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**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE  
CANADA**



**OPERATIONAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**

**DIRECTORATE OF STRATEGIC ANALYSIS RESEARCH NOTE 95/01**

**PLO - HAMAS RELATIONS:  
THE STAND-OFF CONTINUES**

**by**

**James W. Moore, Ph.D.**

**January 1995**

**OTTAWA, CANADA**



## Operational Research and Analysis

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OTTAWA, CANADA

JANUARY 1995

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## **ABSTRACT**

This Research Note explores PLO - Hamas relations following the signing of the Cairo Accord in May 1994. First, the deterioration in relations over the past six months, culminating in the clashes in Gaza City on 18 November between the Palestinian police and supporters of Hamas, is chronicled. Next, three scenarios for relations over the next two-to-three months are described, the most likely deemed to be a continuing stand-off. Finally, three key indicators are identified, developments in which may presage a change from this scenario.

## **RÉSUMÉ**

La présente note de recherche traite des relations entre l'OLP et Hamas à la suite de la signature de l'Accord du Caire en mai 1994. On y examine d'abord la détérioration de ces relations au cours des six derniers mois et des affrontements qui ont eu lieu à Gaza le 18 novembre entre la police palestinienne et les partisans de Hamas. Sont ensuite exposés trois scénarios possibles quant aux relations pouvant s'établir entre les deux organisations au cours des deux ou trois prochains mois, le plus probable étant la continuation de l'impasse. On donne enfin trois indicateurs clés pouvant laisser présager une situation différente.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

PLO - Hamas relations are inherently difficult. The two hold competing visions of Palestinian society, and competing visions of that society's relationship with Israel. Despite the fundamental opposition of aim and strategy, both remain wary of the other, mindful of the support that each enjoys within the Palestinian community at large. Rather than confront Hamas, the PLO has tried to open a dialogue with the Islamists, if not to co-opt them then, at least, to neutralize their opposition to the Middle East peace process. For its part, Hamas has pledged not to oppose violently the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and its security services, though it has vowed to continue the armed struggle against Israel. The operations of the Qassam Brigades -- Hamas' military wing -- and those of Islamic Holy War -- a smaller Islamist guerilla group -- have put the PLO in an increasingly difficult position. In a process that was repeated time and again over the past several months, the Israeli Government reacted to terrorist attacks with demands that the PNA and Palestinian police act against the perpetrators. The PLO responded by detaining some Hamas and/or Islamic Holy War supporters for a short time until the furore in Israel died down, after which they were quietly released so as not to unduly offend or provoke the Islamists. Increasingly, though, this satisfied no-one. The Israelis became exasperated with the charade while Hamas railed against the detentions. As a result, Arafat lost credibility in the eyes of both Israelis and Palestinians: Israelis saw him as too weak to control the self-rule areas, while Palestinians viewed him as a collaborator and traitor. The situation worsened as the peace process dragged on and little of the international aid intended to alleviate the economic suffering in the self-rule areas was forthcoming.

The growing tensions between the PLO and Hamas finally erupted in violence in Gaza City on 18 November. Palestinian police fired on Islamist protestors in street battles that lasted for several hours, killing twelve and wounding two hundred; one officer was killed and ten wounded. Shocked by the violence, the PNA and Islamic groups concluded a temporary truce on 19 November. They had backed away from the brink; however, neither was backing down. Al Fatah and Hamas held a series of demonstrations in the self-rule areas in the days following the Gaza incident. These rallies were none-too-subtle signals to the other that both have the determination and the strength to fight if that is what matters come to.

Relations between the two movements have now reached a temporary stand-off. Where do they go from here? Three scenarios in PLO-Hamas relations are possible over the short-term (i.e. the next two-three months):

### **a. Confrontation**

An unintended or unauthorized act may serve as a catalyst to a confrontation, e.g. street clashes between Hamas supporters and the Palestinian police or Fatah Hawks, or an attempted assassination of Arafat by more extreme Islamic

radicals. Are there circumstances, though, under which either Hamas or the PLO might deliberately seek a confrontation with their Palestinian opponent?

i. Hamas

Should the PLO cooperate with Israeli intelligence or acquiesce in Israeli activities against Hamas in the self-rule areas, Hamas may strike back against the Palestinian authorities. Reinforcing any inclination to challenge the PLO would be an awareness of growing support among the Palestinians masses. Should the Palestinian masses become increasing disillusioned with the peace process, Hamas might feel it has the need and the power to expose the charade of Palestinian self-rule, and challenge the PLO "lackeys" doing Israel's bidding.

ii. The PLO

For the PLO, its "red lines" are Hamas attacks against Israeli targets in the self-rule areas that embarrass and weaken Arafat. Such attacks bring pressure on him from Israel to honour his commitments under the peace accord and assert his control over opposition forces in the Gaza. Yet, when he acts against the opposition, he is accused of being a collaborator, and his already shaky credibility among the masses is weakened further. Should the peace process stall and no significant infusions of international aid be forthcoming, Arafat may feel cornered in these circumstances, and lash out against the Islamists in order to preserve his deteriorating position.

b. Cooperation

Violent confrontation between Hamas and the PLO is not inevitable. Under certain circumstances, the two might bury their mutual hostility and cooperate with one another. For example, should infusions of international aid and the holding of elections for the Palestinian council increase support for the peace process among the masses, the credibility and strength of the Palestinian authority will increase, with a corresponding loss for Hamas of the "soft" support that flocked to its banner when the peace process seemed to have reached an impasse. To avoid becoming marginalized, Hamas may adopt a more conciliatory stance vis-a-vis the PLO, signalling its willingness to participate in the elections, and seeking a role in an administration of national unity with the PLO.

c. Stand-off

Alternatively, the current stand-off between the PLO and Hamas could continue, with neither backing down nor being needlessly provocative. Hamas will continue its attacks against Israeli targets, but will limit them to Israeli soldiers and settlers in Israel and the West Bank, i.e outside the self-rule areas. The PLO will continue to condemn such attacks and take the minimum action

necessary to placate Israel as it presses for rapid progress on redeployment, elections, and aid. However, it will permit Hamas to operate in Gaza so long as it does not carry out attacks on territory supposedly under Arafat's control, and keeps its weapons and gunmen more or less out of sight.

The most likely scenario in the short-term (i.e. over the next two-to-three months) is Scenario C. -- a stand-off. However, there are three key indicators to monitor which could presage a change in scenario:

- a. International aid -- A rapid and substantial infusion of aid used to initiate infrastructure and employment programs in the self-rule areas will improve the prospects for Scenario B. Delayed or piecemeal commitment of small amounts of funds disbursed to a privileged few PLO leaders and their supporters will presage a change to Scenario A.
- b. The peace process -- Scenario B becomes more likely in the event that agreement is reached soon on troop redeployments and elections. Interminable negotiations that reinforce perceptions of Israeli stonewalling and PLO negotiating impotence and incompetence increase the likelihood of Scenario A.
- c. Terrorist attacks -- Bloody attacks launched against civilian targets in Israel proper or carried out from areas supposedly under Arafat's control will drive circumstances toward Scenario A. Limited attacks against military and settler targets in the West Bank will likely portend a continuation of Scenario C.

## SOMMAIRE

Les relations OLP - Hamas sont fondamentalement difficiles. Les deux mouvements ont des vues opposées sur la société palestinienne et sur ses rapports avec Israël. Ayant un but et une stratégie contraires, elles se méfient l'une de l'autre, conscientes de l'appui dont chacune jouit dans la communauté palestinienne. Plutôt que de faire front à Hamas, l'OLP a tenté à nouer le dialogue avec les islamistes afin, sinon de les rallier à elle, au moins de neutraliser leur opposition au processus de paix au Moyen-Orient. Pour sa part, Hamas a promis de ne pas s'opposer par la violence à l'Autorité nationale palestinienne (ANP) et à ses services de sécurité, mais il a juré de poursuivre sa lutte armée contre Israël. Les opérations des brigades Qassam -- l'aile militaire de Hamas -- et celles du Djihad islamique -- une plus petite guérilla islamiste - - ont mis l'OLP dans une situation de plus en plus difficile. À plusieurs reprises au cours des derniers mois, face à des attaques terroristes répétées, le gouvernement israélien a exigé que l'ANP et la police palestinienne prennent des mesures contre les auteurs de ces attaques. L'OLP s'est pliée aux demandes d'Israël en détenant brièvement certains partisans de Hamas et du Djihad islamique, jusqu'à ce que la situation se calme en Israël, après quoi les détenus ont été libérés discrètement afin de ne pas trop offenser ou provoquer les islamistes. Cela n'a toutefois satisfait personne. Les Israéliens ont été exaspérés par cette comédie tandis que Hamas a jeté les hauts cris contre les détentions. En conséquence, Arafat a perdu sa crédibilité aux yeux tant des Israéliens que des Palestiniens : les Israéliens l'ont jugé trop faible pour contrôler les secteurs autonomes, tandis que les Palestiniens l'ont considéré comme un collaborateur et un traître. Le processus de paix s'éternisant et l'aide internationale destinée à atténuer les problèmes économiques dans les territoires autonomes n'arrivant qu'en petite quantité, la situation a empiré.

La tension entre l'OLP et Hamas s'est accrue, et, le 18 novembre, la violence a fini par éclater dans la ville de Gaza. La police palestinienne a tiré sur des manifestants islamistes dans des combats de rue qui ont duré plusieurs heures et qui ont fait douze morts et deux cents blessés; un officier a été tué et dix ont été blessés. Le 19 novembre, perturbés par la violence, l'ANP et les groupes islamiques ont conclu une trêve temporaire. Ils avaient évité de justesse la catastrophe; toutefois, ni l'un ni l'autre camp ne voulait céder. Al Fatah et Hamas ont organisé une série de manifestations dans les territoires autonomes après l'incident survenu à Gaza. Ces rassemblements avaient pour but de signifier à l'autre camp que chacun était prêt à se battre et qu'il en avait la capacité s'il fallait en arriver là.

Les relations entre les deux mouvements en sont là pour le moment. Qu'arrivera-t-il ensuite? Les relations OLP-Hamas pourraient prendre trois tournures à court terme (c'est-à-dire au cours des deux ou trois prochains mois) :

#### a. Affrontement

Un acte non intentionnel ou non autorisé pourrait provoquer un affrontement, c'est-à-dire des batailles de rue entre les partisans de Hamas et la police palestinienne ou les faucons de Al Fatah, ou encore une tentative d'assassinat contre Arafat par des islamistes extrémistes. Y a-t-il toutefois des circonstances où Hamas, ou bien l'OLP, chercherait délibérément un affrontement avec son adversaire palestinien?

##### i. Hamas

Si l'OLP collabore avec le service de renseignement israélien ou qu'elle acquiesce aux activités d'Israël contre Hamas dans les territoires autonomes, Hamas pourrait répliquer en s'attaquant aux autorités palestiniennes. Hamas sera sans doute plus enclin à s'opposer à l'OLP s'il sait que les masses palestiniennes lui sont de plus en plus favorables. Si celles-ci deviennent désenchantées du processus de paix, Hamas pourrait juger qu'il se doit et qu'il a le pouvoir d'exposer le caractère illusoire de l'autonomie palestinienne, et il pourrait affronter les «laquais» de l'OLP qui exécutent les ordres d'Israël.

##### ii. L'OLP

Ce qui cause des problèmes à l'OLP, ce sont les attaques de Hamas contre les Israéliens dans les territoires autonomes. Ces attaques causent de l'embarras à Arafat et le rendent vulnérable. Israël fait pression sur lui pour qu'il respecte les engagements qu'il a pris en signant l'accord de paix et qu'il tienne en échec les forces de l'opposition à Gaza. Cependant, si Arafat s'en prend à l'opposition, on l'accuse d'être un collaborateur, et il continue à perdre sa crédibilité auprès des masses, qui lui font déjà peu confiance. Si le processus de paix aboutit à l'impasse et que l'aide internationale ne commence pas à arriver en grande quantité, Arafat pourrait se sentir coincé et s'attaquer aux islamistes afin d'affermir sa position chancelante.

#### b. Coopération

L'affrontement violent entre Hamas et l'OLP n'est pas inévitable. Dans certaines circonstances, ils pourraient mettre fin à leur hostilité mutuelle et collaborer entre eux. Par exemple, si l'aide internationale arrivait et que des élections étaient tenues pour former le conseil palestinien, ce qui rendrait les masses plus favorables au processus de paix, la crédibilité de l'OLP augmenterait et sa position serait affermie, et Hamas perdrait l'appui «tiède» de nombreux éléments qui se sont ralliés à lui lorsque le processus de paix semblait avoir abouti à une impasse. Pour éviter d'être marginalisé, Hamas pourrait se faire plus conciliant avec l'OLP, signifiant ainsi qu'il est disposé à participer aux élections et qu'il cherche à jouer un rôle dans un gouvernement d'unité nationale, en collaboration avec l'OLP.

**c. Impasse**

Ou bien, l'impasse dans laquelle se trouvent présentement l'OLP et Hamas pourrait durer, aucune des deux organisations ne cédant ni ne provoquant l'autre sans nécessité. Hamas poursuivra ses attaques contre les Israéliens, mais les limitera aux soldats et aux colons israéliens en Israël et en Cisjordanie, c'est-à-dire en dehors des territoires autonomes. L'OLP continuera à condamner ces attaques et fera le minimum nécessaire pour apaiser Israël tout en insistant pour que les choses aillent rapidement en ce qui concerne le redéploiement, les élections et l'aide. L'OLP permettra toutefois à Hamas de mener ses activités à Gaza pourvu qu'il ne lance pas des attaques dans le territoire censé être sous le contrôle d'Arafat, et que ses armes et ses guerriers restent hors de vue.

À court terme, le scénario le plus probable est le scénario C : l'impasse. Il y a toutefois trois indicateurs clefs qui pourraient présager un scénario différent :

a. L'aide internationale -- Un apport rapide et important d'aide internationale permettant de mettre sur pied des programmes d'infrastructure et d'emploi dans les secteurs autonomes augmentera les chances que le scénario B se réalise. Si l'aide tarde à venir ou si seules de petites sommes sont versées à quelques chefs privilégiés de l'OLP et à leurs partisans, cela pourrait laisser présager le scénario A.

b. Le processus de paix -- Le scénario B devient plus probable si une entente est bientôt conclue sur le redéploiement des troupes et sur les élections. Des négociations interminables qui renforcent l'impression d'obstruction de la part d'Israël et d'impuissance et d'incapacité de l'OLP à négocier, accroissent la probabilité du scénario A.

c. Attaques terroristes -- Des attaques sanglantes lancées contre des cibles civiles en Israël ou depuis des secteurs censés être sous le contrôle d'Arafat pourraient donner lieu au scénario A. Des attaques limitées contre des cibles militaires ou des colons en Cisjordanie présageront sans doute la continuation du scénario C.

## **PLO - HAMAS RELATIONS: THE STAND-OFF CONTINUES**

### **I. BACKGROUND**

1. PLO - Hamas relations are inherently difficult. The two hold competing visions of Palestinian society, and competing visions of that society's relationship with Israel. After twenty-four years of uncompromising armed struggle, the PLO officially accepted a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at Algiers in November 1988. While committed to creating a secular, independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital, it recognizes Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 boundaries. Consistent with this, the PLO has rejected terrorism and adopted a strategy of negotiation. It has accepted the process set out in the Declaration of Principles (signed in Washington on 13 September 1993): an interim period of self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho; the transfer of administrative powers in the remainder of the West Bank; and negotiations to begin within two years on the final status of the territories.
2. Hamas, on the other hand, rejects the existence of Israel, and is committed to creating an Islamic state in the whole of the former mandate of Palestine. Not surprisingly, it rejects the PLO's negotiating strategy. While the political wing of the movement proselytizes within the Palestinian community, the military wing -- known as the Qassam Brigades -- carries on the armed struggle against Israel. Originally targeting soldiers and settlers in the territories (widely considered in the Palestinian community to be legitimate targets of the occupation), it shifted to attacks against civilian targets following the Hebron massacre, e.g. the recent Tel Aviv bus bombing.
3. Despite the fundamental opposition of aim and strategy, both remain wary of the other, mindful of the support that each enjoys within the Palestinian community at large. Rather than confront Hamas, the PLO has tried to open a dialogue with the Islamists, if not to co-opt them then, at least, to neutralize their opposition. Despite its

commitments under the Cairo Accord, the PLO has not made a serious effort to disarm the militants. It has permitted Hamas to hold demonstrations and rallies in the self-rule areas, though often these result in denunciations of the peace process with Israel.

4. For its part, Hamas promised, following the creation of the self-rule areas, not to provoke the PLO. Though rejecting the peace process and vowing to continue the armed struggle against Israel, it pledged not to oppose violently the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and its security services. However, the operations of the Qassam Brigades and those of Islamic Holy War -- a smaller Islamist guerilla group -- have put the PLO in an increasingly difficult position (see Annex A for a summary of major terrorist attacks since May 1994). In a process that was repeated time and again, the Israeli Government responded to terrorist attacks with demands that the PNA and Palestinian police act against the perpetrators, and with warnings that the peace process would break down if the PLO did not block anti-Israeli terror attacks. Condemnations of the attacks from the PLO followed, as did promises to take action against the militants. Some Hamas and/or Islamic Holy War supporters were then detained for a short time until the furor in Israel died down, after which they were quietly released so as not to unduly offend or provoke the Islamists.

5. Increasingly, though, this satisfied no-one. The Israelis became exasperated with the charade while Hamas railed against the detentions. Arafat lost credibility in the eyes of both Israelis and Palestinians: Israelis saw him as too weak to control the self-rule areas, while Palestinians viewed him as a collaborator and traitor. The situation worsened as the peace process dragged on and little of the international aid intended to alleviate the economic suffering in the self-rule areas was forthcoming.

6. Matters came to a head between the PLO and Hamas over the past two months. Reacting to a series of bloody terrorist operations -- the 9 October attack in a Jerusalem street mall, the 9 October kidnapping and subsequent killing of Cpl. Nahson

Waxman, and the 19 October Tel Aviv bus bombing -- the Israeli Government brought tremendous pressure to bear on Arafat to crack-down on the Islamist opposition. For their part, the Islamists became increasingly antagonistic toward the PLO and Arafat personally. On 3 November, he was publicly humiliated while trying to attend the funeral of Hani Abed, an Islamic Holy War leader killed in a car bombing in Khan Yunis; outraged militants shoved him out of the Omari Mosque in Gaza City where the funeral was being held. The last straw for Arafat came on 11 November when a suicide bicycle bomber killed three Israeli soldiers at a military outpost near Netzarim in the Gaza Strip. The attack, for which Islamic Holy War claimed responsibility, angered and embarrassed Arafat because it took place on territory supposedly under his control. The next day, Palestinian police raided scores of houses and a mosque in the Gaza Strip, arresting more than one hundred middle-level supporters of Islamic Holy War. On the 14th, all street protests were banned and the PNA promised a sustained crackdown against the radicals. Several hundred protestors eluded the police, however, and rallied outside the bomber's home, denouncing both Israel and Arafat.

7. The tensions finally erupted in violence on 18 November. Palestinian police fired on Islamist protestors in street battles that lasted for several hours, killing twelve and wounding two hundred; one officer was killed and ten wounded. According to some witnesses, two hundred police started shooting to break up a planned rally outside the main Gaza City mosque. Other witnesses claimed that the 5,000-10,000 demonstrators began throwing rocks after police pulled down loudspeakers set up for the rally. The police initially fired in the air to disperse protestors, then fired into the crowds. The clashes soon spread to police headquarters, another police outpost, and the Shifa hospital where most victims were taken for treatment. Riots also flared in Rafah, and Palestinian youths marched on the Israeli outpost near Netzarim (Israeli troops withdrew to avoid a confrontation, and the youths set the outpost on fire).

8. Shocked by the violence, the PNA and Islamic groups concluded a temporary truce on 19 November. The PNA also agreed to investigate the street battles, with Hamas and Islamic Holy War to be represented on the commission. Despite this, each blamed the other for the incident. Hamas released a statement saying it held Arafat personally responsible for the incident, and demanded a confession and an apology. However, it called on its followers not to attack Palestinian police but to revenge the martyrs by attacking Israeli targets. After the incident, Al Fatah -- Arafat's faction of the PLO -- issued a statement warning Hamas and Islamic Holy War that they were "crossing the red line" with attacks on the PNA that "harm national unity." Further, Al Fatah said it was on "full alert" and would resist the "conspiratorial plans on behalf of foreign parties," apparently in reference to Iran.

9. The PLO and Hamas had backed away from the brink. However, neither was backing down. Evidence of the continuing tension could be found in the graffiti war that broke out on the walls of Gaza. Hamas slogans condemned Arafat and the Fatah Hawks as "killers of Palestinians" and "Israel's loyal servants," and called for Arafat's assassination. Fatah countered with slogans threatening to cut off the tongues and hands of Arafat's opponents, and labelling the Islamist opposition as "agents of Iran" and "wild dogs." More tangible demonstrations of strength came in a series of rallies held in the self-rule areas. On 23 November, 5,000 Palestinians, many of them armed members of Al Fatah, attended a rally in support of Arafat in Jericho. The PNA arranged the rally as a display of loyalty to Arafat, to show that he has his own militia and intends to stay in control even if it means fighting other Palestinians. Earlier in the week, 10,000 Fatah members paraded in Gaza in support of Arafat, many of them brandishing weapons. The Fatah rallies were followed on 26 November by an even larger rally for Hamas. An estimated 20,000 Hamas supporters attended a rally in Gaza. By prior agreement with the authorities, the militants kept their guns hidden, while the Palestinian police stayed away from the soccer field where the rally was held. Speakers lashed out at the PLO and at Israel, but the rally passed peacefully. All these rallies were none-too-subtle signals to the other that both the PLO and

Hamas have the determination and the strength to fight if that is what matters come to.

## II. SCENARIOS

10. Relations between the two movements have deteriorated over the past several months and, following the 18 November clashes, have reached a temporary stand-off. Where do they go from here? Three scenarios in PLO-Hamas relations are possible over the short-term (i.e. the next two-three months):

### a. Confrontation

An unintended or unauthorized act may serve as a catalyst to a confrontation, e.g. street clashes between Hamas supporters and the Palestinian police or Fatah Hawks, or an attempted assassination of Arafat by more extreme Islamic radicals. Are there circumstances, though, under which either Hamas or the PLO might deliberately seek a confrontation with their Palestinian opponent?

#### i. Hamas

Should the PLO cooperate with Israeli intelligence or acquiesce in Israeli activities against Hamas in the self-rule areas, Hamas may strike back against the Palestinian authorities. These are considered to be "red lines" which Hamas has already warned the PLO that it crosses at its peril. Reinforcing any inclination to challenge the PLO would be an awareness of growing support among the Palestinians masses. Should international donors fail to deliver on promises of financial aid, and Israel stall on troop redeployment in the West Bank and on Palestinian elections, Palestinians disillusioned with the peace process and feeling they have nothing to lose will turn to Hamas as the only viable opposition force within their community. In these circumstances, Hamas might feel

it has the need and the power to expose the charade of Palestinian self-rule, and challenge the PLO "lackeys" doing Israel's bidding.

ii. The PLO

For the PLO, its "red lines" are Hamas attacks that harm "national unity," that is, dramatic attacks against Israel targets in the self-rule areas that embarrass and weaken Arafat. Such attacks bring pressure on him from Israel to honour his commitments under the peace accord and assert his control over opposition forces in the Gaza. Yet, when he acts against the opposition, he is accused of being a collaborator, and his already shaky credibility among the masses is weakened further. Should the peace process stall and no significant infusions of international aid be forthcoming, Arafat may feel cornered in these circumstances, and lash out against the Islamists in order to preserve his deteriorating position.

b. Cooperation

Violent confrontation between Hamas and the PLO is not inevitable. Under certain circumstances, the two might bury their mutual hostility and cooperate with one another. For example, should substantial international aid begin to flow to the self-rule areas and Palestinians begin to see tangible improvements in their daily lives, they will have an increasing stake in the success of the peace process. This stake in the process will be reinforced politically as elections to the Palestinian council approach and the heretofore autocratic PNA structure begins to open to broader participation. In these circumstances, the credibility and strength of the Palestinian authority will increase, with a corresponding loss for Hamas of the "soft" support that flocked to its banner when the peace process seemed to have reached an impasse. To avoid becoming marginalized, Hamas may adopt a more conciliatory stance vis-a-vis the PLO, signalling its willingness to participate in the elections to the

Palestinian council, and seeking a role in an administration of national unity with the PLO.

c. Stand-off

Alternatively, the current stand-off between the PLO and Hamas could continue. They have both recoiled from the spectre of a Palestinian civil war, brought into stark relief with the 18 November clashes in Gaza City. However, neither is willing to back down. The rallies held in the aftermath of the riots were demonstrations that both Hamas and the PLO have the power in the streets to fight back if pushed too far. Nevertheless, neither wants to be needlessly provocative. In these circumstances, the tensions between the two are likely to remain just below the flash-point. Hamas will continue its attacks against Israeli targets, but will limit them to Israel and the West Bank, i.e. outside the self-rule areas. It will restrict its operations to limited attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers to avoid provoking an extreme Israeli reaction that might leave Arafat no alternative but to crack down on Hamas once and for all. The PLO will continue to condemn such attacks and take the minimum action necessary to placate Israel as it presses for rapid progress on redeployment, elections, and aid. However, it will permit Hamas to operate in Gaza -- e.g. demonstrations, rallies, and other political and social activities -- so long as it does not carry out attacks on territory supposedly under Arafat's control, and keeps its weapons and gunmen more or less out of sight. For its part, the Palestinian police will maintain a low profile, especially at Hamas functions, to avoid a repeat of the unintended clashes in Gaza City in mid-November.

### III. WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

11. The most likely scenario in the short-term (i.e. over the next two-to-three months) is Scenario C. -- a stand-off. However, there are three key indicators to monitor which could presage a change in scenario:

- a. International aid -- the amount of financial aid released to the self-rule areas, the speed with which it actually reaches the Palestinian authorities, and the uses to which it is put.

A rapid and substantial infusion of aid used to initiate infrastructure and employment programs in the self-rule areas will improve the prospects for Scenario B. Delayed or piecemeal commitment of small amounts of funds disbursed to a privileged few PLO leaders and their supporters will presage a change to Scenario A.

- b. The peace process -- the pace of negotiations on redeploying Israeli troops from West Bank towns and cities, and on proceeding with elections for the Palestinian council.

Scenario B becomes more likely in the event that agreement is reached soon on troop redeployments and elections. Interminable negotiations that reinforce perceptions of Israeli stonewalling and PLO negotiating impotence and incompetence increase the likelihood of Scenario A.

- c. Terrorist attacks -- the location and deadliness of Hamas attacks against Israel.

Bloody attacks launched against civilian targets in Israel proper or carried out from areas supposedly under Arafat's control will drive circumstances toward Scenario A. Limited attacks against military and settler targets in the West Bank will likely portend a continuation of Scenario C.

ANNEX A  
 TO D STRAT A RESEARCH NOTE  
 DATED JANUARY 1995

CHRONOLOGY -- THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Date	Event
4 May 1994	In Cairo, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat sign an accord inaugurating Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.
20 May	Two Israeli soldiers are killed in a drive-by shooting at the Erez border crossing. Both Islamic Holy War and Hamas claim responsibility.
21 May	The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) denounces the Erez killings as a threat to Palestinian security in the self-rule areas and to the peace accord with Israel.
30 May	An Israeli reservist is killed near Nahal Oz when Palestinian gunmen fire on six soldiers guarding bulldozers used to erect a security fence around the Gaza Strip
17 July	Gazan labourers at the Erez checkpoint, frustrated with the long line-ups to enter Israel, clash with Israeli soldiers. Two Palestinians are killed and over one hundred wounded, including five Palestinian police officers.
19 July	An Israeli soldier is shot and killed near Rafah when a patrol stops to check a ladder leaning against the border fence. In a leaflet issued by the Qassam Brigades, the ambush is said to be in revenge for the "terrible massacre" at the Erez checkpoint two days earlier.
12 August	Three Hamas gunmen fire on an Israeli patrol car in East Jerusalem, wounding three police officers. Israeli police later shoot two of the gunmen and capture the third.
14 August	One Israeli civilian is killed and eight wounded in two roadside ambushes in the Gaza Strip. Hamas says the attacks are revenge for the killing of two of its members in Jerusalem on 12 August.
15 August	The PNA condemns the attacks as a breach of the accord with Israel. Palestinian police arrest at least thirteen Islamic militants and holds them for questioning.
17 August	Palestinian security forces promise to confiscate illegal weapons in the self-rule areas.

9 October	Two Palestinians from the Gaza Strip kill two Israelis and wound thirteen others in the Nahalat Shiva area of Jerusalem, a narrow pedestrian street with many outdoor restaurants. Israeli border police shoot the two gunmen. The Qassam Brigades claim responsibility for the attack.
9 October	An Israeli soldier, Nahson Waxman, is abducted while hitchhiking near Ben Gurion airport, five miles southeast of Tel Aviv.
11 October	Hamas releases a videotape and handwritten note announcing it is holding Waxman hostage, threatening to kill him unless some two hundred Palestinian prisoners, including Sheik Ahman Yassin, the founder of Hamas, are released from Israeli jails.
13 October	Palestinian security forces arrest about two hundred Hamas militants in raids throughout the Gaza Strip.
14 October	Israeli forces launch a rescue operation upon receipt of information that Waxman is being held in the village of Bir Nabala, two miles from his home in northern Jerusalem. The rescue attempt fails. Waxman and one soldier on the rescue team are killed, and twelve other soldiers wounded. Three militants are killed in the attack, and two others captured.
15 October	Hamas warns the PNA that, unless the two hundred militants arrested earlier in the week are released, it would "reply by setting the Gaza Strip ablaze on the heads of the Zionists and their lackeys." Thousands of Hamas supporters march on the main prison in the Gaza Strip.
16 October	Israel announces that negotiations on Palestinian elections will resume in Cairo on 18 October.
19 October	A suicide bomber blows up a bus in Tel Aviv, killing twenty-two and wounding forty-six. Hamas claims responsibility for the attack.
23 October	Israel announces it has arrested dozens of Hamas members in the West Bank.
30 October	At the economic development conference in Casablanca, Arafat and Rabin agree to accelerate negotiations on Palestinian elections and the transfer of administrative powers in the West Bank.
2 November	An Islamic Holy War leader, Hani Abed, is killed in a car bombing in Khan Yunis. He was suspected of involvement in the shooting of two Israeli soldiers at the Erez checkpoint in May. Palestinians accuse the Israeli security services of the bombing.
3 November	Gazans pour into the streets demonstrating against Israel and denouncing Arafat as a collaborator. Protestors shove Arafat out of the Omari mosque in Gaza City as he tries to attend religious services being held for Abed.

4 November	Thousands of Hamas and Islamic Holy War supporters march in Gaza City, denouncing Israel and warning the PLO that it has made enough concessions to Israel.
8 November	Meeting at the Erez checkpoint, Rabin and Arafat agree to negotiate several major issues simultaneously, principally the transfer of certain administrative powers in the West Bank to the PNA, and elections to the Palestinian council.
11 November	A suicide bomber riding a bicycle blows himself up at an Israeli outpost near the Gaza settlement of Netzarim. Three soldiers are killed and twelve other people wounded (including six Palestinians). Islamic Holy War claims the attack is revenge for the murder of Hani Abed.
12 November	Palestinian police raid scores of houses and a mosque in the Gaza Strip, arresting more than one hundred middle-level supporters of Islamic Holy War.
14 November	The PNA bans street protests and promises a sustained crackdown on Islamic radicals. Several hundred Islamic Holy War protestors elude Palestinian police and rally outside the home of the Netzarim bomber, where they denounce Israel and Arafat.
14 November	Palestinian police arrest another two dozen supporters of Islamic Holy War, bringing the number detained since 11 November to one hundred and sixty.
15 November	Responsibility for tourism and social services in the West Bank is transferred to the PNA.
18 November	Palestinian police fire on Islamist protestors in street battles that last several hours throughout central Gaza City. Twelve protestors are killed and over two hundred wounded. One officer is killed and ten others wounded in the clashes.
19 November	The PNA and Islamic groups conclude a temporary truce in an effort to reduce tensions in the Gaza Strip.
21 November	Ten thousand Al Fatah members parade in Gaza City in support of Arafat, many of them openly brandishing weapons.
22 November	A Palestinian police officer is shot and wounded outside his home in Gaza City in the first attack of its kind since self-rule began in May. No-one claims responsibility, but it is suspected that Hamas carried out the attack in revenge for the 18 November massacre of its supporters.
23 November	Five thousand Palestinians, many of them armed members of Al Fatah (Arafat's faction of the PLO) rally in support of Arafat in Jericho.
23 November	Israel announces that it is handing over \$8.6 million in tax receipts from Palestinians to the PNA. The money is intended to help Arafat create jobs in the self-rule areas so as to shore up his position.
26 November	Twenty thousand Hamas supporters attend a rally in Gaza City.

27 November	A rabbi is killed and an Israeli police officer wounded when their car is fired on three miles from Hebron in the West Bank. Hamas claims responsibility for the attack.
29 November	World Bank officials and Arafat sign grants and loans worth \$58 million, to be paid to the PNA over the next four months.
30 November	Twenty-two donor countries and three international agencies agree to sign \$125 million in grants for the PNA, and promise an additional \$23 million before Christmas. The grants are to cover the Authority's financing needs for the next four months, and are supposed to be used for public service salaries, job creation, and infrastructure projects in the self-rule areas.
30 November	A Hamas militant from the West Bank kills an Israeli soldier in an axe attack in Afula. Rabin says negotiations with the PNA will continue, and that the PNA cannot be held responsible for the attack since the killer came from territory under Israeli control.
1 December	Responsibility for taxation and health services in the West Bank is transferred to the PNA. This completes the first phase of the transfer of administrative power in regions outside the self-rule areas.
3 December	Copies of the East Jerusalem dailies <i>Al Quds</i> and <i>An Nahar</i> are distributed for the first time in five days in the Gaza Strip. Distribution had been delayed earlier in apparent punishment for the papers' reports on the 26 November Hamas rally in Gaza City. The papers cited a Hamas estimate of 70,000 people attending the rally. Palestinian police placed the figure at 5,000, and Western news organizations at 20,000.

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This Research Note explores PLO - Hamas relations following the signing of the Cairo Accord in May 1994. First, the deterioration in relations over the past six months, culminating in the clashes in Gaza City on 18 November between the Palestinian police and supporters of Hamas, is chronicled. Next, three scenarios for relations over the next two-to-three months are described, the most likely deemed to be a continuing stand-off. Finally, three key indicators are identified, developments in which may presage a change from this scenario.

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