

Anatomy of Another Rebellion

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Anyone watching the widespread clashes that engulfed the Occupied Territories in October and November 2000 must experience a sense of *deja vu*. The dramatic elements seem like a restaging of events twelve years ago. Young men armed with stones face the mightiest army in the Middle East, mothers mourn, nationalist symbols abound at martyrs' funerals — all covered instantaneously by the international media. Even the parades of masked youth carrying guns recall the chaotic ending of the first intifada. But in this second intifada, the various stages are more condensed, the killing more brutal, the reactions swifter and the media coverage more intense. The language of the uprising has already become the idiom of everyday existence — for participants and observers alike. Speaking on November 2 to the Voice of Palestine about besieged Bethlehem's need for food, the city's parliamentary deputy said: "We have to adapt ourselves to intifada days and non-intifada days." Non-intifada days? Mass insurrection has once again been superseded by quotidian life.

As in the first uprising, diplomatic stalemate followed by a series of dramatic events sparked a long-foreseen explosion. In 1987, a disappointing Arab summit, a settler killing of a schoolgirl and the death of seven Palestinian workers in a car accident triggered the uprising. In late September 2000, the breakdown of the Camp David II summit, followed by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Haram al-Sharif and the killing of demonstrators there the next day, detonated the situation. But in both cases deeper factors determined the sudden transition from a seemingly sedate and routinized system of control to widespread violence involving tens of thousands of young men and women ready to give their lives to bring the status quo to an end. The makeup of political forces and their ability to shape, support and give strategic direction to spontaneous actions will ultimately determine if, and how, the uprising leads to a reformulation of larger Israeli and Palestinian political strategies.

The crucial differences between the first and second uprisings emanate from their profoundly changed political and diplomatic contexts. Their consequences are also likely to be considerably different. The first intifada (1987-1993) came at a time of total political stalemate — the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the dispersal of the PLO and intensified Jewish settlement throughout the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli military was in full control of Palestinian population centers, and administered Palestinians' daily lives under conditions of direct colonialism. The uprising — a militant but essentially unarmed civil insurrection — put the Israeli military, and Israeli society at large, on notice that Palestine could no longer be governed by colonial rule. It shifted the political balance to the internal forces inside the Territories, and enhanced the role of civil society and its mass organization. It engaged a large sector of Jewish society in soul-searching and, ultimately, retreat from long-held beliefs. It also redirected the PLO leadership's strategic thinking in favor of a two-state solution based on UN Security Council Resolution 242 and the partition plan.

Ten years ago the Palestinians had a strong civil society, a colonial state and an amorphous internal leadership, the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU). The PLO directed, or attempted to direct, the movement by remote control from Tunis. Today in Palestine there is a virtual state apparatus in situ, headed by the relocated and expanded PLO bureaucracy, with a substantial and armed security apparatus and an elected parliament. The Palestinian Authority (PA) presides over a "peace process" which, after seven years, has left them and the population they rule penned into disconnected fragments of the Occupied Territories, encircled by ever growing settlements. Yet these new actors seem paralyzed at a critical moment of Palestinian history. Here we have a massive uprising supported by millions across the Arab world, but the participation of the Palestinian street itself seems limited: civil society is absent, the opposition parties' involvement is token, the government gives

almost no guidance and the legislative assembly is silent. How can we account for this?

Oslo: Original Deceit or Broken Promises?

The main political outcome (if not achievement) of the first intifada was the Oslo accords themselves. Early critics of Oslo who saw it leading to a continuation of occupation — either as apartheid pace Edward Said or as “occupation by remote control” pace Meron Benvenisti — most likely see vindication of their analysis in the current crisis. More important is how the political leaderships who signed the agreements understood them, and whether, over time, various Israeli governments actually changed their meaning.

Broadly, Oslo called for phased devolution of Israeli rule over the West Bank and Gaza, followed by negotiation of the thorny issues of settlements, refugees and Jerusalem as part of the final status agreements. Besides its original withdrawal from Jericho and Gaza, Israel would undertake three redeployments during the five-year transitional phase. The text of various agreements is not explicit on the amount of territory these three redeployments would return. But the PA and Palestinian supporters of Oslo assumed they would encompass all of the 1967 territories, save Jerusalem, the settlements and vaguely defined “military installations,” which would be left for final status. Such optimism first ran into trouble with the miserly second redeployment under Netanyahu. But in line with US thinking, optimists believed that the return of Labor would restore the original spirit of the agreement. Among other things, they failed to take seriously the fact that Ehud Barak, as interior minister in the Rabin government, had actually abstained from the vote on Oslo in its heyday.

Camp David

Barak never implemented a third redeployment. Rather, at Camp David (July 11-25, 2000) he insisted on moving directly to final status talks. Thus, the PA was forced to negotiate permanent status issues when they fully controlled only 18 percent of West Bank and Gaza territory and jointly controlled another 24 percent. The former (Area A) comprises urban centers, while the latter (Area B) is composed of built-up village areas. Barak's strategy sharpened Oslo's fundamental imbalance of power: whereas final status talks had been contingent on withdrawal from almost all the Occupied Territories, the third (and final) redeployment was now contingent on major Palestinian concessions on final status issues.

The Palestinian leadership always distinguished between concessions they had to make over transitional arrangements — internal mobility, bypass roads, economic agreements and water sharing — and firm stances in final status talks, particularly a stricter interpretation of Resolution 242. They presented the initial failings of Oslo as contingencies imposed by the need to bring the PLO home from exile before it could struggle for statehood from within the Occupied Territories. [1] As Oslo's failings mounted, logically the leadership would adhere even more strongly to these Palestinian "red lines" during final status talks. On one level, Camp David's breakdown is the product of the clash of these two contending logics: Israel expected continued Palestinian "flexibility" in return for more land area, while the PA had lost too much in the transitional stage to concede much on final status.

But there are major differences of opinion about what happened at Camp David. According to the official Israeli version, echoed by Bill Clinton, Barak made "first-time generous offers" which the Palestinian leadership rejected. Jerusalem — and specifically the Israeli demand that Israel have some form of sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif — was the stumbling block. Recently, new analyses are emerging about the content of Israeli offers,

about the causes of the breakdown of talks, and most importantly, about the strategies underlying Israel's behavior at the talks.

Jerusalem

Although Barak announced at the end of September that he favored the creation of two capitals for two states in Jerusalem, a published interview with Menahim Klein, advisor to chief Israeli negotiator Shlomo Ben Ami, shows what he meant by this. [2] According to Klein, Israel would annex the main bloc of settlements in East Jerusalem and expand Greater Jerusalem as far south as Gush Etzion near Hebron. The outlying Arab suburbs of East Jerusalem would be divided into an outer ring with full Palestinian sovereignty and an inner ring with only expanded autonomy. Muslim and Christian holy sites, and the Arab neighborhoods inside the Old City, would receive this "expanded form of autonomy but Israel would remain the hegemonic power" — that is, would retain overall sovereignty. Within this arrangement, metropolitan Jerusalem would be divided into Palestinian and Israeli municipalities, and would remain an open city, with no international borders or checkpoints.

Akram Haniyyeh, among the Palestinian advisors at Camp David, provides a different version. The crucial difference in the "American-filtered" version of the Israeli proposals received by Palestinian negotiators was that the Old City would not enjoy the same expanded autonomy as the "inner ring" neighborhoods. Instead, he relates, the Americans proposed a special status for the Old City in which the Palestinians would have sovereignty over the Christian and Muslim quarters, while Israel would have sovereignty over the Jewish and Armenian quarters. [3]

Haniyyeh's and Klein's versions of events dovetail on three main issues. Arafat rejected anything short of full sovereignty in all Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem. Proposed Israeli sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif

area was a critical element in ending the talks. The Israelis proposed a “vertically divided” sovereignty, in which the Palestinians would control the surface area of the Haram al-Sharif, and Israel would control the area below surface. The idea of shared sovereignty was stunning — no previous Israeli administration, Labor or Likud, had ever advanced such a notion. According to Klein, “It was on this point that the summit ended.”

Settlements, Refugees and End of Conflict

Three components of the Israeli offers on settlements were unacceptable to the Palestinians. [4] Besides the massive Etzion bloc mentioned earlier, two other blocs which intrude considerably into the boundaries of the proposed Palestinian state would be annexed to Israel. These three blocs house some 250,000 settlers, who would retain Israeli citizenship, but would include 80,000-100,000 Palestinians living within the enlarged bloc, who would be effectively disenfranchised. Most problematic within this arrangement was the complete encirclement of East Jerusalem with vast, newly expanded settlements such as Maale Adumim towards the east, and Har Homa in the south. Integrating the three blocs would mean that Israeli territory would reach in a long line from the eastern outskirts of Jericho westward to Beit Sahour, effectively splitting the West Bank in two. It would also seal Jerusalem off from its Palestinian hinterlands.

But behind Jerusalem loomed the more problematic issue of refugees. Under the guise of “family reunification,” Israel offered a symbolic return of a few thousand refugee families from Lebanon over a 15-year period. Israel also suggested the formation of an “international” fund for refugee resettlement in the countries in which they live, or for compensation. In return, the Israelis expected an “end of claims” and “end of conflict” statement from the Palestinian negotiators, meaning that any implication of Israeli responsibility for creating the Palestinian refugee problem would be forever buried. Such a statement would drive a wedge between Arafat and diaspora Palestinians, whom he would no longer be able to represent.

This demand, perhaps more than control over the holy places, constituted the main obstacle to success at Camp David. As Akram Haniyyeh expressed it, Barak wanted “the golden signature from the Palestinians” on a *carte blanche* for Israel. [5] Contrary to all major sources, Uzi Benziman also suggested in Ha’aretz on November 3 that it was refugees, not Jerusalem, that produced the stalemate at Camp David. “There is a growing impression,” he writes, “that even if Barak had agreed, at Camp David, to leave sovereignty over the Temple Mount in the hands of the Palestinians, the question of the right of return would have remained open, and in any event Arafat would have refused to sign a peace agreement that contained a statement declaring the end of the conflict and the renunciation of mutual claims.”

An Exit Strategy for Barak?

According to commentators on both sides, the issue of sovereignty over the Haram compound was raised after negotiations actually broke down due to the “end of conflict” clause. If the talks had already collapsed, then why did Israel demand shared sovereignty over the Haram at the last moment? There are three theories. One is that Barak wanted to keep Shas in his crumbling coalition and so offered a palliative to the religious right. This demand would also allow him to save face when his proposed concessions to the Palestinians were leaked. Or perhaps Barak got cold feet and decided to add an element into the negotiations which he consciously knew the Palestinians would reject.

The third theory — believed by most of the Palestinian negotiators — is that Barak, from the outset, went to Camp David intending that the summit fail. Calculating that he could not survive politically after making even limited concessions to the Palestinians, he opted to let them provide him with an exit from an agreement. According to a recent analysis by an Israeli

historian, Barak's actual agenda at Camp David was to create a crisis that would invite a Palestinian rejection. July 10, one week before the commencement of the Camp David talks, Dan Margalit, a journalist close to the Israeli leadership, wrote:

This is what should happen with the Palestinians: Barak should present them with proposals, which stipulate that he is willing to make concessions that are very difficult for Israel. If they are rejected, both the Arab and Western worlds will understand that Arafat is no different from Asad, for at the decisive moment, he preferred the convenience of the routine conflict to the audacity of bringing about peace.

The resemblance of Margalit's scenario to actual events is uncanny. While the actual Israeli concessions may seem stingy, Barak's public relations victory after the talks posed Israeli generosity against Palestinian intransigence. More intriguing is Margalit's suggestion, in the same article, that "whoever advocates a national unity government must internalize the need to set two conditions for its establishment: generous Israeli proposals and Palestinian refusal." [6] But of course, the formation of a national unity government (with Likud's Sharon) would halt peace negotiations entirely and bring Labor into conflict with the US. Such a coalition would only be acceptable to the US if the Palestinians became belligerent.

Whatever the Israeli intention, the idea of shared sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif raised the sensitive religious dimension — control over a highly contested sacred site — in the public arena. In raising the issue, and then granting a police permit and protection to Ariel Sharon to visit the site, Barak linked the humiliating deal offered at Camp David to the event that galvanized the Palestinian street. In the process, it was inevitable that protests would take on a religious character.

An Untenable Situation

The deeper backdrop to the current uprising is the Palestinian population's actual experience of Oslo. During Barak's tenure, negative processes begun under Netanyahu have deepened, rendering the situation untenable for most Palestinians, and unbearable for hundreds of thousands. First is the continued separation of the West Bank from Gaza. Movement between the two areas has remained almost completely restricted to a few of the political elite and, to a lesser extent, large merchants. While some 100,000 commuting workers (less than 5 percent of the population) can get permits to work in Israel proper, they — like the rest of the population — are denied permits to travel to the other part of the Occupied Territories. Even the long-awaited "safe passage" arrangements, finally implemented in 1999, turned out to be the hated permit system in a new guise.

Within the West Bank and Gaza (and particularly in the former), urban and built-up village areas have been fragmented and segmented from each other and from the land surrounding them. These so-called "autonomous" zones are marked off by bypass roads for the use of settlers, and by Israeli security zones (Area C), allowing the army to cut off any area at will. Amira Hass, writing in Ha'aretz October 18, says: "During these days of strict internal restriction of movement in the West Bank, one can see how carefully each road was planned: So that 200,000 Jews have freedom of movement, about three million Palestinians are locked into their bantustans until they submit to Israeli demands." Only within the municipal boundaries of towns does the population live outside direct Israeli military control. For those living inside the municipal boundaries of villages (Area B) and the unlucky people living outside municipal boundaries (Area C), occupation continues unabated.

Strategic settlement expansion and bypass roads effectively divide the West Bank into two major zones, north and south, and carve Jerusalem out from the Palestinian map. In greater Jerusalem, the policy of Judaization

has brought tens of thousands of settlers from inside Israel — many of them new Jewish immigrants — to settle the ring of colonies separating the city from its West Bank suburban hinterland. Simultaneously, the Israeli Interior Ministry undertook a campaign of withdrawing the residency permits of Palestinian Jerusalemites to transfer them from the city.

During 1998-2000, the West Bank and Gaza have witnessed a considerable expansion of Jewish settlements, especially attempts to connect settlements into major blocs so that they may survive final status talks. In the formula of the three zones, the lightly populated Area C, comprising the majority of Palestinian land — most of it agricultural — has effectively become up for grabs. Israeli security control of Area C, writes Hass, “enabled Israel to double the number of settlers in 10 years, to enlarge the settlements, to continue its discriminatory policy of cutting back water quotas for three million Palestinians [and] to prevent Palestinian development in most of the area of the West Bank.” Land confiscations to expand settlements in Area C have gone hand in hand with stepped-up house demolitions to further depopulate it, while settler attacks against olive harvesters became a regular occurrence during the autumns of 1999 and 2000. [7]

Two Intifadas

The elements of the overall situation leading to the current uprising make it qualitatively different from the preceding one. The first intifada — widespread and difficult to control — involved confrontations between the civilian population at large and the Israeli army and border police within the urban centers. The present uprising (except in Jerusalem and early clashes inside the mixed cities in Israel) is taking place at military checkpoints which mark the borders of towns or consolidate control over settlement roads (Netzarim crossing) or religious sites (Joseph’s Tomb, Rachel’s Tomb). By means of the new geography, the Israeli army can better confine the insurgency within specific locations and protect itself at secure strategic

positions. This narrowed “battlefront” has also allowed the greater militarization of the clashes. As Uri Avnery points out, while the military proclaims its use of attack helicopters, missiles and tanks, they don’t mention the main weapon being used — sharpshooters. “The sharpshooter is trained to look at a crowd of demonstrators, choose a target, take aim and hit the head or upper body.” The majority of the Palestinians killed have died in exactly this way.

Unlike the first intifada, there are now about 40,000 Palestinian police and security men under arms. Their presence allows, among other things, for easier justification of Israeli use of military force, despite the fact that official security forces were involved in clashes in only a very few cases. The much-touted Fatah tanzim — a murky designation that includes Fatah street cadre and elements of the Preventative Security Force — has undertaken the majority of armed actions. Armed Palestinian action succeeded in clearing the Israeli military from only one site, Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus. Given its vulnerability, Joseph’s Tomb could arguably have been cleared without the tanzim’s involvement. In most other cases where armed cadre got embroiled in clashes, demonstrators soon called them off, since the main result of their gunfire was that Israeli sharpshooters could exact a higher toll among civilians. [8]

During November, Palestinian military actions under the nominal direction of the tanzim took a new strategic turn, directing attacks at settlements, especially Psagot, Netzarim and Gilo. During the first intifada, the unarmed population was fearful of incurring the wrath of the well-armed and state-supported settlers and largely left them alone. But it isn’t just reduced fear that accounts for the second uprising’s focus on settlements. Twelve years after the first intifada, settlements have often expanded into the vicinities of Palestinian urban centers, and settlers have dramatically increased in numbers, as have their attacks on Palestinian civilians as part of their land piracy in Area C. Both sides now understand settlements as the tangible

cornerstone of Israel's ability to hold on to vast areas of the West Bank and Gaza beyond final status, and to sustain its military presence there indefinitely.

From National to Confessional

While Hamas emerged as a major force by the end of the first intifada, the religious character of that uprising was relatively muted. In comparison, religion has played a major mobilizing and symbolic role in the current uprising. Ironically, the participation of Hamas and other Islamic forces continues to be minimal, confined to raising the Hamas flag at funeral processions. [9] Nevertheless, since the issue of al-Aqsa triggered the uprising, religious fervor has at times engulfed the current conflict. This can be observed in the political idiom of the street, and in the PA's sudden stress on Islamic themes in the struggle over Jerusalem. Its can also be seen in reactions on the Israeli street. Following the damage to Joseph's Tomb after the expulsion of its Israeli garrison by Palestinian youth, Israelis burned mosques in Tiberias and Akka, attempted to burn one in Jaffa, and Palestinians torched the Jericho synagogue. During the second week of the uprising, several imams used the Friday sermon to emphasize Muslim-Jewish antagonism; these sermons were broadcast widely on Palestinian TV. In Gaza and Nablus, Hamas elements attacked several cafes and stores selling alcoholic beverages. The only official response to these sectarian attacks was a condemnation by the PA's minister of information who then called for national unity in the October 15 edition of al-Ayyam newspaper. A large number of Palestinian intellectuals have voiced their opposition to turning the national struggle into a communal conflict. [10] But the enhancement of the confessional and sectarian dimensions has diminished the secular dimensions of the struggle.

The religious dimension is what initially galvanized Palestinians inside Israel and led to a wave of clashes within its borders. Unlike the first intifada, the intensity and extent of Palestinian mass protest inside Israel

led to a major rupture between Arab and Jewish citizens, as the former were accused of attempting to “erase the Green Line” or worse, being “a fifth column.” [11] During the first week of the confrontations, 13 Arab protesters were killed inside Israel. This was followed by pogrom-like attacks on Palestinians in the city of Nazareth, and major clashes between Arabs and Jews in Jaffa, Lydda, Akka and Haifa. Major Israeli roads in the vicinity of Arab villages in the Galilee, and even the coastal highway, were cut off for days on end. Such events hadn’t happened since Land Day in 1976, and were what drove initial Israeli attempts to end the whole uprising quickly. The intensity of these protests also demonstrates the disappointments of Oslo for Palestinians inside the Green Line. Their exclusion from the Oslo framework had refocused their political aspirations upon full civic integration within Israel. The ongoing failure of the Israeli polity and political leadership to move toward making Israel “a state for all its citizens” undergirds their protests.

The Ubiquitous Satellite Dish

Arab news media absent during the first intifada have played contradictory roles in the current events. In the first intifada, Palestinians only had access to Israeli and, to a lesser extent, Jordanian or Egyptian stations. Except for Sawt al-Quds (Voice of Jerusalem), the short-lived pirate radio station of Ahmad Jibril, Palestinians in the early 1990s had nothing but the heavily censored local newspapers through which to disseminate views and analysis. Hence the first intifada’s dependence on “guerrilla media” — leaflets and graffiti — to propagate political directives on the street. This time around, Palestinian official media, as well as the myriad local independent TV and radio stations, cover the events. Given that the leadership has refused to enunciate a general strategy or plan behind the intifada, the official media have not been used to provide direction or instructions to the general populace. Instead, their role has been predominantly mobilizational — providing a constant flow of reportage on events, interspersed with nationalist music and iconography. Israeli accusations that official Palestinian TV “incites” the uprising ignore the fact

that during both intifadas, images on Israeli TV often “incited” the Palestinian street. Moreover, Palestine TV’s mediocrity and heavily censored reporting tends to make it the least popular of all stations. In this light, Israel’s aerial bombing of PA TV and radio installations had no strategic purpose.

But perhaps most significant is the access of the majority of the population to Arab satellite stations. Cheap and readily available, locally produced satellite dishes have become a ubiquitous part of the landscape. Qatar’s Al-Jazeera channel, Beirut’s al-Mustaqbal and LBC, MBC from London and ANN from Spain have all become household names, and almost all channels boast well-known local correspondents and crews. Arab satellite TV proffers almost constant and professional coverage of events on the ground. Just as importantly, these stations — particularly al-Jazeera — provide a steady diet of commentary from Palestinian and Arab analysts, political thinkers and leaders, which has helped define the meaning and goals of the intifada for the local population. Satellite stations have also been crucial in regionalizing the intifada. By providing a type and degree of coverage far beyond what is allowed on state-run television, they have mobilized much more popular Arab protest and solidarity than was possible in the first uprising. At the same time, this powerful image of Arab solidarity is projected back into the West Bank and Gaza via satellite. Not since the heyday of Nasserism have Palestinians felt that the entire Arab world (if not the regimes) is behind them.

But the Arab media have at times also contributed to the notion that the uprising is a religious rather than a national struggle. The most pronounced media failure has been an almost total inability to secure a fair hearing for the Palestinian side in the Western media. The poignant image of young Muhammad al-Durra cowering behind his father was powerful enough to speak for itself. But images of the “lynching” of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah probably tilted the media back to its predominantly pro-Israel

position. The lack of a PA media strategy for positively affecting Western public opinion is not new, nor is it surprising given that the PLO leadership rarely viewed Western public opinion as an important part of the political map.

Double-Edged Economic Sword

Unlike the early 1990s, today a sustained Palestinian campaign of resistance will rely on Palestinians' ability to reorganize their economy. The Israelis, in their turn, can target Palestinians' almost total dependence on the Israeli economy to undermine the intifada — barring entry of 125,000 workers daily to Israeli workplaces, blockading export of agricultural commodities outside PA-controlled areas, refusing to transfer import duties to the PA and threatening to cut off electricity and water. At the end of October, exactly 30 days after the al-Aqsa conflagration, PA Minister of Finance Zuhdi Nashashibi announced that the total losses for the Palestinian economy resulting from military encirclement were \$875 million — roughly the same loss incurred in an entire year during the first intifada. Economic experts consider Nashashibi's a conservative estimate. The United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), which monitors long-term economic trends in Palestine, noted that after considerable economic growth during 1997-2000 due to major investment in the public sector, and a significant reduction of unemployment to 11 percent in the first half of 2000, the clashes raised total unemployment at the end of October to 30 percent. Additional losses incurred by the public sector more than wiped out the benefits of donor disbursement to the Palestinians. [12] The October Arab summit's commitment of \$1 billion in aid, even if it arrives, will hardly compensate for these losses.

A striking difference between today and 1987, then, is the growth of new Palestinian economic sectors, and with them new economic interests, over the last six years. These include investments in infrastructure and the public sector, private capital investments and the small but growing

manufacturing and telecommunications sector. In most respects, however, the Palestinian economy remains the same: heavy dependence on Israel for power supply and employment of unskilled workers, as well as dependence on Israeli control of the conduits for exporting and importing commodities. But if the Palestinian economy is still primitive, the Israeli side is vulnerable for opposite reasons — its sophistication, centralization and deep integration into European and US markets. Intifada-type insurrections can be contained militarily but they wreak havoc on Israelis' sense of security, normality and well-being, acquired painstakingly over the last few years. Already Israel feels the uprising's effects in the demise of the winter tourist season, the threat to the agricultural sector and semi-paralysis in the construction sector. Palestinians are suffering considerably higher human losses than Israelis, but their secret weapon lies precisely in the rudimentary nature of their economy, which can withstand months of encirclement and strangulation, and in the tenacity of their unemployed and underemployed youth.

Weakened Civil Society, Absent State

But neither the more militarized nature of the confrontations, nor the new geography of resistance, can entirely explain the absence of a wider civil rebellion, which may be the Achilles' heel of the second uprising. Save for candlelight marches and funeral processions within the cities, the larger population has assumed virtually no active role in the uprising. This is clearly not by choice, but results from the disappearance of the political structures and movements that made popular, civil organizing the main thrust of the 1988-89 period of the first intifada. Popular committees, neighborhood committees, mass organizations and most of the political movements that sustained them began to collapse under the collective weight of Israeli anti-insurgency methods at the end of the first intifada. Their recovery was preempted by the Gulf war, and by the emergence of Oslo and the state formation process it set off. [13] The demobilization of the population and their deepening alienation from political action had been (until the current uprising) a salient outcome of PA rule. Currently, the only

structures remaining to organize civil resistance are the now “professionalized” NGOs and what remains of the political factions outside of Fatah. The NGOs’ lack of a mass base and focus on development and governance issues make them incapable of organizing at the mass level. [14] The left political factions are also incapable of mass mobilization, as they have never recovered from their post-Oslo political crises.

Given that under Oslo the PA came to hold a virtual monopoly on public life, it is ironic that during this critical period it is suddenly absent. To date, the political leadership has not publicly articulated any organizational or directive role for itself. Throughout October, the PLO executive, the Council of Ministers and the Legislative Council neglected to meet or issue directives. When the Legislative Council did finally meet on November 1, only 12 deputies attended, limiting their official communique to generic solidarity and support. [15] In contrast, during the first intifada, the leadership in Tunis rode the tide of the uprising and gave it essential political momentum. Under Abu Jihad, at that time the commander of the PLO’s “Western Front,” logistical support and strategic direction were transmitted through local Fatah cadres and the UNLU (Unified Leadership of the Uprising). Thus it is all the more startling that now, when there is a proto-state apparatus on the ground that no such political direction is forthcoming. Yet the leadership’s very presence in the Occupied Territories explains this. The PLO’s return to the West Bank and Gaza was part of a bargain in which it would assume a major role in “security.” For Israel and the US, this “security cooperation” with the PA has been the crown jewel of the accords. As such, Israeli-US calls upon Arafat to “stop the violence” did not simply accuse him of starting it; they demanded that he continue to fulfill his security duties according to the accords. The unannounced demise of security cooperation is perhaps the most powerful message that the PA has sent Israel in the current crisis.

Arafat did not start the current wave of protests, but he has used them and provided passive support through non-intervention. Although the PA has not formally “taken charge” of the intifada, its strategy of rule allows for its involvement through various “autonomous” bodies — most notably, the Fatah movement (tanzim) in the West Bank and, to a lesser extent, elements of the security apparatus.

The PA’s strategy of rule, according to a number of critical analysts, is based on the model of the PLO in Lebanon, adapted to the West Bank and Gaza. In Lebanon, the PLO conflated civil and political society into an all-encompassing movement. [16] Nothing stood outside the PLO, and within it, the boundaries between military bodies, political decision-making bodies and civil institutions were blurred. Over time, patronage became the main mechanism of power within the overall structure. [17] Within the West Bank and Gaza this model can be seen in the ongoing elision of political and civil institutions, democratically elected bodies residing side by side with a myriad of appointed political committees, or military wings performing multiple and contradictory roles. [18] While in the Lebanese context, the aim of this PLO strategy was mass mobilization, in the West Bank and Gaza the PA aims to coopt and control. One of this strategy’s main results has been the dilution of rule of law and democratically elected institutions.

The Benevolent Bystander

In the current situation, the formal apparatus of government and its “police force” stand back and allow the various wings of the broader “national liberation movement” to come to the fore. Fatah is the most active organizational player on the streets. The highly touted tanzim is not an official PA structure and the Kalashnikovs paraded by some of its members are privately owned and licensed, according to Ramallah’s chief of police. The new political structure that has entered the arena, the National and Islamic Higher Committee for the Follow-Up of the Intifada, is composed of all the political factions of the PLO plus the Islamic movements (Hammas,

Islamic Jihad and, separately, the Hamas-affiliated political party, Hizb al-Khalas). Significantly, the Committee does not call itself the “unified leadership” like the first intifada’s UNLU, but simply a “follow-up committee.” Its undated first leaflet indicates that the committee sees its role as providing support rather than actual leadership. The leaflet bears two other striking features: The PA is cast as a benevolent bystander rather than a leader, and the called-for actions bear a clear resemblance to the actions of the first intifada. Suggested forms of action include the formation of neighborhood defense committees, a boycott of Israeli products, the promotion of national products, the inclusion of women in activities and general calls for unity. If the leaflet articulates one clear goal, it is that coordinated efforts should isolate settlements and disarm settlers to encourage their departure from the Occupied Territories.

The Committee also published a calendar of events in the PA newspaper, al-Hayat al-Jadida, which gives day-by-day instructions to the population. Mostly, the instructions call for peaceful processions, but at certain times they also call for breaking the Israeli siege of towns and villages. However, most of the Committee’s 15 movements and parties have very limited mass bases and, to many, they represent a fossilized leadership that has been absorbed into PA rule. The exceptions are Fatah — which as the state party with access to patronage has expanded since Oslo — and Hamas, which as the main opposition to Oslo remained outside the PA’s circle until now. At the level of the street, Fatah will continue to be the main political movement in the intifada though its cadres are more attuned to undertaking armed action than of organizing civil rebellion. Hamas, with its history of victimization by the PA, has been reluctant to take a central role in the uprising to date.

Beyond the issue of leadership, the waves of protest also have a dynamic of their own. As in most popular revolts, multiple and often contradictory political processes are occurring. Although the popularity of Arafat and the

PA has probably increased during the intifada, a number of countervailing trends suggest that the street's support cannot be taken for granted and will ultimately have its own costs. An implicit bargain has been struck. Arafat is well aware that, unlike the 1996 "tunnel intifada," the street will not allow him to trade Palestinian deaths for the mere resumption of negotiations. This balance of anger makes it impossible for the PA to rein in the uprising before gaining a concrete victory. As long as Arafat sticks to this rule of thumb, his popular support will remain intact.

Limits of the Leadership's Vision

Underneath this support lies a growing critique of the PA's inability to provide basic logistical support to the civilian population during the intifada. No civil defense directives have been given to the public, nor any indication that they are prepared for critical eventualities such as water and electricity supply cuts or gas shortages. Palestinians see these omissions as signs of PA incompetence, or even worse, neglect. They are also loath to trust a government well-known for economic corruption with responsibility for dealing with the population's mounting economic losses. The weak performance of the PA is not compensated for by the limited vision and capabilities of the Higher Committee. In the current crisis, an unavoidable conclusion is that the historic leadership is incapable of basic governance and, at the same time, is unable to operate as a national liberation movement.

Near the end of October, leading PA figures finally began to address the public directly about the intifada at a range of forums sponsored by NGOs. The speakers included opposition intellectuals and political leaders who drew large crowds thirsty for information. The events were always widely covered by local radio and TV stations. At a November 5 mass rally in Ramallah, Minister of Information and Culture Yasser Abed Rabbo outlined what appeared to be the PA agenda. He first declared that the intifada should confine itself to peaceful protest, and abandon the use of guns,

which he believed was provoking disastrous Israeli retribution. He warned against a unilateral declaration of independence on November 15, arguing that this would simply provide an excuse for Israel to annex Area C and the settlement blocs. He went on to delineate three central objectives for the uprising. First, he advocated reconvening peace negotiations with Israel on the basis of withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries, a signal that the PA was reassessing previous indications that it would accept Israeli settlements in Palestine beyond final status. Second, he called for including the European Union, Egypt, Jordan and possibly Russia in negotiations to offset the pro-Israeli bias of the US. Third, Abed Rabbo called for an international police presence to protect Palestinian civilians — not merely a temporary buffer between the two parties but a semipermanent trusteeship over the Territories while their future is negotiated.

Abed Rabbo's calls for an international trusteeship and ending the US monopoly on negotiations resonated with public sentiments. However, his dismissal of armed resistance and his support for reconvening negotiations were bound to bring the PA leadership into conflict with more militant elements in the leadership of the uprising. Soon after Abed Rabbo's speech, Marwan Barghouti, speaking on behalf of Fatah alongside representatives of four main opposition parties, came out strongly for a program of escalation. But while all of the left factions supported a unilateral declaration of independence, Barghouti did not. Barghouti, head of the tanzim and new bete noir of the Israeli media, cautioned that a state had already been declared in November 1988. Now activists should focus on "how to sustain the uprising in order to ensure the end of occupation." No meaningful independence can be accomplished, he added, while the settlements fragment the Palestinian territories. Read together with Abed Rabbo's arguments, Barghouti's position suggests that the tanzim seeks to complement, rather than contradict, the strategy of the mainstream leadership.

This intifada has enhanced the role of Fatah, not as the party of the PA, but as a popular force capable of mobilizing the street and leading it in confrontation with the military and Israeli settlers. It also restored the legitimacy of Arafat as a national leader, both locally and within the Arab world, as a statesman who will reject Israeli and American diktat on final status arrangements. These two achievements have been secured, however, at the expense of consolidating the role of Palestinian national institutions, both at the state level, and at the level of civil society.

Third Redeployment or Military Stalemate?

If Abed Rabbo and Barghouti's statements are taken at face value, we can assume that the leadership has lately introduced strategic goals and methods for achieving them into the logic of the intifada. The immediate goal of bringing in a UN peacekeeping force and broadening the negotiating process to include other countries is to resituate negotiations firmly in the realm of international law, away from the direct influence of US and Israeli politics. Under the Geneva Conventions and UN Resolution 242, the settlements are illegal by their very nature, while under Oslo they are simply final status issues to be negotiated. An international peacekeeping force would hopefully publicize settlements' deleterious effects on the Palestinian population and harden international resolve to dismantle them. An international force, in place of the IDF, in the Territories increases the likelihood of removing most or all of the settlements peacefully. If the international community were not willing to enforce the ideal solution — the creation of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 boundaries — it might be willing to broker a third Israeli redeployment out of the Occupied Territories, on terms more favorable to the Palestinians and to positions much closer to the 1967 borders than Israel currently envisions. That redeployment would hopefully mandate dismantling more settlements than Israel currently assumes to be necessary. The Palestinian state that would result would not be so heavily truncated and would not come at the cost of an "end of conflict" clause.

In this context, the intifada becomes a means to keep the pressure up on a number of fronts. The continuation of civil unrest asserts that the status quo is untenable and that the leadership is unable to return to where Oslo left off, given that the population is in revolt against it. The harsh Israeli military response to the uprising helps justify an international peacekeeping force to protect the population or, at least, the need for a buffer between the civilian population and both the Israeli military and settlements. Limited armed actions against settlements send a message to settlers that they cannot live in peace in Palestinian territory and send a message to Israel that the financial and military cost of keeping settlements in place will be very high.

The settlement issue points to a major but less obvious flaw within the above scenario. Since its evacuation from southern Lebanon, the IDF leadership has become increasingly desperate to justify and sustain its level of power and centrality in the Israeli state. This explains why the current IDF chief of staff, Shaul Mofaz, keeps presenting doomsday scenarios to the Israeli cabinet about the potential escalation of the intifada into a full-scale regional war, followed by requests for larger military budgets. In addition, except possibly the case of Hebron, the past few years have seen a growing and conscious synergy between the army and the settlers — in contrast to their often conflict-ridden relationship before Oslo. The growth of permanent military garrisons at settlements with each new redeployment (all funded by US taxpayers) suggests the consolidation of this settler-army alliance. The extreme influence of the IDF and the military identities of both Barak and Sharon, and the possibility of a national unity government, portend at least an attempt to find a military solution to the intifada.

Here, it's worth remembering that the intifada arose in response to the outcome of Oslo's distorted logic, most clearly evinced at Camp David. Oslo's denouement saw final status negotiations taking place over the

minimal amount of 1967 territories that could be returned to the Palestinians for the maximum price — a final end to all political claims on the Israeli state. Since Barak has built his political career on the Oslo logic, a return to 242 or even implementation of the third redeployment along lines acceptable to the Palestinians would represent his political death. Part of his calculations probably go as follows: by linking the third redeployment to final status, he succeeded in plunging Israel into a major conflict which reverberates throughout the region. Simply implementing the third redeployment now would show that the immense costs of the intifada could have been avoided altogether.

A main outcome of the first intifada was Israel's realization that a final military solution was impossible. Again and again, Palestinians' tenacious resistance defied the huge weight of collective punishment and anti-insurgency measures deployed against them. Where the population may be short on organization or initiative, it is clearly long on the stubborn ability to survive under terrible circumstances, an ability developed over more than fifty years of necessity. All signs suggest that Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are willing to go through this again, and that the leadership is banking on their ability to do so. But this time, wary of replicating the Oslo predicament, Palestinians are less likely to allow the leadership a free hand in investing the intifada's political outcome.

Endnotes

[1] Mamdouh Nawfal, *Qissat ittifaq Uslu [The Oslo Agreement]* (Amman: Ahliyyeh Publishers, 1995). See especially pp. 289-98.

[2] Interview with Menahim Klein (with Graham Usher), *Publico* (Lisbon), September 14, 2000.

[3] Akram Haniyyeh, *Awraq Camp David [The Camp David Papers]* (Amman: al-Ayyam Publishers, 2000), pp. 42-43.

[4] Ibid., pp. 711-82.

[5] Ibid., p. 43.

[6] Both quotes are taken from Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Different Aspects of the Bloody Events," *Between the Lines* 1/1 (November 2000).

[7] For a systematic record of clashes between farmers and settlers during the second uprising, see http://www.alternativenews.org/settlers_violence/.

[8] Saleh Abdul Jawad, "The Intifada's Military Lessons," *Palestine Report* (October 25, 2000). He warns against militarization of the current intifada.

[9] The yellow banners of Hizballah, also ubiquitous at funerals, have been raised by nationalist groups rather than Hamas. Hizballah has no constituency on the ground in Palestine.

[10] See in particular Hasan Khader, "Khaybar, Khaybar ya yahud," *al-Ayyam* (November 6, 2000). He satirizes the radical religious slogans that have gained currency in the street. Khaybar is the name of the seventh-century battle at which Muhammad's army defeated the Jews of Medina.

[11] Yossi Dahan, *Yediot Aharanot*, October 19, 2000. See also Zeev Schiff, *Ha'aretz*, October 20, 2000. Schiff wrote, "We are experiencing a sharp shift from the sense that we are members of an affluent society to the realization that in times of disturbances, certain roads and highways in Israel, especially in its demographically mixed cities...might become hazardous for vehicular traffic."

[12] UNSCO, *The Impact on the Palestinian Economy of the Recent Confrontations, Mobility Restrictions and Border Closures* (Gaza, October 2000).

[13] For an analysis of this process, see Rema Hammami, "NGOs: The Professionalization of Politics," *Race and Class* 37/2 (1995).

[14] The most active NGO umbrella organization, the PNGO Network, has limited its actions so far to calls in the local press for a boycott on accepting money from USAID, and against continued participation of organizations in

shared Israeli/Palestinian projects. Additionally, they have set up a number of task forces, one of them to develop strategies for the internal situation. Many of the 120 member organizations are reviewing their activities in an attempt to make them relevant to the current crisis.

[15] Al-Quds, November 2, 2000; al-Ayyam, November 2, 2000. Parliamentary deputies were barred from travel from Gaza to the West Bank at Israeli checkpoints, and even within the West Bank, which partly explains the low attendance. On November 6, a well-attended second session adopted a resolution calling for an emergency fund for public-sector employment. Al-Ayyam, November 7, 2000.

[16] George Giacaman, "In the Throes of Oslo: Palestinian Society, Civil Society and the Future," in *After Oslo: New Realities, Old Problems* (London: Pluto Press, 1998). See also Giacaman, "Madakhil li-i'adat al-buna" [Approaches to Reconstruction] in *Ma ba'd al-azma: al-taghayyurat al-bunyawiyya fi al-hayat al-siyasiyya al-filastiniyya* [After the Crisis: Structural Transformations in Palestinian Political Life] (Ramallah: Muwatin, 1998).

[17] Jamil Hilal, *al-Nizam al-siyasi al-filastini ba'd Uslu* [The Palestinian Political System After Oslo] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1998).

[18] Rema Hammami and Penny Johnson, "Equality with a Difference: Gender and Citizenship in Transitional Palestine," *Social Politics* 6/3 (Fall 1999).

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