

# The Failure of Democratization in Palestine

Carsten Keil \*

July 7, 2002

Today democracy has established itself as the sole unchallenged form of political system. Fukayama even went as far as claiming the *End of History* had come due to the failure of any viable alternative<sup>1</sup>. Why democracy? Simply because it was found again and again to be the best environment for people to live the life they want to live. This includes, to name only a few out of Dahl's *Why Democracy?* list, the guarantee of essential rights, general freedom and self determination<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, history confirmed two additional facts: Modern democracies tend to be prosperous<sup>3</sup> and, more striking, modern democracies do not fight wars at each others<sup>4</sup>. Other means to resolve conflicts and meet challenges proved to be more efficient. *Democratic citizen and leaders learn the art of compromise*<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless democracies indeed fight and fought wars with nondemocratic countries, they imposed colonial rule and conquered people - but, and that is the point, democratic societies do not fight one another. *Thus a more democratic world promises also to be a more peaceful world*<sup>6</sup>. Exactly, what Kant had theoretically claimed 200 years earlier when linking *The Eternal Peace* to the republic form of government<sup>7</sup>.

Does this apply to Palestine? Why should it not? My thesis is that, firstly, democratization failed in Palestine, where it prevailed in Israel. The failure of genuine Palestinian democracy thus is attributable to both, internal and external factors. This is elaborated in detail below. Secondly, Palestinian society had lost its ability to handle the post Camp David troubles in a controlled peaceful manner. I do attribute the latter to the loss of the means, i.e. to the loss of democracy.

Huntington regards the Palestine problem as a classical *fault line conflict* between Muslim and non-Muslim civilizations<sup>8</sup>. I do see the fault line along a democratic and a non-democratic society.

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<sup>1</sup>Fukayama 1989, pp. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Dahl 1998, pp. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Huntington 1991, pp. 59.; Dahl 1998, pp. 58

<sup>4</sup>Huntington 1991, p. 29.; Dahl 1998, pp 57. In toto: Reiter 2002; Weart 1998

<sup>5</sup>Dahl 1998, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>Dahl 1998, p. 58.

<sup>7</sup>Kant 1796, p. 205.

<sup>8</sup>Huntington 1996, p. 256.

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## 1 Nonexistence: Palestine 1947-1995

In 1947 the colonial rule in the British Mandate of Palestine ended. The UN decided to create a Jewish and a Palestinian state, both independent but highly connected. In these days the Jews accepted the loss of 'biblical territory', the 'Land of the Kings', their Judea and Samaria - an area called today The West Bank<sup>9</sup>. The communities clashed as early as in 1948. The Palestinians, defeated by Israel, called their Arab neighbors for help, and the first Israeli-Arab war broke out. Up to the recent past the Palestinians were blamed for having waged this war in order to 'drive the Jews into the sea', whereas today there are some discussions on the stake of Israel - at least Israel is accused of severe atrocities<sup>10</sup>. The result is now history: Israel won and expelled about 700'000 Palestinians from their homeland. The Refugee problem was born. Jordan and Egypt occupied the Palestinian territory. Within months the Palestinians had lost their first state.

In 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive war (Six Day War) and occupied the Sinai, West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. 'Judea and Samaria' was back in Israeli hands - but with Palestinian population. To 're-incorporate' these lands into the Jewish state and to address some Israeli security concerns settlements started. 1987 the First Intifada broke out: an uprising against Israel occupation. 1988 King Abdullah of Jordan waived the West Bank in favor of a forthcoming Palestinian state. In October 1991 the Madrid talks between the Palestinian Liberalization Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel (GOI) started. The turning point was reached in the Oslo talks when the 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements' were signed accord 19/8/1993 (Oslo I): A Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and West Bank was in the making. The DOP became official in the so called Gaza Jericho accord of 13/9/1993. It has to be pointed out that the key issues were not addressed: Neither the settlement<sup>11</sup> nor the refugee problem<sup>12</sup> was discussed. The 4/5/1994 the GOI-PLO accord was signed in Cairo. This was the prerequisite for the 28/9/1995 (Oslo II) agreement on the return of the PLO to Palestine and the installation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) - an institutional body of Palestine.

## 2 Sketching the Political System: Palestine 1995

Based on the Election Law of 7/12/1995 and the Draft Basic Law of 7/12/1995 the provisional framework of the Palestinian State was laid. A Parliamentary Democracy based on the Rule of Law and Separation of Powers was sketched. What follows is an outline of the system<sup>13</sup>.

**Occupied Palestinian Territories (POT)** The West Bank (aka 'Judea and Samaria' in some Israeli papers) and the Gaza Strip are officially referenced as POT. These areas form the territory of the Palestinian democracy, whereas in 'Areas A' (18%) security and civil matters are with the Palestinians, in 'Areas B' (41%) only civil matters and 'Areas C' (31%) remain under full control of Israel.

**Palestinian National Authority (PNA)** The PNA (aka PA in western papers) is the executive body for Palestinian Self Government. Its president<sup>14</sup> is elected in 5 years term, has the power to initiate legislation and promulgate laws. The PNA consists of 26 ministers. The cabinet, appointed by the President, must consist of at least 80% of the legislative. The President is neither subject to votes of non-confidence by the legislative, neither can he dissolve the legislative.

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<sup>9</sup>Primor 2001, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Pappe 2000, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Makovsky 2001, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup>Pappe 2000, p.5.

<sup>13</sup>Center Peace Fact Sheet: Palestinian Political Process & Parties; Baumgarten 1995, pp. 7; PSR

<sup>14</sup>There is some confusion on this. The official term, used in texts written in English, is Arabic ra'ees. Western media and the Palestinians translate this as 'president' whereas the Israeli prefer 'chairman'. Perthes 1996, p. 264.

With more than 70% of the vote Yasser Arafat was elected for president (22% blank ballots, 8% Samiha Khalil)<sup>15</sup>.

**Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)** The PLC (aka PC in Israeli papers, or 'parliament' in informal Palestinian documents) is the transitional body for the legislative. It consists of 88 elected members plus the president of the PNA. It is unicameral and elected by majority vote by 16 governates. Its legislation is restricted to domestic issues which explicitly excludes all laws regarding the final status or foreign relations. It debates policy and approves laws, budget and cabinet ministers. It may not impeach the president but it can vote of confidence in the government.

**Palestinian Liberalization Organization (PLO)** The PLO was founded in exile. Up to now it is the only political body of the Palestinian people, *both* in the POT and diaspora. Its executive body, the PLO Executive Committee consist of 18 members of which Yasser Arafat is the chairman. Its legislative body is the Palestine National Council (PNC) with about 700 members nominated by the Executive Committee.

**Palestinian political parties and interest groups** The main political party is **Fatah** which is part of the PLO and was founded in 1959. As well part of the PLO, there is the People's Party of Palestine (**PPP**), the Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (**PFLP**, founded 1969) and the Democratic Front of Liberation of Palestine (**DFLP**). Furthermore there is a split of the PFLP, the Palestinian Democratic Union (**FIDA**, founded in 1991).

Islamic Interest Groups are firstly Harakat a muqawama al islamiye (**Hamas**). Hamas was founded by the Muslim Brotherhood and follows the ultra islamistic strain of Salafiya (derived from Arabic al-Salaf al-Salih, the Venerable Forefathers), the same as of al-Queda and the Saudi Wahabits. Nevertheless it has a more pragmatic, i.e. Palestinian Nationalistic, agenda then al-Queda<sup>16</sup>. Secondly there is the Palestine faction of the **Islamic Jihad**, a series of small non-cohesive groups. Furthermore there exists a significant number of independents, which are either secular or islamistic.

Group	PLO	flavor	bias	popularity	seats
Fatah	yes	secular	pro-Arafat	30%-40%	55
PPP	yes	secular	pro-Arafat	5%-10%	boycott
FIDA	no	secular	pro-Arafat	1%	1
DFLP	yes	secular	anti-Arafat	2%	boycott
PFLP	yes	secular	anti-Arafat	5%-10%	1
Hamas	no	islamistic	anti-Arafat	15% - 20%	(4)
Islamic Jihad	no	islamistic	anti-Arafat	2% - 4%	-
Independents	no	both	both	15% - 20%	11 (+16)

Table 1: This overview tries to quantify the political diversity of Palestine. *Popularity* are range figures, since they changed over time. Fatah's popularity declined over time, first independents then Islamists gained. *Seats* counts the members in the PLC in the highdays of democracy around 1997. Hamas members did not run as Hamas representatives but are known to be affiliated. The (+16) seats under *Independents* are people which changing bias towards Fatah (12) and others.

<sup>15</sup>Shikaki 2002, p. 91.

<sup>16</sup>Doran 2002, p. 25.

### 3 Give Democracy a Chance: Palestine 1995-2000

#### 3.1 Elections

Elections are the core concept of democracy. Huntington defines a political system *as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote*<sup>17</sup>. For him *elections, open, free and fair are the essence of democracy, the inescapable sine qua non*<sup>18</sup>. Out of Dahl's 7 benchmark criteria for democracy the first 3 are about elections. According to him a country is considered as democracy, if it (D1) has elected officials, (D2) free, fair and frequent elections and (D3) inclusive suffrage<sup>19</sup>. Are these textbook criteria met by Palestine?

On 20/1/1996 elections for PLC and presidency were held. Due to the importance - the first democratic election in Arab history ever<sup>20</sup> - they were monitored very closely by international organizations. *For the most part the reports have been positive*<sup>21</sup>. They were judged as *genuine and represented the will of the electorate*<sup>22</sup>. The suffrage was inclusive, caring about minorities as well as well a the right to vote for woman - nothing to hold a-priori for an Arabic society. The turnout was high with 79.9%<sup>23</sup>. There may have been some oddities, since *some have suggested that the high levels of illiteracy contributed many woman allowing male relatives to decide how their votes should be cast*<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless numerous problems on the election day have been reported (like manipulation of the right to vote or interactions by security forces, both Israeli and Palestinian<sup>25</sup>) but *were generally of an administrative nature and it appears that these were not intended to frustrate the genuine nature of the elections or to hinder the expression of the will of the electorate*<sup>26</sup>. Bottom line, the official were elected in a free and fair election.

I like to raise some critics, not about how the elections have been carried out, but how they have been designed to be carried out.

Firstly, the election design process itself was not much democratic at all - it was carried out by a democratically not (yet) legitimated PNA in the 1995 - 1996 years. In these *undemocratic* years all legislative, executive and judicial power lay with Yasser Arafat<sup>27</sup>.

Secondly, it was designed by the ruling elite to favor this elite. This needs further investigation: The PLC elections are of majoritarian style, i.e. 'winner takes it all'. *The party gaining a nationwide majority or plurality tend to be overrepresented in terms of parliamentary seats*<sup>28</sup>. Of course this is deliberate in a majoritarian style democracy, because, as its advocates argue, it tends to be more stable and the executive gains a clear mandate. But one may ask the question if that was the right model for Palestine. *Especially in plural societies that are sharply divided (...) the flexibility necessary for negotiation is likely to be absent*<sup>29</sup>. The Palestinian society is indeed highly divided: Both along a secular-islamistic division and between advocates and opponents of the Oslo peace process. PLO and Fatah themselves are sharply segregated into, how Shikaki calls it, an *Old Guard* and a *New Guard*<sup>30</sup>. Along these fault lines later the Palestinian society broke into pieces. *What such societies need is a democratic regime, that includes and tries to maximize the size of the party ruling majority instead of being satisfied with a*

<sup>17</sup>Huntington 1991, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup>Huntington 1991, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup>Dahl 1998, p. 221.

<sup>20</sup>Center Peace, Fact Sheet: Palestinian Political Process & Parties..

<sup>21</sup>POGAR, Palestine: Elections, p. 3..

<sup>22</sup>PCHR E4, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>PLC, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>POGAR, Palestine: Woman, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Perthes 1996, p. 268..

<sup>26</sup>PCHR E4, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup>Baumgarten 1995, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup>Lijphart 1999, p. 143.

<sup>29</sup>Lijphart 1999, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup>Shikaki 2002, p. 89.

*bare majority: Consensus democracy*<sup>31</sup>. Exactly these concern have been raised when the Election Law was discussed in 1995<sup>32</sup>. *There was some call by smaller opposition parties for the use of proportional representation system, which traditionally allows smaller parties greater opportunities*<sup>33</sup>. But this was ruled out by Yasser Arafat.

*Article 5(2) of the Election Law provides that the distribution of seats amongst constituencies must be proportional according to the population number in each constituency*<sup>34</sup>. But the non-yet legitimated PNA set seats to maximize political aims<sup>35</sup>, e.g. the city Nablus should get 10 seats, but received only 8 - the same number as the city of Khan Younis, which should only have 6<sup>36</sup>. This was severely criticized and considered *to be a breach of the provision of the Election law*<sup>37</sup>, but did not change the illegal action of the PNA. Fatah could start much better into an already highly biased election.

The result of the election was majoritarian textbook like: *Fatah received approximately 30% of the total votes, the party won 58% of the parliamentary seats. Conversely, the various independent candidates received approximately 60% of the votes but captured only 40% of the seats*<sup>38</sup>.

To worsen things, the opposition parties PFLP and DFLP had called for a boycott of the elections. Slightly different with Hamas which refused participation as a party, but advocated certain candidates after experiencing pressure from the basis<sup>39</sup>. Since Yasser Arafat strictly advocates the Old Guard within PLO/ Fatah, the New Guard got underrepresented in the political live (e.g. only 15 of the 55 Fatah seat have been assigned to the younger generation)<sup>40</sup>. A fair representation of all elements of Palestinian society into the political institutions could not be achieved.

But the most severe critic I have to raise is the violation of Dahl's requirement (D2) for *frequent* elections. Officials shall only stay in office for a pre-determined period - after that, they must face elections again. This is a core requirement.

The pre-determined cut-off date was 5/4/1999, the date to which United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 should have been implemented (The interim period was then extended without any clear date, after Israel failed to meet its commitments). But *no* elections have been held and both, PNA and PLC stayed in office. Yasser Arafat *just* decided that there should no be any elections<sup>41</sup>. Critics were severe: *This constitutes a grave violation of basic democratic norms, particularly because elections are often a vital mechanism through which the people give a mandate to representatives to act on their behalf*<sup>42</sup>. Palestinian Human Right groups, opposition and intellectuals *actively advocated for new elections, warning that the legitimacy of the PNA would continue to erode without a renewed mandate from the people*<sup>43</sup>. The critics have been ignored by Yassar Arafat.

The fact that no elections had been held when they were planned found not much reflection in western media. This is worrying, since from a normative point of view, Palestine Government acted from 5/4/1999 onwards *without any formal democratic legitimacy*.

All of the above, (1) an electoral system favoring a single party single policy establishment, (2) the failure to establish an Rawlsian 'Overlapping Consensus' on democratic process by certain parties being excluded or refusing to be included in the elections and (3) the loss of legitimacy by avoiding elections, put the Palestine democracy not in the best shape. But exactly this means would have been extremely useful to pass through the troubled waters after the Camp David disaster.

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<sup>31</sup>Lijphart 1999, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup>Perthes 1996, p. 268.

<sup>33</sup>POGAR, Palestine: Elections, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>PCHR E2, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup>Perthes 1996, p. 268.

<sup>36</sup>PCHR E2, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup>PCHR E2, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>POGAR, Palestine: Elections, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup>Perthes 1996, p. 269.

<sup>40</sup>Shikaki, p.

<sup>41</sup>PCHR 24, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>PCHR 24, p. 11.

<sup>43</sup>PCHR 2002a, p. 2.

### 3.2 The Political Process

The political system does not allow a-priori to judge whether or not a country is democratic<sup>44</sup>. But it allows to judge if the Rule of Law is followed - a crucial prerequisite for a stable and vivid democracy. Did Palestinian institutions follow the law they gave themselves?

PLC's major role *represented in drafting and approving laws that organize the daily life of Palestinians and supporting the building of a Palestinian civil society*<sup>45</sup>. The situation was challenging: the actual legal system was based on a mixture of legacy laws, acts and orders-in-council dating back to Jordan, Egypt and even the British Administration. From 1967 onwards additionally Israeli civilian and military law have been applied<sup>46</sup>.

For that role the PLC was designed to be a strong counterpart of the PNA, both legitimated by direct vote. Reality looks different. Over time the influence of the PLC deteriorated, yielding the PLC a broken sword. This can be attributed to two facts: Firstly the PNA ignored the Rule of Law and therefore the role of the PLC. Secondly the PLC did not take a fighting stance towards the PNA. In the following I will elaborate in case studies how I came to this conclusion.

The establishment of an independent judiciary was constituted in the Draft Basic Law. Consequently there was a clear mandate, both for PLC and PNA to design and ratify the Judicial Authority Law. The law *establishes the structure of an independent and accountable Palestinian civil judiciary, including regular courts (...) as well as an office of attorney general*<sup>47</sup>. The law was proposed for discussion 13/11/1997, approved third reading 25/11/1998 and presented to Yasser Arafat for ratification 5/12/1998<sup>48</sup>. The PLC's by-law now required the president to approve or return the law to the PLC for further discussion within 30 days. If the president takes no action, the law would come into force automatically<sup>49</sup>. But Yasser Arafat ignored his duty and did neither approve nor rejected the law within the legal period - and neither did the law come into force<sup>50</sup>. The 23/6/1999, 20/7/1999 and 19/10/1999 the PLC again asked the PNA to ratify law. And again the PNA ignored the request. On 1/6/2000 the whole issue went in different direction, when the PNA suddenly decided to install a Higher Judicial Court, slightly different than proposed in the Judicial Authority Law. The PLC took no action against this, admittedly beneficial, but nevertheless illegal step.

Similar procedures can be found with the Draft Basic Law. It was approved in third reading 1/10/1997 but the PNA failed again to approve or reject it, the PLC did not find a mechanism to pressure the PNA<sup>51</sup>. The issue remained unresolved for the following years. Critics were harsh, both towards PNA and PLC: *This can be understood as an overstepping of the most basic principles of democratic work and a threat to opportunities for building institutions of democratic governance and civil society*<sup>52</sup>. *In fact, it is surprising that the Council did not even try to pressure the Executive. This raises questions about the Councils ability to fulfill its responsibilities as a parliamentary institution in establishing democratic norms between it and the Executive*<sup>53</sup>.

Further examples are the Charitable Societies and Non-Governmental Organizations Law which would regulate the work of NGOs and hinder *the state to exercise its arbitrary measures on the society and*

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<sup>44</sup>Consider for example the current cry for Montesquieu's famous *Separation of Powers* into legislative, executive and judicial branches in Palestine (**Montesquieu 1748**, Vol. 2, chapter 6). But this criteria is even not met by *any* parliamentary western democracy, where the fault line is along government, opposition and supreme court (**Nohlen 1995**, Gewaltenteilung, Hans Boldt, p. 155, Vol. 1.).

<sup>45</sup>**PCHR 19**, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup>**POGAR**, Palestine: Judiciary, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>**PCHR 2002a**, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>**PCHR 19**, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup>**PCHR 2002a**, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup>**PCHR 19**, pp. 29.

<sup>51</sup>**PCHR 19**, pp. 23.

<sup>52</sup>**PCHR 19**, p. 24.

<sup>53</sup>**PCHR 24**, p. 38.

to quell any collective activities aimed at serving the society<sup>54</sup> (approved third reading 21/2/1998 - not ratified in the following years<sup>55</sup>) or the 1998 General Budget Draft Law (PNA did not seek approval of its budget)<sup>56</sup>.

Indeed the PNA did approve 24 laws since 1996<sup>57</sup>. But whenever the issue was about regulation and sharing of power of PNA, firstly the Executive simply ignored the Legislative and therefore the Rule of Law. Secondly the PLC did not take any actions against this. It could have, e.g. with the often requested vote of no-confidence in the government, which was *never* used. It even did not so when PLC members themselves became target of repetitive physical attacks by PNA security forces<sup>58</sup>. The PLC had *accomplished much in its first two years, but its performance had since deteriorated as some members had become subservient to the PNA executive or to their own self-interest at the expense of the PLC*<sup>59</sup>. In the first years the PLC was simply weak, in the later years it became the antidemocratic companion of Yasser Arafat: *Not only had the PLC passively accepted its marginalisation by the Executive, but it started as well to participate actively in the process of undermining democratic norms, including its own by-laws*<sup>60</sup>. The frustration grew in the political parties from 1996 onwards and reached a fatalistic state in the late days of the democracy: *'The Council is operating as an executive institution, not a legislative one, working on behalf of an elite group'* (Salah al-Tamari); *'A dangerous development in the PLCs performance is that a number of its committees speak with the same voice as the Executive'* (Abdel Jawad Saleh); *'There is no separation of powers in Palestine. There is only one authority, and it dominates all aspects of political life. That authority is the Executive (...) Most of the legislation drafted by the PLC remains theoretical and has not been brought into force. The PLC has failed to develop democratic relations with the executive. The PLCs ability to monitor the executive was very weak, if at all existent. Most of the monitoring cases undertaken by the PLC were supposed to be transferred to the judiciary but the PLC failed to do so and failed to take any measures against anyone involved in any sort of violations. The Council has not fulfilled its expected role'* (Rafat al-Najjar)<sup>61</sup>.

The Palestine people, deprived from appropriate, democratic political means within the system, started to resist Arafat without the system. The judicial apparatus went on strike the October, 11th and 27th 1999 to protest against illegal interference by the PNA. The 27/11/1999 eleven Palestinian Intellectuals criticized in an open letter the *tyranny* and corruption of the PNA. Some of them got arrested and held in prison without any charge<sup>62</sup>.

### 3.3 The Sovereignty of Palestine

Both, the issue of elections and the issue of political processes are internal factors which contributed to the decline of Palestine democracy. But there is another very important external factor in the period discussed here: The question of Palestine Sovereignty and, accordingly, the policy of Israel. After Israel occupied the POT in 1967, it put it under military law of the IDF and, effectively under governance of GOI. This policy is referenced as *closure*. All the world but Israel judges this as a violation of the 1949 IV Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in the Time of Wars (Israel takes a somehow weird stance here by arguing *that its occupation (...) is sui generis since it did not gain control of these territories in an aggressive war, but as a result of defensive action, and therefore it is not subject to Occupier Law*<sup>63</sup>). This military and administrative framework allows the

<sup>54</sup>PCHR 19, p. 40.

<sup>55</sup>PCHR 19, pp. 32; PCHR 24, pp 41.

<sup>56</sup>PCHR 19, pp. 42.

<sup>57</sup>POGAR, Palestine: Legislature, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup>PCHR 27, pp. 38.

<sup>59</sup>PCHR 2002d, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup>PCHR 27, p. 35.

<sup>61</sup>All quotes in: PCHR 27, p. 31 and p. 35. The persons are PLC members.

<sup>62</sup>Fischer 2001, p. 395.

<sup>63</sup>PCHR 6, p. 2.



control of all movements of goods (i.e. trade) and people. With the implementation of the 1994 Interim Agreement IDF partially withdrew from PNA territories, but the rule of Israel remained unquestioned. E.g., as early as 25/2/1996 or 26/10/1996 Israel imposed again temporarily absolute closure over the POT and introduced a permit system with identification cards every Palestinian must possess. It is important to emphasize the territorial diversity: Fully (i.e. regarding security and civil matters) controlled the PNA only 18% ('Area A') of the POT, whereas 31% remained under IDF rule ('Area C'). In 41% PNA at least gained control over civil matters ('Area B'). The areas are highly fragmented and scattered, and therefore even small movements fell under the full impact of the remaining closure. The POT have been transformed *into what is effectively a small collection of Palestinian cantons, each surrounded by Israeli occupying forces which control their borders*<sup>64</sup>. Pappé calls this situation *Bantustan* and compares it to the situation in the homelands of Apartheid South Africa<sup>65</sup>. Alawi sees Palestine *still under occupation*<sup>66</sup> and because of airspace, coasts and water still under foreign control as nothing more but a *protectorate*<sup>67</sup>.

In order to 're-introduce' Jewish Population in Arabic Territories, to secure a buffer zone against potential invasion, and, as some critics argue, to pursue the quest of a 'Greater Israel', the GOI followed from 1967 onwards a straight settlement policy. This was accompanied with massive expropriations<sup>68</sup>. Today there are about 150'000 settlers in the POT, which occupy 1.4% of the West Bank. Settlement activity has expanded by about 50%, both in territory and numbers, since the Oslo accords<sup>69</sup>. By enhancing the settlements GOI surely did not violate *letters, but sense* of the Oslo accords<sup>70</sup>. The settlement policy is judged (by all but Israel) as illegal and is widely regarded an attempt to destroy Palestinian national integrity<sup>71</sup>. Since with 44% a fairly significant percentage of the settlers are orthodox or even ultra-orthodox, clashes are unavoidable<sup>72</sup> Even pro-Israel hawkish writer Halevi rejects any positive in the *insertion of armed Jewish fanatics into Palestinian population centers*<sup>73</sup>.

I think it is fair to state that Palestine society neither owned territorial integrity nor sovereignty. It is clear why Israel reacted like that - it feared about its security and its own very existence. But was this an appropriate policy? Democracy is about the sovereign of the people. Restricting sovereignty equals restricting democracy. And restricting democracy of a people restricts security of neighboring democratic societies.

### 3.4 Does Anybody care?

Palestinian democracy had died. Now, does this matter? It obviously did neither matter to western Media nor to western Governments which paid little attention to the failure of democratization in Palestine, as long as the Palestinian-Israel negotiations seemed to be on track. But decline of democracy eroded in the long term the capability of the Palestinian society to address its problems with the means of politics in favor of violence.

In the short term it mattered as well. It mattered to the people of Palestine. Text book patterns of non-democratic societies arose, of which I will name some in the following lines. Freedom in its very basic form, the freedom of movement, and the very integrity of an autonomous person was restricted by Israeli closure. The freedom of expression, the right for alternative information and associational autonomy in Palestine (all 3 basic requirements of Dahl<sup>74</sup>) were hindered by proactive interventions of the PNA<sup>75</sup>.

<sup>64</sup>PCHR 6, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup>Pappé 1998, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup>Alawi 2000, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup>Alawi 2000, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup>Pappé 1998, p. 33.

<sup>69</sup>Center Peace Fact Sheet: Settlements, Pappé 1998, p. 33; Makovsky 2001, p. 35

<sup>70</sup>Makovsky 2001, p. 34.

<sup>71</sup>Pappé 1998, p. 33.

<sup>72</sup>Center Peace, Fact Sheet: Settlements.

<sup>73</sup>Halevi 2001, p. 39.

<sup>74</sup>Dahl 1998, p. 221.

<sup>75</sup>PHRMG

The PNA used its security apparatus to crush the opposition, ignoring legal procedures and the Rule of Law. Activists of the PFLP and Hamas were rounded up and detained - often without *any* charges. As much as 12 different security services have been created *to wage war against Hamas*<sup>76</sup>. The PNA used *Israeli pressure to justify the arrest of opposition figures not connected to any illegal activities*<sup>77</sup>. The 4/9/2000 Amnesty International criticized the PNA for its authoritarian style, arbitrary arrests, press censorship and inhumane treatment of political detainees.

Another topic is corruption, which is judged not yet to have *penetrated deep within Palestinian culture and society nor has been legitimated as de-facto in the society*<sup>78</sup>, but to exist. It is repetetively criticized by the Palestinian people. In 1996 'only' half of the people considered the PNA to be corrupt, today its about 80%<sup>79</sup>. The PNA is named a *thugocracy*<sup>80</sup>. The results are known and severe: the economy is weakened and the credibility of the political institutions is destroyed. The cause is the loss of democracy, having manifested itself in *the hegemony of the executive branch over the legislative and judicial branches and the lack of Rule of Law*<sup>81</sup>.

## 4 The Breakdown: Palestine in the wake of Al-Aqsa

### 4.1 The Failure of Camp David

When on the 25/7/2000 Yasser Arafat walked out of the doors of Camp David, the Oslo peace process collapsed. There was much discussion whether or not his conclusion he drew out of the GOI offer was justified. Official Israel sources still blame Yasser Arafat, others deem the proposal unacceptable<sup>82</sup>. Why Camp David failed, shall not be the issue here. I rather focus on the consequences.

Yasser Arafat had identified himself with Oslo. At this point in time, the Palestine system already had turned into a authoritarian regime which had condemned all anti-Arafat elements to insignificance. With the failure of Oslo, suddenly Arafat himself was at stake. Arafat and his PNA had lost much popularity, confidence and credibility in the eyes of the Palestine people<sup>83</sup>. In a situation of overwhelming dissatisfaction, both with Israel and the PNA and no option for whatever opposition to make politics within the system, the situation became critical. The 25/2/2000 27 prominent Palestinian politicians asked called for an end of negotiations with Israel and called for resistance<sup>84</sup>. In May 2000 Israel had withdrawn unilaterally from southern Lebanon. The so called *Hisbullah* model, i.e. not to negotiate with GOI but to expel the IDF (how the withdrawal was interpreted), seemed very attractive<sup>85</sup>. The islamistic Hamas and the secular New Guard of Fatah jumped the bandwagon.

PLO's New Guard was *composed of newly emerging local leaders as well as the leaders of the first Intifada*<sup>86</sup>. While Arafat's Old Guard resided in Tunisia the young generation fought Israeli forces 1987 to 1993. Efforts to integrate the New Guard, represented by warlords like Sami Abu Samhadaneh or Aatif Ebiat and more respectable personnel like Marwan Barghouti or Husam Khader, failed due to the Old Guard's *authoritarian tendencies*<sup>87</sup>. Consequently they got not much representation in the official political bodies, but could gain certain power in other Fatah bodies like the semi-militia Tanzim. The New Guard demanded *transparency, accountability, a campaign against corruption* and strongly supported demands for *good governance, including respect for the Rule of Law, an independent judiciary,*

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<sup>76</sup>Makosky 2001, p. 34.

<sup>77</sup>PHRMG, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup>Shuaibi, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup>PSR

<sup>80</sup>???, Guardian 2002..

<sup>81</sup>Shuaibi, pp. 2.

<sup>82</sup>Alawi 2000, p. 10; Pappé 2000, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup>65% in 1996, 46% in 7/2000, PSR.

<sup>84</sup>Fischer 2001, p. 395.

<sup>85</sup>Makovsky 2000, p. 42; Ibrahim 2001, p. 466.

<sup>86</sup>Shikaki 2002, p. 94.

<sup>87</sup>Shikaki 2002, p. 94.

*a stronger role for the legislature, and stronger and more efficient public institutions*<sup>88</sup>. There was a call for an all-inclusive national-unity-government including of opposition groups as well as of Islamist Hamas and Jihad. All was turned down by the Palestine establishment<sup>89</sup>. The hawkish faction of the New Guard and the hard core of Islamists came up with a joint agenda: Direct confrontation with Israel, no cease fire, no negotiations.

Meanwhile the IDF implemented a comprehensive siege and closure over the POT, resulting in a *de-facto apartheid* and bringing the last of democratic life to a standstill<sup>90</sup>. The situation was likely to explode.

## 4.2 The Al-Aqsa Intifada

On 28/9/2000 Sharon visited the Haram al Sharif/ Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Despite the fact that no evidence was found that the visit was anything else but an internal political act, i.e. not intended to provoke, it was more than badly timed<sup>91</sup>. The Palestine people felt assaulted and started the next day demonstrations at the same place. Police and demonstrator clashed, killing 4 persons and injuring about 200. Clashes with increasing severity and fatalities followed the next days and thus began what now is known as 'Al-Aqsa Intifada'. The semi-militia of Fatah, the Tanzim, the Fatah Al-Aqsa martyr brigades, both dominated by the New Guard escalated the clashes by introducing arms and suicide commandos<sup>92</sup>. The oppositional PLFP joined in. The armed wing of Hamas (the Izzadin al-Qassem Brigades) and the Islamic Jihad started to attack Israel with suicide attacks.

Why did it happen? The GOI insisted that the PNA had orchestrated the uprising. Despite the fact that no evidence could be found that this holds, it has to be pointed out that the PNA did do nothing to constrain the uprising and violence<sup>93</sup>. It took Yasser Arafat two month to call for reduction (not cease!) of violence<sup>94</sup>. On the other side IDF squads overreacted and the GOI took no means to constrain lethal force when facing unarmed Palestinians. Metal-cored rubber rounds and live ammunition in hands of untrained, non-senior IDF personnel is hard to justify<sup>95</sup>.

But problems lie deeper. Due to the problems noted in the previous section, Yasser Arafat himself (and his Old Guard) now was target of the al-Aqsa Intifada as well as Israel. He now reacted in extreme authoritarian style, hoping to sort things out this way. But exactly this was wrong. He maneuvered himself away from the people of Palestine and from his former partners in negotiations, the GOI and USA.

Firstly, he tried to seek approval from the uprising New Guard and Hamas by tolerating the alliance between them and the violence they caused. But he tried not the obvious, *opening up the Palestinian political system and encouraging a true transition to democracy*<sup>96</sup> - i.e. to use democracy as a catalysator. *Yasser Arafat failed to repudiate violence as a negotiable tactic. In fact the relished using it to achieve political goals*<sup>97</sup>. It has to be taken into consideration that the extreme violence, i.e. the suicide commandos, were not a spontaneous uprising of the street but the result of a *well oiled machinery* working in the back - driven by Palestinian elites (and financed by states like Iran and Iraq)<sup>98</sup>, elites out of any control, because not included in any political process.

Secondly, Yasser Arafat went one step further: His PNA security forces started to participate. Palestinian police stood by, when Tanzim attacked IDF<sup>99</sup>. The presidential guard, the Force 17, was accused

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<sup>88</sup>Shikaki 2002, p. 95; Fischer 2001, p.395

<sup>89</sup>Ibrahim 2001, p. 406; Shikaki 2002, pp. 97

<sup>90</sup>PCHR 27, p. 42.

<sup>91</sup>Mitchell 2001, pp. 3.

<sup>92</sup>Fischer 2002, p. 403.

<sup>93</sup>Mitchell 2001, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup>Makovsky 2001, p. 33.

<sup>95</sup>Mitchell 2001, pp. 3, p. 8.

<sup>96</sup>Shikaki 2002, p. 95.

<sup>97</sup>Makovsky 2001, p. 30.

<sup>98</sup>Goldenberg 2002b

<sup>99</sup>Hedges 2001, p. 141.

to take direct actions against IDF<sup>100</sup>. In August 2001 the PNA started a joint undertaking with Islamic Republic of Iran to purchase for \$10 million a shipload full of weapons. But the freighter, the Karine-A, was taken over by an Israeli commando unit 3/1/2002<sup>101</sup>.

Thirdly, Yasser Arafat smashed the remainder of Palestine democracy. In an opportunistic act he signed on 18/5/2002 the Judicial Authority Law, but not without ignoring just after that: Detainees without charges, ordered by the High Court to be released, still are kept in custody by order of the PNA, the (now illegal) PNA State Security Courts continue to function despite all critics and the Justice Minister was sacked because he refused to alter certain articles of the law *just* because Yasser Arafat had requested that<sup>102</sup>. The security forces kept operating with no respect for the Rule of Law including illegal arrests and torture<sup>103</sup>. Dahl considered it as a main threat to democracy if the means of violent coercion are not controlled by civilians themselves subject to democratic process<sup>104</sup>. But exactly that was the case in the late days of Palestine democracy. Yasser Arafat's PNA security forces fought without control by democratic institutions<sup>105</sup> - Not to talk about the other armed elements, where he firstly tolerated weapons and secondly failed to control them.

To worsen things, the Israeli siege caused the PLC to virtually cease to exist and there was not much effort to re-implement it<sup>106</sup>.

### 4.3 9/11

With the al-Qaeda attacks on the USA on September, 11th 2001, the focus now was on 'terrorism'. Firstly the Palestine terrorism against Israel (and to a much lesser degree Israeli 'counter terrorism') was on the radar screen. Secondly the people behind this terrorism became primary target of the USA. Because of Yasser Arafat not actively (or at least not reliably) discouraging anti-Israeli terrorism, the participation of his forces and the dubious connections to 'rogue states' like Iran, he became unacceptable in the eyes of America.

## 5 And now?

The Palestine democracy turned into regime with strong authoritarian bias latest by 2000. The trend amplified in the period 2000 to 2002. Surely, Yasser Arafat tried to follow the Good Cause: The problem was that *he* tried to define what that is, the Good for the Palestine people - and not the people itself. This worked to a certain degree until the failure of Camp David, up to where his aims, certainly not his means anymore, coincided with the agenda of the western Establishment. He completely failed when he tried in the wake of al-Aqsa, to be both, as Ibrahim put it, to fulfill a role as a peace seeking politician *and* as a leader of Palestinian resistance<sup>107</sup>.

Latest with the al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel shattered Palestine sovereignty completely. It destroyed Palestine infrastructure and institutions, including Gaza airport and seaport, broadcasting facilities and Ministry of Education. *Normal social functions are severely disrupted either by violence (...) or movement restrictions*<sup>108</sup>. Dahl notes that democracy can not establish, if the country is *subject to intervention by a foreign power hostile to polyarchy*<sup>109</sup>. In Palestinian eyes this assumption holds: *These policies (...) strongly suggest that the current Israeli government would consider free and fair Palestinian elections*

<sup>100</sup>Fischer 2002, p. 403.

<sup>101</sup>Satloff 2002, pp. 5.

<sup>102</sup>PCHR 2002a, pp. 1.

<sup>103</sup>PCHR 27, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup>Dahl 1998, p. 245.

<sup>105</sup>PCHR 2002a, p. 3.

<sup>106</sup>PCHR 27, p. 46.

<sup>107</sup>Ibrahim 2001, p. 406.

<sup>108</sup>PCHR 2002a, pp. 2.

<sup>109</sup>'Polyarchy' is Dahl's term for a society heading towards ideal democracy. Dahl 1989, p. 264

to be a threat<sup>110</sup>.

Democracy now? The sad thing is that the current discussion focus more on the ends, i.e. peace and end of terrorism, rather than the means - which I consider to be the democratization of Palestine. Some writers take a complete realpolitik stand, like Satloff, who notes that it were *about the Arab leaders to decide*<sup>111</sup> (and not the Palestine people!). The good side is that democracy is highly demanded by the street in Palestine<sup>112</sup> and got with US president George W. Bush the most powerful advocate one can think of<sup>113</sup>.

How to achieve a second democracy in Palestine? Address the obstacles which made the first democracy fail. First to talk about are the internal factors: The most important issue is to meet Dahl's 3 key criteria which I repeat here: (D1) officials are elected, (D2) the elections are free, fair and frequent and (D3) the suffrage is inclusive<sup>114</sup>. All of this is highly demanded by the basis, and there is no evidence of any unwillingness to participate in a democratic society (there may be in the elites, but that is a different issue - it is about democracy to control the elites)<sup>115</sup>. Bush talks of *fair, multi-party local elections*<sup>116</sup>. The second issue is the political system itself. Nearly all Palestinians support fundamental reforms, half of them advocate the introduction of a parliamentary democracy based on consensus democracy in favor of the existing majoritarian presidential system<sup>117</sup> and Yasser Arafat's popularity is with 35% at an all-time low<sup>118</sup>. Bush brandmarked the flaws of the Palestinian democracy for the first time explicitly and required changes: *Today, the elected Palestinian legislature has no authority, and the power is concentrated in the hands of an unaccountable few. (...) The Palestinian parliament should have the full authority of a legislative body. Local officials and government ministers need authority of their own and the independence to govern effectively*<sup>119</sup>. This is a considerable turning point, since all other US statements issued before, like the Mitchell or Zinni report do not mention the political system of Palestine at all - not to talk about that they did not require the implementation of democratic reforms<sup>120</sup>. The same holds for the Arab Peace Initiative which just speaks of a Palestinian *state*, no matter of which style<sup>121</sup>.

Second to talk about the external factors, i.e. Israel. Palestinian sovereignty must be established at all means (Bush speaks here only vaguely of a *provisional sovereignty*<sup>122</sup>, The Arab Peace initiative is more direct by calling for a *Sovereign Independent Palestinian State*<sup>123</sup>). This would require a withdrawal of the IDF from the POT, even if its unilateral<sup>124</sup> (Bush demands IDF *to withdraw fully to positions they held prior to September 28, 2000*<sup>125</sup>. The Arab League's text is more explicit by requiring Israel to leave all territories occupied since 1967, including Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanon<sup>126</sup>). *Israel can not retain control over its biblical territory while remaining a Jewish state and a democracy*<sup>127</sup>. The security gap must be closed by the intervention of an international force and demilitarization of the newly emerging Palestinian body.

The issue of territorial integrity must be addressed, which includes the solution to the settlement problem

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<sup>110</sup>PCHR 2002a, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup>Satloff 2002, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup>89% support a democratic system of government, PSR, in the May 2002 opinion poll.

<sup>113</sup>Bush 2002, pp. 1.

<sup>114</sup>Dahl 1998, p. 221.

<sup>115</sup>E.g. 95% advocate periodic political elections, PSR

<sup>116</sup>Bush 2002

<sup>117</sup>91%, 48%; PSR, p. 3

<sup>118</sup>PSR, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup>Bush 2002

<sup>120</sup>Mitchell 2001, Zinni 2002

<sup>121</sup>Arab 2002, 2(c).

<sup>122</sup>Bush 2002

<sup>123</sup>Arab 2002, 2(c).

<sup>124</sup>Halvi 2001, p. 44; Makovsky 2001, p. 40

<sup>125</sup>Bush 2002

<sup>126</sup>Arab 2002, 2(a).

<sup>127</sup>Makovsky 2001, p. 41.

(Bush only states that *Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must stop*<sup>128</sup>, but does not talk about what should happen to the current settlements. Strange enough the Arab Peace initiative does not explicitly mention the problem at all). Considerations are along the line of land swaps between Israel and Palestine and secured connections between Gaza and the West Bank in order to create a non-fragmented body<sup>129</sup>. It may be conceivable that this works without major re-settlements since most of the Israeli settlement are along the Green Line anyway<sup>130</sup>. This could as well include the Arab minority in Israel - this would address one lurking Israeli problem: The 20% Israeli Arab minority grows faster than the Jewish<sup>131</sup>. The creation of a territorial integrity would address Dahl's establish-democracy criteria of a *culturally homogeneous society*<sup>132</sup>.

The refugee problem is more severe: Their numbers exceed 3 million, which puts the 5 million Israeli (of which 1 million are Arabic!) at balance. A fact which more than worries Israel<sup>133</sup>. Neither Bush (*'We must also resolve questions concerning (...) the future of Palestinian refugees'*<sup>134</sup>) nor the Arab League (*Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem*<sup>135</sup>) offer a masterplan here.

All of the above may sound hard to achieve but one has to bear in mind, that as long there is no sovereign democratic home for Palestinian people, there will be no peace in the Middle East.

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<sup>128</sup> **Bush 2002**

<sup>129</sup> **Agha 2002**, p. 15.

<sup>130</sup> **Center Peace**, Fact Sheet: Settlements.

<sup>131</sup> **Agha 2002**, p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> **Dahl 1989**, p. 264.

<sup>133</sup> **Makovsky 2002**, p. 38.

<sup>134</sup> **Bush 2002**

<sup>135</sup> **Arab 2002**, 2(b).

## **6 Appendix 1: Abbreviations**

**GOI** (G)overnment (O)f (I)srael

**IDF** (I)sraeli (D)efense (F)orces

**POT** (P)alestinian (O)ccupied (T)erritories

**PLC** (P)alestinian (L)egislative (C)ouncil

**PLO** (P)alestine (L)iberalization (O)rganization

**PNA** (P)alestine (N)ational (A)uthority

**PNC** (P)alestine (N)ational (C)ouncil

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