

THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY FORCES: PAST AND PRESENT CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to identify and discuss several dimensions which affect the effectiveness of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces in the field of security and counter-terrorism. The analysis will touch upon, in addition to technical and organizational aspects, also the historical, cultural and political background of the Palestinian society and the outcomes of the assistance provided by international actors, such as the United States and Italy. In doing so, it will be possible to better understand which are the main challenges faced by the Palestinian security system in a systematic way. There are two main conclusions to this research: 1) The Palestinian Authority Security Forces are still far from being considered a professional quasi-military corp; 2) Analyzing socio-political dimensions of the Palestinian case is fundamental in order to understand the environment from which the Palestinian security apparatus emerged and how it has evolved over the years.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present work aims at analyzing the security forces of the Palestinian National Authority, a quasi-military security apparatus whose purpose it is to guarantee order and security over the territories under both joint Israeli-Palestinian control and the Palestinian Authority's control. These security forces represent an interesting case study due to their specific and unique characteristics, which are the result of a complex environment in militarily, politically, and culturally terms. Indeed, this paper will focus not only on the technical aspects of the Palestinian Authority security forces, such as the evolution of their organizational structure over the years and the tasks of their main branches, but first and foremost the historical, political, social, and cultural features that affect them and their effectiveness on the ground on a daily basis. Through this broad analysis, it will be possible to identify the main security challenges faced by the Palestinian security apparatus through a different approach. While several authors focused more on one of the several aspects mentioned above (technical, political, military, etc.), this work aims at giving the reader a broader perspective of the topic discussed. This analysis aims at looking for and identifying the main features which affect Palestinian Authority security forces' effectiveness. Moreover, the purpose is to show how the security challenges are result of a combination of several factors, which interact between them and shape the Palestinian security apparatus.

Following a brief introduction on the historical background, which will give the reader the context in which the Palestinian Authority security forces were established and evolved, the analysis will move to a broader discussion of the main cultural features which characterize the Palestinian society and, therefore, also the nature of the security apparatus. Subsequently, it will be possible to analyze the organizational structure of the Palestinian security system, showing how it was in its early stage during the 1990s and how it changed over the years. Part of this section will deal with a deeper study of the tasks of each security branch, in order to better understand how the security forces are built and how they operate, or should operate. Following, the analysis will move to a case study, the battle for Gaza in 2007. This event can be considered the first test in which Palestinian Authority security forces faced a great security threat. Through the analysis of this event, it will be possible to

highlight those critical factors which affected the effectiveness of the Palestinian Authority security apparatus. Finally, the last part of this paper will analyze the consequences following the loss of Gaza by the Palestinian Authority. A specific focus will be on the international support provided by the United States and some European countries in training the Palestinian Authority security forces, support that showed to be partially useless in the battle for Gaza and which increased following said event. This section aims at understanding, first of all, why the international contributions were not effective in the period before the events in 2007 and why they basically failed in preparing and strengthening the Palestinian Authority security apparatus. After this, it will be possible to focus on the most recent years, in order to see if and how the international support improved training operations. Due to the fact that Italy plays a key role in training the Palestinian Police, the backbone of the Palestinian Authority security apparatus, part of this section will analyze the *Missione Addestrativa Italiana in Palestina* (Italian Training Mission in Palestine, MIADIT) carried out by Carabinieri, an Italian military-police corp which is involved in preparing and training Palestinian policemen on a daily basis.

Analyzing the challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority security forces is not relevant only for the specific context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The wide study over historical, political, cultural and technical dimensions of this quasi-military corp will allow the reader to understand which key factors influence the establishment, evolution and effectiveness of a security apparatus, regardless its country of origin. Nowadays, several Western countries are constantly involved in training foreign military, paramilitary and police units. Technical and operational dimensions are, most of the time, secondary aspects in comparison to the more important historical and socio-cultural aspects, because each security apparatus emerges from its specific and unique environment. Understanding this point is extremely relevant for those countries which aim at improving the effectiveness of their own security apparatuses or at helping other countries in doing so. Therefore, this work does not aim at giving answers or solutions to the problems which the Palestinian Authority faces on daily basis in matter of security. The goal is to identify and better understand these problems and challenges, moreover how they combine and interact with

each other. As Albert Einstein once stated: “If I had an hour to solve a problem, I’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about the solutions.”¹

The terminology used in the present work is based on the sources studied and analyzed, official documents, and authors’ points of view and opinions. Terms like “Occupied Territories”, “West Bank”, or “occupation” are not intended to represent a specific political meaning or perspective and do not express personal political orientations. Such terms are used as they are used by the authors quoted in this paper.

The schemes which show the organization and describe Palestinian Authority security forces’ tasks and changes in their structure over the years are based on the comparison between different sources. Nevertheless, due to the difficulty of matching different interpretations and sometimes different descriptions about such topic, it is important to mention that these schemes could be not totally correct and reliable.

Among the sources used, there are interviews’ transcripts and notes from personal discussions that I had with some authors. Upon their request, in order to guarantee their security and privacy, throughout the paper Col. G. will be referred to as Col. G, while Gen. S. will be referred to as Yoram Cohen”.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to Alaa Tartir², the evolution of the Palestinian Security Forces can be divided into three main phases: The Oslo Accords phase (also called “Arafatism” by the author), from 1993 until 1999; the Second Intifada phase, from 2000 until 2006; and the Fayyadism phase (from the name of the Palestinian finance minister in 2003, Salam Fayyad), from 2007 until 2013.

2.1. THE OSLO ACCORDS PHASE

The PASF grew out of the militias of Yasser Arafat, founder of the Fatah Party and the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from 1969 until his death in

1 Albert Einstein, “On determining the proper question by Albert Einstein,” *Gurteen*. Accessed February 26, 2018. doi: <http://www.gurteen.com/gurteen/gurteen.nsf/id/determining-the-proper-question>.

2 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 2-14. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

2004. During his leadership, Arafat created multiple militias with ambiguous and overlapping duties, in order to maintain his power over fractious and competing commanders³. Therefore, during this phase, the process of building-up the PA's security forces was neither inclusive nor transparent, but rather fraught with corruption and nepotism, and exposed to inside-outside leadership clashes⁴. At that time, the Palestinian leadership was not a unified identity. Because of this, the terms "inside leadership" and "outside leadership" were commonly referred, respectively, to the Palestinian leadership within the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian leadership outside the Occupied Territories.

Following the 1994 Cairo Agreement, a police force of 9,000 recruits⁵ (7,000 from abroad and 2,000 from the Occupied Territories) was established, in order to guarantee "public order and internal security within the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority⁶". In 1995 Yasser Arafat arrived in the West Bank and Palestinian forces were deployed in Areas A⁷. Overall, seven Palestinian cities (Jenin, Qalqiliya, Tulkarm, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron) were set to come under full Palestinian Police control (Area A); some 440 hamlets, villages and towns would come under shared Palestinian-Israeli security control (Area B)⁸.

The proliferation of security forces and nepotism were the main tools adopted by Chairman Arafat in dealing with the newly established Palestinian security sector. Indeed,

3 Kimberly Marten. "Reformed or Deformed? Patronage Politics, International Influence, and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces," *International Peacekeeping* 21, no.2 (2014): 182. Accessed February 22, 2017. doi: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13533312.2014.910404>.

4 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 2. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

5 In 1998, the number of security personnel reached between 30,000 and 40,000, increasing to 50,000 by 2000, and 53,000 by 2003. *Ibid.*

6 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 96.

7 The West Bank is divided into three administrative divisions, which are Areas A, B and C. Area A is exclusively administered by the Palestinian Authority; Area B is administered both by the PA and Israel; Area C is administered only by Israel. By 2000 the PASF had sole administrative and security control of about a fifth of Palestinian territory, in non-contiguous areas scattered around the West Bank and Gaza (Area A). The PA had civil administrative responsibility under IDF security control in other places (Area B), where the PASF was allowed to operate only in special circumstances and with the explicit permission of Israel. Israel retained sole administrative and security control in more than half of Palestinian territory (Area C), but these areas contained only 10% of the Palestinian population, and centered on Israeli agricultural settlements. International Crisis Group (ICG). "Who Governs the West Bank? Palestinian Administration under Israeli Occupation," *ICG Middle East Report*, September 28, 2004, 8. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/415c0c034.html>. See Appendix for the map of the different areas in the West Bank.

8 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 243.

the proliferation of security branches with competing tasks allowed Arafat to maintain control over the security establishment and to enforce his approach of divide-to-rule⁹. Additionally, he personally appointed the heads of security forces, who reported to him exclusively. This, in turn, contributed to an increase in the rivalry in their operations and to reducing the PASF's operational effectiveness.

The de-institutionalized mode of governance was coupled with an intra-Palestinian conflict between the inside and outside leaderships. Indeed, the issue of the creation of a Palestinian police force touched the sensitive inside-outside (*al-dākhil, al-khārij*) relationship in the Palestinian politics of that period and risked leading the two political wings to a split¹⁰. Since the early 1990s, when the idea of creating a Palestinian police force arose, the outside Palestinian leadership (based in Tunis) was concerned that the inside leadership in the West Bank could make a deal with Israel on the police issue to the detriment of the diaspora¹¹. When the PLO leadership returned from exile, a large scale reintegration of local Intifada activists and paramilitaries took place. Indeed, Fatah began to exert control over the newly opened PLO offices in the Occupied Territories¹², deeply influencing the recruitment process during this phase. Following a careful screening process of personnel selection, Fatah established its hegemony in the police and security forces. This was done by recruiting Fatah ex-prisoners detained in Israeli jails¹³ and precluding a large-scale recruitment of opposition militants. In addition, the police recruitment procedures were also used in order to repatriate exiled fighters in countries like Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Nevertheless, this undermined efforts at building a professional

9 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 4. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

10 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 106-112.

11 The Tunis PLO led by Arafat proposed international peacekeepers as an alternative to a local police force. When Israel proposed an early deployment of a Palestinian police force before an agreement was reached, Tunis countered the Idea by requesting that the PLO-loyal forces in exile, such as the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), should become the new police force. *Ibid.* 119.

12 The first calling for police recruits in the Occupied Territories was on 21 September 1993. The Palestinian police committee opened 14 recruitment offices in 9 Palestinian towns. *Ibid.* 134-135.

13 In the recruitment process there was also a specific focus on Palestinian prisoners and detainees jailed by Israel for political and/or security-related offences. The main reason for this is that, having served prison terms, it was a testimony of personal sacrifice for the Palestinian revolution. The preference for ex-prisoners contributed to strengthening the predominance of long-time Fatah cadres in the police force. In addition, the applications of ex-prisoners would have made the new police more acceptable to a Palestinian public deeply suspicious of police and security authorities. *Ibid.* 138.

police force: the lack of police training inside the Territories meant that there were hardly any personnel in the Palestinian police who both had police training and were familiar with the environment in which the police were supposed to work¹⁴. In addition, such policies contributed to delegitimize the whole institution, which was not perceived as a neutral national institution by the public¹⁵.

The idea of a non-politicized and “national” police force was unfeasible at this stage and it was inevitable that police recruitment and training assumed a strong political dimension. Therefore, professionalism and qualifications became a secondary concern¹⁶ compared to *wāsta* (nepotism), which became the main marker of merit¹⁷.

2.2. THE SECOND INTIFADA PHASE

The failure of the Camp David and Taba Peace Summits in 2000 opened a new round of violence which ended in a new Intifada. On the 12th of October 2000, a major incident in Ramallah signaled the PA’s security forces engagement in the Intifada. On that day, the PA police stopped two Israeli soldiers in plain clothes and dragged them to the main police station where they were beaten, stabbed, and killed¹⁸. This event led Israel to launch airstrikes against PA security targets. For his part, Arafat deliberately promoted militarization of the conflict so that the Israelis would target the Palestinian Authority. Being a target of Israel’s attacks would salvage the PA’s legitimacy amongst Palestinians who had become increasingly alienated by widespread corruption within the bureaucracy, lack of accountability and disregard for human rights¹⁹. Nevertheless, the major threat to Israel during the second Intifada was the wave of suicide bombings, which led to many casualties among the Israeli population. This eventually led Israel to launch Operation Defensive Shield in March 2002. The destruction of the PA forces’ capabilities, capacities and resources created a gap that was soon filled by other armed groups, such as Hamas.

14 *Ibid.* 213.

15 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 5. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

16 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 132, 139.

17 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 5. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

18 *Ibid.* 6.

19 Hillel Frish, *The Palestinian Military. Between militias and armies*, (Routledge, New York, 2008), 93.

Non-statutory security actors entered the scene at the same pace at which the PNA's administrative infrastructure disintegrated. Islamist armed groups such as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas) or the Al-Quds Battalions (Palestinian Islamic Jihad – PIJ) started to combine their paramilitary activities with law-and-order functions; in addition, new actors emerged such as the Fatah-affiliated Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades²⁰. This security vacuum was fraught with consequences: the PA security sector began facing governance challenges and losing trust from the Palestinian public, who perceived the other armed groups as more trustworthy and legitimate than the PA actors²¹.

The rising influence of non-PA actors was a threat to Israeli security as well. Thus, under Israeli and international pressure, the PA was forced to reform its security sector and forces. In June 2002 the PA announced the so called 100-Day Reform Plan, aimed at restructuring the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and modernizing its apparatus. Nevertheless, a new security doctrine started to emerge only in 2005 following the death of Arafat. Promoting the slogan “one law, one gun, one authority”, the new President Mahmoud Abbas declared his determination to establish the PA's monopoly of violence as the main priority²². Overall, it is possible to identify five levels within the PA security sector reform: 1) structural reorganization through merging numerous security forces, disbanding the Special Forces and the Special Security, and reactivating the National Security Council; 2) commence working on a White Paper to establish a normative-legal framework for the security sector; 3) initiation of the Civil Police reform program with the establishment of the EU Police Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) to assist the PA in improving its law-enforcement capacity; 4) embarking on tentative Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes, such as dismantling Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades; and 5) improving the capabilities of the PA security forces through better human

20 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. “Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform,” *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 20. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

21 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 6. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi.22>

22 *Ibid.* 9.

resource management, increase in salaries and benefits, and local and regional training²³. Nevertheless, according to the Report of the UK Department for International Development:

The PASF lack a monopoly over the means of violence. Israel continues to control significant portions of the West Bank. Communications between West Bank and Gaza are difficult. Command and control of the PASF is factionalized and personalized. There are overlapping responsibilities among the different services and no unifying doctrine. The security services have limited political support, and there is an inadequate legislative framework to guide them. The judiciary is weak. Parliamentary and other forms of oversight are virtually non-existent. Following the Second Intifada, the PASF face deep infrastructure and equipment gaps. They also have a relatively high number of ineffective personnel, in part because employment in the security services has been and continues to be used as a form of social safety net. The PASF are affected by low morale and a degree of apathy, deriving to some extent from the prevailing political environment. The culture of secrecy inherited from the Arafat era persists and there are perceptions of corruption within the security sector²⁴.

Yet, the biggest challenge to the Palestinian security reform derived from the unexpected victory of Hamas in the 2006 Parliamentary elections in Gaza. The overwhelming victory of Hamas in the elections reflected a radical change in the internal Palestinian balance of power. For the first time since the reemergence of the Palestinian national movement, the incumbent force consisting of the PA, Fatah, and the security forces, had clearly lost its hegemonic control²⁵. Soon after this political change in the Gaza Strip, the PA-Hamas unity government dissolved and clashes between PA security forces and Hamas militias erupted. This new phase of fragmentation and instability ended in June 2007 following the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas. In the aftermath of these events, Hamas controlled Gaza and the Palestinian Authority while Fatah controlled the West Bank.

2.3. THE FAYYADISM PHASE

After declaring the state of emergency, President Mahmoud Abbas appointed Salam Fayyad as the head of the emergency government. His main priorities were to establish a monopoly of violence by the PA security forces, to modernize and professionalize the security

23 *Ibid.* 9-10.

24 Nicole Ball, Peter Bartu and Adriaan Verheul. "Squaring the Circle: Security-Sector Reform and Transformation and Fiscal Stabilization in Palestine," *UK Department for International Development Report* (2006): 19. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: <http://transparency.aljazeera.net/files/385.PDF>.

25 Hillel Frish, *The Palestinian Military. Between militias and armies*, (Routledge, New York, 2008), 152.

apparatus²⁶, and to replace the patronage links of the old Fatah leadership inside the PASF with new patriotism toward the West Bank government²⁷. Regarding the last aspect, in Fayyad's point of view the only alternative to chaos in Palestine following the events in Gaza was to eliminate the corruption practiced under Arafat, so that PA would be perceived (both by Palestinians and the international community) as a legitimate, law-abiding, and high-functioning state²⁸. In establishing a PA monopoly of violence, Fayyad's first move was a weapons cleansing process in order to render dysfunctional the military groups committed to armed resistance of Israeli occupation. Regarding the modernization of the security apparatus, the Palestinian Prime Minister reorganized the security forces into six main operational branches and two smaller ones, with formal control divided between the PA presidency and the Minister of Interior²⁹. In addition to the modernization process, the technical assistance provided by the two international bodies involved in training the PA security forces, the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) and EUPOL COPPS, increased following Hamas' coup in the Gaza Strip³⁰. Thanks to these domestic and international efforts, the PA security forces received better equipment, training and education. In addition, this phase saw also an improvement in counter-terrorism cooperation between the Palestinian security forces and the Israeli counterparts. Nevertheless, according to Yezid Sayigh³¹, the large level of outside support has hindered rather than helped the West Bank security sector. Even if USSC and EUPOL COPPS contributed (and still contribute) to professionalize and train the Palestinian security forces, the attention only to the technical assistance and the lack of an integrated approach weakened the Fayyad government's control over its security sector, due to the fact that the rebuilding of the security sector had been provided without democratic governance and a constitutional order.

26 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 11. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

27 Kimberly Marten. "Reformed or Deformed? Patronage Politics, International Influence, and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces," *International Peacekeeping* 21, no.2 (2014): 187. Accessed February 22, 2017. doi: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13533312.2014.910404>.

28 Kimberly Marten. "Militia Patronage vs. the Diffusion of Professionalism: The Palestinian Security Forces," *Barnard College and the Harriman Institute, Columbia University* (2013): 20. Accessed July 10, 2017. doi: https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/isa_paper_2013_pasf_militias_and_diffusion.pdf.

29 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 12. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

30 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

31 *Ibid.*

Moreover, the extensive international support discouraged PASF commanders from undertaking serious reform, since they did not have to make difficult choices about priorities or take full responsibilities for planning, budgeting, and service delivery in under-prioritized sectors. Finally, the security sector was still led by officers loyal to the previously dominant movement Fatah. The international support to the PASF strengthened the Palestinian population’s perception of a security sector which is highly politicized and which answers more the leadership’s needs than those of the people. In sum, the reinvention of Palestinian security forces during the Fayyadism phase showed several pros and cons. On one hand, the security sector improved its law-and-order capabilities. On the other hand, the security sector failed to generate a genuine institutional capacity to design, plan, and conduct training indigenously³². Moreover, despite Fayyad’s efforts to instill a patriotic ideology within PASF, and although a new generation was hired into the security forces, family and neighborhood connections still mattered in determining how to employ the PA security forces³³. Strong familiar ties and interests³³, therefore, still had a great impact on operational decisions. Also the improved cooperation with Israel in counter-terrorism and the American and European assistance caused side effects. The mistrust towards PA security forces grew within the Palestinian public who considered this security collaboration at the expense of Palestinian security and as a way to criminalize resistance and to create “new Palestinian men”³⁴.

3. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE PALESTINIAN SOCIETY AND THEIR INFLUENCE WITHIN THE SECURITY SYSTEM

For the purpose of this work, it is fundamental to analyze and bear in mind the pillars of the Palestinian society in order to better understand in what kind of environment the Palestinian security system developed and which core challenges it faced during the years. Indeed,

32 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 13. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

33 Kimberly Marten. “Reformed or Deformed? Patronage Politics, International Influence, and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces,” *International Peacekeeping* 21, no.2 (2014): 193. Accessed February 22, 2017. doi: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13533312.2014.910404>.

34 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 14. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

before looking at the organizational structure of the PA security forces, it is necessary to step back and to analyze which core components characterize a Palestinian as an individual and member of his society. Each member of the Palestinian Police, Presidential Guard, or General Intelligence is first and foremost a man, with familial ties, political orientations, and religious beliefs. Because of that, the Palestinian people, as an entity, are characterized by a vast array of competing group identities, which affect the structure of the society on a daily basis. The absence of a Palestinian nation-state is probably the main factor which contributed to create a fertile ground for the growth of alternative identities that are not necessarily national and which, in many cases, interact, clash and even mix each other. Overall, it is possible to distinguish four main competing identities within the Palestinian society: tribal-familial, national-Arab, Islamic, and distinct Palestinian-nationalist³⁵. Since the foundation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 until today, it is possible to assert that tribal-familial, Palestinian-nationalist, and Islamic identities had the greatest impact on the Palestinian society³⁶ and each of them has been represented by three distinct types of actors: Clans and families; Palestinian National Authority and nationalist factions (such as Fatah); and Islamist non-statutory actors (such as Hamas). Therefore, the focus of the present chapter will be on these three identities and categories of actors.

3.1. THE TRIBAL-FAMILIAL IDENTITY

The tribal-familial identity is predicated on the blood relations and local loyalties within a traditional society, in which primordial relations are of utmost importance³⁷. It is important to note that, in the Palestinian arena, one of the most important entities³⁸ within the tribal-familial identity is the clan³⁹ (locally called *hamula*). In the Palestinian territories, *hamulas*

35 Ephraim Lavie, “The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State” in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 121.

36 *Ibid.* 129-134.

37 *Ibid.*

38 According to Yoram Cohen, clans are among the most powerful and influencing actors within the Palestinian society. Yoram Cohen, interview by Francesco Dotti, April 3, 2017.

39 A clan, like a tribe, is a group of people who claim common ancestry through their fathers’ male line and thus share the same family name. Many anthropologists showed that claims of common male ancestry are often a fictitious tool intended to strengthen political partnerships between unrelated groups of people. In the Palestinian case, the process is usually made simpler by claims of descent from a vague overarching tribe that several *hamulas* belong to. Dror Ze’evi. “Clans and Militias in Palestinian Politics,” *Crown Center for Middle East Studies* 26, (2008): 2. Accessed May 16, 2017. doi: <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications1/meb/MEB26a.pdf>

have become a focus of political activity and major hubs of local power⁴⁰. Following the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada and the subsequent weakening of the central government, the extended family framework of identity gained strength, leading more and more people to turn to the family and tribe for protection and support⁴¹. It is possible to understand this trend looking at the fundamental role played by families and tribes within the Palestinian social framework. These two entities, which are characterized by interfamily solidarity and mutual assistance, constitute the cornerstone of Palestinian society. For years, family and tribe heads were publicly involved on the local level. In the West Bank towns, heads of the families were used to meet informally to resolve problems by negotiation. In some West Bank villages, refugee camps and the Gaza Strip, some clans even became paramilitary groups, patrolling their quarters and sometimes taking part to raids against their perceived enemies⁴².

It is not surprising that the ideas of national struggle and development of a sense of belonging to society constituted a challenge to family and tribal identity⁴³. On one hand, the rise of a young urban leadership threatened the basic values of family and tribe, which saw the risk that familial bonds and loyalties could be substituted by ideological and political commitment to the Palestinian nation. On the other hand, Islamic identity also contributed to marginalize the familial component of the Palestinian identity, due to the fact that it placed national and familial values in a secondary position in respect to the Islamic ones.

Paradoxically, the failure of the Intifada in 1987 allowed the resurgence of family identity. Many of the young nationalists who led the first Intifada turned to the traditional leadership as the parties involved in the popular struggle failed in reaching the national goals. In addition, the absence of a determined and effective central government led a lot of Palestinians to rely on customary law in order to resolve conflicts and combat the rise of crime, further strengthening the role of traditions within the society. The return of Yasser Arafat following the Oslo accords changed this trend and the role of Palestinian clans was,

40 *Ibid.* 4.

41 *Ibid.* 4.

42 *Ibid.* 3.

43 Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State" in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 128.

once again, challenged. Indeed, most of the PLO leaders abroad did not belong to the leading families of Palestine and for some years the nationalistic spirit prevailed within the Palestinian population, obscuring the role of clans and families. Even if the new Palestinian elite did not have the enthusiastic backing of the clans, its leaders were perceived by the locals as legendary heroes of the resistance. They were perceived, basically, as the future⁴⁴. Nevertheless, the influence of clans and families over the Palestinian political arena remained strong and pervasive, even during these years in which the nationalist identity was revitalized thanks to the return of Arafat from the exile. Indeed, according to Ephraim Lavie⁴⁵, families and tribes deeply influenced the PNA's exercise of control over the population in three main directions. First of all, tribalism began to integrate and expand in the political arena. This blurred the national character of Palestinian society and of the PA, while bolstering conservative and traditional trends that obstructed the development of a class structure and a multi-party system. Even after the Palestinian National Authority was established, the new political entity did not introduce profound changes in the existing social order, mostly because this was unlikely to have success. Indeed, the PA leadership had to face a traditional society in which the ties and loyalties between Palestinians and notable families were still stronger than other frameworks of affiliation. The Palestinian national identity is relatively young in respect to the familial one and this is probably the main challenge faced by the Palestinian leadership since it became the formal authority⁴⁶. Therefore, the only possible solution in order to cope with such a reality was to integrate the notable families (including their economic institutions and traditional social frameworks) into the new ruling elite in order to not lose the control over the Palestinian public⁴⁷. Secondly, as a consequence of the previous point, kinship and tribalism hampered the performance of the government, due to the fact that civil servants were primarily appointed on the basis of their family affiliation, and less for their merit and professional skills.

44 Dror Ze'evi. "Clans and Militias in Palestinian Politics," *Crown Center for Middle East Studies* 26, (2008): 4. Accessed May 16, 2017. doi: <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications1/meb/MEB26a.pdf>.

45 Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State" in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 134.

46 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

47 Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State" in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 132.

Finally, customary law prevailed, in many cases, over other forms of law and this perpetuated the rift within the Palestinian society, leading the Palestinian leadership to allow the use of traditional laws and therefore preventing the government from implementing effective measures in order to run the society. The PA recognition of customary law is highlighted also by the development of a specific branch within the PA security forces, the so called County Guard or Governorate Security (*Amn al-Muhāfaẓa*), a kind of police corp whose main task was to mediate and solve local quarrels between members of different families⁴⁸.

Over the years, the decline of the PA’s ability to deliver effective government and sufficient services pushed many Palestinians to seek refuge in the private sphere of the family. The weakness of the Palestinian National Authority had also other consequences. Due to the paralysis of the legal and law enforcement systems, customary law became more relevant in solving local disputes⁴⁹. Indeed, clans are also mediating bodies and when small or big disputes occur, inter-clan mediation process kicks in⁵⁰. In many of these inter-family disputes also members of the security organs abided by customary law in order to avoid escalations and confrontations with the local population. The fact that disputes and feuds were settled by committees that adhered to traditional custom instead of governmental offices, further hampered the unification of the society and strengthened the clans’ position of power. Therefore, despite the presence of a leader such as Yasser Arafat who, as previously mentioned, adopted an hegemonic approach in ruling all the aspects of the society, the PA had no choice but to deal with and accept the non-secondary role of clans and families within the Palestinian arena.

Following Arafat’s death and the end of the second Intifada, the importance of families and tribes became even greater. As it happened during the first Intifada, the second

48 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

49 Ephraim Lavie, “The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State” in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 137.

50 Mediation between two sides involved in a dispute begins with setting the terms of a truce (*‘atwa*). Usually, the offending clan nominates a prominent family member known for his knowledge of the law, who is asked to “put on the clan’s clothes” in order to speak on behalf of the clan. The final phase of negotiations is often a public meeting of the clans involved in the dispute, during which a final settlement (*sulha*) is negotiated. Dror Ze’evi. “Clans and Militias in Palestinian Politics,” *Crown Center for Middle East Studies* 26, (2008): 5. Accessed May 16, 2017. doi: <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications1/meb/MEB26a.pdf>.

Intifada in 2000 permitted a resurgence of clans' prominence within Palestinian society. Once again, *hamulas* became the most viable governing structures in place. In the cities, villages, and semi-nomad communities, with the waning of central authority and as access to economic and political resources became strained, clans were the only social institutions able to cope with the challenges, provide for food, and defend the weak elements of the society⁵¹. Under the security point of view, the second Intifada also witnessed a breakup of Palestinian security services into smaller groups led by local commanders and, in many cases, by self-appointed warlords. This allowed the clans to boost their own forces and to build up more effective fighting forces than PA security forces and to become a fundamental source of support for the Palestinian factions, such as Fatah and Hamas. Indeed, when tensions between these two escalated in 2006-2007, both groups relied on local clans to support their militias. Some families proved to be able to maintain their local power regardless their support to one faction or the other and regardless the results of the disputes. For example, when Hamas decided to detain and disarm some members of the Gaza-based Hillis family, which supported Fatah in the fights in the Gaza Strip in 2007, the Islamist movement encountered tenacious resistance and was force to retreat and allow the clan to keep its weapons⁵². As noticed by Yoram Cohen⁵³, the *hamulas* are complex and multi-dimensional entities which embed social, economic and even military dimensions. Usually, each *hamula* relies on its own paramilitary forces, composed by family members, and its own arsenal of weapons (in some cases not only guns and rifles, but also rocket launchers). According to the author, owning a weapon has also a cultural meaning in the Palestinian society in addition to practical aspects, like solving local disputes with other *hamulas*. Perceived as a symbol of “manhood”, many young male Palestinians possess a weapon and this habit always represented a challenge to the Palestinian Authority in being the only entity in owning the monopoly of violence.

In conclusion, clans are invariably anchors of individual identity within the Palestinian society in all its aspects, regardless of whether they are small or big. First of all, during difficult moments clans function primarily as welfare institutions and represent a

51 Ibid. 4.

52 Ibid.

53 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

“safe shelter” for their members. Strong clans also offer protection from attacks, due to the fact that they can rely on their own militias. Offenders think twice before attacking a house or robbing a store that belongs to a powerful family. Finally, clans are also a body of law, being the main entity which mediates and deals with local disputes. Therefore, due to all of these features, it is possible to assert that the tribal-familial identity put itself in deep contrast with other identities, mostly the nationalist one, and probably represents the main competitor of the Palestinian National Authority within the Palestinian arena. As Dror Ze’evi states, every Hamas or Fatah member is first and foremost a member of his or her family. When the organization acts in a manner that contradicts the interests of the clan, in most cases the individual will side with the family rather than with the organization⁵⁴. Regarding this specific point, as Shlomo Brom points out⁵⁵, going out from the Western mindset, which would label such tendencies as “corrupted”, would allow to better understand the fundamental concept of “loyalty” within the Palestinian society. A corrupted policeman, in the eyes of a Palestinian, would be that one who put the interests of his organization in the first place instead of those of his family, and not vice versa. Therefore, ignoring clans’ role, alienating their leadership, refusing to interact with them, or simply ignoring the strong ties that each individual has with his family or clan, would surely result in failure to assert any governmental control by the PA.

3.2. THE PALESTINIAN-NATIONALIST IDENTITY

The Palestinian-nationalist identity is grounded on civic solidarity and the geographical bond to Palestine. Historically, this identity was embodied by the Palestinian Liberation Organization founded by Arafat, which engaged in the politics of a national liberation movement. For the most part, this entity relied on activities on a national scale and was not organized along familial-tribal or ethnic lines. It enlisted the support of the population in the Occupied Territories for the national struggle, but all the activities were placed under the purview of the PLO leadership⁵⁶. Nevertheless, since the PLO functioned in exile until the end of the 1990s, the national leadership could not operate within the Palestinian society

54 *Ibid.*

55 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

56 Ephraim Lavie, “The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State” in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 125.

and establish a state framework. Therefore, once it became the official leadership, the Palestinian National Authority lacked, from the early phase, the necessary ties with the local population and the requisite enforcement tools of state with which to directly control society, cultivate a sense of national consciousness, and inculcate a territorial identity⁵⁷.

Nowadays, the nationalist identity faces several challenges, such as the incapacity to be as strong as the tribal-familial identity and therefore to strengthen its ties with the local population, and the difficulty to build an effective counter-narrative in the face of the stronger and better organized Islamic identity. For example, in order to deal with the other competing identities, familial loyalties and mostly radical Islam, the nationalist leadership tried, during the years, to build the idea of a Canaanite past in Palestine. This idea was intended to strengthen the claim of an uninterrupted presence of the Arab Islamic Palestinian people in Palestine since the earliest times. In addition to the national element, the Canaanite narrative contained religious elements, so that it could be acceptable to the Palestinian Islamic movement and avoid putting the Islamic-Arab identity in a secondary place⁵⁸.

Nevertheless, the lack of legitimacy is probably the main challenge faced by the Palestinian National Authority, mostly today. Overall, the dispute between different identities relies on who is the legitimate source to rule the society. Nowadays, Islamic and tribal-familial identities are stronger than in the past and more popular among the population due to the fact that the nationalist leadership is perceived as lacking the tools and rights in order to govern. Within the Palestinian society, the concept of legitimacy is extremely relevant and it can partially explain why the nationalist leadership has been losing power in recent years. Legitimacy is made by two main components, strictly correlated to each other: *Shar'iyya* (legitimacy through elections) and *Marji'iyya* (source of giving orders). Once the leader is legitimated and backed by the society, only then he will be able to be perceived and seen as the sole authority to give orders⁵⁹. In the last three-four years, President Mahmoud Abbas' biggest challenge has been the lack of legitimacy in the

57 *Ibid.* 126.

58 *Ibid.* 130.

59 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

eyes of the Palestinian population, which does not see any practical result coming from the political agenda of the nationalist leadership. The President is seen as an authoritarian ruler who is not backed by popular support and his security forces are perceived as protectors not of their own people, but of a corrupted regime which cooperates with Israel and favor the Israeli presence in the West Bank⁶⁰. As a consequence, the Palestinian Authority is losing the so called *Hībat al-Dawla*, the reverence (mixed with fear and respect) for the state by the local people. Therefore, as Yoram Cohen states⁶¹, the Palestinian center of power, or *Muqāṭa'a*⁶², is threatened by *Fawḍa*, the return to a state of social chaos and disorder. According to the same author, for the specific Palestinian case, *Fawḍa* is made by three main components: *infīlāt amni*, the loss of control over the people by the leadership; *fitna*, dissension or discord among people of the same society; and *fasād*, corruption. All these three elements, called the “three F” by the author, contribute to deeply weaken the Palestinian national leadership in face of other competing actors.

3.3. THE ISLAMIC IDENTITY

The Islamic identity is embedded in the people’s Islamic-religious consciousness and represents a type of identity in deep contrast with the other two, mostly the nationalist one. For the purpose of this work, the focus will be on the Islamist orientation of the Palestinian Islamic identity, due to the fact that Islamism, and not Islam in general, can be considered the biggest threat to the Palestinian Authority.

The Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Islamist organization founded in Egypt by the scholar Hassan al-Banna in 1928, was the first actor within Palestinian arena to raise the banner of Islamic identity and consider Palestine a part of a large Islamic state. Indeed, unlike the Ba’thists⁶³ and Arab nationalists, who both raised the banner of pan-Arabism, the Muslim Brotherhood identifies pan-Islamism as the basis to define the collective Palestinian political identity. Indeed, the Islamist movement remained committed to the primacy of social Islamization, not confrontation with Israel, because in the eyes of its leadership it was

60 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

61 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

62 Literally, *Muqāṭa'a* indicates the group of buildings in Ramallah from which the Palestinian political leadership rules. This term is also used to indicate the Palestinian centre of power in general. *Ibid.*

63 Ba’athism is an Arab nationalist ideology which promotes the creation of an unified Arab state. Therefore, the focus of this ideology is on the Arab identity and culture, not on the Islamic religion.

impossible to separate Israel from a larger campaign by the West to discredit and undermine Islam⁶⁴. Therefore, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood differed from its nationalist counterparts in the strategy adopted in order to establish a Palestinian state: Before confronting the Israeli occupation, a genuine Islamic society must be created first. Nevertheless, starting from the 1980s, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood began to divide along class and ideological lines. An activist middle stratum consisting primarily of university-educated men from the lower middle class emerged and started challenging the leadership. In the Islamist activists' point of view, confronting the Israeli occupation and Islamizing Palestinian society should be done simultaneously, due to the fact it is not possible to struggle in order to obtain political power in absence of a purified society, and vice versa⁶⁵. The result of the internal dispute within Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood was a coup by the middle stratum of the movement against its leaders and the subsequent establishment of Hamas.

The Islamic movement of Hamas represents not a break with the Muslim Brotherhood, rather its necessary reorganization in order to frame the specific issues of the Palestinian society. During the first Intifada, Hamas promoted an ideological and political alternative to the Palestinian secular nationalism and saw the *jihad* as the main tool in order to liberate Palestine. Therefore, following the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, the conflict with Israel is seen by the Islamic movement not as a conflict over the borders of a secular state, but as a struggle for the Muslim and Arab existence in Palestine⁶⁶. During the years, Hamas succeeded to draw an absolute correlation between Palestinian identity and Islam, assimilating part of the nationalist identity. As Glenn Robinson highlights⁶⁷, the powerful fusion of religious and nationalist elements within Hamas' narrative is made by five main frames:

64 Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement" in *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 120-121.

65 *Ibid.* 121-122.

66 Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State" in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 127.

67 Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement" in *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 130-135.

- *Palestine is waqf*. From Hamas' point of view, Palestine is a religious endowment (*waqf*) given by God for all time exclusively to Muslims. Therefore, no man or government has the right to negotiate away part of the *waqf* to non-Muslims. Implicitly, such belief is totally in contrast with the politics and the ideology of the Palestinian Authority which promotes the establishment of a Palestinian state only in Gaza and in the West Bank.
- *Islam is the solution*. Following the powerful phrasing "Islam is the solution", Hamas states that Palestine was lost, in part, because Arabs turned their backs on Islam. Only by embracing Islam, through the path of *Jihad*, can Palestine be won back.
- *The Jewish conspiracy*. Hamas, like most Islamist groups, is fundamentally anti-Semitic⁶⁸. According to the Islamist movement, Jews, helped by the United States, prevent Palestinians from acquiring what it is own to them through a great conspiracy. By framing the conflict as a result of such conspiracy, Hamas produces a powerful message, which is taken by many people as truth and which absolves the Palestinians of their weaknesses.
- *Patience*. The concept of patience (*sabr*) is used by Hamas to justify strategic and tactical decisions. For example, during the Oslo accords' phase, the Islamist movement refused the implementation of such agreements, stating that the peace process will fail on its own. Once Oslo collapsed, Hamas was in the position to confirm what it "predicted", enhancing the credibility of its message. On the tactical side, *sabr* allowed Hamas leaders to take contradictory decisions and positions towards Israel, justifying them as interim solutions in the eventual liberation of all Palestine, and to justify even long periods of inactivity or truces with the enemy. For example, following the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Hamas was able to frame such event through the lenses of its message: Patience allowed the Palestinians to step forward in the struggle against the Israeli occupation.
- *Hamas offers a more authentic nationalism*. As already mentioned, Hamas was able to draw a correlation between the Islamic identity and the nationalist one. It succeeded in doing so by framing nationalism in a different way and suggesting its

⁶⁸ Hamas sees the conflict in religious terms, not nationalistic. This can be noticed, for example, by the fact that the Islamist movement refers to its enemy, Israel, as "Jews" and not as "Israelis".

variant of nationalism, which was presented as more powerful and authentic. In Hamas' point of view, nationalism is not in contradiction with religion. Nevertheless, while other nationalisms (like the secular Western ones) are concerned with material, human, and territorial causes, the nationalism of the Islamic movement has all this in addition to more important divine causes, which make such nationalism pure in nature. Therefore, by accepting Hamas' vision of nationalism, a Palestinian can simultaneously support the Islamist movement and still view himself as a Palestinian patriot.

Through the analysis of the pillars of Hamas' message is possible to identify where the strength of the Islamist movement relies on: the Arab-Israeli conflict has, by nature, a nationalistic feature which is deeply felt by the Palestinian people. On the other hand, Islam is an organized idea, it is broader than other nationalistic narratives and more motivating⁶⁹. Therefore, the combination of the nationalistic identity with the Islamic one gave Hamas a powerful tool to attract people to its ideology. In the first years of 1990s, following the Oslo accords, the Islamist movement had the opportunity to strengthen its position within Palestinian society, thanks to the political changes that occurred in that historical phase. On one hand, the Palestinian Left⁷⁰ received a great blow from the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communist ideology; on the other hand, Fatah (Hamas' main adversary) officially transformed itself from an oppositional movement (to Israel) to a governing one once it became part of the Palestinian National Authority⁷¹. Due to these events, and after the failure in implementing the Oslo accords, Hamas became the best alternative for those Palestinians who were disillusioned and disappointed by the ruling leadership.

The elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006 represented another great opportunity to Hamas to consolidate its position mostly in the Gaza Strip. This event showed how the Islamic narrative had greater impact on the people. The Palestinian population, at that time, felt the need for a shake-up in the leadership. The loss of faith in the ability of the new president, Mahmoud Abbas, to end the occupation by political means,

69 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

70 The Palestinian Left was composed primarily by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestinian People's Party (PPP).

71 Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement" in *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 126.

the intensification of the divisions within Palestinian society, the doubts concerning the very foundations of the government, and the abrupt suspension of the nation-building process contributed to spread among the Palestinians a deep feeling of mistrust towards the PA leadership⁷². Hamas, taking advantage of this crisis, offered an Islamic response to the weaknesses of society and government, following the slogan *al-Islam huwa al-hal*, Islam is the solution. Therefore, during the elections, the Islamic movement successfully matched national and Islamic objectives⁷³ in a way that they could face the new geopolitical reality and the wishes of the people.

Nevertheless, the political and religious narrative of Hamas is not the only strong point of the Islamist movement. Hamas is also a social movement with an institutional base and uses social and institutional infrastructure in order to enhance the people's Arab and Islamic identities. In addition, Hamas provides many types of social services other than the political ones, such as mosque-based services, medical services, and educational services⁷⁴. One of the most important mosque-based institutions was the Islamic Association of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Mujamma' al-Islami*) which combined religious and social activities for the Palestinians. Since its foundation in 1973, the *Mujamma'* transformed the mosques in multi-dimensional institutions, building schools, kindergartens, clinics, hospitals, charitable associations, sports clubs, and nursing schools. Therefore, mosques became not only a place of worship but a provider of social services as well. When the Muslim Brotherhood morphed into Hamas in 1987-1988, the *Mujamma'* and all of its institutions went into Hamas, which kept providing the same services and strengthening its position within Palestinian society⁷⁵. In the medical and educational realms, Hamas established the Scientific Medical Association in 1997 as a counterweight to the Red Crescent Society, and strengthened its position in the universities (mostly the Islamic University in Gaza) relying on faculty and student bodies. Over the years, all these institutions, particularly the medical

72 Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State" in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 138.

73 See Appendix for a list of the main objectives of Hamas' agenda for the elections in 2006.

74 Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement" in *Islamic Activism. A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 127-129.

75 *Ibid.* 127.

ones, provided a large support to the Palestinian population, challenging more and more the Palestinian Authority's reputation.

All the components of the Islamic identity, framed in Islamist terms, mentioned above deeply contributed to create further challenges to the unification of the Palestinian society. Over the years, entities which promoted Islamist values, such as Hamas, have become more and more powerful and rooted into the society, posing, therefore, a great challenge to the Palestinian Authority, promoter of a more secular nationalist identity, in exerting control and influence over the population.

Concluding the present section, it is possible to understand the importance of the socio-cultural background of the Palestinian society and the rivalries between different types of identities. As already said, before moving to a deeper analysis of the structure and organization of Palestinian security forces, it is fundamental to contextualize the PA security apparatus into its social environment. Understanding the importance of competing identities within Palestinian society allows to understand some of the core challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority in being the only official entity and in being recognized as such by the population. Moreover, this analysis allows to notice how political changes affects the PA's ups and downs of power and influence. Whenever the Palestinian nationalists faced crises, such as the failure of the first Intifada (then led by the PLO) and of the Oslo accords, other entities got stronger, filling the sense of vacuum of many Palestinians. On one hand, families and clans strengthened their positions within the society following those moments of crisis in which the official authorities were not able to provide fundamental services. Nowadays, for example, the still present rivalry between Palestinian factions, such as Fatah and Hamas, contributes to strengthen clans' power. Clans pose multiple challenges to the PA leadership and undermine the establishment of a strong and unified government due to the fact that the competition between different entities spreads a feeling of anarchy among the population, pushing it to rely more on the protection offered by the family and not by the government⁷⁶. On the other hand, Islamist groups proved to be able to take advantage of the political impasse in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, highlighting the

76 Dror Ze'evi. "Clans and Militias in Palestinian Politics," *Crown Center for Middle East Studies* 26, (2008): 6. Accessed May 16, 2017. doi: <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications1/meb/MEB26a.pdf>

incapacity of the Palestinian National Authority in reaching its political goals and in answering the needs, both material and ideological, of the population. As it is possible to imagine, such struggle within the Palestinian society, which includes familial loyalties, politics, ideology and religion, have had deep consequences on the PA security apparatus, limiting Palestinian security forces in being effective to provide law and order.

4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY FORCES

This chapter will focus on the analysis of the PASF’s organizational structure, its branches and units, and its evolution from the early 1990s until the security reform of 2005. Focusing on these technicalities is important in order to better understand the changes of the Palestinian leadership’s security agenda over the time and therefore the nature of the PA security sector. Through the analysis of each specific branch and its role within the Palestinian security system it will possible to identify further characteristics and challenges to the PASF’s efficiency.

A broad definition of the Palestinian security forces is given by Graham Usher⁷⁷, who defines them as a quasi-state body entrusted with enforcing “security”. According to Gal Luft⁷⁸, the Palestinian security forces can be described as a hybrid force, something in between an army and a police force. A military force differs from a police force because of structural differences, tasks, and responsibilities. The former refers to an armed body with the objective of protecting territorial borders, skies, and coasts of the state from external threats, and in many cases also against domestic threats⁷⁹, while the latter is generally defined as “an organization of people, usually uniformed, employed to maintain civil order,

77 Graham Usher. “The Politics of Internal Security: The PA’s New Intelligence Services,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no.2 (1996): 24. Accessed January 25, 2017. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538181>.

78 Gal Luft. “The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 51-55. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

79 Military organizations employ armed personnel organized in formations of varying sizes (platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, divisions, and corps). A general staff is usually responsible for the deployment and operations of the forces during times of war and peace and coordinates the work of the different units. The mandate of the general staff is to direct military operations according to the instructions and directives of the political leadership. Finally, a military force is characterized by a well-developed officer corp, the backbone of the military organization responsible for recruiting and training soldiers for the different units.

to prevent and investigate crime and to bring criminals to book⁸⁰”. During Arafat’s presidency, the PA became the most heavily policed territory in the world, with an officer-to-resident ratio of 1:50⁸¹. In addition, almost 75 percent of the total force was not assigned to any law enforcement duties. Therefore, although PASF were commonly referred to as “Palestinian Police”, three-fourths of their officers were not technically police officers⁸². On the other hand, the Palestinian security forces lacked fundamental components that ought to exist in any military establishment, such as a well defined and organized officers’ corp, a general staff apparatus, and training of military formations. To summarize, the PASF, during the Arafat phase, were a hybrid force, too complex to be a regular police force, too underdeveloped (both organizationally and militarily) to be considered an army.

Along the years, the PASF underwent several changes in their structure, mostly after the reform under Abbas’ presidency. Nowadays, according to Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold⁸³, the Palestinian security sector (including also entities other than the Palestinian Authority) can be divided in five different categories of actors: 1) *Organizations authorized to use force*, which include the Internal Security Forces, National Security Forces, and branches such as Presidential Security/Force 17, Presidential Guard, General Intelligence. 2) *Civil management and oversight bodies*, which include President, Prime Minister, National Security Council, customary and traditional authorities, and financial management authorities. 3) *Justice and law enforcement institutions*, which include Regular courts, Shari’a and religious courts, and military courts. 4) *Non-statutory security forces*, which include Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (military wing of Hamas) and Al-Aqsa Martyrs

80 Accountability is an important issue with regard to the police because of their involvement with civil liberties. They are concerned both with enforcing the law and capable, at times, of breaching it. In addition, two main factors influence the conduct of police forces in this context. One is the degree of force accompanying their constraint. In some countries the police forces are not armed, while in many others they are armed and also used in a paramilitary capacity. The second factor is the recruitment of police forces from areas in which they patrol which help them to understand the local people. On the other hand, this results in their sharing the prejudices of the inhabitants and may encourage corruption, especially in big cities. Hence the problem of policing the police and dealing with complaints against them. This may be best done by some regulatory body, or legislative committee. Frank Bealey, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science* (UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 245.

81 The U.S. ratio for police officers and sheriff’s deputies, in contrast, is 1:400.

82 Most of them were assigned duties relating to regime preservation and preventive action against the PA’s Islamist opposition, as well as the protection of Area A borders and cooperative work with the IDF under the definitions of the Oslo Accords.

83 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. “Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform,” *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 16-17. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

Brigades (Fatah affiliated armed groups). 5) *Non-statutory civil-society groups*, which include professional groups, media, religious organizations, and other non-governmental organizations⁸⁴.

For the purpose of this paper, the analysis will be mostly focused on the first group and its ties with the second one, due to the fact that they represent the core of the PA security sector.

4.1. THE PASF DURING THE ARAFAT PHASE

During the ten years of Yasser Arafat's presidency (1994-2004), the PNA had a centralized decision-making system with strong authoritarian and neo-patrimonial traits⁸⁵. The first element which characterized this phase is the direct control Arafat had over the various PNA security organizations. The Palestinian leader succeeded to exert his control over all PASF's branches thanks to the strategy of "divide to rule", establishing different organizations with overlapping or parallel functions and fostering competition between their commanders⁸⁶. For example, while the "Inside" Fatah organization⁸⁷ and its Revolutionary Security Apparatus served as basis for one prominent police/intelligence organization (the PSA), the range of security agencies, intelligence units and guerrilla forces based in Tunis and at other PLO outposts coalesced into a variety of new police branches, creating a situation of overlapping and competing security organs⁸⁸. The second characteristic of this period is the proliferation of the security organizations. For example, regarding the

84 See Appendix for an extensive list of the PA security sector's categories.

85 *Ibid.* 19.

86 For instance, several conflicts saw Preventive Security versus General Intelligence, Preventive Security versus Special Forces, National Security Forces versus Military Intelligence, Presidential Security versus Presidential Guard, Presidential Security versus Naval Police, and Special Security Agency versus the so called External Security in Tunis. Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 48. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi:

[www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf):20.

87 As a reminder, before the return of Arafat from the exile in Tunis, the PLO leadership was divided between "Inside" and "Outside". The former indicated the leadership within the Occupied Territories, while the latter indicated the leadership in exile. Basically, the clash between these two wings concerned the decision to define who decided what.

88 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 307.

intelligence units, Arafat proceeded to establish new organizations (not mentioned in the Oslo Agreements), such as the Special Security and the Special Forces⁸⁹.

Overall, during Arafat's presidency, it is possible to identify several prominent challenges which characterized the structure of the Palestinian security forces:

- As already mentioned, the proliferation of statutory security forces and the difficulty of defining their different functions can be considered the main challenge to Palestinian security forces' efficiency⁹⁰. At that time, there were, for example, eight different bodies dealing with intelligence⁹¹ and anti-opposition related activities⁹². Their overlapping responsibilities often led to street clashes, confusion, inefficient work, and-in more extreme cases-battles over blurred jurisdictions⁹³.
- Strictly linked to the first point is the personalized, neo-patrimonial style of governance of Arafat⁹⁴. Arafat built the forces in such a manner that only the PA chairman could arbitrate in the clashes and rivalries between commanders, making the coordination between services complicated.
- Another challenge came from a weak human resources management. A limited number of specialized personnel was assigned to a whole range of different forces, hampering the systematic application of their knowledge. In addition, many security personnel were assigned duties that they had not been trained for⁹⁵.

89 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 20. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

90 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 3. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

91 Depending on how they are classified, the number of intelligence bodies could range from four to nine units. Graham Usher. "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no.2 (1996): 23. Accessed January 25, 2017. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538181>.

92 One important reason for such abundance of intelligence-related services was the PA's necessity to constantly monitor and be wary of Hamas' and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's activities, in order to diminish the political threat they posed. The intelligence services, therefore, represented Arafat's emphasis on counter-opposition and counter-terrorism activities and his attempt to weaken Islamist activities as much as he can. Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 50. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

93 *Ibid.* 49.

94 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 3. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

95 For instance, combat officers and soldiers of the National Security Forces were ordered to provide personal protection for PNA officials or to guard PLO offices; PLO air force personnel, including pilots and technicians, were employed in police functions and not in civil aviation. Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security

- A further challenge can be defined as legitimacy and trust gap among actors⁹⁶. Within PASF, three distinct groups of generals were represented in the security establishment. The first consisted of PLA veterans who arrived in the territories in 1994 as part of the Oslo Accords and were appointed to some of the most senior positions⁹⁷. These generals brought with them varying levels of military experience. Nevertheless, they were considered as “outsiders” who did not actively participate in the intifada and this affected their credibility and status in Palestinian society. Strong popular support was given to the second group of leaders, those who represented the heritage of the Palestinian struggle for independence⁹⁸. In his effort to maneuver between the two schools of commanders, Arafat gradually introduced a third group of officers, who were brought to the Territories from abroad to command the more sensitive security bodies⁹⁹. These officers were known to be extremely loyal to Arafat.

Therefore, the presence of officers with different backgrounds, social statuses and reputations within PASF’s branches represented an additional challenge to Palestinian security forces’ efficiency, combined with competing roles and rivalries between them. This allowed Arafat to prevent the formation of a cohesive general staff with excessive power.

- Factional and non-transparent recruiting process was a challenge as well¹⁰⁰. The PA’s method of selection of security forces’ personnel was basically undefined and largely based on political affiliation and loyalty to the regime rather than on

Organisations,” in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. “Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform,” *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 49. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

96 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 3. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

97 These men included Nasr Yusef, commander of the General Security Service, simply known as the Palestinian Police; Abdel al-Razzak Majaideh, commander of the General Security Service’s Gaza units; and Ziad al-Atrash, representative to the Liaison Security Committee with the Israelis. Gal Luft. “The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 50. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

98 Jibril Rajoub and Muhammad Dahlan were the most important. *Ibid.* 50.

99 Brig. Gen. Amin al-Hindi, head of the General Intelligence, was the main figure in this group. *Ibid.* 50.

100 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 3. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

intellectual and leadership qualities¹⁰¹. In addition, there was not a clear promotion policy. Some officers were dismissed or banned from taking higher positions on the basis of personal disputes, while others were promoted on the basis of “loyalty” parameters¹⁰².

- Another challenge to Palestinian security forces’ efficiency, strictly linked to the previous one, was the large-scale recruitment of Fatah members into the security organizations. Although the majority of Fatah officials did not have any prior military or policing experience, they were given military ranks equal to the serving officers. Therefore, this led to the blurring of distinctions between military and political security work¹⁰³.

In conclusion, under Arafat’s presidency, the work of the PNA security organizations was marred by confusion over remits and responsibilities, inefficiency, and sometimes even open confrontation between different branches. The PNA modelled its police and security units on the Arab *mukhabarat* (intelligence services) state, preferably the Ba’thist model of Syria and Iraq consisting of a system of competing agencies so as to concentrate maximum power in the hands of the political leader¹⁰⁴. Therefore, confusion, inefficiency, and confrontations were not side effects of the leadership’s policies, rather a wanted outcome.

4.2. UNITS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PASF (1994-2005)

During the ten years from its establishment until the reform of 2005 under Mahmoud Abbas’ presidency, the PA security sector saw expansion and proliferation of security branches. This paragraph aims at describing the PASF’s organizational structure in the period 1994-2005 and identifying the main security branches with their roles and tasks.

101 Gal Luft. “The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 54. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

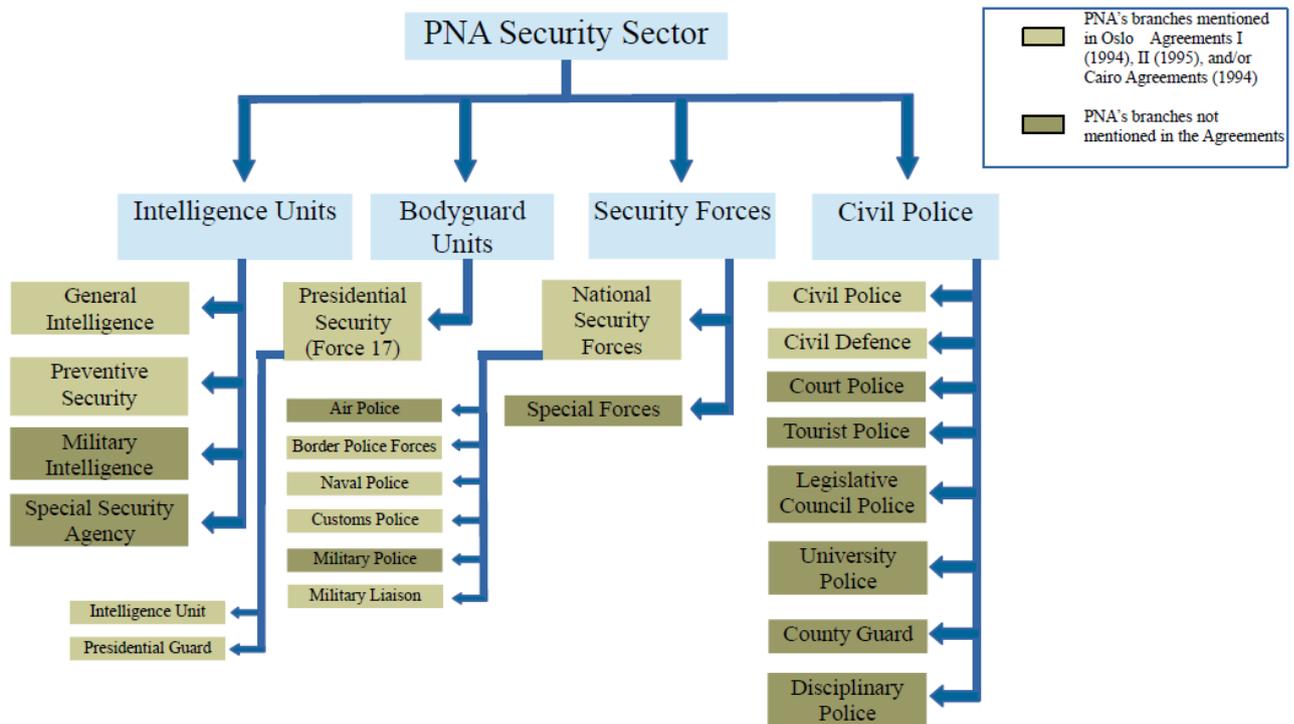
102 Ahmad Hussein. “Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations,” in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. “Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform,” *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 49. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf):20.

103 *Ibid.* 49.

104 In addition, instead of relying upon a unified command headed by a director-general as stipulated in the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, or delegating supervisory powers to a minister of the interior, Arafat formed in 1994 the Supreme Council for National Security (SCNS), a body of some thirty to forty members inefficient in providing coordination, guidance and unity of command. Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 307-308.

The following scheme provides an overview of the main PASF units divided in categories, so to have an idea of the structure of the PA security sector of the decade 1994-2005.

Scheme 1. PASF Units' Categories (1994-2005).¹⁰⁵



General Intelligence

The General Intelligence Service (GIS) was established in late November 1993, when Arafat decided to merge the previous United Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency into one intelligence Forces agency. The former agency was headed by Colonel Amin al-Hindi, the latter by Hakam Bal'awi. When the two agencies merged, a tripartite leadership of al-Hindi, Tariq Abu Rajab and Fakhri Shaffurah was established¹⁰⁶. Al-Hindi became the

105 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 19-20. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 307-321, 435-436.

Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 47-49. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

Graham Usher. "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no.2 (1996): 24. Accessed January 25, 2017. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538181>.

106 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 311.

overall director of what was now termed the General Intelligence Service (*al-Mukhabarat al-'Ammah*), which can be considered the official PA intelligence¹⁰⁷.

In June 1994 al-Hindi had at his disposal 200-300 field agents, intelligence-gathering personnel, researchers, analysts, and intelligence implementation experts¹⁰⁸. The new GIS under al-Hindi's command kept a lower profile than its counterpart, the Preventive Security Agency (PSA), but worked steadily in recruiting agents and expanding the organization on the new and unfamiliar territory in the West Bank¹⁰⁹.

Although the General Intelligence is involved in intelligence gathering inside and outside the Territories, counterespionage operations, and developing relations with other foreign intelligence bodies¹¹⁰, the GIS spent many efforts in monitoring the Inside Palestinian opposition, uncovering collaborators and conducting general counter-intelligence activities¹¹¹.

Preventive Security Agency

The Preventive Security Agency (*Jihaz al-Amn al-Waqa'i*), (PSA) grew out of the Inside Fatah security organization and was composed by two separated agencies in Gaza and Jericho with no overall commander. PLO's purpose was to create an effective and independent counterpart to the Israeli *Shin Bet* (the Israeli internal intelligence agency). Following the understanding on intelligence coordination between Israeli and Palestinian authorities (December 1993 – January 1994), Fatah activists were allowed to conduct some informal police and intelligence activities throughout the Occupied Territories (excluding East Jerusalem) before the Israeli withdrawal¹¹². According to Israeli intelligence sources, in

107 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 48. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

108 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 311.

109 Al-Hindi, like many others of his officers, were part of the Tunis leadership, the so called Outside Leadership. Indeed, al-Hindi's core personnel consisted of around 800 experienced professional intelligence officers mainly from Tunis. *Ibid.* 312.

110 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 48. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

111 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 312.

112 *Ibid.* 163, 312.

1996 the Preventive Security Forces counted around 4,000 agents in the West Bank and Gaza¹¹³. Being the only truly homegrown Inside-based police branch, the PSA commanded considerable respect and credibility among the Palestinians, as nearly all its officers had been jailed by Israel for security offences¹¹⁴. The PSA was the first PNA security organization to establish a presence in all West Bank villages, thanks to its close association with Fatah. The branch grew quickly, from an estimated 685 men in October 1994 to about 2,500 in May 1995, reaching more than 5,000 by mid-1997¹¹⁵. PSA's main activities remained mostly focused on fending off internal security threats to the PNA from the armed Islamist opposition and collaborators and on preventive actions against terrorist groups, as well as information gathering in Israel¹¹⁶. Indeed, together with the GIS, the PSA maintained security coordination with Israel with regard to the exchange of intelligence. In the field of counter-terrorism, the PSA is considered probably the most effective Palestinian agency¹¹⁷.

Military Intelligence

The Military Intelligence (*al-Istikhbarat* or *Istikhbarat al-'Askariyyah*) was a smaller intelligence body and was comprised of remnants of the extensive PLO Military Intelligence in Lebanon. It was expected to assume primarily a military police role in investigating the conduct of PLO military personnel and taking disciplinary action. In reality, it also became involved in political surveillance, detention and interrogation of members of the opposition¹¹⁸. In order to monitor and identify dangers to the stability of the regime, this body also investigated some of the illegal actions of the PA's other intelligence

113 Graham Usher. "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no.2 (1996): 23. Accessed January 25, 2017. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538181>.

114 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 312.

115 *Ibid.* 312.

116 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 48. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

117 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 313.

118 *Ibid.* 313.

and security bodies¹¹⁹. Despite the fact that the Military Intelligence is considered a sub-unit of the Palestinian National Security Forces (PNSF), it operates largely independently of the PNSF command.

Special Security Agency

The Special Security Agency (*al-Amn al-Khass*) was more an oversight body specialized in internal monitoring rather than a full-blown intelligence organization. Probably the smallest body of PASF, the Special Security Agency's main mission was allegedly to "snoop around the other intelligence networks in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and, if necessary, report directly to Arafat on their findings"¹²⁰. Indeed, its importance was great as it worked under Arafat's direct supervision and it was used also to gather information about the activities of opposition groups in foreign countries, especially Arab ones. The Special Security Agency also supplied Arafat with information about any corruption and illegal actions by PA officials¹²¹.

Presidential Security / Force-17

The Presidential Security/Force-17 (*Amn al-Ri'yasahl/Quwwat-17*) was one of the PLO's elite units at the time of Oslo, with an estimated strength of 1.000-1.500 men. Its officers were once members of Force-17, Arafat's security guard while he led the PLO in the diaspora¹²². Its mission spanned from protecting Arafat and PLO personalities to conducting various commando operations, acting as an elite paramilitary force for special operations and emergency situations.¹²³. During the years, the Presidential Security lost its characteristic of exile-based guerrilla unit and quickly developed from a small group of

119 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 48. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

120 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 314.

121 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 49. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

122 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 49. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

123 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 314.

returnees to a large force of mostly locally recruited personnel. By 1997, it numbered 5.500 officers, with 3.000 in the West Bank and 2.500 in Gaza¹²⁴. The Presidential Security handled counter-terrorism activities as well and was responsible for arresting opposition activists and suspects of collaboration with Israel¹²⁵. Two subsidiary bodies of the Presidential Security were the Intelligence Unit, whose main mission was information gathering about the activities of the opposition movements and other domestic threats, and the Presidential Guard, Arafat's most loyal and trusted inner circle¹²⁶. This latter unit provided the tight security around him, preventing any assassination attempts. Although officially Force-17 disbanded when Arafat returned to Gaza, the background of most of the officers in the Presidential Security leads most Palestinians to refer to this branch simply as Force-17¹²⁷.

National Security Forces

The Interim Accord endorsed the formation of six operational police branches, of which the (Palestinian) National Security Forces (*Quwat al-Amn al-Watani*), (PNSF) constitutes the largest branch. The Palestinian National Security Forces was a gendarmerie-type force whose responsibilities covered policing outside the cities, public order maintenance, and patrolling along the borders of Area A. During its early phase after it was established, PNSF recruited most of its officers from the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) and gradually added increasing numbers of local recruits¹²⁸. Nominally, the PNSF comprised a number of additional sub-units: Air Police; Border Police Forces; Naval Police; Customs Police; Military Police; Military Liaison.

The Air Police (*al-Shurta al-Jawiya*) was established in connection with the opening of an airport in Gaza. Its members consisted mainly of guards and security personnel with

124 *Ibid.* 315.

125 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 49. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

126 According to Israeli intelligence sources, in 1996 the Presidential Guard counted several hundred members. Graham Usher. "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no.2 (1996): 23. Accessed January 25, 2017. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538181>.

127 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 49. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

128 *Ibid.* 47.

the responsibility of transporting Arafat and other Palestinian leaders¹²⁹. Originally, the unit also comprised crew and pilots responsible for operating and maintaining the PNA's helicopters and three small jet planes, which were all destroyed during the *al-Aqsa* intifada. The unit was based on the former Force 14, Fatah's aviation unit, and was re-established under the PNA as part of the Palestinian Civil Aviation Department¹³⁰.

The Naval Police (*al-Shurtah al-Bahriyyah*), also known as the Marines, the Coast Guard and the Navy, was composed largely of exile-based forces. Nevertheless, unlike most other branches, it was allowed to retain its pre-Oslo organization largely intact. The Naval Police derived from the PLO Naval Forces, a small and highly trained elite commando force previously stationed in Yemen and Lebanon¹³¹. During the early self-rule, the Palestinian Police lacked boats and for this reason it was also used for duties other than strictly maritime policing like certain special operations and public order maintenance. In particular, the Naval Police was used to protect the PA's territorial water mainly against arms- and drug-smugglers from Egypt¹³².

The PNSF fielded also Military Police units (or Military Security, *al-Amn al-'Askari*) for maintaining internal discipline and a range of other units. It specialized in riot control, arrests, protection of important people and important installations, and prison maintenance¹³³.

The Liaison Forces manned the extensive apparatus of joint security offices and joint patrols with the Israeli army.

Special Forces

These forces were not mentioned in the Oslo and Cairo agreements. More than "special forces", they can be classified as militias, offshoot of factions or established by Arafat himself. One of them was the Tanzim militia, widely considered an armed offshoot of Fatah

129 *Ibid.* 48.

130 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 321.

131 *Ibid.* 318.

132 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 48. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

133 *Ibid.* 48.

which developed its own structure and leadership. Tanzim was established in 1995 by Arafat and the Fatah leadership as a paramilitary force intended to offset the power of the Palestinian Islamist groups, particularly Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Fatah's decision to form the Tanzim was apparently motivated, at least in part, by armed confrontations in 1994 between PA security forces and members of Hamas¹³⁴.

Civilian Police

The Civilian Police (*al-Shurtah Madaniyya*), also known as the “Blue Police”, counted only a few trained officers from exile at its establishment and was the main law enforcement tool in the PA¹³⁵. It grew into one of the largest and most important branches, counting 10,500 men in 1997, with 6,500 in the West Bank and 4,000 in the Gaza Strip¹³⁶. Overall, this body handled ordinary police functions such as directing traffic, arresting common criminals, and keeping public order. In addition, it also spearheaded a 700-officer rapid-deployment special police unit that was trained to handle complex crises, such as severe riots and counter-terrorism operations¹³⁷. The Civilian Police underwent a significant improvement in its professionalism, expanding its infrastructure during the years and forming new specialized units, such as traffic police, criminal investigation department and anti-drug unit.

Towards the end of the 1990's, The County Guard or Governorate Security (*Amn al-Muhāfaẓa*) was established as a specialized unit for tribal disputes and in response to an upsurge in clan violence and feuding. This small unit supplied security services to the county governors and their offices. The County Guard also summoned people for questioning and resolved local quarrels¹³⁸. Even though it was a small unit, it is worth to mention its role to better understand the Palestinian socio-political background, in which

134 The Tanzim was also a grass roots organization that operated at the community level and, by taking a hardline position toward Israel, it helped siphon Palestinian support from the Islamist groups to the PA and PLO leadership. Kenneth Katzam. “The PLO and Its Factions,” *Congressional Research Service – CRS Report for Congress* (2002): 4-5. Accessed April 5, 2017. doi: <http://webmail.iwar.org.uk/news-archive/crs/11562.pdf>.

135 Gal Luft. “The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 47. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

136 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 318.

137 Gal Luft. “The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 47-48. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

138 *Ibid.* 49.

families and tribes play a key role, and Arafat's attitude in trying to manage them. The Palestinian chairman appointed these "special assistants" in order to exert his control over families and tribes (mostly bedouin ones, which were known to be hard to control). Appointing this unit to solve internal disputes was one of the ways to both avoid a direct clash with families and tribes and to control them¹³⁹.

According to Graham Usher¹⁴⁰, Military Police, Naval Police, and Disciplinary Police were considered as smaller forces and it is not clear whether these constituted separate forces, with their own command and structure, or whether they are subsumed under the larger intelligence services.

Civil Defense

The Civil Defense (*al-Difa' al-Madani*) included rescue units, emergency medical services and firefighting units, which were coordinated in conjunction with other civilian services during emergencies¹⁴¹. In normal times, the body administered a massive program of first aid and rescue training for the civilian population.

Within the Civil Defense apparatus, there was also the University Police. Its task was to maintain order and to guard entrances and exits to the campuses, but it was also involved in political surveillance, apparently employing nearly a hundred informers on various campuses¹⁴².

4.3. THE REFORM OF THE PASF

Following Arafat's death, the new PA president Mahmoud Abbas declared, in January 2005, the reestablishment of the PNA's monopoly on force as his main priority. In order to do that,

139 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

140 Graham Usher. "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no.2 (1996): 24. Accessed January 25, 2017. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538181>.

141 Gal Luft. "The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no.2 (1999): 49. Accessed March 21, 2017. doi: <http://www.rubincenter.org/meria/1999/06/luft.pdf>.

142 Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force Without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2006), 320-321.

he adopted a two-fold strategy aimed at accommodating the Islamist opposition and initiating institutional and organizational reforms in the security sector¹⁴³.

In April 2005, the PNA began to merge the numerous security forces into three main security organizations: the Internal Security Forces, the National Security Forces, and the General Intelligence Organization, which remained under the President's direct control. Nevertheless, as many security organizations opposed their subordination to the Ministry of Interior and National Security, the new structure largely remained paperwork¹⁴⁴. Overall, according to Ahmad Hussein¹⁴⁵, the reform aimed at:

- *Rejuvenating the security leadership*: President Abbas issued a decree ordering the retirement of various long-standing security commanders so to replace them with younger and supposedly more reform-minded officers.
- *Reorganizing the security branches*: All the PNA security organizations merged into three branches, the Internal Security Forces (which report mainly to the Ministry of Interior), the National Security Forces (which report to the National Security), and the General Intelligence (which reports directly to the President).

In reorganizing the security branches, further measures were taken, such as: 1) Dismantling of Special security (their members were assigned to the National Security Forces); 2) Dismantling of special forces which had been created by Arafat as a counterweight to the Preventive Security in the late 1990s (their members were transferred to the General Intelligence and the National Security Forces); 3) Efforts to enhance the integration of the Presidential Guard Battalion into the Presidential Security; 4) Unification and standardization of the Gaza and West Bank branches of the Preventive Security; 5) Merging of the different departments of the National Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza, such as training, planning, transportation

143 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 21. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

144 Some influential individuals in the Ministry had a strong preference for more decentralized and loosely-structured security organizations, which ran counter to PNA policy of centralization and institutionalization. *Ibid.* 22.

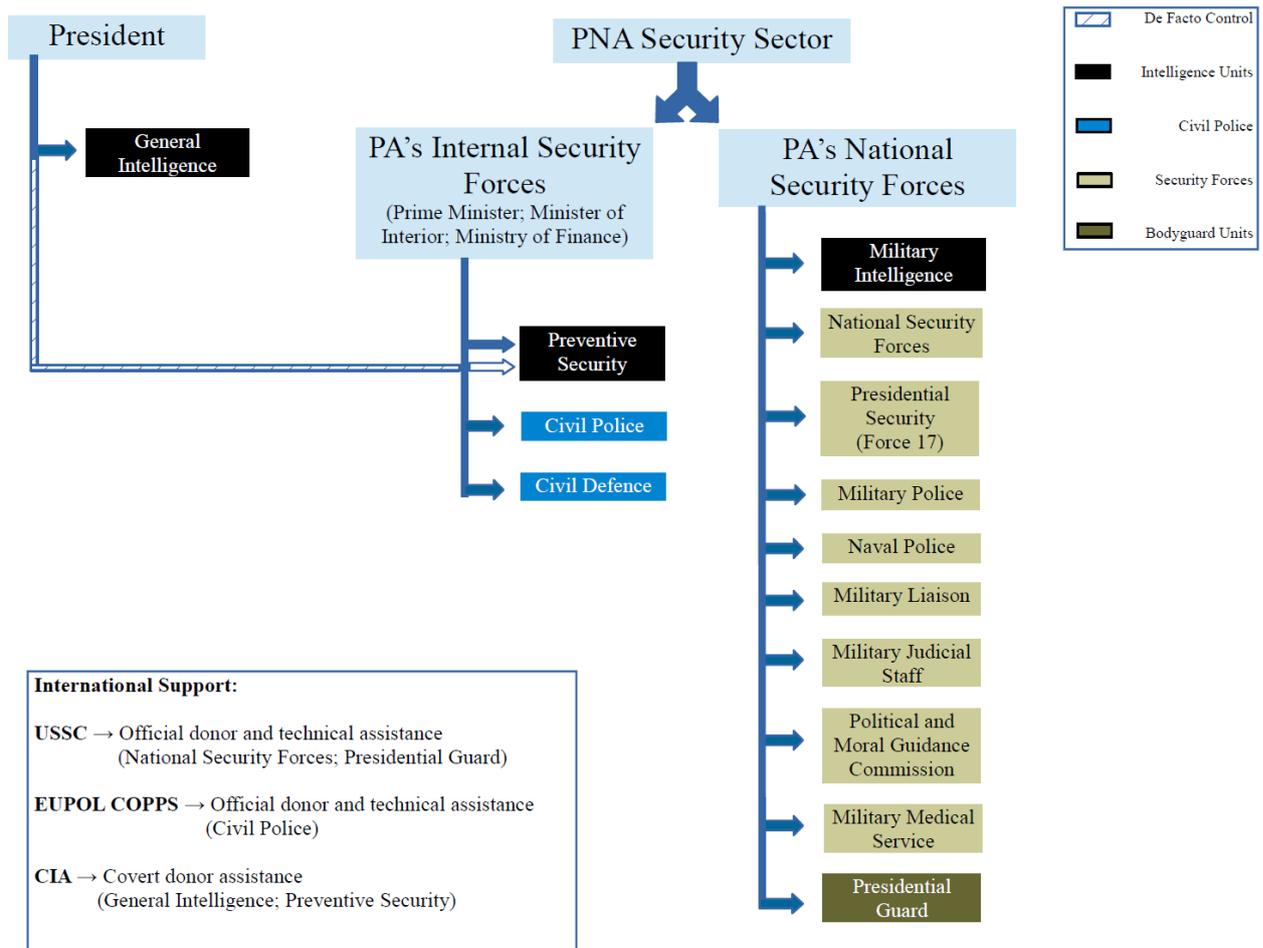
145 Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organizations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 57-60. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

and logistics; 6) Separation of the Military Police from the Military Intelligence and integration of both organizations into the National Security Forces as separate departments (this also included the redefinition of responsibilities for both agencies); 7) Division of the Military Liaison into two departments, the Military Coordination (which was made a department in the National Security Forces administration) and the Joint Patrols (which were merged with the National Security Forces); 8) Reactivation/establishment of planning departments in the Ministry of the Interior and National Security and the various security branches.

- *Improving human resources management:* The most significant step in this regard was the creation of a military retirement system through specific laws which required all security personnel above the age of 60 to resign. In addition, further measures were taken in order to redistribute the security personnel according to skills and specializations criteria. Another important step was the introduction of the *Law of Service in the Palestinian in the Palestinian Security Forces No.8 of 2005* which explicitly prohibited promotions based on personal contacts or kin affiliation.
- *Enhancing training and readiness:* The PNA security organizations saw an improvement of training standards and readiness thanks to training courses held also for officers without previous experience in military affairs. In addition, rehabilitation courses for security and police personnel were designed and partly implemented.
- *Reforming financial management:* the Ministry of the Interior and National Security banned all PNA security organizations from receiving foreign aid through channels other than the Ministry itself. The centralization of funding helped to curb patronage networks run by certain security commanders.
- *Overhauling logistics and procurement:* Throughout 2005 the PNA reviewed supply and procurement procedures in all security organizations. A general inventory and maintenance check on weaponry was conducted in each branch.
- *Rehabilitating the communications infrastructure:* Communications networks of the security organizations were repaired as much as Palestinian capacities allowed for.
- *Creating a normative-legal framework:* Some steps were taken also in the direction to create a legal framework for the security sector.

Following the implementation of the Palestinian security sector reform, the organizational structure of the Palestinian security forces changed. The scheme below shows the re-organization of the security branches.

Scheme 2. The PA Security Sector following the Reform in 2005.¹⁴⁶



146 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 8. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>

Yezid Sayigh. "Policing the People, Building the State. Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza," *Carnegie Middle East Center* (2011): 6. Accessed March 14, 2017. doi: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/gaza_west_bank_security.pdf.

Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 16. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 57-59. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

Although the Palestinian security sector reform succeeded in improving the PASF's efficiency and in professionalizing the security personnel, overall the end results were modest, due to the fact that the Palestinian security sector continued to face several challenges which deeply influenced their performance.

One of the main challenges to PASF's efficiency was, still, the great bureaucratization of the security sector¹⁴⁷. In addition, the apparatus lacked meritocracy in selecting and promoting the personnel. Applying Western standards, it is possible to notice that key positions in the security sector were still covered by officers and commanders who did not distinguished themselves because of specific merits¹⁴⁸.

Strictly linked to this element is the politicization of the security apparatus, probably the biggest problem of the PASF since Arafat's phase. Ideally, a professional security sector should be a-political, bipartisan, in order to function well. Following the reform in 2005, the PA security sector was still a Fatah controlled security sector. Almost all commanders and higher officers were members of Fatah and this monopoly led to the blurring of security and political work¹⁴⁹. In many cases, also strong loyalty to the figure of Mahmoud Abbas was a key element in order to cover leading positions in the security branches. An indicator of the pervasive presence of Fatah within the PA security forces was the establishment of the so called "Political and Moral Guidance Commission" (*Hay'at al-Tawjīh al-Siyāsi Wal-ma'Nawi*), a branch of the National Security Forces. This corp was composed by Fatah-affiliated officers whose task was to raise the motivation of the units assigned to them¹⁵⁰, do pro-Fatah propaganda, and ideologically attack the other Islamist factions¹⁵¹. Basically, their figures were very close to the *Politruk* (political commissar) in the Soviet Union.

147 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

148 *Ibid.*

149 Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 61. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf):20.

150 In many cases, the Palestinian security forces had been despised by the local Palestinian population who accused them to collaborate with Israel. This, with its psychological implications, was a factor which deeply reduced the morale of the Palestinian security forces.

151 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

Corruption played a key role as well in reducing the effectiveness of the PA security forces. Despite the efforts to bring transparency within the security sector, persecuting individuals suspected of fraud or embezzlement was very difficult. The PNA usually preferred to transfer corrupted personnel to new posts, sometime outside the country. Together with rampant nepotism and financing of armed groups through influential individuals in the PNA, this dealt a huge blow to the credibility and public legitimacy of the Authority¹⁵². Pursuing corruption and illicit activities was difficult also because of the absence of a formal judiciary body able to monitor and punish offences. According to Benedetta Berti¹⁵³, even if the PASF experienced a crescent professionalization in skills and competences, the lack of rule-of-law and checks-and-balances within the PA security apparatus further reduced the efficiency and mostly the legitimacy of the all system¹⁵⁴. Therefore, accountability can be considered an additional challenge in this regard.

The armed Palestinian factions represented another challenge to PASF' efficiency. The Palestinian leadership, indeed, never made any real efforts to establish the monopoly of force vis-à-vis the armed factions¹⁵⁵. While Fatah experienced infightings, assaults on rival politicians, attacks by militants on public property during all 2005, Hamas, often sided also by the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Islamic Jihad, rapidly grew politically and socially, until the point to reach victory in the political elections in the Gaza Strip in 2006¹⁵⁶.

152 Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 61. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi:

[www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

153 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

154 Violations of basic human rights by PASF personnel were very common in the West Bank and Gaza. The fact that certain violations could not be properly pursued deeply affected the local population's opinion of the PA security forces during the years.

155 Ahmad Hussein. "Reconstructing the PNA Security Organisations," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 61. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi:

[www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

156 *Ibid.* 61.

5. THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY FORCES AND THE BATTLE FOR GAZA

The analysis of the Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007 is relevant for this study because it was the first time in which the PA security forces were actually deployed against an enemy and faced a big threat for the internal stability and security. This event can be considered the first test of the PA security forces' efficiency on the field following the security reform of 2005 after Arafat's death and following the big international support in terms of training and equipment provided by the United States and the European Union. The quick and sensational defeat of the PA security forces and Fatah's militias in the confrontation with the Islamist movement of Hamas shocked not only the Palestinian Authority, but also the international community, which wondered how was possible that the official Palestinian forces, backed by many other actors and superior in terms of numbers and means, could be defeated by a smaller force which did not receive the same support. In the aftermath of the Gaza's events, the causes for such military catastrophe had been searched. Overall, it is possible to assert that the PA security forces' defeat in Gaza was the result of the combination of internal problems within the PA security sector, such as lack of organization and politicization, challenges which had been analyzed in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, this case study will highlight an additional factor of challenge to the PASF's efficiency, which is the presence of non-statutory actors within the Palestinian arena.

The biggest challenge to the Palestinian security reform of 2005 derived, indeed, from the unexpected victory of Hamas in the 2006 Parliamentary elections in Gaza. The overwhelming victory of Hamas at the elections reflected a radical change in the internal Palestinian balance of power. For the first time since the reemergence of the Palestinian national movement, the incumbent force consisting of the PA, Fatah, and the security forces had clearly lost its hegemonic control¹⁵⁷. In the aftermath of the elections, the existing Fatah-PA's security forces' leadership refused to deal with the new government led by Hamas. The chain of command, responsibilities, interests, ideologies, and approaches began

157 Hillel Frish, *The Palestinian Military. Between militias and armies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 152.

to clash, leading to an unstable situation in which was hard to guarantee the Gaza citizens basic security needs¹⁵⁸. What became clear was that this competition between Fatah's security forces and Hamas' militias had reduced more than ever the prospects for a united security force¹⁵⁹. In addition, the international community decided to boycott the Hamas-led government. This measure caused the inability to pay salaries to 150.000 public employees, including the security forces, and further eroded the legitimacy and functionality of the PA institutions¹⁶⁰. Following the crisis, PA's President Abbas adopted four main measures in order to keep control over security forces: 1) He separated the National Security Forces from the Minister of Interior¹⁶¹; 2) he nominated a Chief-of-Staff to report directly to him; 3) he appointed a loyal Fatah leader as the head of three internal security bodies; 4) he created new bodies and expanded others, particularly the Presidential Guard¹⁶².

In April 2006, street battles in various parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip broke out between Fatah and Hamas supporters. At least 30 people were injured in the clashes, considered the worst bout of violence since Hamas' electoral victory four months earlier¹⁶³. Following these events, Sa'id Siyam, the newly installed Minister of Interior and National Security in Gaza, decided to deploy the Hamas' Executive Force in order to cope with the continued violence between Hamas and Fatah supporters. Nevertheless, Hamas leaders aimed at both expanding the Executive Force and establishing its legitimacy. In order to win public acknowledgement, Siyam deployed the new force in the streets of Gaza for the first time on 17 May in a new uniform¹⁶⁴. Throughout the following months, the Executive Force was involved in violent confrontations with both the rival security forces and Fatah. Only

158 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 10. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

159 Hillel Frish, *The Palestinian Military. Between militias and armies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 152.

160 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 10. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

161 This measure was already contemplated in the Palestinian security reform project of 2005 (See chapter 3).

162 *Ibid.*

163 Most of the violence took place between students from *al-Azhar* University which was controlled by Fatah, and students from the neighboring Hamas-dominated Islamic University. Gunmen from both sides soon joined the fray, using automatic weapons and hand grenades, forcing officials at the two universities to suspend studies. Hillel Frish, *The Palestinian Military. Between militias and armies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 157.

164 No longer black and green, colors particularly associated with Islam, the uniform was changed to blue, colour of the regular police force. Also the emblem that force personnel wore was designed with the specific aim to give the Executive Force legitimacy: it consisted of an "eagle", the official emblem of the PA, inside a circle under which was written "The Executive – Ministry of Interior and National Security. *Ibid.*

on 14 June, after Haniyeh, political leader of Hamas, agreed to remove the Executive Force from the streets of Gaza, did the situation calm down slightly. This indicated that most of the tension was due to the desire of the Presidency, and the security services operating under it, to contain the Executive Force¹⁶⁵.

December 2006 saw another round of violence between Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip. Haniyeh, returning from a trip to Iran and Arab capitals in order to raise funds¹⁶⁶, was stopped at the Rafah border while Hamas terrorists and Executive Force members descended on the border crossing site engaging fights with the Presidential Guard. After Haniyeh and his entourage were allowed to cross the border, they had been attacked by unknown assailants who killed Haniyeh's bodyguard and wounded his son. For the first time senior Hamas officials accused Dahlan (the former head of the Preventive Security in Gaza) and the Presidential Guard of being behind an assassination attempt¹⁶⁷. In the aftermath of this event, both Hamas and Fatah began bolstering their own forces. Nevertheless, seeking ways of confronting the growing challenge to the security forces through augmenting their strength and creating new units did not translate into greater law and order for the Palestinian people, who wondered out loud why so many forces, consuming so much revenue, produced so little security¹⁶⁸. The rupture between Abbas' security forces and Hamas' Executive Force became complete in late December and early January 2007¹⁶⁹. Mutual recriminations, bloodletting, and kidnapping indicated that the government, the Presidency, and the respective forces loyal to them, had arrived at the point of no return.

On 13 June, Hamas military men engaged PA security forces and moved unchallenged through northern Gaza and the streets of Gaza City as Fatah fighters ran short of arms and ammunition and abandoned their posts. Subsequently, Hamas militias succeeded to take over and burn the main police station, symbol of Fatah power, and

165 *Ibid.* 158.

166 Abbas had apparently learned from Egyptian sources that Haniyeh was carrying with him 35 million dollars, which he suspected would in part be spent on augmenting the Executive Force's capabilities.

167 *Ibid.* 161.

168 *Ibid.* 162.

169 The PLO Executive Committee openly accused Hamas and its Executive Force of *taqfiri* (accusation of heresy) tendencies, stressing the need to disband the force. The Hamas government responded that it would double the force from 6.000 to 12.000 personnel. *Ibid.* 164.

surrounded the main national security headquarters building of Al Suraya¹⁷⁰. On 14 June, in what can be considered a preemptive strike¹⁷¹, Hamas eventually took over the Gaza Strip leading President Muhammad Abbas to declare the state of emergency and to install Salam Fayyad as new Prime Minister, dismissing Ismail Haniyeh¹⁷².

Overall, it is possible to assert that the first performance of the Palestinian security forces in dealing with a big security crisis was a clear failure¹⁷³. Within the space of three days, Hamas' forces, which counted around 8.000 fighters¹⁷⁴, defeated a total force of about 35-40.000 men of the PA security forces and Fatah¹⁷⁵. According to Benedetta Berti¹⁷⁶, it is not a surprise that Hamas came on the top of the confrontation. The Gaza Strip, over the years, became the stronghold of the Islamist movement in the Palestinian arena, politically, militarily and socially. Yet, it was a surprise how fast Hamas overtook an opponent which was supposed to be better trained and equipped, superior in terms of manpower and capabilities, and backed by the United States and some European countries. Actually, during those days of fighting, only a small number of PASF combatants fought against Hamas' militias. Indeed, the Presidential Guard faced Hamas' men alone¹⁷⁷ because part of the other security branches defected during the battle, and many of them did not take part in the fighting¹⁷⁸. This eventually led the Palestinian Authority to lose the confrontation with Hamas, which subsequently expelled all Fatah-aligned political and security forces from the Gaza Strip.

The immediate question that arose among those who witnessed these events was how it was possible that PA security forces could be defeated so sensationally and quickly. Overall, three main factors can be considered decisive in the battle for Gaza in 2007:

170 Steven Erlanger, "Hamas Seizes Broad Control in Gaza Strip," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2007. Accessed April 24, 2017. doi: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/14/world/middleeast/14mideast.html>.

171 At this point, it was clear to Hamas that the PA was going to perform a coup against the government in the Gaza Strip. Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

172 S. Samuel and C. Rajiv, "The Hamas Takeover and its Aftermath," *Strategic Analysis* 31, no.5 (2007): 844. Accessed April 24, 2017. doi: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700160701662336>.

173 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

174 The major part of Hamas' forces were composed by the Executive Force and the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades members. *Ibid*.

175 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

176 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

177 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

178 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

- Lack of motivation within PA security forces was probably the main cause of their low performance during that event. According to Shlomo Brom¹⁷⁹, the Palestinian security forces, since the beginning of the implementation of the Oslo agreements, used to be a means in order to provide political support to the Palestinian leadership. Many of the members of the different security branches, as already mentioned in the previous chapters, were employed according to their political affiliation to Fatah. Even after the security sector reform of 2005 the political affiliation remained a fundamental parameter in selecting the PASF personnel. In addition, many members of the PA security forces had just the salary as main factor of motivation and actually they were not expected to do more than support the Palestinian leadership politically¹⁸⁰. Therefore, the events of Gaza clearly showed how the politicization of the PA security sector represents one of the main limits to PASF's efficiency.
- Parallel to the lack of motivation, the PA security forces also suffered a lack of legitimacy among the local population of Gaza. Seen just as political supporters of the establishment and not as defenders of the population, the PASF were mistrusted by the civilians. According to a poll by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Palestinian population placed significantly higher trust in non-statutory armed groups than in the PA security organizations¹⁸¹. Besides, other security actors, such as the Hamas' Executive Force, portrayed themselves as the legitimate security forces, contributing to spread confusion among the civil population. The lack of legitimacy eventually shaped even the nature of the conflict. More than a coup d'état aimed at bounding the raising threat of Hamas, the conflict became a kind of civil war between Palestinian factions in the eyes of the population¹⁸².

179 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

180 *Ibid.*

181 According to the survey, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Brigades were the most trusted security actors in the Palestinian Territories at that time: 34% of the interviewees had great trust in the al-Qassam Brigades, and 29% had great trust in the Al-Aqsa Brigades, as opposed to 21% in the Civil Police and 18% in the Preventive Security. Mohammad Najib and Roland Friedrich. "Non-Statutory Armed Groups and Security Sector Governance," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 122. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf):20.

182 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

- The third factor that led to the defeat of the PA security forces in 2007 was the better organization of Hamas in military, technical and mostly ideological terms. First of all, even being inferior in numbers respect to the Fatah counterpart, Hamas militias trusted the leadership and the commanders, factor that allowed them to quickly take the advantage over the opponent. In addition to the better connection between chain of command and operational levels, Hamas' militias seemed to have exploited the training provided to PASF by United States and European countries. The armed wing of Hamas, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, had apparently long been infiltrating the PASF in Gaza in order to set up its own internal security and police team¹⁸³. Finally, Hamas' members were more politically and religiously motivated than the PA security forces. Being Gaza the stronghold of the Islamist movement and relying on a spread local support, Hamas did not face obstacles during the conflict. Nevertheless, the religious factor is probably the most relevant in this case. As noticed by Yoram Cohen¹⁸⁴, Islam is an “organized idea” and provides the ideological tools that usually a nationalistic ideology alone is not able to provide in order to raise the motivation of its members. In the case of Hamas, according to Ephraim Lavie¹⁸⁵, the Islamist movement succeeded in presenting itself as both a religious and a national alternative to the Palestinian National Authority, drawing an absolute correlation between Palestinian identity and Islam.

Overall, the low performance of the PA security forces in facing the events in Gaza in 2007 can be considered the result of internal problems in the PA security system, which clearly showed to be still affected by those organizational and structural factors mentioned in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, this case study gave the possibility to make a comparison between the PA security forces and a different actor, Hamas, highlighting further challenges faced by the PASF. Indeed, following the analysis above, it is possible to identify the

183 Kimberly Marten. “Militia Patronage vs. the Diffusion of Professionalism: The Palestinian Security Forces,” *Barnard College and the Harriman Institute, Columbia University* (2013): 17. Accessed July 10, 2017. doi: https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/isa_paper_2013_pasf_militias_and_diffusion.pdf.

184 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

185 Ephraim Lavie, “The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State” in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 127-128.

presence of non-statutory actors as an additional factor of challenge to the PA security sector effectiveness.

Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Palestinian non-statutory armed groups have gained additional political prominence. The case of Gaza in 2007 showed the ability of these groups to gain prominence within the society and the security sector as well. Under a social and political point of view, non-statutory groups like Hamas represent a great challenge to the Palestinian National Authority. Indeed, from an institutional perspective, these groups further contribute to undermine the legitimacy of the PNA¹⁸⁶. Following the takeover of Gaza, Hamas took the monopoly on the use of force and began functioning as parallel, localized government with its own apparatus and security forces. In addition to that, the Islamist movement have succeeded to gain more popular support and legitimacy than the Palestinian Authority within the Gaza Strip. Indeed, Hamas began being more and more involved in societal affairs, from dispute-resolution to education and *da'wa* (propaganda), becoming the official authority de-facto. From the security perspective, the main challenge represented by non-statutory actors is the difficulty to provide long-term solutions toward them. According to Mohammad Najib and Roland Friedrich¹⁸⁷, three options are available in order to reduce the threat posed by these actors. Nevertheless, each of them present additional challenges to the Palestinian Authority. The first option is the forced disarmament of Islamist Palestinian armed groups, policy favored by regional and international actors. This option lost its attractiveness following the defeat of PA security forces in Gaza due to the fact that Hamas proved to be better trained, equipped, structured and motivated than the official security forces. Moreover, this policy would likely be biased and ineffective. In addition to Hamas' militias and armed groups there are also other non-statutory actors offshoot of Fatah, like the Al-Aqsa Brigades, with many of their operatives simultaneously serving in the PA security forces. The second option is the voluntary demilitarization of non-statutory groups. This policy is highly improbable because of two main reasons: 1) No Palestinian group would give up the "arms of resistance", such a move

186 Mohammad Najib and Roland Friedrich. "Non-Statutory Armed Groups and Security Sector Governance," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 122. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

187 *Ibid.* 123-127.

would be perceived as surrender and would clash with the ethos of “steadfast resistance”; 2) For the Islamist organizations, the dismantling of their military wings would mean to give up their most important political card and their main tool of recruitment. In addition, for some groups, the continuation of the armed struggle is a pillar of their ideology. Finally, the last option is the integration of non-statutory groups into the PA security infrastructure, which would mean that personnel of various armed factions would join the PA security branches individually or as a group. The main challenge that this option would face is creating a common political and ideological horizon for all the groups involved and coherent with the PA institutions. Moreover, depoliticization of the security system should be the pillar of such policy. As long as Fatah continues to dominate the security organizations and as long as they are perceived as unprofessional and partisan, incentives will be high for Hamas and other groups to maintain their own security apparatuses. Therefore, this option does not seem feasible due to the high level of politicization of the Palestinian security sector which, after the seizure of power by Hamas in Gaza, officially split into two different security apparatuses, hostile towards each other.

Thus, given the political and social context of the Palestinian arena, the presence of non-statutory actors represents, mostly after the Hamas’ takeover of Gaza in 2007, one of the biggest challenges to the Palestinian National Authority. The analysis of this case study allowed not only to show the consequences of the PA security sector’s organizational and structural problems, many of them heritage of the Arafat’s era, when it came to face a a big security threat, but also to highlight the deep influence of such issues within military, political and social sphere all together.

6. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY FORCES’ TRAINING AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

International security assistance to Palestinian Authority was provided since its establishment in the 1990s, following the Oslo accords. In that period, training and preparing the PA security apparatus raised major concerns over potential threats to Israel’s security, due to the fact that the line between the new PA forces’ policing functions and

their potential for military use began to blur¹⁸⁸. Indeed, PASF's personnel was largely drawn from the PLO's and Arafat's personal militia members. In addition, the Palestinian leader approved the establishment of several security and intelligence units not officially mandated by Oslo accords, such as the Preventive Security Agency. In order to face such concerns, the United States (the main actor which supported the building up of PA security apparatus) allowed other international actors like Jordan, Egypt, Japan and the European Union (including individual European states) to take leading roles in providing the forces' training and funding.

In 1996, U.S. involvement increased following terrorist attacks in Israel carried out by Hamas. More Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in counter-terrorism was needed, therefore the Clinton Administration began providing PASF's organizations with tens of millions of dollars in covert assistance. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the patronage style of Arafat in managing the PA security apparatus, this assistance ended up being directed towards those organizations with personal ties with the Palestinian president. This contributed to foster a fiefdom mentality among competing security chiefs to address short-term objectives, undermining and hampering the consolidation of the PA security apparatus since its early stage¹⁸⁹.

Following the outbreak of the second Intifada, the Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation slowly put in place basically ceased, due to the fact that some members of PA security forces engaged in activities aimed at Israeli soldiers and civilians. Even if much of the PA security forces' infrastructure was destroyed, and in spite of the involvement of members of PA security forces in the Intifada, covert assistance by the United States was still provided to the Preventive Security Agency for counter-terrorism operations. The outbreak of the second Intifada and the death of Arafat in 2004 represent a turning point in the history of international assistance to the PA. Once the Palestinian uprising lost energy, the United States created the office of the U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC), believing that the moment for a PA security sector reform had come following the election of Mahmoud

188 Jim Zanotti. "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," Report Congressional Research Service (2010): 5. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

189 *Ibid.* 6.

Abbas as new president¹⁹⁰. Undertaking a security sector reform and reining in the Palestinian militias were fundamental steps also to convince Israel that a viable Palestinian security partner existed. This have always been one of the main goals of USSC agenda in training and professionalizing the PASF¹⁹¹. In spring 2005, also the European Union began to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority in matter of training and support to its security forces. The Europeans set up a seven-strong UK-led European Union Police Coordinating Office Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS), which was tasked to assist the reform of the Civil Police. EUPOL COPPS managed to achieve some progress during 2005; an EU-Palestinian Change Management Team for Civil Police Reform was established, vehicles and riot-control equipment were delivered and police stations refurbished¹⁹². Both U.S. and European assistance helped the PA security sector reform in 2005 which, nevertheless, failed in facing the events in Gaza in 2006 and 2007. The takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas led to the establishment of a more moderate PA government in the West Bank with Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister and this allowed a more substantial assistance by the United States. Fayyad, indeed, was committed to modernize and professionalize the PA security forces under the banner of “One Homeland, One Flag, One Law”.

Under a technical point of view, the USSC is a multinational organization which is composed of military and civilian personnel, mostly based in Jerusalem and Ramallah. Besides USSC, the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) coordinates USSC’s activities and funding decisions¹⁹³. In addition, INL is responsible to hire contractors to staff Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) and Strategic Planning Directorate (SPD). MTTs also assist other entities, such as Jordanian police trainers at the Jordan International Police Training Center, and supplies non-lethal

190 *Ibid.* 7.

191 Kimberly Marten. “Militia Patronage vs. the Diffusion of Professionalism: The Palestinian Security Forces,” *Barnard College and the Harriman Institute, Columbia University* (2013): 15. Accessed July 10, 2017. doi: https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/isa_paper_2013_pasf_militias_and_diffusion.pdf.

192 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. “Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform,” *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 54. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

193 INL is largely known for its work assisting Latin American countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan with their counter-narcotics capabilities. INL provides counter-narcotics assistance also to other countries in the Middle East, such as Iraq and Lebanon. Jim Zanotti. “U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority,” Report Congressional Research Service (2010): 14. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

equipment to the Presidential Guard and National Security Forces with Israeli approval¹⁹⁴. Overall, the U.S. assistance, which follows a “gendarmerie-style” approach, is provided to newly-formed NSF Special Battalions constituted from recruits from various West Bank regions. Such battalions constitute the vanguard of the NSF, to be deployed as strategic reserves and reinforcements wherever they are needed¹⁹⁵. According to USSC’s standards, a lot of attention is dedicated to recruitment processes for NSF battalions. In the early 2008, the PA instituted a financially attractive early retirement scheme meant to sift out less-motivated and undesirable officers¹⁹⁶ and to free up places for new recruits for the PG, the NSF, and the police. In addition, USSC officials believe that the competition between the new battalions would select top-notch recruits, therefore improving the overall quality of the PA security sector¹⁹⁷. Usually, the new recruits follow basic training at PA facilities in or around Jericho, and then travel to the Jordan International Police Training Center (JIPTC) near Amman for 19 weeks of U.S. sponsored training. Such procedure, USSC officials believe, strengthen the new PA officers’ cohesion, morale, and willingness to embrace professionalism, being away from the family, clan, and factional affiliations of home.

Overall, in the period between 2005 and 2010, the PA security sector registered some improvements: corruption declined in the security spheres; the security personnel were better equipped, trained, educated, dressed, and compensated; in technical terms, the PA security forces became more professionalized and engaged in daily coordination with Israel in security operations¹⁹⁸. Such improvements were due not only to the assistance by the international community, but mostly to the motivation and dedication of the Palestinian Prime Minister in fighting internal corruption and strengthening the reputation of the Palestinian Authority¹⁹⁹. Proof of that was Fayyad’s effort to neutralize Fatah partisans within and/or outside of the security forces in order to de-factionalize the PA security

194 *Ibid.* 14-15.

195 *Ibid.* 16.

196 The names of the recruits are also checked by the Shin Bet, the Israeli security agency, the Israeli police, the Jordanian government, and the Palestinian Authority to guard against the recruitment of any with criminal records or terrorist background or links.

197 *Ibid.* 17.

198 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 12. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

199 Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017.

sector²⁰⁰. Overall, all these improvements within PA security system were results of the events in the Gaza Strip in 2006-2007. According to Shlomo Brom²⁰¹, in addition to the increased efforts by United States and European Union in training and professionalizing the PA security forces, the trauma of Gaza played a major role in “teaching a harsh lesson” to the Palestinian Authority and the international community. Both parties understood that it was fundamental to build a security system in such a way that it would not allow something similar to the event of Gaza in 2007 to happen again, this time in the West Bank.

Within the dimension of the international support to the PA security sector, the Italian contribute represents an interesting case due to its task, approach and methods used in training the Palestinian police specifically. The following chapter will highlight the main characteristics of the Italian training mission, where increasing the level of professionalism (mostly in terms of awareness of policeman’s role regardless distinctions of culture or country) is more important than the mere teaching of technical skills.

6.1. “MISSIONE ADDESTRATIVA ITALIANA IN PALESTINA” – ITALIAN SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY CIVIL POLICE

Among the several international actors present in the West Bank which contribute to the training and professionalization of PASF, Italy has been playing its role in this regard officially since 2012. While U.S. assistance is mostly focused on funding the PA security apparatus and its infrastructures, and in training all PASF units, Italian assistance, under the umbrella of EUPOL COPPS and USSC, aims at training and mentoring the Palestinian Police. On July 2012 the Italian Foreign Ministry and the Palestinian National Authority reached a bilateral agreement which would have seen Italy taking part to the training of the Palestinian Police through several missions. These capacity-building missions, aimed at stabilizing the PA on the West Bank by increasing technical and operational skills of its police²⁰², would have been carried out by a training unit of Carabinieri²⁰³.

200 Jim Zanotti. “U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority,” Report Congressional Research Service (2010): 10. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

201 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

202 Ministero della Difesa. “Missione Addestrativa Italiana – MIADIT Palestina.” Last modified June 19, 2015. doi: http://www.difesa.it/OperazioniMilitari/op_int_conclude/MIADIT/Pagine/default.aspx.

203 Carabinieri is one of the four military forces and one of the four police forces of the Italian Republic. Overall, Carabinieri are defined as a gendarmerie corp, which, in addition to military and police functions, includes several other

The first *Missione Addestrativa Italiana* (MIADIT, Italian Training Mission) started on March 2014 and saw the deployment of a 30-man team in the training center of Jericho²⁰⁴. Basically, MIADIT missions consist of 12 weeks of training, with two sessions per year²⁰⁵ and it is aimed at providing basic preparation mostly to the Palestinian Police²⁰⁶ in investigation techniques, management of public order, VIP escort, and protection of cultural sites²⁰⁷. Each training unit is divided into two main sections. The first one, the “practical section”, trains personnel from National Security Forces, Presidential Guard and the General Military Training Commission (GMTC). The second one, the “police section” focuses on the Palestinian Police and its sub-branch, the Custom Police²⁰⁸, assisting them also in cyber-crime investigations²⁰⁹. Even though the training provided is basic, each Carabinieri unit consists of top-level personnel, including operatives of the *Gruppo Intervento Speciale* (GIS), the Carabinieri special forces qualified for counter-terrorism operations, and paratroopers from 13° and 7° *Tuscania* Regiments²¹⁰. The deployment of such elite units, each one with its specific expertise, is coherent with the aims of the Italian Training Mission, which proactive strategy is not only to increase the operational capability of the Palestinian Police, PG and NSF, but also to help the PA training system to be self-sufficient as much as possible. Indeed, each MIADIT, in addition to the training, focuses on identifying and selecting the top-four recruits among each PASF units (for a maximum of 30). These recruits will be subsequently sent to follow the T3 (Train the Trainers)

specializations, such as protection of cultural heritage and food and agriculture security. Ministero della Difesa – Carabinieri. Accessed July 17, 2017. doi: <http://www.carabinieri.it/home>.

204 Military News from Italy Staff, “Carabinieri: al via la missione di addestramento della polizia palestinese,” *Military News from Italy*, March 19, 2014, accessed July 17, 2017, <https://militarynewsfromitaly.com/2014/03/19/carabinieri-al-via-la-missione-di-addestramento-della-polizia-palestinese/>.

205 The first training phase, 8 weeks, aims at establishing inter-operability between Carabinieri officers and petty officers and their recruits. The second phase, 4 weeks, focuses on the operational training of each specific unit, such as police and custom police. Andrea Strippoli Lanternini, “Intervista al Colonnello Mennitti, Capo Missione di MIADIT Palestine,” *Difesa Online*, September 11, 2014, accessed July 17, 2017, <http://www.difesaonline.it/evidenza/interviste/intervista-al-colonnello-mennitti-capo-missione-di-miadit-palastine>.

206 Overall, each MIADIT mission trains 200-250 policemen.

207 Military News from Italy Staff, “Carabinieri: al via la missione di addestramento della polizia palestinese,” *Military News from Italy*, March 19, 2014, accessed July 17, 2017, <https://militarynewsfromitaly.com/2014/03/19/carabinieri-al-via-la-missione-di-addestramento-della-polizia-palestinese/>.

208 Custom Police’s main task is preventing the smuggle into the Wes Bank of illegal items, such as drug and weapons.

209 Col. G., in discussion with the author, May 7, 2017.

210 *Ibid.*

program²¹¹ at the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (COESPU) in Vicenza (Italy), the only center existing in Europe specialized in training foreign police units. The purpose of COESPU’s courses is to further strengthen recruits’ skills and prepare them to be instructors in their original units. Once the course is over, the recruits go back to the West Bank and they will be placed side by side with Carabinieri officers as assistant-instructors. After the third stage, which consists in additional courses, the recruits are sided by Carabinieri officers, the latter with mentoring functions, and they are expected to be ready for instructors’ tasks²¹².

Mentoring is probably one of the most important components within MIADIT in all its phases. In a security apparatus which lacks a judiciary system with checks and balances on police’s actions, like the Palestinian one, forming the policeman mindset before his technical capabilities is even more relevant. As Col. G. stated, “training a policeman who eventually is incapable and unaware how to relate himself with the society around him, means training a monster”²¹³. Therefore, Carabinieri teams are asked to pay a lot of attention on the so called “*polizia di prossimità*” (police of proximity) concept during the training²¹⁴, highlighting those core components common to all police units (regardless their cultural background), such as respect of human rights and code of conduct, which each policeman has to be aware of and keep in mind in dealing with civilian population on daily basis.

6.2. PROS AND CONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY FORCES

Following the discussion above, it is possible to assert that the international assistance provided by the United States and some European countries contributed in improving the performance and professionalization of the PA security forces, mostly following PA’s debacle in Gaza in 2007. Indeed, many observers and experts agree on the fact that the

211 Ministero della Difesa - Carabinieri. “Conclusa la missione MIADIT Palestina 6. Oltre 250 unita' delle forze di sicurezza palestinesi addestrate dai Carabinieri” Last modified May 23, 2017. doi: <http://www.carabinieri.it/cittadino/informazioni/eventi/conclusa-la-missione-miadit-palestina-6.-oltre-250-unita%27-delle-forze-di-sicurezza-palestinesi-addestrate-dai-carabinieri>.

212 Col. G., in discussion with the author, May 7, 2017.

213 *Ibid.*

214 Andrea Strippoli Lanternini, “Intervista al Colonnello Mennitti, Capo Missione di MIADIT Palestine,” *Difesa Online*, September 11, 2014, accessed July 17, 2017, <http://www.difesaonline.it/evidenza/interviste/intervista-al-colonnello-mennitti-capo-missione-di-miadit-palestine>.

battle for Gaza taught a harsh lesson to PA leadership, which understood that it could not allow something like that to happen in the West Bank in the future. Nevertheless, also several challenges derived from the international support to PA security sector, some of them result of the international assistance itself, others of the specific Palestinian context. Analyzing such challenges is important in order to understand which are real contributors and core obstacles faced by foreign organizations or entities that deal with the delicate task of training and preparing security forces in a completely different political, social, and cultural environment.

The first core challenge is the constant interference of Israel in PA security forces' training and activity. The Oslo agreements contained clauses that preserve Israel's prerogative to carry out operations in areas of limited Palestinian self-rule. This, over the years, undermined PA security forces' effectiveness and credibility. In addition to that, Israel put restrictions over the equipment and arms that PASF can use and train with and over the amount of ammunition allowed to practice with fire arms. For example, USSC and EUPOL COPPS personnel are not allowed to train PASF in defusing explosives and IEDs²¹⁵. Such restriction comes from Israel's worries in teaching Palestinians, even if members of the security forces, how to defuse, to deal, and therefore to build, explosive devices²¹⁶. These restrictions are applied also to the use of certain types of light arms and rifles by the PA security forces. In addition, each request to transfer equipment to PASF runs a difficult course of bureaucracy, and therefore, many times, PASF is not able to answer basic needs required in establishing an effective security apparatus. On one hand, Israel is interested in the success of the PA security reform, which would enable progress in the security process. On the other hand, Israel fears that arms and equipment could fall into the hands of terrorist elements²¹⁷. Regarding this aspect, Jim Zanotti defines such situation as "chicken-egg security dilemma"²¹⁸. This dilemma relies on the mutual mistrust between Israeli and Palestinian authorities in matter of security and counter-terrorism. The Israeli Defense

215 Acronym for Improvised Explosive Device.

216 Col. G., in discussion with the author, May 7, 2017.

217 Shlomo Brom. "Update on Reform of the Palestinian Security Apparatuses," *Institute for National Security Studies*, no77 (2008): 4. Accessed July 23, 2017. doi: <http://www.inss.org.il/publication/update-on-reform-of-the-palestinian-security-apparatuses/>.

218 Jim Zanotti. "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," Report Congressional Research Service (2010): 31. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

Forces routinely restricts the scope of PASF operations through training restrictions, curfews, checkpoints, limitations on international arms and equipment transfers, and by refusing to make arrests requested by the PA in areas under Israeli control in the West Bank (usually areas B and C). The reason behind such measures is the Israeli mistrust towards PA's effectiveness in handling high-risk security challenges, mostly when they are related to counter-terrorism operations in West Bank areas. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the IDF in apprehending terror suspects reinforces a common Israeli belief that handing over control of anti-terror operations to the PA is not worth the risk of having such operations fail. Therefore, both parties face a situation in which, on one hand, Israel cannot leave the West Bank to the PASF until they have the capacity and willingness to suppress attacks on Israel, and in the other hand the PA security forces cannot develop the necessary capacity and willingness while Israeli interference and presence in the West Bank stir Palestinian resentment and undermine PASF's ability to take independent action²¹⁹. Overall, the contributions of international entities to PA security forces' training, as vast as in terms of money and personnel, are limited due to general political impasse between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Nevertheless, it is possible to assert that there has been an improvement in PASF's professionalization thanks to international assistance. Even if such assistance and the training provided by USSC and EUPOL COPPS is mostly technical and operational, these efforts indirectly contributed in raising consciousness within PA security forces about their fundamental role and strengthened their cohesion and in highlighting basic but fundamental concepts such as "servants of civilians". Proof of that is, for example, the very low number of PASF members involved in the recent wave of violence in Israel and in the West Bank. While during the second Intifada several PASF members took part to acts of violence or even terrorist attacks, nowadays there have been registered just a couple of cases like that. So, such trend shows that the PA security sector is relatively motivated, and it received a good training and good education in doing its job from the international organization present on the ground²²⁰.

219 *Ibid.*

220 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

Another challenge in professionalizing PA security forces is to make training an activity carried out independently by local personnel, without foreign assistance. Creating a self-sufficient security apparatus has always been one of the cornerstones of the PA security sector reform and the final result of the international assistance should be not only to assist the Palestinian Authority in preparing more professional and efficient security forces, but first and foremost to support the building up of an autonomous system, so that PA will be able to be independent to sustain its security system by itself. This, as already showed, is the purpose of the Italian missions in the West Bank for example. Nowadays, most of PA units still train in Jordan and both the United States and those European countries involved in training PASF aim at moving the training activities to within the West Bank by 2020²²¹. Nevertheless, this is unlikely to happen in the next following years. The economical and logistical sustainability of the PA security sector is still a big concern. As Benedetta Berti highlights, one of the main questions is not if PASF are more professional and effective than in the past, but if such improvement is correlated to the huge amount of money that had been spent to train and equip the PA security system²²². So far, the international support to PASF, in addition to training activities, assisted the PA also in building new facilities with considerable fixed costs and maintenance obligations and in providing equipment and vehicles. Providing more assistance in order to further increase PASF operational capability could prolong the PA's dependence on external assistance and, therefore, would obstacle those incentives to make the PA security system self-sufficient²²³. On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority is not strong enough economically to sustain the entirety of its security sector by itself without external help. In case of international assistance would cease, all the PA security sector would likely collapse immediately.

Nevertheless, limited training and self-sufficiency of the PA security apparatus are secondary aspects in comparison to another issue, which relies on this question: Does the Palestinian population in the West Bank perceive the progresses within the security sector and the international assistance to it as a benefit? This is a further challenge. Since the

221 Col. G., in discussion with the author, May 7, 2017.

222 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

223 Jim Zanotti. "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," Report Congressional Research Service (2010): 35. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

failure of the Oslo accords, the establishment of a Palestinian state became more and more a remote hope and no further political steps had been taken by both Israeli and Palestinian sides. Therefore, during the years, Palestinian public began wondering about the scope in building a more effective security apparatus in absence of results within the political sphere. Even following the events in Gaza in 2007, when Salam Fayyad decided to deeply reform PA security sector and fight nepotism and corruption within it, the PA was already on its way to become more authoritarian. As noticed by Alaa Tartir, the practices of the security forces were observed by scholars as a reform unfolding in an authoritarian context due to the lack of a long-term strategy²²⁴. Also Nathan Brown highlights how, at the end of the day, Fayyad’s administration had no domestic foundation, and that his efforts would had paid off only in the context of a meaningful diplomatic process that reinforced the drive toward statehood²²⁵. Indeed, according to the same author, two of the major failures of Fayyad were not being able to build any state-like political structures and not strengthening the rule-of-law within the West Bank. Therefore, when it comes to analyze PASF’s operational improvements after the loss of Gaza, it is fundamental to look at the general and wider picture. The years after 2007 saw several successes in joint counter-terrorism and security operations between IDF and PASF. The latter were given more thrust in carrying out such operations within the West Bank and were able to exert control over problematic areas by themselves²²⁶. On the other hand, the major part of Palestinian public perceived such results only on the benefit of Israel’s security²²⁷ and began looking at PASF as mere Israel’s collaborators who carry out security operations on behalf of Israel and on behalf of president Abbas, whose only concern, in their eyes, is to fight political opponents who challenge him²²⁸. Therefore, operational improvements within PA security sector without a political process backing them, a long-term strategy, led the PA to harden its authoritarian features and thus to lose legitimacy over the years in the eyes of the local population.

224 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 12-13. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

225 Nathan J. Brown, “No Savior,” *Foreign Policy*, (2011). Accessed July 20, 2017. doi: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/17/no-savior-2/>.

226 Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

227 Alaa Tartir. “The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 14. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

228 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

In all of the aspects mentioned above, the Western countries involved in assisting the Palestinian Authority and its security apparatus are not only third-party actors who economically and technically support the PA, but also influential ones that shape discourse and strategies, and affect dimensions of the Palestinian system. Both USSC and EUPOL COPPS basically failed to support democratic governance and improve civil oversight and accountability due to the technical nature of their assistance and their lack of local sensitivity²²⁹. Both sides focused on conventional train-and-equip approach which created, yes, a more skillful security apparatus, but failed to generate a genuine institutional capacity to design, plan, and conduct training indigenously. Moreover, if some might say that success in building the PA's counter-terrorism capacity within a consolidated security structure subject to civilian control is the key to enabling progress in political negotiations with Israel, then the international assistance is even more relevant in this regard. For example, so far neither the Preventive Security Agency nor the General Intelligence Service, the key PA intelligence units, fall under the USSC's train-and-equip mandate, even though they reportedly received U.S. training. These PA intelligence organizations have questionable human rights records and, since Arafat's era, they lack accountability on human rights issues. By limiting the USSC's involvement with these PA security branches, the risk is that allowing such exceptions to the security reform mission could eventually undo and reverse whatever successes might be achieved²³⁰. Due to the fact that U.S. ties to these organizations may already exist, the absence of civilian oversight over PA security apparatus risks not only to further delegitimize the image of PASF in the eyes of the local population, but also to undermine the international assistance to PA and thus to nullify the results achieved within its security system in the long term, being the United States and European countries linked to PASF's actions. Therefore, in absence of a deep political and legal reform within the PA, the U.S. and European support risk to enhance PA's authoritarianism, paving the way for the establishment of a police state, and, as a

229 Alaa Tartir. "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 13. Accessed February 21, 2017. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi>.

230 Jim Zanotti. "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," Report Congressional Research Service (2010): 32. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

consequence, to indirectly strengthen the unpopular image of PASF within Palestinian society.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The present paper aimed at highlighting the core challenges faced by PA security forces in being effective in security and counter-terrorism fields, covering several dimensions such as cultural, political, and organizational. As result of this broad analysis, a few conclusions can be reached. The first point that must be stressed at the end of this work is related to the question: Can the Palestinian Authority Security Forces be considered a professional security apparatus today? In order to answer this question, one should first understand the meaning of professionalism. As Kimberly Marten highlights, professionalism and operational quality are two similar but distinct concepts²³¹. Samuel P. Huntington defined the concept professionalism as involving three main components²³². The first one is the “expertise”. This term indicates a man with specialized knowledge and skill in a significant field of the human endeavor, elements acquired only by prolonged education and experience. The second component is “responsibility”, a term that indicates a professional man who exerts his expertise in a social context when required and when specific conditions occur. The major feature of such component is, indeed, responsibility: The essential character of the professional man’s service imposes upon him the responsibility to perform the service when society needs it. Finally, the last component of professionalism is “corporateness”. Members of a profession share a sense of organic unity and consciousness of themselves as a group. This collective sense has its origins in the lengthy discipline and training necessary for professional competence and establishes and enforces the standards of professional responsibility. Taking Huntington’s theory, it is possible to assert that PASF cannot be completely considered a professional corp in military sense. First of all, since their early stage, PASF were formed in a patronage-based political system, and have been used for internal political purposes, not just security ones, by the Palestinian leadership. Also Benedetta Berti highlights how professionalization differs from operational quality:

231 Kimberly Marten. “Militia Patronage vs. the Diffusion of Professionalism: The Palestinian Security Forces,” *Barnard College and the Harriman Institute, Columbia University* (2013): 3-4. Accessed July 10, 2017. doi: https://barnard.edu/sites/default/files/isa_paper_2013_pasf_militias_and_diffusion.pdf.

232 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State. The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 8-10.

An effective security system includes, first and foremost, elements such as accountability, transparency and checks-and-balances over personnel's actions, rule-of-law, and respect of human rights²³³. Over the years, PASF faced improvements in organizational and operational skills. Nevertheless, the political system kept influencing the nature of the Palestinian security apparatus on its main dimensions. Although Arafat had a greater centralization over the security system, since then few things have changed. PASF remain highly politicized with Fatah's prominent presence, and even if the Palestinian security apparatus is under Minister of Interior's control (on the paper), the President still monopolizes the entire system²³⁴. Probably, the main obstacle to an effective reform within PA security system is the absence of a legal framework and a weak legislative and judicial oversight over the security sector, which means that the security personnel is rarely held accountable for violations of the law and human rights²³⁵. Since Arafat era, the creation of a legal framework for the PA security sector had been difficult for several reasons²³⁶. The absence of a legal framework also did not allow to properly define PA security organizations' competences. Following Arafat's death, by the end of 2005 only two security organizations (the General Intelligence and the Civil Defense) had their own laws and the definitions of PASF branches' competences were still incomplete and reflecting more the status quo than a comprehensive vision of security²³⁷. Since then some improvements have been registered, but the PA is still far from reaching a comprehensive and effective legal framework. Factional loyalties are still strong within the security system and this hinders the creation of a national and professional ethos. In the past ten years since the PA security sector reform in 2005, the security apparatus has continued to be politicized and affiliated to

233 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

234 *Ibid.*

235 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 20. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

236 Almost all issues related to security governance were already regulated in the Oslo agreements and Arafat exploited this to monopolize the security system, invoking the accords (which invested the PA president with large powers) and putting the veto to block any Palestinian Legislative Council's legislations that he considered in contrast with his decisions. Asem Khalil. "The Legal Framework for Palestinian Security Sector Governance," in Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 33. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).20.

237 *Ibid.* 36-37.

Fatah²³⁸. President Abbas has been kept promoting and placing loyal commanders on top of security organizations in order to strengthen his position and to face political challenges. Thus, that the major problem in establishing a legal framework relies on the direct consequences deriving from its creation: to make officers and commanders accountable of their actions to a bipartisan entity which is not the President. Therefore, going back to Huntington's analysis, it is possible to assert that, nowadays, the Palestinian Authority Security Forces still partially lack two of the main components in order to be considered a professional security apparatus: responsibility and corporateness.

Expertise and operational quality are surely fundamental factors within every military system. Nevertheless, in absence of the other two, they are less relevant. Moreover, the case of PASF showed how the focus only in improving their skills also brought side-effects. The fact that in recent years the security cooperation between Israel and PA increased and the fact that PASF proved, in some cases, to be able to handle security crisis and counter-terrorism operations by themselves, do not mean that in the long-term the West Bank will be more stable and more secure. Israel can see the benefits resulting from such cooperation, but the situation is different for the Palestinian public, which strengthened its perception of PASF as sub-contractors of the Israelis, and as an authoritarian police force which operates in behalf of the Palestinian president and not of the population²³⁹. In the last decade, PASF faced declining popularity and legitimization within Palestinian public and also the international assistance, many times, has been seen as an effort to shore up the Palestinian rulers. The victory of Hamas in the Gaza's elections in 2006 and the following PASF's debacle in 2007 as well can be partially explained through the lenses of lack of legitimization. The Palestinians of Gaza saw the PA as a deeply corrupted political system, which did not bring any fruitful improvement to the general situation of the population. In addition, once clashes between PASF, Fatah's militias and Hamas' militias began, the local population had a lot of difficulty in recognizing PA security forces as the legitimate actors within the conflict. The detachment between Palestinian public and PA security system, thus, is also result of the general perception that the latter is not fulfilling political goals at

238 Benedetta Berti, interview by Francesco Dotti, March 28, 2017, transcript.

239 *Ibid.*

the benefit of its own people. As Carl von Clausewitz stated on his work “On War”, the use of the military tool in absence of political direction is senseless use of force²⁴⁰. In the case of PASF, the Palestinian Authority followed a political agenda. Nevertheless, such political agenda has not been perceived as beneficial for the sake of the society by the Palestinian people. Legitimization is, therefore, one if not the most important aspect within a security system, due to the fact that every security apparatus relies, first and foremost, on its link and connection with the local social environment and on the recognition as such from it.

Thus, professionalization and legitimization are aspects correlated not only to technical and organizational elements, but also to political, social and even cultural ones. This is the reason why this paper analyzed several aspects of the Palestinian society in dealing with a specific topic such as its security apparatus. Analyzing the general and broad background allows to understand and to differentiate which are circumstantial challenges, such as political and technical, and which are core challenges when it comes to discuss the effectiveness of the PA security system. As discussed in the course of this work, cultural features and competing identities within Palestinian society represent core and constant challenges to PA’s legitimacy. The Palestinian Authority is constantly challenged by both external and internal threats. Non-statutory actors and terrorist organizations, like Hamas, are not the only actors who challenge the stability of PA and the effectiveness of its security system. As already seen, following political crisis such as the first and second Intifadas, the Palestinian population relied more on the assistance and protection of other entities, different and often in competition with the formal ones. The tribal system and *hamulas*, for example, represent and always will represent an obstacle to PA in exerting its control and influence over the population, and in instilling a sense of nation within it and within its security apparatus as well. The combination of cultural aspects with circumstantial political events resulted in ups and downs of actors’ authority within the society. In the aftermath of both Intifadas, PASF faced more challenges in exerting control over the population which relied on protection provided from local militias and members of the clan of origin. The

240 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

same is happening today, where the PA lives a political crisis²⁴¹ and, as a consequence, its security apparatus faces stronger *hamulas* and multiple challenges in exerting control even in those areas where, few years ago, it had limited problems in doing so²⁴².

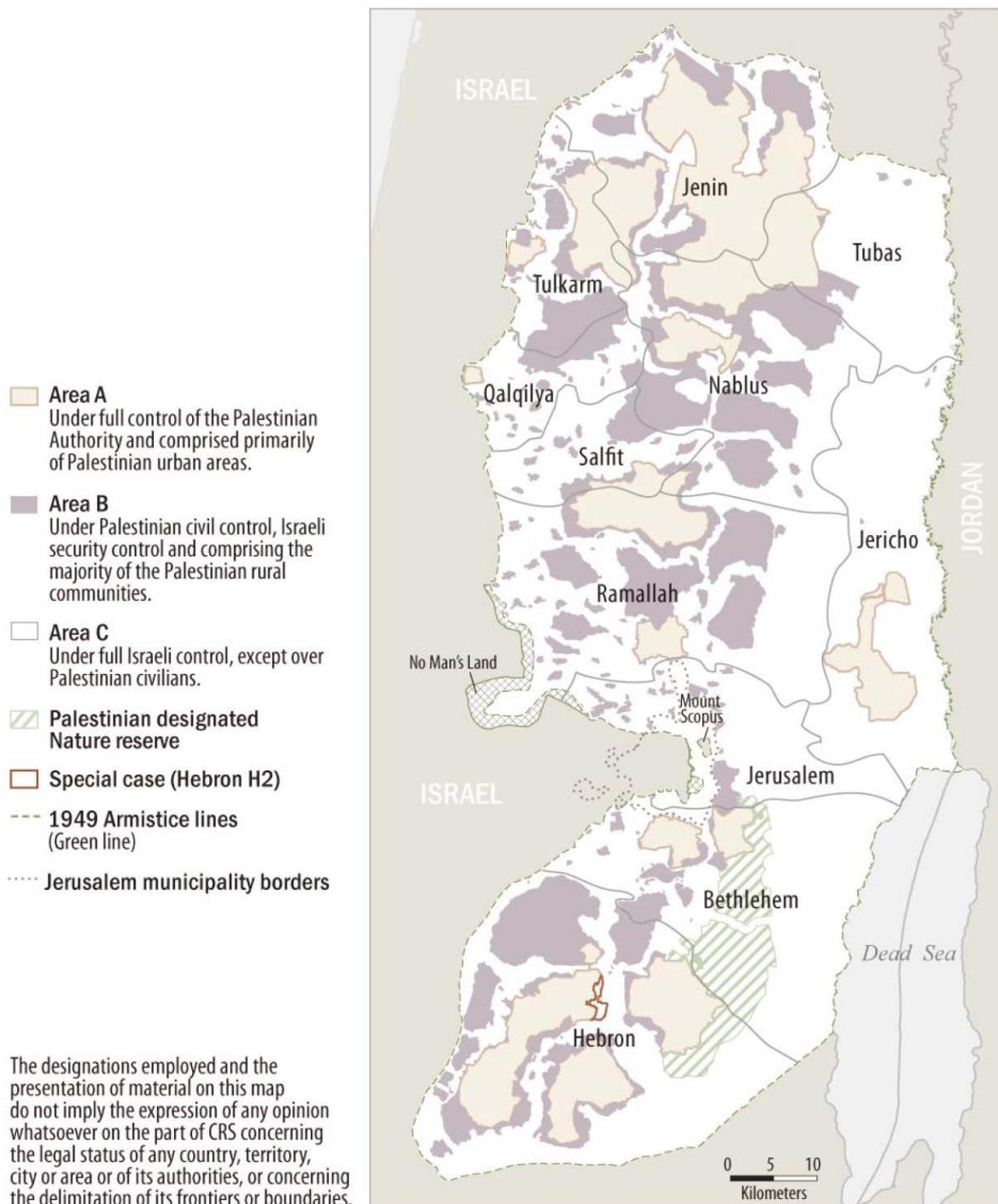
All this shows how is important to analyze and integrate all the dimensions of the Palestinian background, cultural, political and technical, in order to understand the complicate issues of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces. In conclusion, the purpose of this paper was not only to discuss and analyze all these challenges, from the cultural to the technical ones, which affect PASF's efficiency independently, but to understand how they combine, how they interact each other and what are the results and consequences of such interaction.

241 Another element which contributes to delegitimize the present PA presidency is that there have not been presidential elections since 2009, when the mandate of President Mahmoud Abbas expired.

242 As Yoram Cohen and Shlomo Brom noticed, nowadays the PA police is not able to enter and operate in several neighborhoods and villages, mostly around Nablus and Jenin, like in the past. Many times, like during clashes between members of different clans, the police do not intervene, fearing not only to be involved in such clashes but also to keep distance from disputes which involve *hamulas*. Yoram Cohen, in discussion with the author, April 3, 2017. Shlomo Brom, interview by Francesco Dotti, February 26, 2017, transcript.

APPENDIX A

*Map of Palestinian Authority West Bank Governorates and Areas A, B, and C.*²⁴³



243 Jim Zanotti. "U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority," *Report Congressional Research Service* (2010): 2. Accessed June 15, 2017. doi: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.

APPENDIX B

*Categories of actors within the Palestinian security sector.*²⁴⁴

The Palestinian security sector (including also entities other than the Palestinian Authority) can be divided in five different categories of actors: 1) *Organizations authorized to use force*, which include the Internal Security Forces (Civil Police, Preventive Security, Civil Defense), National Security Forces (including Naval Police, Military Police, Military Intelligence and Military Liaison), Presidential Security/Force 17, Presidential Guard, General Intelligence. 2) *Civil management and oversight bodies*, which include President, Prime Minister, National Security Council, Palestinian Legislative Council and select committees, Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Planning, customary and traditional authorities, financial management authorities (Ministry of Finance, Bureau of Financial and Administrative Control), Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens Rights' (PICCR). 3) *Justice and law enforcement institutions*, which include Regular courts (Magistrate Courts, Courts of First Instance, Courts of Appeal, High Court), High Constitutional Court, High Criminal Court, administrative courts, *Shari'a* and religious courts, military courts, High Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice, Correction and Rehabilitation Centers, Criminal Investigation Departments, Public Prosecution, customary and traditional justice systems. 4) *Non-statutory security forces*, which include Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (military wing of Hamas), Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fatah affiliated armed groups), Al-Quds Battalions (military wing of Islamic Jihad), Nasser Salah ad-Din Brigades (military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees), Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Battalions (military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, PFLP), National Resistance Brigades (military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, DFLP). 5) *Non-statutory civil-society groups*, which include professional groups, media, research organizations, advocacy organizations, religious organizations, other non-governmental organizations, universities.

244 Roland Friedrich and Arnold Luethold. "Entry-Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform," *Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)* (2007): 16-17. Accessed March 5, 2017. doi: [www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points\(EN\).pdf](http://www.dcaf.ch/content/download/98409/1517146/file/Entry-Points(EN).pdf).

APPENDIX C

*Main objectives of Hamas' agenda during the elections in 2006.*²⁴⁵

Overall, three can be considered the main goals that the Islamic movement vowed to address as soon as it assumed office:

- The installment of a trustworthy leadership to protect the interests, unity, and national principles of the Palestinian nation, while strengthening its ties with the Arab and Islamic world and establishing balanced diplomatic relations with the international community.
- An extended period of respite, allowing the government to implement comprehensive institutional reforms, rehabilitate society and the economy, put an end to the anarchy, and restore law and order.
- The founding of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, conceivably within temporary borders, but without the recognition of Israel. The state would be founded on the basis of democratic principles.

²⁴⁵ Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinians – Competing Group Identities in the Absence of a State" in *Challenges to the Cohesion of the Arab State*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2008), 139.

APPENDIX D

List of acronyms

EUPOL COPPS	European Union Police Coordinating Office Palestinian Police Support
GIS	General Intelligence Service
INL	State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
JIPTC	Jordan International Police Training Center
NSF	National Security Forces
PA	Palestinian Authority (PA and PNA are the same)
PASF	Palestinian Authority Security Forces
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PG	Presidential Guard
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PNSF	Palestinian National Security Forces
PSA	Preventive Security Agency
USSC	United States Security Coordinator

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