestinian public and elite have grown confident that preserving the status quo can only consolidate occupation and that the PA itself, to be true to its mandate, must lead the efforts to challenge that status quo rather than play a role in maintaining it.

The twin conclusions they have now reached are that (1) Israel's right wing has no intention of ending its occupation or allowing the emergence of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel and therefore bilateral negotiations with the current Israeli government is not a viable path to independence; and (2) the current mixed Palestinian policy, of limited diplomatic confrontation accompanied by civil and security cooperation and coordination with Israel, is not likely to prove effective in challenging the status quo and might even lead to the opposite, and therefore the PA and civil society must embark on a new strategy, one that imposes greater costs on the occupying power and forces it to come to terms with Palestinian aspiration for independence. Palestinians are currently debating what that strategy might entail.

This report provides a brief description of the context for this debate as well as the various approaches proposed by the Palestinian elite and public. The description is based on the results of the work of a task force established by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in October 2015. Comprised of twenty experts, academics, and former and current policy makers, the task force explored, in five policy papers, seven closed workshops, and one public conference, five approaches for the Palestinian Authority and civil society to embrace. The approaches call a departure with the past, ending various elements of PA-Israeli cooperation and embarking on a new strategy of total political confrontation. The new strategy calls for specific legs that include a non-violent popular resistance approach, a boycott, an end to security coordination, a rights-based approach, and a resumption of negotiations. Elite interviews and three public opinion surveys were conducted between September 2015 and March 2016 in order to assess elite and public perception of these approaches.

The Context: a No War, No Peace Architecture[1]

Failure of the 2000 Camp David Summit in the first phase of the search for peace ended with the eruption of a five-year armed intifada which ended with an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the reoccupation of the entire West Bank. Slowly (and quietly) but surely, a post–second intifada "status quo" emerged in 2005 and became stronger over the next few years. The new status quo, an architecture based mostly on formal and informal instruments and both *de jure* and *de facto* arrangements and outcomes, can best be described as a *no war, no peace* condition. It goes without saying that this description applied to Israeli-Palestinian relations in the West Bank only. The Gaza Strip, starting in mid-2007, took a different path, when Hamas resorted to force against President Abbas and asserted its full control over that Palestinian area; since then, Gaza-Israel relations have been characterized by occasional conflict and war. By contrast, the Abbas decade was one of peaceful relations with Israel, punctuated by occasional disagreements and political quarrels.

Four characteristics in particular marked the Abbas decade. First, the new order was mostly about the restoration of peace and quiet after five years of intifada: Hence the "no war" dimension of the decade. Palestinian security services were to be rebuilt with American assistance in a context of renewed coordination with the Israeli security establishment. Second, the new era was characterized by the PA's assertion of a monopoly over the use of force—another "no war" dimension. In coordination with their Israeli counterpart, the retrained Palestinian security services disarmed all militant groups, including those of Fatah and Hamas.

Third, the new era was characterized by the consolidation of Israel's position in the West Bank, reversing many of the Palestinian Oslo gains; this was the first of two "no peace" dimensions. Palestinian-Israeli security coordination and the PA security services crackdown on armed factions in the West Bank were not conditional on restoration to pre-intifada conditions—so Israel kept its West Bank intifada gains, such as continued IDF deployment throughout the West Bank with daily incursions into Palestinian cities, and the maintenance of hundreds of checkpoints, including in some cases in the area designated "A," which according to the Oslo Accords was to be under full PA civil and security control. Furthermore, Palestinian police and customs presence at the international crossings with Jordan was terminated. The wall and separation barrier, erected by Israel in the West Bank during the second intifada, remained in place; and Palestinian access to Israeli markets, for labor and goods, was severely restricted. Other policies, most importantly Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, continued without interruption. In 2005, after the Israeli evacuation of the Gaza Strip, there were a little over 250,000 settlers in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem); in 2015, the number of settlers in the same area stood at about 400,000, about a 60 percent increase.[2]

Finally, the Oslo Accords, both their interim aspects and the remaining unfulfilled Israeli obligations, were essentially suspended, which constituted a second dimension of "no peace." According to the original agreement, the temporary arrangements stipulated by the Oslo Accords were to be replaced by permanent ones within five years from the date of implementation of the Declaration of Principles (DOP), known as Oslo I. The DOP went into effect in 1994, upon Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, but remained operational long after its intended expiration in 1999, owing to the failure of the two sides to reach a permanent

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[1] The following borrows from the author's piece on "The End of the "Abbas Decade": The Crumbling of the Post-Intifada Status-Quo," *Middle East Brief*, No. 97, The Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, January 2016.

[2] For details, please see the regular reports by the Foundation for Middle East Peace on "Israeli Settlement in the occupied territories:" http://fmep.org/issues/settlements/

agreement by that year. Equally importantly, by 2005, Israel had not yet carried out some of its most important obligations: most vitally, for the Palestinians, the third redeployment from area C, the opening of a seaport, and arranging for "safe passage" between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The Drivers of the No War, No Peace "Abbas Decade"

The 2000–2004 second intifada served essentially as a backdrop to the new reality. More than one thousand Israelis and five thousand Palestinians were killed during some of the worst Israeli-Palestinian violence since the beginning of the conflict in the first half of the twentieth century. Israeli-Palestinian security coordination was suspended; the Israeli army reoccupied the West Bank; PA security services were devastated and PA civil institutions considerably weakened; and the Palestinian economy was devastated. Moreover, PA president Yasser Arafat died—most Palestinians say poisoned—right around the end of this period, and the mainstream nationalist movement Fatah lost considerable public support while the Islamist Hamas gained significant popularity.

The post-intifada status quo—the Abbas decade of no war, no peace—stood on five legs, one indispensable one being Abbas himself. Three other legs were provided by the Palestinian domestic environment and one leg was provided by the United States, supported by the donor community and the main Arab regional powers.

Without Abbas, who was elected president in 2005 with 63 percent of the vote, it would have been impossible for the new status quo to emerge. Indeed, this outcome had all the hallmarks of the methods and mindset of the new president. Abbas viewed the armed violence of the second intifada—what he called the "militarization of the intifada"—as destructive to Palestinian national interests. He was determined to put an end to the violence, and believed that direct bilateral negotiations with Israel were the key to making peace. Equally importantly, Abbas invoked a second policy dimension that would set the stage for the post-intifada status quo: He was committed to a policy he termed "One authority, one gun," reflecting his determination to dismantle armed groups that had emerged during the intifada. Finally, Abbas held to a third principle that contributed significantly to the evolving outcome of the 2005–15 period: He, one of the main architects of the interim agreement that was Oslo, now expressed strong opposition to any new interim agreements. Fearful that an interim or "provisional" Palestinian state, one of the three phases of the Quartet's so-called "Roadmap," would become permanent, Abbas refused all but a permanent status agreement.

A second pillar of the Abbas decade was provided by Hamas. During the 2006–7 period, the emergence of Hamas' threat to the PA's national hegemony, and the direct military threat it posed to Abbas' authority—evidenced most dramatically in the violent takeover of the Gaza Strip—provided the new Palestinian leadership with an enormous motivation to improve Israeli-Palestinian relations. A third pillar was introduced by Salam Fayyad, the Palestinian prime minister between 2007 and 2013. "Fayyadism," a notion that promoted Palestinian self-reliance and empowerment, argued that Palestinians could end the Israeli occupation by building the institutions of a future Palestinian state—thereby creating, in effect, a de facto Palestinian state—rather than by violence or even through peace negotiations. This notion gained local and international support, with Fayyad himself arguing that Palestinian state-building efforts would have a transformative impact on all concerned, and thereby would remove any Israeli pretext for continued occupation.

Another domestic dynamic—public support—provided a fourth leg for the Abbas decade. Not only did the public elect Abbas, who made no efforts whatsoever to hide his views, but it also supported his efforts to end chaos and anarchy and enforce law and order. Moreover, two months

after Abbas' election, in a reflection of 'intifada fatigue,' public support for violence, including suicide attacks inside Israel, had dropped sharply, from over 70 percent six months earlier to 29 percent.[3] Optimistic about the chances for peace with Israel now that Arafat was no longer leading the PA, an overwhelming majority (84 percent) supported returning to negotiations. And 59 percent believed that with Abbas now leading the PA, it was possible to reach a compromise agreement with the Israeli leadership.

The last leg of the post-intifada status quo was provided by the United States, the international donor community, and the Arab regional system. The role of the U.S. was the most critical. In the post-intifada period, as part of "Roadmap" implementation, the U.S. took upon itself the goal of rebuilding the Palestinian security forces. Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, who headed the U.S. mission in Jerusalem between 2005 and 2010, oversaw the training of various Palestinian battalions. As important as Dayton mission was, the U.S. role in the peace process was even more important. The Annapolis peace process, initiated by the Bush administration at a peace summit in November 2007; Barack Obama's efforts in 2009 linking resumption of negotiations to a settlement freeze; and John Kerry's 2013–14 efforts to reach a permanent peace agreement in nine months succeeded in reviving a process that had been dormant for seven years by bringing the two sides into direct bilateral negotiations. Although all these efforts failed, they did manage to embed within the Abbas decade a highly ambitious peace agenda. Security coordination, and the peace and quiet it engendered, seemed thereby to have a purpose: to facilitate both the end of occupation and Palestinian state-building. Without this agenda, it would have been impossible for the post-intifada status quo to last beyond its first few years.

Immediately after the holding of the Annapolis peace summit, the donor community, meeting in Paris in December 2007 and comprising some seventy countries, pledged a massive $7.4 billion, in the strongest show of support to date for the PA and the evolving Palestinian-Israeli relationship. Furthermore, three regional Arab states played a highly important role in shaping the Abbas decade: Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. After years of reluctance to support the Oslo process, Saudi Arabia pledged as much as $1.25 billion at the 2007 Paris donor conference; and between 2006 and 2007, the Saudis played a significant role in reducing tension between Fatah and Hamas. Jordan served as a base for the American-supported training of the Palestinian National Forces (PNF). And Egypt, under three presidents—Hosni Mubarak, Mohammad Morsi, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi—helped Abbas and Hamas manage differences between themselves as well as with Israel. This Egyptian role helped to ensure that three Hamas-Israel Gaza wars—in 2008, 2012, and 2014—would not destroy or even seriously destabilize the Abbas decade.

The Abbas Decade Coming to an End

The decade of no war, no peace in Palestinian-Israeli relations is now coming to an end. The post-intifada status quo that prevailed in the West Bank during the 2005–15 period is currently being challenged by two escalating developments: The Palestinian Authority (PA), which contributed significantly to its creation, is rebelling against it, with PA president Mahmoud Abbas threatening to dismantle the Oslo Accords; and the Palestinian public, which facilitated that status quo, is now taking matters into its own hands and is on the verge of plunging the West Bank into violence. Abbas, without whom the post-intifada design would have been unthinkable, may or may not survive the turmoil, but it is almost certain that the "Abbas decade" that he shaped will not survive.

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[3] Public opinion findings mentioned in this report are taken from polls conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research: http://pcpsr.org/.

Most of the legs upon which the post-intifada architecture stood are now crumbling. The 2007-08 Annapolis efforts in the post-intifada period were more impressive in their achievements compared to previous rounds of bilateral negotiations but failed nonetheless to produce success. Efforts by the US president Barak Obama in 2009 and 2010 and by his Secretary of State John Kerry in 2013 and 2014 met with a similar fate leading to greater Palestinian determination to resort to means other than direct bilateral negotiations to end the Israeli occupation and build a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. But by 2014, other demands on U.S. foreign policy attention meant that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was no longer a priority. With Kerry's Middle East peacemaking efforts failing early in 2014, the U.S. now entered a phase of serious negotiations with Iran on a nuclear deal. Mosul fell to ISIS in June, and issues revolving around terrorism, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the South China Sea were soon ascendant. When, early in 2015, the French came up with the idea of going to the UN Security Council to help restart Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the Americans wanted the efforts postponed until after a deal with Iran was reached in order to avoid further worsening their relationship with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Arab region became at least as distracted as the U.S. By 2011, the Arab Spring had already diverted attention away from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And by 2015, the region was buried under the burdens of civil wars and regime change, not to mention the threats from Iran and ISIS and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya.

With the international as well as the regional focus elsewhere, the Israel's right-wing government was busy building settlements and weakening the prospects for a two-state solution. Although he retracted the statement later, in March 2015, during the Israeli election campaign, Netanyahu asserted that a Palestinian state would not be created under his watch if he was re-elected. In July, settler violence against Palestinian villagers became lethal when radical settlers firebombed a Palestinian home in the village of Duma in area B of the West Bank, resulting in the death of three family members. Tension in the second half of 2015 in Jerusalem's holy places also generated great volatility, especially in the most sensitive area in the occupied territories: the al-Aqsa Mosque. The perceived rising threat represented by Jewish national-religious groups and sentiments, along with the fear that Israel was intent on changing the status quo on al-Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount), incited violent action by individuals and groups.

By September 2015, the Palestinian domestic environment had changed radically in other respects. The Palestinian public withdrew legitimacy from the PA, with 53 percent telling pollsters that they viewed the PA as a burden rather than an asset. For the first time since the PA's creation, 51 percent wanted to see it dissolved. Two-thirds of Palestinians wanted Abbas to resign as president of the PA; only 38 percent were satisfied with his performance. In a hypothetical election, Abbas lost to Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh by 44 percent to 49 percent, and in December he lost to Haniyeh, in another hypothetical election, by 41 percent to 51 percent.

Moreover, optimism among the Palestinian public had declined considerably by 2015, with 78 percent believing that the chances for establishing a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel in the next five years were slim to nonexistent and only 21 percent believing the chances were medium or high. In September 2015, 67 percent of Palestinians believed that the two-state solution was no longer viable, and support for that solution had declined considerably to 48 percent, declining further three months later to 45 percent. The decline in support for violence early in the Abbas decade, referenced above, was now reversed: By 2010 it stood at 40 percent, but by September 2015 it had risen to 57 percent and by December, to 67 percent.

One of the most important sociopolitical developments during the past few years involved Palestinian youth. By 2015, an "Oslo generation" had matured. Born around the time of the

signing of the Oslo agreement, youths between the ages of 18 and 22—alienated from the political process, highly secular, and almost totally reliant on social media—now expressed strong opposition to the two-state solution, and almost three-quarters of male youths supported a return to an armed intifada.

Finally, over time, the man behind the Abbas decade grew weaker and weaker. Having failed to deliver on the peace process, or to reunify the West Bank and the Gaza Strip despite significant Hamas concessions, Abbas' popularity gradually declined, and once his electoral term ended in 2010, his legitimacy was questioned. As a result, Abbas grew weaker both within Fatah and within the PLO. His decision in August 2015 to convene an emergency meeting of the PLO's National Council (PNC) was challenged by his own Fatah colleagues and by most members of the PLO Executive Committee. Abbas had no choice but to concede, and to postpone the meeting. A weakened Abbas is now forced to embrace more confrontational policies with Israel, and to take a tougher stand regarding peace negotiations.

The Search for Alternative Approaches:

Starting in 2011, the Palestinian leadership embarked on an efforts to "internationalize" the search for peace. In November 2012, Palestine became a UN non-member state. While Palestine was able to join several other international organizations, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), it failed, due to a US veto, to gain a full UN membership. But the shift in strategy away from direct bilateral negotiations to "internationalization" did not succeed in forcing Israel to stop settlement construction or accept previously negotiated terms of reference regarding borders and statehood. In September 2015, speaking at the UN General Assembly, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas threatened to end Palestinian compliance with the terms of the Oslo agreement as long as Israel was not complying with those same terms.[4]

The current PA policy, i.e., combination of cooperation and limited diplomatic hostility, is unacceptable to most Palestinians. They believe that military occupation, with its settlement expansion, is sustainable only because Israel's cost-benefit calculation favors continuation of the status quo. They therefore conclude that the Palestinians must resort to all available means to impose costs on Israel thereby changing its calculus.

What options do the Palestinians have as they seek to end occupation and gain independence and/or political rights? There are two options that are currently viewed by the Palestinian leadership and public as unacceptable: (1) maintaining the status quo, and (2) resuming negotiations without any pre conditions. Armed violence is also rejected by the PA leadership. Abbas is determined to prevent any eruption of violence, viewing armed attacks on Israelis as detrimental to Palestinian interests with potential catastrophic consequences for the well-being of the Palestinian public. The Palestinian security services will most likely be the first target of Israeli retaliation leading to a quick collapse of law and order and the effective collapse of the PA. As we saw earlier, a majority of the Palestinian public disagrees with the PA leadership on this issue. Indeed, the public started in late 2015 and early 2016 to view armed violence as the most effective means of increasing the costs of continued Israeli occupation. Hamas' model in

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[4] "Israel has destroyed the foundations upon which the political and security agreements are based," Abbas said. " We therefore declare that we cannot continue to be bound by these [Oslo] agreements and that Israel must assume all its responsibilities as an occupying power, because the status quo cannot continue," he concluded.

the Gaza Strip, while not seen as ideal, is currently viewed by a large majority of the Palestinian public as the most effective approach. Violent and popular confrontations that started in October 2015 benefited from and capitalized on these pro-violence sentiments.

On the other hand, internationalization of the conflict is favored by both, the PA leadership and the public as it is seen helpful in increasing the diplomatic cost of continued occupation by capitalizing on one of the most important resources available to the Palestinians: international law and UN institutions. But many Palestinians believe that the reliance on international diplomacy alone is likely to prove ineffective, as it did in many previous occasions, due to US use of its veto power. Those skeptics call for additional measures that go well beyond diplomatic confrontation with Israel, measures that entail a much wider political confrontation. In this regard, five additional approaches, or directions, have been the subject of Palestinian public and elite discourse. They can all be viewed as various facets of a strategy of political confrontation, one that takes the PA away from its current civil and security cooperation and coordination with Israel and plunge it into a large scale political confrontation. Each proposed approach capitalizes on one or more resource or asset it believes the Palestinians have: public rejection of the status quo and motivation to challenge it at a heavy cost, willingness to provide Israel with a market for goods and services, willingness to cooperate with Israel to prevent violence and ensure quiet, demography, international law and legitimacy, international community's support, and ownership of the only true key to Israel's legitimacy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds.

Five approaches have dominated Palestinian public and elite discourse: popular resistance, boycott, ending security coordination, adoption of a rights-based focus, and a return to negotiations. The following is a summary of the main features of these approaches. The summaries are based on the papers written for the task force by the authors.

1) Popular Resistance:

Sufian Abu Zaideh's paper, "Peaceful Popular Resistance: Is it a Feasible Option?"[5] argues that for popular resistance to succeed, the PA must support it with all means available to it, including budgets. Popular resistance refers to efforts by the Palestinian public to express its opposition to the Israeli occupation and its policies through participation in mass demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, and various forms of civil disobedience. Notable recent cases included efforts by residents and international and Israeli solidarity groups to express rejection of land confiscation or the construction of the Israeli separation barrier in places like Ni'lin, Bil'in and Nabi Salih. Other examples include efforts by civil society activists to erect tents and buildings in areas threatened by settlement expansion. But popular confrontations with Israeli soldiers at checkpoints at the entrance to Palestinian cities have been the most frequent examples of such resistance.

Abu Zaideh's paper argues that popular resistance is effective when meeting three conditions: (1) the goal of the resistance is defined as ending the occupation, rather than a mere return to the negotiating table; (2) political parties and factions, in an alliance with civil society and the private sector, work in harmony to ease the burden and reduce the costs incurred in such resistance on the various sectors of society; and (3) the actual participants in the confrontations resist the temptations to resort to violence.

Furthermore, the paper sets a series of measures that the PA must adopt in order to win public trust and wide participation. These measures include (1) termination of security coordination with Israel; (2) imposition of a comprehensive economic boycott of Israeli products; (3) termination of all exchanges of information with the occupation including those related to

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[5] For main excerpts from the paper, see
http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Dr.%20Sufian%20Abu%20Zaida%20E%20Design.pdf

population registry; (4) a gradual ending of labor work in Israeli settlements and inside Israel; (5) halt use of Israeli currency and replace it with Jordanian Dinar or any other currency; (6) redefine the mission of the PA in a manner that allows it to serve the goal of popular resistance, for example by unilaterally ending the interim period of and declare Palestine as a state under occupation; (7) devise emergency plans that allow the continuation of service delivery under condition of PA collapse or dissolution; and, (8) insure uninterrupted functioning of schools and universities and avoid going on strikes in the educational system.

The paper argue that in responding to popular resistance, the Israelis will probably avoid taking steps that might lead to direct PA collapse. Nonetheless, the paper concludes that if the PA does indeed terminate security coordination and adopt measures that significantly increase the cost of continued Israeli occupation, Israel might reestablish direct control over the West Bank. Alternatively, Israel might take measures that could force the gradual militarization of popular resistance and in doing so bring about an end to that resistance. But the militarization of the resistance is a serious threat even without Israeli encouragement. The paper finds popular culture to be dominated by an armed struggle legacy that tends to underestimate that efficacy of non-violence. The paper also emphasizes the destructive role played by the Fatah-Hamas split, with a high potential threat of Hamas resorting to armed attacks in the West Bank in order to destabilize conditions in these Palestinian territories. This perceived Hamas threat might in turn lead the PA to discourage or even impede popular resistance activities.

2) Boycott

The paper by Raja Khalidi, "The Prospect for Palestinian Economic Boycott of Israel: Forms and Difficulties,"[6] argues that under certain circumstances, boycott can be a highly effective tool against Israeli occupation. A Palestinian boycott policy, the paper argues, could go unfold in stages: (1) start with a simple goal, such as the isolation and weakening of Israeli settlements; (2) expand to more ambitious and difficult goals that could range between targeting all those who support and benefit from the Israeli occupation and the settlement enterprise to boycott of any Israeli made product that has a Palestinian substitute; (3) embark on a long term economic attrition campaign targeting various Israeli economic sectors; and finally (4) embrace a full economic, legal and administrative separation from Israel. To achieve these goals, the PA could employ a variety of tactics, from the least to the most costly. It could start by utilizing its various security, legal, and administrative arms to enforce a ban on settlements products followed by a ban on labor work in settlements, waging popular campaigns to educate the public and the business sector, to terminating contacts with Israelis and Israeli firms, and ultimately moving to enforcing a full official ban on contacts with and products from Israel.

To facilitate the adoption of a boycott policy, the paper emphasizes the need for the Palestinians to address two serious impediments: the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the lack of trust between the PA and civil society. It argues that for a boycott policy to succeed, the PA must reunify the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, thus insuring the inclusion of the Gaza Strip in the effort. Similarly, the PA would be required to improve its relations with civil society and win its cooperation.

The paper devises a work plan that entails various roles for various Palestinian actors: the PA and PLO and the various institutions, and resources available to them, that would be required to insure the full enforcement of regulations adopted for the implementation of the strategy; the National Boycott Committee that would work closely with local and international BDS partners

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[6] For main excerpts from the paper, see
http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Raja%20Khalidi%20E%20Design.pdf

in order to insure a wider public participation; the private sector that would be required to provide substitute products to those no longer available from Israel and search for alternative sources of raw material and for markets for import and export; and civil society and its various organizations that would be required to organize activities, collect data, and ensure a large scale adherence to the boycott measures at the popular level.

3) Termination of Security Coordination:

In his paper, "Is it Possible to Suspend Security Coordination?"[7] Hani al Masri distinguishes between the civilian dimension of "coordination," the one that seeks to facilitate civil daily life in the occupied territories, and a second dimension that facilitates exchange of security information and coordination of security policies and efforts in order to prevent armed attacks on the occupation forces. The paper argues that if the PA terminates the security dimension, the one that benefits Israel, civil coordination, which benefits the Palestinians, would be expected to remain unhindered, as Israel would still have an interest in insuring a smooth functioning of the PA. Nonetheless, if the Palestinian leadership does indeed suspend security coordination with Israel, the occupying power might retaliate by imposing a series of measures, such as the suspension of the transfer of Palestinian custom's returns, in order to coerce the PA to return to that coordination. If the PA takes countermeasures, it might find itself on the verge of collapse, particularly if the suspension of security coordination was accompanied by further Palestinian measures that involved termination of other Oslo-related commitments.

The paper argues that it is highly unlikely that the PA leadership would suspend security coordination. It relies heavily, for its continued existence, on custom and tax transfers that allows it to pay salaries and keep the PA offices running. Furthermore, the PA in the West Bank fears the threat of Hamas, a threat that might, in the absence of coordination with the Israeli army, become greater and the Islamist group might therefore seek to take advantage of any vacuum that might follow PA weakening or collapse. The paper also argues that PA allies in the Arab world are not likely to support such a PA policy due to their concerns about the potential destabilization such a step might generate to their relations with Israel.

The paper examines possible scenarios that might follow a Palestinian suspension of security coordination: (1) Israel might respond by dismantling the current PA only to re-establish a new one, one that would agree to maintain security coordination; (2) the PA might collapse under the pressure of various Israeli and US sanctions; (3) the PA might, in response to Israeli and US sanctions, decide to abandon the Oslo agreement altogether and dismantle itself; and finally (4) the PA might decide to abandon the Oslo agreement but without dismantling itself, instead, it would restructure itself so that it can function as a service delivery institution for a state under occupation.

Al Masri's recommendations to the PA involve various aspects: (1) The PA must redefine its relations with Israel based on the identification of Israel as an occupier and an enemy; (2) The PA should adopt a policy that seeks to gradually terminate its Oslo obligations starting with the termination of the exchange of security-related information, restrict security discussions with Israel to the political echelon, reduce the budget allocated to the security sector, dissolve some of the security formations and services whose make up is partisan, confront Israeli military incursions into area "A" of the West Bank, and support areas the come under settlers' attacks by the formation of local guard committees; (3) redefine the mission of the PA so that it can be "resistance friendly," one that can coexist alongside an active resistance movement; (4) transfer

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[7] For main excerpts from the paper, see
http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Hani%20Masri%20E%20Design.pdf

the main headquarters and institutions of the PLO to the Gaza Strip and neighboring countries; (5) prepare for the possibility of PA dissolution by insuring continued service delivery by means other than formal ministries and authorities; (6) prioritize reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and reunification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and (7) rebuild the PLO institutions on more inclusive, nationalistic, and democratic principles with the aim of achieving full partnership between the various groups and factions.

4) One-state Solution:

In his paper, "Asynchronous and Inseparable Struggles for Rights and a Political End-Game,"[8] Sam Bahour seeks to answer the following question: How can the threat of abandoning the two-state solution and adopting the one-state solution be given sufficient credence, in order to force the Israeli society into facing the implications of maintaining the occupation? The author argues that Israel's emphasis on its Jewish character provides the Palestinians the tool needed to reframe the Israeli-Palestinian debate by highlighting the likely consequences of continued military occupation and settlement expansion on the future of that national character.

But the author affirms that changing the content of the debate does not require a change in the Palestinian goal of statehood; why risk losing the gains made over decades, with 130 countries recognizing Palestine as a state. In fact, the paper sees no strategic benefit for the Palestinians in embracing a one-state solution. Moreover, the author argues that the Palestinian target audience should not be restricted to the Israeli community; instead, the Palestinians should also be reaching out to the international community. External pressure, the author asserts, is likely to leave its impact on the Israeli society.

The paper advances the case for a rights-based approach. Rights are defined as internationally-accepted norms that are enjoyed by millions of global citizens the world over. For example, they include political rights (the ability to participate in the political system(s) that governs Palestinians), economic rights (the ability to produce and trade with full access to one's own resources and the free movement of goods and labor within the homeland and across one's borders), and social right (the ability to re-establish bridges between the fragmented Palestinian communities across the globe, where Gazans, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Jerusalemites, West Bankers, refugees and Diaspora Palestinians can reunite and feel a sense of common identity and purpose). Such right and liberties, when obtained, can make Palestinian lives worth living,

The paper argues that the struggle for national self-determination should not come at the expense of the struggle for rights - and vice versa. The two types of struggle are in fact complementary; one focuses on the political, human and civil rights of the individual and the second focuses on the right of self-determination for the nation. But while the struggle for independence should continue without interruption, Palestinians must also engage in a fight to secure the rights of the individual. Individuals' political, economic and social rights must not be placed at the mercy of the ups and downs of the two-state solution; indeed, rights are immediate needs and must come first. Regardless of the final outcome of Palestinian struggle, one or two states, what Palestinians need now is rights. Once rights are achieved, the end-game becomes secondary.

The author argues that Palestinians must force Israel to choose between (a) ending the occupation (if it recognizes the current state of affairs as occupation), or (b) granting Palestinians their full rights (if it is not occupation) as there would be no justification for denying equal rights to everyone who is subject to Israeli rule.

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[8] The full text of the paper can be found at http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Sam-Bahour%20E%20Design.pdf

5) Return to Negotiations:

In his paper "Making Negotiation Viable,"[9] Ali Jarbawi argues that only a two-state solution can bring an end to the conflict. The paper further argues that if the Palestinians do indeed seek a two-state solution, they must resort to negotiations with Israel. Rejection of negotiations, or conditioning it on Israel's freeze of settlement construction or release or prisoners does not serve Palestinians' strategic interests. Negotiation via mediators is also seen as ineffective. Furthermore, the paper views continuation of negotiation from where it ended as harmful to Palestinian interests. Similarly, participation in what one perceives as futile negotiations is also counterproductive. Instead, the paper argues that for negotiations to succeed (or permanently fail), the Palestinians must change the rules of the game, rules of negotiation that they have embraced during the previous two decades.

For negotiation to succeed, the Palestinian side must gather all the resources available to it and use them as leverage. First, it must rebuild its home front: end the West Bank-Gaza Strip split and reunify the PA, revitalize the political system and put it on track to a transition to democracy through new elections, and reform the PA and its institutions making them stronger and more transparent. Second, it should mobilize available international and regional support by modernizing its diplomatic core, engage directly with civil societies in other countries, and seek to enlarge the Israeli two-state constituency. Third, it must capitalize on available domestic and external resources to impose costs on Israel and force it to end its occupation. Domestically, means of leverage include various forms of boycotts, popular marches and demonstrations, and resort to various means of resistance in a prudent and selective manner. Externally, pressure can be utilized through effective use of international organizations including, the International Criminal Court, support for the BDS campaign, and enhanced mobilization of international public opinion.

Revising the rules of the game also requires a reorganization of the process of negotiations. The paper argues that the goal of negotiations should be defined as the ending of occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the lines of 1967. Furthermore, it identifies eight additional conditions that can contribute to a successful process: negotiations should address issues of the permanent status only; peace talks must be based on international law and relevant UN resolutions; only one track of negotiations should be pursued, no secret second-track or parallel talks should be allowed; the negotiating team should be infused with local and international legal experts; the negotiating team must report to a single body, a legitimate authority that provides the vision and the instructions; one single place, preferably outside the country, should be designated as the venue for negotiations; there should be one media outlet responsible for all matters related to the talks including keeping the Palestinian public informed of any progress and keeping the international public informed regarding any Israeli violations of international norms; and finally, the talks must not be open-ended and must have an end date set in advance.

Assessment and Policy Implications:

The Palestine elite and public demand a clear departure from current PA/PLO policy. Demands focus on ending the policy of cooperation, coordination, and limited diplomatic skirmishes with Israel and embracing a strategy of total political confrontation with its various facets of popular

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[9] For excerpts from the paper, see
http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Ali%20Jarbawi%20%20E%20Design.pdf

resistance, local boycott and international BDS, termination of security coordination, shift to a rights discourse, and return to negotiations. But public support for and appreciation of the efficacy of these five components of the strategy vary. For example, support for a boycott campaign is high and a majority believes that such a campaign can be effective in achieving Palestinian national rights; but about two thirds believe the PA is not serious about initiating or leading such a campaign, A majority is also in favor of popular resistance and about half of the pubic believes that such a resistance is likely to be effective. Nonetheless, a very small number of Palestinians actually participate in such activities. Moreover, a larger percentage views *armed* resistance as the most effective means of achieving Palestinian national rights.

A majority is also in favor of ending security coordination with the Israeli army and the termination of Palestinian compliance with the Oslo obligations. But a large minority remains opposed to such a step. Such opposition stems from concern about the implication of such step on the state of law and order in areas to which Palestinian police access requires such coordination. Current "security coordination" entails three forms: (1) coordination of the movement of Palestinian civil police vehicles and personnel on area "C" roads as they move between various "B" and "C" area enclaves, thus allowing greater enforcement of law and order in such areas; (2) communication with and meetings of senior security officials' to coordinate policy and exchange of information on various threats, thus allowing a more effective crackdown on armed factions; and (3) communication of messages between the Israeli army and the Palestinian counterpart announcing the intention of the army to enter various part of area "A" of the West Bank, thus allowing the Palestinian forces to stand down or move out of the targeted areas. The first form of coordination indicates Palestinian respect for the agreed Oslo terms conditioning PA police access to "B" and "C" areas while the third form allows the Israeli army to violate those agreed terms that condition its own access to Palestinian areas.

The Palestinian public is not opposed to the coordination of civil police movement on Palestinian roads. But it strongly opposes facilitation of incursions and the exchange of intelligence information on, and coordination of mutual measures against, armed factions. For most Palestinians, coordination with the occupation forces on matters other than the movement of PA civil police is tantamount to collaboration with the occupation forces. The public and the elite believe that under conditions of prolonged occupation, the mission of PA security forces should be the defense of the Palestinians, not the Israelis and the Israeli army.

The first two forms of security coordination are mandated by the 1995 Oslo II agreement.[10] But the third form was never part of the Oslo agreement; in fact, the Palestinians never officially agreed to Israeli incursions into area "A." These incursions, a clear violation of the Oslo agreement, started just before the Israeli reoccupation of the West Bank in 2002. But the coordination of these incursions was only introduced, on *de facto* basis, in the aftermath of the gradual restoration of security coordination during 2005-07. At that time, efforts were underway to rebuild and retrain the PA security forces that were devastated during the second intifada. Perceived Hamas threat to the PA at that time was very high, and the Israeli intelligence services were unwilling to share information with their Palestinian counterparts. Yet, the incursion-related security coordination remains in effect today, more than a decade later. Today, most Palestinians see this form of coordination as complicity in the violation of Palestinian jurisdiction. Instead, the public believes that the Palestinian security services' top priority should be to defend against such incursions rather than to facilitate them.

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[10] The Oslo agreement gave Israel temporary (not exceeding 18 months) territorial and internal security and law and order control over area C and internal security control over area B pending a full Israeli redeployment outside these areas (with the exception of settlements, borders, and military locations whose fate was to be determined in final status negotiations).

A majority of the pubic rejects the idea of embracing the notion of equal political rights for Jews and Palestinians, as presumed in the one-state solution, and a similar majority remains opposed to the idea of unconditional return to the negotiating table. As indicated above, a majority is in favor of a resumption of negotiations but only if Israel suspends its settlement activities and agrees to acceptable terms of reference that endorse the creation of a Palestinian state along the 1967 lines. More importantly, a clear majority views negotiations with the Netanyahu government as useless. While most Palestinians are in favor of an international framework for negotiations to resolve the conflict, a conference along the lines of the French proposal in spring 2016 is seen as lacking the resolve to impose sanctions on those who violate international law. For this reason, the conference is seen as yet another diversion preempting a much needed Palestinian initiative to embark on a confrontational strategy against Israel.

Despite wide spread support for a strategy of political confrontation that combines popular resistance, boycott, and termination of security coordination, the elite and the public view three domestic dynamics as serious impediments to the development of such a strategy. The first, and most serious, is the belief that PA president is highly reluctant to embark on any dramatic departure from current PA practices. Abbas' mind set, is believed, rejects risk-taking and avoids measures that might rock the boat. It is also believed that Abbas's concerns about leadership succession in the absence of a functioning parliament and within a context of sharp internal polarization are diverting his attention away from an effective confrontation with Israel. Secondly, the Fatah-Hamas conflict that sustains the continuation of the West Bank-Gaza Strip split is seen as another serious impediment as it imposes serious constraints on a rational Palestinian decision-making. The Fatah-Hamas conflict is seen in terms of a zero-sum game that greatly limits Palestinian options. The prevailing view among PA and Fatah elite is that Hamas benefits first and foremost from any destabilization of conditions in the West Bank. Therefore Fatah and the PA view de-stabilization as destructive to PA and Fatah interests. In other words, it is believed that the PA cannot seriously confront Israel while the West Bank-Gaza Strip split lasts. Thirdly, the PA's lack of electoral legitimacy is seen as destructive to the ability of the president, Fatah and all other factions to mobilize and organize Palestinian masses against occupation. In this regard, questions are raised not only about the willingness of the Palestinian public to participate in popular campaigns, but also about the extent of PA's trust in the public willingness to make the sacrifices necessary for an effective confrontational strategy.

Advocates of the various directions among the Palestinian elite acknowledge also that potential risks and pitfalls related to the various approaches might also make difficult for the PA and civil society to embark on the road of political confrontation with Israel. For example, a popular peaceful campaign can easily, as in the past, turn violent and out of control and could soon turn into a third intifada. Indeed, there is no consensus among popular resistance activists on the definition of non-violent resistance, as many consider unavoidable some level of violence. Moreover, there is no consensus among the activists on what forms and tactics a popular resistance campaign should entail. The prevailing view within the PA elite and within the security sector is that the Israeli reaction to popular resistance, no matter how peaceful it is, is likely to be disproportionate and violent giving rise to demands for revenge. This expected Israeli reaction, it is believed, is likely to contribute to gradual demoralization in the PA security services, a development that might in turn contribute to greater prospect for armed violence. More importantly, lack of popular participation in such resistance in recent years seems to signal a deep divide between the public on one hand and the PA leadership and security services on the other: the public does not trust the leadership and the security services does not trust the public. Factional conflicts and mutual fear between Fatah and Hamas greatly reduce the motivation of these two factions to mobilize their bases for non-violent resistance. Fear of Hamas is seen behind PA efforts to end the recent popular demonstrations that erupted last October. Finally,

many express doubt about the ability of the Palestinians to organize mass popular action in the absence of a central figure or leader, such as a Gandhi or a Mandela.

Concern has also been voiced by some elite members and those in the business community about the likely impact of the boycott on the Palestinians. Given Palestinian total dependence on Israeli economic and administrative measures, a comprehensive boycott campaign might become more costly for the Palestinians than the Israelis. While an international BDS campaign is seen as effective, due to the huge size of the Israeli world-wide export, it is believed that a local boycott would hurt the Palestinians much more than the Israelis. For this reason, many argue that before embarking on a comprehensive boycott campaign, the Palestinians must first tailor their own economic system and priorities in a manner that allows for greater level of self-reliance. A gradual disengagement from the Israeli economy is viewed as a necessary prior step to any long term boycott approach.

Some, particularly within the PA security elite worry that an end to security coordination might dramatically increase the chances of Palestinian-Israelis armed clashes during incursions into "A" areas of the Palestinian territories and might make it extremely difficult for Palestinians to deliver security and enforce law and order in "B" and "C" areas. Indirectly, suspension of security coordination might also create a security vacuum allowing for a greater Hamas rebuilding of its armed wing, a development that is viewed by the PA as a severe threat.

One of the most significant aspects of Palestinian discourse on the costs and benefits of the various directions revolves around the concerns that an abrupt or sharp departure from the status quo might significantly impair the capacity of the PA to function and deliver vital services and might in fact threaten its existence. Some also argue that the Palestinian leadership is unlikely to take serious steps against Israel, such as the termination of security coordination or suspension of other Oslo obligations, as long as it believes that such measures might bring about an eventual PA collapse. Such collapse is seen as a grave threat, one that would deprive the PA leadership and the elite associated with it from its power base. Security coordination is also seen as the most effective means of preventing the eruption of violence or even a third intifada. In an interview in March 2016, president Abbas told Israeli TV that security coordination prevented the eruption of armed intifada: "If we give up on security coordination there will be chaos here. There will be rifles and explosions and armed militants popping up everywhere and rushing at Israel. Without security cooperation, a bloody Intifada would break out."[11] The head of the Palestinian intelligence service, Maj. Gen. Majid Faraj, told Defense News that since October 2015, PA security services have prevented 200 attacks against Israelis, confiscated weapons and arrested 100 Palestinians: "We are sure that violence, radicalization and terrorism will hurt us. It won't bring us closer to achieving our dream of a Palestinian state." For Faraj, security coordination provides a bridge to peace: "We fought for many decades in a different way; and now we are fighting for peace … So I will continue fighting to keep this bridge against radicalization and violence that should lead us to our independence." But even Faraj acknowledges the risks of continued facilitation of Israeli incursions into area "A": "But we really are at a crossroads. We see ourselves as powerless when the Israelis invade where we live … What can I tell my officers and the people we're supposed to protect?"[12] While most Palestinians and many of PA elite view security coordination as serving merely as a cover for a prolonged occupation, Faraj and Abbas

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[11] See Barak Ravid, "Abbas: Security Coordination With Israel Preventing 'A Bloody Intifada'" Haaretz, 31 March 2016: http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.712120

[12] See interview with Faraj: http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2016/01/18/keeping-isis-out-palestine/78939962/

view it as providing a peace-friendly environment on the road to independence.

Questions are also raised about the willingness of the Palestinian public to participate in any massive popular resistance campaign at a time when there is a large barrier of distrust and lack of credibility, as indicated above, between the public and the PA. On the other hand, it is feared that the PA, with its twin concerns about loss of control and PA collapse, might discourage such popular resistance because it does not trust the public's commitment to non-violence and to the tremendous discipline it requires.

Also, there is concern among the public and the elite about the efficacy of the whole internationalization efforts and those efforts that seek a return to negotiations at a time when the international community and the Middle East region are preoccupied with other more pressing issues. An overwhelming majority of the public believes that the Arab World has abandoned the Palestinians and that Palestine is no longer its principal cause. Moreover, it is believed that the international community and the major international players, due to the historical legacy and/or domestic considerations, cannot or will not impose sanctions on Israel or press it to respect its obligations under international law and that the US will continue to use its veto power to shield it from international censure. Even if efforts to renew negotiations succeed, very few Palestinians have any illusion about the international community's willing or ability to ensure Israeli compliance with terms of reference that are consistent with international law and practice.

The choices for the PA leadership are therefore not easy. It is not clear that the PA leadership or the public are ready yet for a confrontational strategy. Indeed, as indicated above, advocates of the new strategy believe that the risks involved in such a policy departure are enormous. To reduce the risks involved in a confrontational strategy, many see an advantage in gradualism, starting with small steps and tailoring each confrontational approach into practical and manageable measures that can be more easily implemented. Small measures from most or even all approaches can begin simultaneously but escalate, if necessary, gradually. For example, popular confrontations can be restricted to a selected number of areas under full Palestinian control before expanding to other areas including those under Israeli army control. The boycott can initially focus on settlements only, expanding later to other steps such as a full embrace of local and international BDS. Suspension of security coordination can begin by withholding PA security cooperation during incursions before expanding to passive or even active resistance to such incursions. Demands for rights can begin by focus on human rights and expand later to civil and political rights. Even a return to negotiations can be tailored to grow in intensity parallel to the escalatory ladder elsewhere in the other approaches. It is important however to point out that only in the context of such a fundamental policy departure by the PA and the PLO, can this graduated confrontational strategy see a place for unconditional resumption of negotiations, in bilateral or multilateral forms.

Gradualism has advantages. It makes it easier for the PA and the Palestinian public to cope with the likely costs and risks and learn to adjust expectations along the lines of a prolonged conflict. It can also help restore some of the currently absent public confidence in the PA and its leadership. By demonstrating resolve, the PA leadership might regain credibility at home and abroad and particularly among the Israelis. Gradualism might also provide space for the international community to step in and show greater resolve and determination to end the conflict.

What Directions? – List of Policy Papers, authors and commentators

#	Author	Title	Commentators
1	Dr. Sufian Abu Zaida	**Peaceful Popular Resistance…Is it a Feasible Option?**	Qais Abd al-Karim & Mr. Jamal Zakout
2	Mr. Sam Bahour	**Asynchronous and Inseparable Struggles for Rights and a Political End-Game**	Mr. Mohammad Daraghmeh & Mr. Radi Jarai
3	Dr. Ali Jarbawi	**Making Negotiation Viable**	Dr. Ayman Daraghmeh & Dr. Azmi Shuaibi
4	Mr. Raja Khalidi	**The Prospect for Palestinian Economic Boycott of Israel: Forms and Difficulties**	Mr. Fajr Harb & Dr. Ghassan Khatib
5	Mr. Hani al-Masri	**Is It Possible to Suspend Security Coordination?**	Dr. Naser al-Shaer & Dr. Husam Zomlot

What Directions? Members of the Task Force

#		Name	Organization
1	Mr.	**Qais Abd al-Karim**	PLC
2	Dr.	**Sufian Abu Zaida**	Birzeit University
3	Dr.	**Hanan Ashrawi**	PLO
4	Mr.	**Sam Bahour**	AIM
5	Mrs.	**Fadwa al-Barghouti**	Fatah
6	Dr.	**Ayman Daraghmeh**	PLC
7	Mr.	**Mohammad Daraghmeh**	Journalist
8	Mr.	**Fajr Harb**	Activist
9	Mr.	**Radi Jarai**	Al-Quds University
10	Dr.	**Ali Jarbawi**	Birzeit University
11	Mr.	**Raja Khalidi**	MAS
12	Dr.	**Ghassan Khatib**	Birzeit University
13	Mr.	**Alaa Lahlouh**	PSR
14	Mr.	**Hani al-Masri**	MASARAT
15	Mr.	**Saleh Rafat**	PLO
16	Dr.	**Naser al-Shaer**	An-Najah University
17	Dr.	**Khalil Shikaki**	PSR
18	Dr.	**Azmi Shuaibi**	AMAN
19	Mr.	**Jamal Zakout**	PNC
20	Dr.	**Husam Zomlot**	Fatah

Changing the Status Quo:

What directions for Palestinians?

September 2015-March 2016

Given the current stalemate in Palestinian-Israeli relations and the potential for wide-scale escalation in the near future, PSR has conducted a 6-month policy research on new directions for the Palestinians. The research sought to explore Palestinian discourse on the best means to move forward. Five short policy papers, written by senior Palestinian experts and academics, explore various approaches and directions for the PA to take (see list of papers and authors at the end of the report). All these directions are currently part of the Palestinian public and elite discourse. Each paper describes a specific approach, outlining its potential impact on the Palestinians and Israelis and exploring its contribution to a more effective Palestinian strategy to end the occupation. Each approach therefore represents a component in a larger proposed strategy. The five papers were reviewed and discussed by a core group of 20, a "Core Expert Group," made up of the five authors and fifteen reviewers and discussants. The discussion of the papers took place in six closed workshops attended by experts, policy makers, academics and activists. An open conference was organized on 29 February and was devoted to a discussion of all five papers.

This final report provides a political context and summarize the main findings of the research and the proposed strategy and its five components. The report examines the overall policy implications for the PA and the PLO. It is based on the five policy papers as well as the discussion and contents of the workshops, background research, elite interviews, and public opinion surveys. The discussion among the core expert group was very vibrant and insightful; for that, PSR wishes to express its appreciation for all members of the group (see list of names and affiliations at the end of the report) for the time and effort they have devoted to this work. However, the discussion among the members of the core group indicated at times serious differences of opinion. In this light, it should be made clear that this report does not necessarily represent the views of every single member of the core expert group. It only represents the analysis and the assessment of its author based on the reports, the discussions and the interviews.

PSR is also grateful for the support of the *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre* (NOREF) and the *Netherland Representative Office* in Ramallah without which this project would not have been possible. But it should be made clear that this support does not in any way mean an endorsement, on the part of these two organizations, of the content of the five papers or this final report.

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