Chapter 6

Security Vs. Statehood Debate
SECURITY VS. STATEHOOD DEBATE

Issues relating to the occupied territories seized by Israel from Jordan and Syria in the 1967 war gradually became the prime national issue in Israeli politics. The overall differences among Israeli parties on this issue moved from a position favouring annexation on the extreme right to a position favouring withdrawal on the extreme left. While the Palestinians have already registered their claim to all the West Bank and Gaza Strip within the 1949 armistice lines and can be expected to press for all the symbolic and substantive prerogatives of independence. However when the permanent status negotiations began symbolically in May 1996, Israel had not formulated its position towards a Palestinian state.

Since 1973, the Labour Party platform had explicitly opposed the possibility that such state would emerge as part of a permanent settlement. This categorical opposition was reiterated in the platform of 1977, 1981, 1984 and 1988. In the 1992 election campaign, on the question of occupied territories the Labour party’s position entailed four issues: the immediate future and the long-term future of the territories, issue of Jewish settlements in the territories, and attitudes toward the Intifada—the Palestinian uprising—in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

From the beginning of 1981, the Labour party political platform specified that a Palestinian state could not serve as a solution to the conflict but rather as “a focus of hostility and the inflammation of passions”. Yitzhak Rabin described it in 1988 as “a cancer in the heart of the Middle East.” On a later occasion, he called it a “time bomb” (Efraim Inbar 1991:100), and (Kaufman et al 1993). It had actually gained its momentum in 1980s among the Labour doves although not with the party leadership and even after the DoP, official Labour policy remained somewhat defensive about this issue.
However, the evolution in Israeli party position on Palestinian issues has been slow and often contentious (Inbar 1991). But after 1973 various government officials and public figures began to emphasize the importance of the Palestinians among them were several well-known writers, university professors, political leaders, former high-ranking army officers, past and present Knesset members. Personalities such as Lova Eliav, Uri Avinery, Yossi Sarid, Shulamit Aloni and former general Aharon Yariv endorsed the idea of Palestinian state (Heller 1997:9). They believed that without solving the Palestinian Arab question there would be no peace. They called for Palestinian representation in United Nations debates, mutual recognition and mutual concessions (Ward, et al.1977:143). The question of recognizing the Palestinians became a significant issue in Israeli politics when the ex-secretary general of Labour party abandoned his parliamentary group to form a new four member Knesset faction called Yaad (Ward, et al 1977:143 Its platform included recognition of Palestinians and their participation in peace negotiations.

They remained marginal figures for many years. Since than, gradually, the idea of territorial compromise in regard to the establishment of Palestinian entity emerged. They include, 'West Bank option', 'East and West Bank option', 'unilateral state: Palestine/Israel', and 'An entity within Arab nation' (Ward, et al 1977:79-106). Now based on this debate/option a number of changes occurred in both sides over the establishment of Palestinian state, more importantly between the two major parties.

99 The chronology of evolution of Labour party’s positions were as follows: In 1973—“Palestinian identity” and a “Jordanian-Palestinian state” first mentioned and so was opposition to a Palestinian state. In 1977 it talked of ‘representative from Judea and Samaria’ to be allowed in a Jordanian- Palestinian delegation; opposition to a Palestinian state; and the PLO explicitly excluded from the peace process. In 1981 it promised: representative of the inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and Gaza permitted into a Jordanian – Palestinian delegation; talks with “Palestinian personalities and bodies that will recognize Israel and denounce terrorism” allowed; opposition to a Palestinian state, the PLO excluded from the peace process; organizations basing themselves on the Palestinian covenant not acceptable. In 1984 there were no significant changes.In 1988 it promised: willingness to negotiate an interim agreement with authorized representatives of the inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and Gaza; opposition to a Palestinian state. In 1992 the party platform for the first time did not mention Palestinian state. But initiated a secret negotiation through third party mediation including bi-lateral and multi-lateral talks.
Right Vs Left

The question of establishment of Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was a struggle between Israeli hardliners and soft liners, security-centeredness and diplomacy, intractability and conciliation, the certainty of war and a chance for peace. Based on these principles, both the Labour party and Likud have a different perception on security and Palestinian sovereignty.

The contemporary Israeli militarism was manifested in the doctrine of territorial security espoused by the Likud party and a number of right wing parties and organizations allied with it.\textsuperscript{100} The doctrine of territorial security much like the Ben-Gurion line of the 1950s holds that the most effective means by which to deal with the Palestinians were through the language, if not the outright use of force accordingly. For long Israel treated the Palestinians as a security threat rather than a political partner and all issues pertaining to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, especially territorial issue were addressed through the discourse of security rather than in terms of partnership and diplomacy (Jacoby and Sasley 2002:52). In contrast to the doctrine of territorial security espoused by the Likud, the left wing of the Labour party and its allies inherited the legacy of Israeli moderation originally and most eloquently espoused by Moshe Sharret.\textsuperscript{101} Thus, the leading proponents of the doctrine of moderation discuss the importance of diplomacy, negotiation and most centrally, partnership. The moderate line argued that security could be better attained by creating new political realities than by identifying and responding to perceived threat. In accordance with these views, the Palestinian problem was to be seen as one of politics and not of security. At the core of this doctrine was the notion of ‘land for peace’ whereby long-term security would be linked not to control of land but rather to the exchange of land for a stable and institutionalized peace.

\textsuperscript{100} The Likud is the second largest and most important right-wing party in Israel. While it is traditionally allied with the settler’s movement, the latter maintains its own grassroots organizations and party, the Gush Emunin (Bloc of the faithful) and the National Religious Party (IRP), respectively.

\textsuperscript{101} Mapai’s leadership was not always united on issues of security and foreign affairs. Moshe Sharett, who was once the Prime minister of Israel (1953-55) Foreign minister frequently, challenged Ben-Gurion’s hawkish policies until he was forced to resign from the government in 1956.
The Likud party chief Netanyahu viewed that land for peace in strategic rather than a political problem. He contended that the slogan ‘land for peace’ was singularly inappropriate. To achieve a sustainable peace, Israel must maintain a credible deterrents long enough to effect a lasting changes in Arab attitude. It was precisely Israel’s control of this strategic territory that has deferred all-out war and has made eventual peace (Jacoby and Sasley 2002:52-53).

In contrast to Netanyahu, Shimon Peres emphasized the political nature of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship and the importance of partnership and cooperation to that relationship. There are two ways in which to end the conflict with the PLO. Peres remarked during a meeting with the former US Secretary of state Warren Christopher, “with the power of power or with the power of wisdom.” Wisdom was better than power if all act wisely, the PLO would become a partner in a peace instead of an obstacle to it. Elaborating the theme of the Palestinian as partners, Peres notes that he and former Prime Minister Rabin “tried to look upon Arafat as a partner, Netanyahu looks upon him as an agent. Arafat cannot exist as an agent. You cannot give him orders... we meet as partner for peace, but we cannot make out of him an instrument to realize our policies” (Jacoby and Sasley 2002:53).

The Likud party also argue that Israel must retain full political and military control over the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip whether by means of annexation or by granting autonomy “to the population” rather than “to the territory.” According to them, Israeli military presence and Israeli settlement activity must continue in the entire area under any circumstances.

In opposition to the Likud, the Labour party supported “the territorial compromise” a repartition of the land of Israel along borders defined as “defensible” (Allon 1976:42). Some of the advocates of this alternative are not altogether rejecting the option of separating by allowing limited military presence in defined areas beyond Israel’s border. The very epitome of
territorial compromise was the “Allon Plan.” Its strategic aim was to control the eastern approaches to the West Bank, to be achieved through the annexation of the Jordan valley with the exception of a narrow corridor connecting the bank to the rear of the West bank. The West Bank would be demilitarized and linked to Jordan as part of a Jordan-Palestinian political entity, obviating demand for creation of a third state between Israel and Jordan.

Those in favour of annexing the West Bank usually based on ideological dedication to the land of Israel. Though in the 1996 Israel election the Likud party for the first time did not mention the ‘greater Israel’ in its agenda, it has been emphasizing the autonomy or self-rule since Camp David agreement. It advocated ‘expanded autonomy’, ‘autonomy plus’ to project its concept of permanent status settlement with the Palestinians.

This still remains the official position of the Likud party and its government. But the legacy of Rabin-Peres government stuck to the territorial compromise or quasi-Palestinian state, which the bulk of the Israeli public desired to continue with the peace process. As Peres claimed, “the PLO’s revision of its charter is the most important event in hundred years of history of the conflict” (Alpher 1996:172). In this way both the parties have taken different stand on the establishment of Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**Security concerns towards a Palestinian state**

Israel recognizes peace and cooperation with the neighbouring Arab states was vital for its long-term survival and development and this remained a cornerstone of successive governments (Reich 1985:149). At the same time, the prolonged refusal of the Arab states to enter into negotiations for peace fostered an excessive Israeli focus on security. It is on this substantive ground

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102 The Labour party had long been committed to the principle of territorial compromise as a basis for peace agreement. The very purpose of territorial compromise however was to transfer the bulk of Palestinian population to Jordanian Jurisdiction from its (Israel) burden of direct rule. While allowing it to reserve strategically vital and thinly settled area in the West Bank. This is known as the “Allon Plan” named after the late foreign minister and Deputy Prime minister Yigal Allon. For further understanding see chapter-3.p.4, and his own theme see (Allon 1976).

that the Israeli thinking on national security began with the premise that Israel was engaged in a struggle for its survival (Yaniv 1993:11). This covered divergent ideologies, politics and threat perceptions. This resulted from the fact that Israel was one of the two sides that were actively involved in a conflict. In the absence of peace with its Arab neighbours (that is, on the level of interstate relation) Israel also faced the military challenges of survival in hostile strategic surroundings in the confrontation between Jews and Palestinians over the fate of the territory stretching from the Jordanian River to the Mediterranean Sea (that is, on the national ideological level)(Yaniv 1993:11-12).

The latter has always been a major issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict. For long both Jewish and Palestinian national movements denied each other the right to self-determination(Martin Kett 2000) and Ze’ev Schiff 1999:435). The PLO Covenant explicitly called for the destruction of the Jewish state and the organisation strongly espoused a commitment to the ‘right to return’ of its refugees. Periodically the PLO leader Arafat paid tributes to slain Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders, and used incendiary rhetoric, including calls for Jihad against Israel.104

The process of Israeli acceptance into the Middle East began with the visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem in November 1977 and has continued ever since. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-91, which deprived the Arabs states of the support of the super power partly, enabled this process. The victory of the US-led coalition in 1991 Gulf war brought about the Madrid peace conference. This in turn gradually led to a series of bilateral and multilateral interactions involving Israel, establishment of formal relations between Israel and several Arab states, regional economic summits, a greater volume of movement of goods and people across the border, and a substantial

104 Arafat called for Jihad to liberate Jerusalem in Johannesburg in May 1994 and liberating Palestine through Jihad and making Jerusalem as its capital. In June 1995, Arafat said: ‘We will continue this long jihad, this difficult jihad... via death, via battles. He also repeated in April 1995 speech, he compared the Oslo accords to Mohammed’s agreement with the Kuaraish tribe, which the prophet broke two years eater. See, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat’s speech on Jerusalem to South African Muslims, Johannesburg, 10th may 1994, Journal of Palestine studies (Washington D.C.) issue 93, vol. 24, no.1, August 1994.
reduction of the Arab boycott against Israel. At the same time normalisation of Israel with the outside world, especially within region was virtually linked to the improvement in Arab-Israeli relations.

Many Arab leaders gradually realized that Israel was an economically and militarily strong state that cannot be eradicated by force. So most of the Arab states evolved a position of accommodation with Israel. They recognized that a political solution and peaceful coexistence were also their interest. The military option or even the status quo was liable to be counter productive and highly destructive of their asset (Joseph 1994:233). In Israel’s perception of security issue, there were a number of positive characteristics of the current environment that tend to favour peace and stability rather than war and terror.

Although it was the prime beneficiary of changes in the strategic environment over the past decade, the systematic environments also brought a new uncertainties and challenges that complicated Israel’s policy choice with regard to strategic aims, defence and foreign policy based on past experience. Even though they feel secure given their military and economic superiority, Israel still could not ruled out the possible threat from any Arab country or coalition of countries in future (Avner Cohen 1995:51), (Alvin Z, Rubinstain 2001:259-280).

Since 1948 Israeli policies were dominated by the security dimension. Six wars, countless skirmishes and terrorist attacks, incessant offensive rhetoric, as well as the Holocaust and Arab hostility since the mandatory period had dominated its thinking (Reich 1985:150). The Arab threat was perceived not as an aberration of history, but rather as its latest manifestations. Analysts believe that an average Israelis still feels insecure for a variety of reason with regard to their strategic risks. These factors greatly influenced and hampered the ability of the Rabin-Peres government to appreciate and agree with the Palestinian aspirations for statehood. These are as follow.
**Geo-strategic threats to Israel**

Unlike the Gaza Strip the West Bank offers a number of geo-strategic advantages to Israel and hence its withdrawal from this region would be accompanied by considerable risks for Israel. The first and foremost, the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be central to the evolution of a future Palestinian state. Initially such a state is likely to have limited military capabilities. Yet its geographic location, combined with instability and an uncertain foreign orientation might make it a potential existential threat to Israel, given its proximity to Israel's heartland (Inbar and Sandler 1997:31). Given the physical proximity of the West Bank, its loss could constitute a danger for Israel regardless of their political disposition of the Palestinian state. Cessation of that territory would complicate by several orders of the task of defending Israel's vital core areas.

The distance between Israel's Mediterranean coast and enemy military installations in the Jordanian-occupied West Bank before 1967, was less than 10 miles (16 kilometres) in places. At its widest point, near the Negev town of Dimona, the country was only 65 miles (105kilometres) across. Over 75 percent of Israel's population and 80 percent of its economic infrastructures are concentrated in the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv-Haifa triangle (Inbar and Sandler 1997:31). There were no natural defence barriers to the percent the advance of enemy forces. Israel's population centres and major military installations were within a few hours advanced by enemy ground forces, many being within enemy artillery range (Reich 1985:152). This contributed to a perception of vulnerability that helped to shape Israel's view of the significance of the occupied territories since the June 1967 war.

The West Bank as delineated by the Israel-Jordan armistice agreement of 1949 covers almost 5,600 square kilometres of east central Palestine including...
approximately 100 square kilometres of East Jerusalem which were annexed to
Israel in June 1967 (Reich 1985:152). From Jenin in the north to Dhahiriyya
in the south, the distance is about 130k.m. From Jordan River, the area extends
westward for approximately 50 km. Its western most point the Palestinian town
of Qalqiliya is just 14 km from the Mediterranean Sea. The region is almost
bisected by a small wedge of Israeli territory – the “Jerusalem corridors.” And
it consists of two main sub regions, a northern bulge (known in Israel as
Samaria) whose largest urban centres in Nablus and a smaller, southern are
(known in Israel as, Judea) centred of Hebron (Heller 1983:14).

The dominant physical feature of the West Bank is a central mountainous spine,
which rises from about 510 metres above sea level in the north to over 1,000
metres near Hebron, before sloping away towards the Arad-Beershaba valley.
To the east, the mountains fall away precipitously towards the Jordan valley,
which itself ranges from one to 11 km in width and whose average elevation is
some 300 metres below sea level. The western descents towards the coastal
plain are more gradual. Most of the large towns in the West Bank are situated
along the crest of mountain ridge (Heller 1983:14).

These geographic and topographic features make the West Bank a formidable
defensive asset if they remain in Israeli hands and a critical threat in the hands
of hostile forces (Lehn 1988:169). It is a defensive asset to Israel, because it
constitutes a major obstacle that hostile Arab forces from the east would have
to overcome before they could approach Israel's population and industrial
concentrations. Furthermore, the control of the West Bank enabled Israel to
maintain airborne and ground based observation and electronic information-

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106 Israel from very beginning focused on the goal of peace, survival, and security within the armistice lines
of 1949, but the refusal of Arab states to accept Israel's existence within either the borders delineated by
the 1947 partition plan or the 1949 armistice lines precluded achievements of those goals.

107 Topographically the West Bank consists of most of the high-lands, the Jordan Valley, and the edges of
the coastal plain and of the southern desert of Palestine.
gathering facilities and surface to air missile – all this 50 km east of the green line and in the case of ground station, on highly favourable terrain. These significantly enhances Israel's its early warning and anti-aircraft capabilities. The West Bank also provides a major training area for Israel Defence Force (IDF). The West Bank airspace has been used extensively by the Israeli Air force for low-level navigation and night flying exercises and weapon training. The ground space is used to maintain training bases and to carry out combined arms exercises. Because of the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, training space has become a scarce resource and the land assets of the West Bank were seen as a partial compensation (Heller 1983:15).

Finally, control of the West Bank was a major asset in dealing with the problem of terrorism. Over the years through the maintenance of a comprehensive security apparatus of electronic barriers, intelligence, police, courts and prisons, Israel was able to frustrate sabotage operations by breaking up networks. The control of the West Bank also enabled Israel to intercept the flow of sabotage material into the area as well as into Israel (Heller 1983:15). Taken together, these advantages constituted a formidable defensive asset which Israel would be deprived of if it withdrew from the West Bank even if the area remained completely demilitarized without a significant Israeli military presence in the West Bank. Its counter-terror capabilities would be seriously impaired.

The second major threat to Israel comes from terrorism that has been driven by a mix of political ideology and religious motives. It generally targets innocent civilians, Jewish settlers and occasionally soldiers. The problem has become perennial, unpreventable and persists, despite progress towards peace. According to a survey conducted by the Jaffee Center in January 1993, 85 percent of Israelis feared attacks by an Arab in their daily lives (Arien 1993:6). Israelis must also keep in mind that radical elements in the region anxious to undermine any peace agreement with Israel, namely, Iran, Iraq and Syria (Maddy-Weitzman and Inbar 1997:205-6).
Israel often accused these countries of providing material assistance to terrorist operations against Israel, even in the face of opposition by an Arab government on the West Bank (Shaley 1985:56). There is also a possibility of terrorist activities being carried out by extremist organizations, perhaps even at the miniature of West Bank government, though the latter might deny responsibility.

Possibility exists that a weak Palestinian state could sponsor terror to further its interest or turn a blind eye to terrorist activities emanating from within its territory. It was clear that militant groups such as the PFLP, DFLP, Hamas and Islamic Jihad have acquired a greater freedom of activities under the PNA than Israeli military administration. (Inbar and Sandler 1997:33). The PNA was reluctant to eradicate the armed opposition, which could turn into a civil war, yet it still values the presence of these militant groups as a potential tool to pressure Israel to make additional concessions. Some fear that a Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza Strip could also repeat the performance of a PLO mini-state in Lebanon, as happened in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and function as a base for international terror (Inbar and Sandler 1997:33). Thus, terrorism is integrated into the aforementioned sense of existential threat. Thus terrorist activities from areas under the Palestinian control would trigger an Israeli military response against the Palestinian state. Such developments could lead to further regional escalation and threaten regional stability.

Thirdly, a Palestinian state, particularly one with the River Jordan as its border, could threaten Jordan's sovereignty. The Palestinian population constitute for more than half of the total population of Jordan. It was the only state that extended citizenship to all Palestinian refugees with full political rights. It also encouraged political participation. Many Palestinians played prominent roles in the Hashemite government serving as cabinet ministers, ambassadors, senior members of the civil service and government administration and as advisors to the King(Ward et al.1977:89-91). Still mutual mistrust between the monarchy and Palestinians continued mainly due to the Palestinian nationalism that was
appealing to many Palestinians in the East Bank and thereby endangering the Hashemite regime.

A Palestinian state would galvanize nationalist feelings among Palestinians in Jordan and such sentiments, which could be radicalized by establishing a Palestinian state so close to their home. Given the position of its location surrounded by the Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria and for demographic and geopolitical reasons Jordan would be unable to dissociate itself from Palestinian state. It still has a vital interest in any final settlement of the Palestinian problem (Nevo and Pappe 1994:1). Fourthly, the Palestinian statehood would undermine Israel’s exclusive claims to Jerusalem. It is a vital issue with great symbolic value in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As explained earlier, the Palestinians have demanded the creation of an independent state on the west Bank and Gaza Strip with Jerusalem/Al Quds as its capital. The Harem al-Sharif/Temple Mount is considered the third holiest site in Islam and is the holiest place in Judaism (Ward et al.1977:90). Therefore, religious conflict seems inevitable and may contribute to strengthen the Islamic and Jewish fundamentalisms in the region. Fourthly, the lack of territorial contiguity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank would be a constant source of friction between Israel and Palestinian as well as a cause for territorial demands. The Palestinians currently demand safe passage but in the future they could demand an extra-territorial corridor. If free movement of people and goods through its territory were permitted, Israel fears that it would be opening its borders to terrorists. The stringent border security measures would infringe upon the Palestinian desire for free passage that is politically unacceptable for Israel. Therefore, it could be a constant source of irritation between Israel and Palestinians (Inbar and Sandler 1997:33).

In its assessment of the threat, Israel relates its survival to a broader self-identity and ultimate purpose. It sees itself as having a number of interrelated missions: the prevention of threats to its independence and territorial integrity, the need to preserve its Jewish character and its links to Jews throughout the world, and the requirement to serve as protector of persecuted Jews.
everywhere. There is also a belief that if Israel loses this opportunity, no Jewish state will ever again exist, with all that implies for the survival of world Jewry. Though all of these risks are possible. Still they have to enhance peace and stability. If precautions are not taken its very concept of survival would be in jeopardy.

Fifthly, the irredentism of its Arab citizens has become a new focus of Israeli concerns vis-à-vis the Palestinian statehood (Heller 1977); (Walhengama 2000). The issue of potential and actual threat the Arab minority upon Israel’s national security has been commented upon. A Palestinian state implies some potential adverse consequences for other Israeli interests. Some fear that the Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza Strip might act as a magnet for nationalist sentiments among Israeli Arabs and stimulant, passive or active, of secessionist tendencies in areas like the Western of Galilee, where the Arab population is concentrated (Freedman 1991:358). It would almost certainly alter the current status of Jerusalem and of Israeli settlements in the territories either as a condition or consequences of peace.

In recent years, the Israeli Arabs increasingly demand the status of a national minority and a change in the definition of Israel as a ‘Jewish state.’ The existence of a Palestinian state along Israeli borders, which has traditionally insisted to replace Israel with a secular Arab state, could only aggravate such demand (Inbar and Sandler 1997:32). Even if such movement (challenge to Israel’s territorial integrity) continued, they would constitute a source of internal stress and a disruptive factor in Israel’s relation with the Palestinian state and perhaps with other Arab states as well.

The spread of Islamic extremism among the majority of the Palestinian in Israel could not be discounted. The idea of securing community control or self-rule for the Arab minority would be boosted greatly by the movement, whose main objective is to revolutionize individual and community life. The struggle for greater autonomy would escalate the dispute between the Arabs and the authorities who regard autonomy as a step towards secession. Another danger is
that it might establish its link with Islamic movements like the Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank (Yaniv 1993: 117).

Reflecting such apprehension, Benjamin Netanyahu observed:

... we confront a Palestinian nationalism that branches out the big tree of Arab nationalism in general, which contains a very deep irredentist aspiration to apply the Palestinian covenant which has not been nullified yet – to the remainder of the territory of the state of Israel. To all of 'Palestine' therefore...... if we accept automatically- what I call the Palestinian principle, the principle that the Palestinian national minority in Judea and Samaria is entitled to self administration, this principle will necessarily extend to the national (Arab) minority in Israel itself. This theory will have no end (Maoz 1997: 194).

Hence, Netanyahu perceived that the Palestinian objective for statehood was unlimited and was aimed at the incorporation (if not destructions) of Israel itself. Thus, he led the strongly Israeli opposition to a Palestinian state, which he sees as posing a real threat to Israeli and agreed to offer autonomy excluding East Jerusalem. Under this arrangement the ultimate PNA over the territory would remain in Israeli hands, especially in matters pertaining to security. The potential impact of a Palestinian state on the political behaviour of Israeli Arabs is therefore of utmost concern to Israel.

**Israeli Military Response**

Over the years, in response to the Arab threat, Israel has created an impressive military establishment although not all elements have been equally developed, and at different times, different components have been given priority. Generally, consideration of short wars and the need for decisive action, flexibility, and mobility in combat have led Israel to focus on its air force and armoured corps. It has a carefully constructed military doctrine and the Israel Defence Forces is central to its security policy. ¹⁰⁸ Many Israeli analysts argue

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¹⁰⁸ The prime minister and the cabinet exercise ultimate control over the IDF, and the minister of defence is the cabinet officer charged with responsibility for security. The Defence Forces of Israel are unified and
that even if peace agreements were in place, challenges to the peaceful order of the region and to Israel's security will continue to remain if not intensify in coming years. In their view and in view of some non-Israeli analysts that Israel's strategic vulnerability is probably increasing as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and enhanced conventional armaments became more available in wider region (Bowker 1996:114).

Opinion in Israel in divided over the political and legal status and not just the dimension of the area to be retained by Israel. Most of the strategic experts of Israel feel that there is need for a limited long-term Israeli military presence in certain areas east of the 1949 armistice line. This view was based on the presumption that full withdrawal from the territory captured from Jordan in June 1967 would be inconsistent with the principle of ensuring Israel's self-defence capability in all circumstances. The negative Israeli consensus vis-à-vis the West Bank is therefore a result of the belief that the demilitarization of the West Bank only would be guaranteed if Israel maintains a territorial base there, to be used by its military forces in the event of a violation of demilitarization.

Most policy makers also agree that any arrangement for the West Bank and Gaza Strip must (1) forbid the deployment of army armoured forces, artillery and most of all, surface-to-air missile, which could prevent planes taking off from anywhere in Israel; and (2) allow the deployment of Israeli military forces so that they could block any army forces advancing from the east until Israel would be able to mobilize its reserves and establish a line of defence to retain strategic control over the West Bank (Yaniv 1993:117-18). This would prevent the West Bank from becoming the source of a military threat to the existence of Israel. Israel under this view must be capable under any circumstances to defend itself with its own forces against any single Arab country or coalition of Arab countries. Hence, if Israel loses just one war, the state will cease to exist and thus, this possibility must be prevented at all costs (Lanier 1984:2).

presided over the chief of the general staff (who is also commander of the army). The general staff directs the activities and operations of the various commands of the Israel Defence Force.
Palestinian Political and Military Response

On the political and military level, the Palestinian were constrained in their attempt to build institutions appropriate for state apparatus in view of the Israeli security policy and Israel's present limitations on Palestinian sovereignty. The most serious security threat that would arouse their anxiety was the possible reversal of Israeli peace policy in the events of dissatisfaction with an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. (Noami Weinberg 1995:16-30), (Ahmad S Khalidi 1995:1-8) There was also the impending apprehension of reoccupation of their territories by Israeli force, as happened following the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000. Most Palestinians were concerned about security and military challenges that have triggered a debate among the Palestinian policy makers on how to deal with these issues.

To meet such a potential Israeli threat, the Palestinian leadership often demanded third party guarantees. Despite these optimistic considerations, the conclusion of security arrangements on the technical and operational levels involved intricate issues and dominated more by Israeli than Palestinian concerns. The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations carried out by the Rabin-Peres government did not include the questions of borders and the measures needed to ensure and address the security concerns of each side (Sayigh 1999:81-89).

The Palestinians viewed that the credibility and Authority of a Palestinian government would be impaired if it was deprived of autonomous armed forces, fuelling resentment among the Palestinian and demilitarization could not be sustained indefinitely. A Palestinian state would require some armed forces, for at least two purposes. The first is as an attribute of sovereignty. Both the dignity of the state and the acceptability of the peace agreement would demand at least the universal symbolic evidence of independence (Walidi Khalidi 1978:703). Secondly, an internal security capability would be required to protect the regime, contain rejectionist and other sources of domestic disorder,
and enforce the state's obligation not to permit acts of violence against neighbouring states to originate from within its territory. Still numerous Palestinian spokespersons have indicated their acceptance of these (demilitarization) conditions, frequently citing the Palestinian's need to devote all their resources for socio-economic development.

However the issue of Palestinian sovereignty remained the most contentious issue during the interim-phase of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

**Palestinian Statehood**

Given the geo-strategic realities of Israel, one question had been dominated the Israeli thinking at least since the June war of 1967: how to resolve the conflict? Was a Palestinian state politically possible? And should a Palestinian state be established in the areas captured in 1967? (Heller 1997:5). These questions have engaged everyone directly or indirectly in the conflict over the establishment of a Palestinian entity not its forms but the procedures as well as contains leading to acceptable of a political-settlement among Palestinians, Israelis, Jordanians and other parties not directly involve in the dispute (Ward, et al. 1977:105), (Cotran 1993:16-17).

This mutual attitude towards the establishment of Palestinian entity has been undergoing significant changes both sides. First, Israel's failure to reach a 'Jericho first' agreement with King Hussein of Jordan (October 1974) prompted the Arab Summit Conference of Rabat to designate the PLO as "the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Second, after the outbreak of the Intifada, King Hussein officially buried the 'Jordanian option' by renouncing all legal and administrative responsibility for the West Bank. Despite these Israel continued to reject any accommodation with the PLO.

Third, under the Camp David agreements with Egypt, Israel agreed to offer autonomy to the Palestinian in the occupied territories (Heller 1979-80:111-132). This autonomy proposal inspired little faith among the Palestinian themselves, especially the PLO leadership. Fourth, in November 1988 through the Algiers declaration, the Palestinian leadership explicitly recognized Israel's
right to live in peace and security. This is better known as the two state solutions.\textsuperscript{109} Fifth, on the eve of Kuwait crisis many observers believed that an independent Palestinian state is the only viable solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict (Nakhleh 1993:5-16).

Still the Palestinian leadership continued to reject any "open ended" agreement that did not stipulate in advance ensured statehood for the Palestinians at some future point. This demand was finally waived only in the secret negotiations leading up to the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles signed in September 1993.

In a formal sense, the DoP neither guaranteed nor precluded the creation of a Palestinian state. The feasibility and implication of a Palestinian statehood have brought to light new factors and led to the emergence of a new negotiating environment. This new development was perceived differently by optimists and pessimists. For some the DoP has implied the recognition of a Palestinian statehood, whereas others have asserted that these accords would not lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. It is quite necessary to discuss briefly regarding this conflicting interpretation of the DoP vis-à-vis Palestinian statehood.

\textbf{Declaration of Principles and Statehood}

The DoP incorporated in the Oslo accord is to be viewed as an open-ended agreement that aimed at incremental process. It was politically impossible at the time for both parties to a definitive accord. For most Israelis the very term 'Palestinian state' was a taboo (Heller 1997:7). The PLO could not insist on including its strategic aim of an independent state due to its overwhelming asymmetric position vis-à-vis Israel. According to the Palestinian convictions the DoP was a charter for eventual Palestinian statehood, if not in letter, at least in spirit.

\textsuperscript{109} For complete text "Palestinian Declaration of independence" Algiers, 15 November, 1988", see \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies} (Washington DC) no.70, Winter 1988, pp.213-16
One of the key issues was the uncertain evolution of a Palestinian government on the occupied territories. The final settlement negotiations over all contentious issues and rest occupied territories were supposed to begin in 1996 and to lay the groundwork for resolving the issue of Palestinian sovereignty. The PNA was created following the DoP and Israel’s partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and from the town of Jericho in 1994. Subsequently, the PNA underwent elections, redeployment and transfer of all powers and responsibilities.

These developments were undoubtedly major progress towards creating a Palestinian state. The PNA had a functional Chief executive and an elected 88-member Palestinian council. The PNA already enjoys numerous state like attributes includes purely symbolic elements such as a flag and national anthem. It also had several substantive manifestations of statehood that includes effective control of territory (about 1800 sq. km) and people (almost all the approximately 2.4 million Palestinian in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). It has wide-ranging powers and functions in the sphere of executive, legislative, judiciary and security areas. It has acquired a widespread international recognition and separate representation in a broad range of international institutions and organizations. The legitimacy of the PNA was ensured through elections, which were conducted in a free and fair manner than those in most neighbouring Arab states. The PNA began enjoying a quasi-state status As former US Secretary of state Henry Kissinger has pointed out, “the outside world would increasingly endow that autonomous entity with attributes of statehood” (Heller 1997:6-8)

At the same time the PNA lacked others key attributes generally associated with statehood that includes defence, communication and foreign policy and above all sovereignty. Most of these symbolic and substantive matters were closely related to the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. These issues include Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, borders, problem refugees, water etc. They in turn essentially subsumed by the question about the size and location of the Palestinian state.
Thus the argument about whether a Palestinian state should or should not exist is a big controversy inside Israel especially because a quasi-independent Palestinian state already exists, resembling recognized states in some respects. At the time of the defeat of Peres in 1995, there were enough indications that quasi-state would continue to exist even if no permanent status agreement was reached and that its formalized independence would inevitably be incorporated into any agreement that is reached.

**Palestinian Position**

An independent and sovereign state has become the ultimate political objective of the Palestinians. They hope that it would be secular and democratic based on universal suffrage, free elections, a multi-party systems and with a basic guarantee of civil and human rights. The Palestinians articulated this vision in the following manner,

... the establishment of a Palestinian state is the ultimate objective of the Palestinian struggle. The stage will come about in a gradual and incremental manner, not overnight. Because of their suffering and their persecution by the Israeli reoccupation authorities. The Palestinians insists that this state should be truly democratic based on multiparty system, free election and freedoms. These are not mere wishes: they constitute the absolute minimum for the establishment of a visible state (Moughrabi. et al. 1991:36-53).

This however came into conflict with a visible intra-Palestinian difference over the establishment of Palestinian state, especially between the two mainstream Palestinian forces, namely Fatah and Hamas

Though known to outside world mostly through its militant campaign against Oslo, Hamas is also a social welfare movement that enjoys considerable support among the Palestinians. At the top of its political agenda are liberating Palestine through a holy war against Israel, establishing an Islamic state on its soil, and reforming society in the spirit of pure Islam. It is this Islamic vision, combined with its nationalist claims and militancy toward Israel, which
accounts for the prevailing image of Hamas as ideologically intransigent and politically rigid movements, ready to pursue its goal at any cost, with no limits or constraints. Islamic and national interest, strong opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and strategies of terror and violence against Israel has become the movement's primary, if not sole objectives (Ziad 1993:5-19).

Since its inception in 1988 Hamas had challenged the authority and supremacy of the PLO and fought for legitimacy and the support of Palestinian public. During the first Intifada, the conflict between the two movements sharpened as they struggled for influence in the political street through graffiti, leaflets and the setting of different strike days. In June 1990, Hamas published a brochure under the title ‘Hamas: Between the pains of reality and the future Hopes’ where it questioned the PLO's claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO responded with the declaration that, 'each rival with the PLO is a rivalry with (our) homeland. The PLO is the state, not just a party within it.'

The manifestation of the competition can be found in the events surrounding the December 1992 Israeli expulsion of over 400 Hamas leaders to southern Lebanon. Hamas tried to translate the sympathy it had gained among Palestinians from the deportation into political power, and thus sought to force the PLO to leave the negotiation table with Israel. The PLO attempted to show Hamas that political involvement with the international community and negotiation with Israel would achieve the return of the deportees. The PLO tried to capitalize on the affairs and emphasized its role as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The competition still continued the PLO began to rethink its December 1992-January 1993 position. Instead of regarding the deportation as the only issue holding up the negotiations, by February 1993, the PLO viewed it as one of the most important issue, delaying the reopening of the peace talks.

110 In December 1992, the PLO promised to suspend its talks with Israel in Washington until Israel returned the expellees, and in January 1993, the PLO conditioned renewing talks on the latter's full implementation of the UN Security Council resolution that called for the immediate return of the deportees.
Hamas again tried to implement its strategy during the January 1993 talks with the PLO/Fatah that discussed the deportation question. Insisting that the Israeli action had increased its support, Hamas again asked the PLO/Fatah to either grant it 45 percent of the seats in the Palestine National Council or to totally abandon the negotiations with Israel, resume the armed struggle and put an end to the intra-Palestinian rivalry (Weitzman and Inbar 1997:115). Hamas challenged the notion that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people but described it merely as a coalition that represented just its members and not the entire Palestinian people.

The conclusion of the Oslo agreement and the signing of the DoP between Israel and the PLO in September 1993 dramatically changed Hamas’s strategic situations. The accord paved the way for Arafat’s return to the Palestinian territories and the establishment of Fatah-dominated PLO rule in the autonomous areas. These political changes brought a major political dilemma to Hamas and conveyed a sense of despair and political weaknesses in the face of Palestinian and international support for the agreement Milton Edward 1996:173). So, many questions being raised by Hamas that, How could these organization respond to the rule of the PLO? What future could the Islamic movement expect under the national leadership of Arafat? What would be the condition for self-rule, such as the formations of a Palestinian police force and security apparatus, implying for the future of the armed wing of Hamas and Islamic Jihad?

The Oslo accord has affected and continues to affect the organization at almost every level of its activities in the west Bank and the Gaza Strip. Therefore they have changed the nature of Hamas relationship with the Palestinian population

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111 These includes the Fatah’s decision to recognize Israel, talk about a final peace agreement, its acceptance of limited self-rule in a small area of the West Bank and the Gaza strip, holding of elections, establishment of a programme for national economic reconstruction, call for democracy and free elections, the prospect of hegemonic national secular rule etc. In addition, the PLO’s agreement to desist from hostile action against Israel, a commitment to be imposed by the future self-governing Palestinian Authority in the Occupied territories, clearly threatened to curtail Hamas freedom of military action and provoke a head-on-confrontation with the PA.
and Fatah and since Oslo formulated its position on all issues relating to internal Palestinian politics.\footnote{These includes Israeli troop redeployment away from centres of population in Gaza and Jericho, the establishment and arrival of the Palestinian police force and accompanying security apparatus, the return of hundreds of high-ranking PLO officials, including Arafat in July 1994, the debate about disarmament, the formation of the PNA with its ministers in Gaza and Jericho, and other towns in the West Bank. It was really confused and difficult to assess that these views of the leadership alone or was a response to pressure from the rank and file of Palestinian for change.}

It also changed the Hamas attitude towards the PLO and later the PNA and called to avoid intra-Palestinian violence and bloodshed. It was aware of its weakness vis-à-vis the security apparatus. Shortly before the Cairo agreement concerning the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho phase was signed in May 1994, a joint statement by Hamas’s battalion of ‘Izzal-Din al-Qassam and the Fatah hawk was published in the Gaza Strip announcing a six point agreement that the two rival faction had reached. This mutual collaboration was aimed at enhancing Palestinian national unity and preventing internal war \footnote{Under the six point agreement, the two sides would refrain from both verbal and violent disputes. commence a “constructive dialogue” and establish joint conciliation committees to resolve conflicts, suspend execution of collaborations for one month, decrease the number of strike days and lift the prohibition on school attendance. This agreement also served as a model for resolving other tensions between local Hamas and Fatah activists.} (Mishal and Sela 2000:68).

The national unity issue stood at the heart of many of Hamas’s statements throughout this period. As Hamas spokesperson Mohammad Nazzal stated in July 1994, “We will avoid a clash with any Palestinian side.” It was even rumoured that Hamas was willing to curtail certain armed operations in order to avoid confrontation with the Palestinian police (Milton Edward 1996:175). Hamas therefore committed itself for co-existence with the nationalists.

Later on, the leaders of Hamas were perceived that peaceful co-existence with the PNA at the price of abandoning the armed struggle against Israel would risk the loss of its distinctiveness as the leading movement for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state Litvak 1998:148-163). It refused to give up the principle stated in its charter “the land of a Palestine is an Islamic trust upon all Muslim generations until the day of
resurrection. It is not right to give neither it up nor any part of it” (Article II). In the opinion of Hamas, the solution of the Palestinian problem rests in the uprooting of the state of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state in its place. It started campaign designed to expose the DoP’s weaknesses and called for its abolition through violent confrontation with PNA. Just to achieve this, Hamas intensified its armed struggle against Israel and PNA’s attempt to suppress the Islamic opposition. As the head of the Hamas political bureau Musa Abu Marzug said, “the military activity is a permanent strategy that will not change. The modus operandi, tactics, means, and timing are based on their benefit. They will change from time to time in order to cause the heaviest damage to the occupation” (Mishal and Sela 2000:67-70.)

However, the difference between the PNA and Hamas was demonstrated by the PNA’s Minister of Planning, Nabil Sha’ath for freezing the armed operation and giving diplomacy a chance, Whereas Hamas leader Mahmud al-Zahar insisted that the employment of arm was legitimate, Sha’ath argued that parallel use of war and peace was possible (Mishal and Sela: 67-72).

Thus, the DoP laid the basis for a Palestinian state for the first time as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinians supported with the Oslo accords with this conviction and it was on this basis, that Arafat mobilized support for his policy in the face of oppositions and criticisms over the lacunae of the text. The Hamas continued to reject the DoP and to deny the legitimacy of Arafat. The Hamas argued that Israel must be eliminated and replaced by a Palestinian Islamic state. For Arafat, handling Hamas challenge was a daunting task requiring a delicate mix of pressure and accommodation, of suppression and persuasion. These in turn directly threatened Israel’s security and endangered the peace process itself. Therefore, the negotiations towards the implementation of provisions of the Gaza-Jericho withdrawal and the Interim Self-Government Arrangements (the interim agreement) had been increasingly difficult at every stage. As specified deadlines were missed regularly, the

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Palestinian became increasingly suspicious of Israel's intentions and accommodation on the permanent-status negotiations became more and more complicated.

The fact that Israeli concessions of functional authority and territorial control were met by rhetorical stridency, including repeated references to jihad, as well as persistent terrorism from the Palestinian side also seemed to agree with the Israeli right's criticism that there was something essentially flawed about the entire process. The manifestation of protest by Palestinians was a growing concern about the viability of the peace process and increasing scepticism that a permanent-status agreement would never be reached. For the Israeli, the term 'Palestinian state' was still taboo, and endorsement of partition was disguised by the politically correct term 'separation.' The Labour party did not completely drop its long-standing rejection of a Palestinian state from its 1996 election platform. On the contrary to the Palestinian opposition argued that the DoP would lead to a Palestinian state. Therefore, in official parlance of the Rabin-Peres government it was always 'Palestinian entity rather than state.'