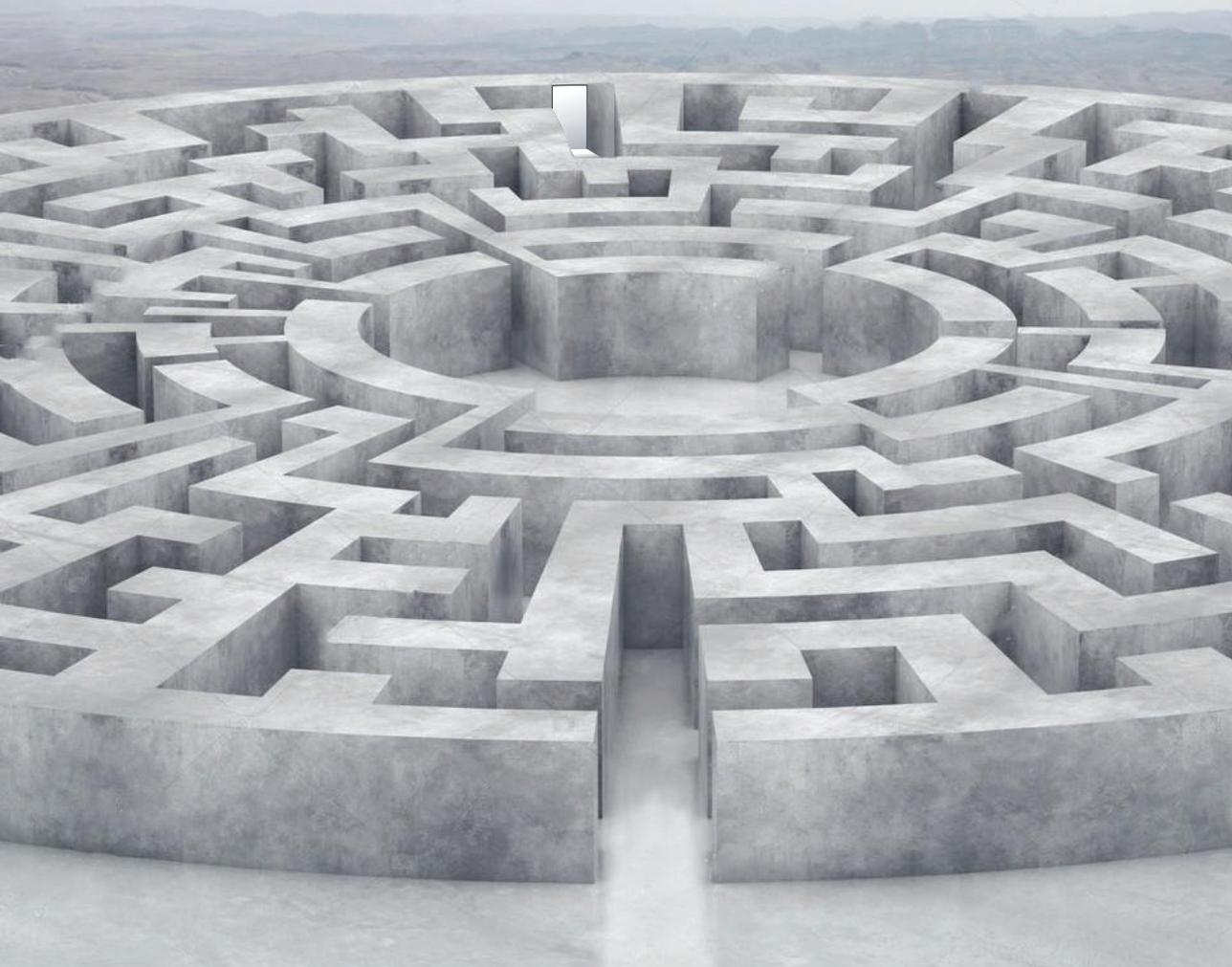


Three Scenarios for Palestinian Resilience

An overview of the research project identifying
alternative future scenarios for Palestine

2021 - 2025



Three Scenarios for Palestinian Resilience

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alternative future scenarios for Palestine*

March 2021

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Abbreviations

- PCBS – Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
- UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
- UAE – United Arab Emirates
- WGI - Worldwide Governance Institute
- WHO – World Health Organisation
- BDS – Boycott, Divest, and Sanction
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council
- ILO – International Labour Organisation
- PA – Palestinian Authority
- PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organisation

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Introduction

The Palestinian society, community, and cause continue to exist under immense strain and pressure. This condition is the outcome of a myriad of internal and external factors, out of which the political division and the ongoing Israeli occupation stand above the rest. The fragmentation of Palestine and the ensuing demands to maintain resilience in the fight for the realisation of the rights of the Palestinian people, calls for a thorough analysis of the various future scenarios.

This document addresses this knowledge gap. The document outlines three scenarios relevant to the status and strength of Palestinian resilience based on broad, participatory research engaging diverse segments of Palestinian communities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories, and the diaspora. The inputs gathered from these groups have been validated and further supported by consultations with relevant stakeholders at regional and international levels.

The drafting of the document began in March 2020 and the relevance of the scenario analysis has only gained momentum since. As political divisions deepen, communities continue their disintegration, the Gaza Strip sees further isolation, and the political performance of Palestinian parties weakens, insights on the near future are gravely needed. Recent developments ranging from the silent expansion of settlements and the suspension of the peace process leave little hope for significant changes towards the better if political dynamics unfold without alteration.

It is worthwhile to note that the most recent escalation of violence seen in May 2021 hit a country and peoples already under extreme strain due to the economic, social, and political ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic plummeted the Palestinian economy to 2015-levels and pushed the Palestinian cause off international policy agendas. As the world builds back from the global crisis, Palestinians can expect to see Israel hold annexation plans on its agenda, Arab nations continue expanding normalisation processes with Israel, and new attempts to rearrange priorities and alliances in the Middle East by regional and international powers. These dynamics call for the elevation of the Palestinian cause to the forefront of international policy-making and the prioritisation of resilience-building within Palestinian communities to confront internal and external threats with consistency and agility.

With these contemporary dynamics in mind, the goal of this document is to

identify pathways that enable the realisation of justice for both the individuals affected by the status quo as well as the region experiencing the ripple effects of instability as a whole.

By involving a broad base of politicians, experts, civil society organizations, trade and labour unions, private sector actors, as well as women and youth representatives in the dialogues leading to the drafting of the scenarios, the research process generated an up-to-date and multi-faceted understanding of the status quo as well as the various factors defining Palestinian resilience. Understanding these underlying dynamics is of particular importance due to the constant state of flux Palestine and the region are seeing. It is worthwhile to note that the consequences of the Arab Spring are all but over and fervent competition over gas and resources, increased geopolitical multipolarity, as well as tensions between and within the Arab Gulf and Iran are worrying dynamics impacting Palestinian both directly and indirectly.

About the *Three Scenarios for Palestinian Resilience Report* and the *Supporting Palestinian Resilience Through Dialogue Project*

The 'Three Scenarios for Palestinian Resilience' report is part of the 'Supporting Palestinian Resilience Through Dialogue' project implemented in collaboration between the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (MASARAT) and CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, in partnership with the Office of the European Union Representative in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (UNRWA).

The first draft of this document was completed in 2020 and the content for the final draft completed early 2021. Despite developments that have taken place since, the conclusions of the document still hold.

Objectives

The primary objective of the research project and the ensuing scenario report is to study the status of Palestinian resilience across communities and actors living and working in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories, and the diaspora.

The secondary goals of the research project are:

- Investigating the political, economic, and social factors influencing the state of Palestinian resilience;
- Outlining scenarios depicting and describing the future of Palestinian resilience;

- Studying the possibilities, opportunities, and threats Palestinian resilience is exposed to across geographical and social contexts;
- Understanding the regional and international environment and its effects on the status of Palestinian resilience;
- Drafting and outlining priorities and strategies for the creation of future policies in support of Palestinian resilience.

Methodology

The research project utilised a participatory methodology and an analytical approach to outline the elements of Palestinian resilience and the linkages between these elements on each other. The scenarios and ensuing analysis have been drafted with the help of the following methodology:

Literature review and data compilation focusing on the political, economic, social, environmental, and technological dimensions of resilience in Palestine. The economic, social, and technological indicators used in this document also draw from an extensive literature review featuring relevant content from the past decade.

Preparation of six baseline reports zooming in on political, economic, and social questions as well as regional and international dynamics, Israel's visions regarding the resolution of the conflict, and environmental risks.

Preparation of six sectoral policy papers that addressed the ramifications of the Covid-19 crisis in terms of political dynamics, economic developments, health and wellbeing, civil society, freedoms and rights, rule of law, and women's rights. These papers are outputs from workshops dedicated to each topic.

Online survey collecting expert opinions and analysis from a wide group of actors from politics, academia, the private sector, civil society, municipalities, as well as women and youth groups. The Palestinians consulted for the project represent communities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories, the diaspora, and countries of refuge.

Nine dialogue workshops organised with representatives from various sectors and social and political segments from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, 1948 territories, and the diaspora. The workshops focused on determining priorities related to the indicators of Palestinian resilience in the political, economic, social, cultural, technological, and environmental spheres. The drafting of indicators was followed by the weighing and prioritisation of indicators in light of the envisioned future with a time horizon reaching until 2025. The workshops also specified

indicators reflecting the particularities of the Palestinian situation in both the 1948 territories and the diaspora.

Statistical models and methods for future forecasting such as:

- *Cross Impact Matrix* enabling the identification of influential and interlinked variables;
- *Futures Wheel Tool* to recognize the consequences of the important factors affecting Palestinian resilience;
- *PESTEL Analysis Framework* used to build scenarios. The technique compiles a large number of micro- and macro-level information, including social, economic, political, technological, legal, and environmental data, and specifically identifies indicators and events with the potential of transforming from secondary trends into major and dominant trends.
- *Delphi Method* to identify influential and influenced factors. The method was applied in expert consultations.
- *5Ts* approach to analyse factors related to Trends, Tensions, Transition, Today, and Tomorrow. The methodology looks at the actual outcomes of relevant pressure points along with the dynamics and tensions these factors create.

A comprehensive survey method was used to analyse internal and external variables defining resilience in the political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental spheres. The analysis enabled the formation of a complete system of knowledge on indicators determining Palestinian resilience. This in turn enabled the construction of dominant and secondary trends shaping the weights given to the identified variables. The variables were then assessed based on their role in enhancing or weakening resilience, creating fragility, and strengthening the agility of Palestinians to adapt to changing situations. The identified variables have been assessed with the historical and contemporary context of Palestine in mind.

Assumptions & Suppositions Guiding the Analysis

The researchers define the key term *resilience* as *decent life in the context of the struggle for freedom and independence*.

With this in mind, researchers identified three risks and related suppositions the scenarios relied upon:

- **Risk 1:** The ambiguity of the nature and extent of the implications of President Trump's Deal of the Century as well as Israel's potential decision to implement its annexation plans or parts thereof.

Supposition: The annexation plan will be implemented wholly or partially, one way or the other.

- **Risk 2:** The duration and nature of the Covid-19 crisis and its social, economic, and political ramifications.

Supposition: The crisis and its ramifications will continue for numerous years.

- **Risk 3:** The ongoing effects of the Palestinian division and its negative reflections on the future of Palestinian resilience.

Supposition: The division will continue and its negative repercussions will become more pronounced in regard to the status of Palestinian resilience.

Other relevant premises the study based its analysis on include:

- The next five years are critical in defining the future of the Palestinian cause.
- The growth and expansion of Arab-Israeli relations, including normalisation, will have a negative effect on the future of Palestinian resilience.
- The work of President Joe Biden administration may create a new trajectory for Palestinian-Israeli relations.
- Internal Israeli affairs and the nature of domestic politics in Israel will have a direct effect on the Palestinian people.
- The economic and social repercussions of the political crisis of Palestine will lead to a continued decline of financial support for the Palestinian people.
- The changes in Iran's regional role will redefine international and regional relations and potentially result in the reprioritisation of the Palestinian cause.

Why Focus on Future Scenarios

Societies that lack a vision for the future quickly find external players steering their growth and development. In order to maintain a hold on the future of Palestine, knowledge on the potential future trajectories and the likelihood of forecasted scenarios is a fundamental pillar of stability.

Before diving into the scenarios identified as part of the research project, it is vital to distinguish the difference between drafting predictions and building scenarios. While predictions rely on available information and an accurate understanding of factors influencing the assessed reality, building scenarios takes the available predictions and assesses them by analysing outcomes. Predictions thus rely on mathematical approaches commonly used to build relations between identified variables and the examined reality. Scenarios on the other hand call for qualitative and quantitative techniques and an understanding of the interlinkages between the information and data gathered.¹

Scenarios as a tool to support decision-making have become widely accepted among politicians and military personnel. The approach relies on creative, realistic thinking combining the possible with the probable, refined with a logical analysis guided by a finely chosen set of parameters. The scenarios presented in this document are based on extensive research and paint a broad spectrum of potential outcomes. These outcomes range between scenarios of strengthened resilience and collapse and chaos.

Future Scenarios in the Palestinian Context

Scenario forecasting is a key tool for future studies.² Scenario-building enables decision-makers to derive expected outcomes on a systems-level, based on a set of indicators and predicted events or developments. The scenarios drafted through this method are then supported by an analysis answering the *whys* and *hows* related to the likelihood of the identified scenarios, coupled with intersectional overviews of related trends, time sequences, and their respective relations.³

Rapid changes and local, regional, and international variables influencing Palestine have until now resulted in only vague future visions. Knowing the complexity and interrelated nature of factors defining the future, the exercise of building scenarios for Palestine is all but easy. Despite the known complexities, creating refined scenarios can assist in:

- Drawing attention to societal challenges and mobilising relevant actors to address the identified issues;

1 Scenario forecasting, otexts: <https://bit.ly/3tFBsi6>

2 Ibid.

3 Political stability - Country rankings, The Global Economy: <https://bit.ly/2PiF4b0>

- Determining variables affecting these conditions and analysing interlinkages between different variables;
- Identifying mental and political motivations as well as innovative openings enabling the creation of a new system of knowledge with the potential of contributing to Palestinian resilience;
- Supporting decision-making processes with scholarly, timely, and realistic knowledge.

The Concept of Palestinian Resilience

The Arabic word *Somoud* translates into steadfastness, perseverance, and resilience. It is a term that came to denote an ideological approach and political strategy coined in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War and has defined Palestinian resistance to the occupation ever since. Today, more than half a century later, the innovative use of resilience in Palestinian policy-making is increasingly called upon.

In its modern use, the concept of resilience denotes unity and the collective, national project seeking to preserve the identity, culture, and characteristics of Palestine. Furthermore, resilience has a decisive role to play in achieving the goals of freedom, independence, and return for Palestinian communities wherever they may be. The concept thus forms a comprehensive system of social, political, and economic adaptability critical in enabling Palestinians to live on their land and defend their rights for self-determination and existence.

Palestinian resilience is critical for:

- Enhancing the ability of Palestinians to confront and manage internal and external pressures constructively;
- Supporting social, economic, and political cohesion among Palestinian people in the homeland and abroad despite geographical and political divisions;
- Supporting existential cohesion regardless of the disintegrating characteristics of the status quo and enabling a shift in the balances of power in favour of the Palestinians.

In this report, resilience is specifically used to denote a *decent life in the context of the struggle for freedom and independence*.

System of Knowledge on the Status of Palestinian Society

The logical framework utilised to investigate factors defining the future of Palestinian society focuses on economic, social, political, technological, environmental, and legal variables. As exploring each variable, the researchers sought to answer the question: *What does the future of Palestinian resilience look like and why?*

Political Indicator

Political indicators are the most complex and decisive factors defining resilience in Palestine. At the heart of these complexities lies the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its current role and mandate. The PA was originally established to act as the interim entity leading Palestine towards statehood. However, the policies set forth by Israel coupled with a host of other ramifications, transformed the means to an end. As it stands, the PA has become a hindrance to the formation of a political and democratic entity capable of transforming into a state.

Different schools of thought exist in regards to the future of the PA. Approaches include calls to dissolve the PA, demands to adjust the forms and functions of the authority, and initiatives to declare a Palestinian State and the forming of a constituent assembly even while under occupation. Additional future scenarios range from the one-state solution to ideas regarding the integration of Palestine into Jordan. Amidst these possible outcomes, the continuation of the status quo remains a realistic alternative too.

Despite the broad range of conceivable trajectories for Palestine, room for political manoeuvres remains limited. The depth of the political crisis in Palestine is best depicted through:

- The lacklustre image of the PLO in terms of social relevance;
- The weakness of Palestinian political parties worsened by internal disputes;
- The political, geographic, and structural division of society;
- The lack of initiatives and leadership to mobilise political change;
- The monopolisation and division of power to Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip;
- The ineffectiveness of institutions representing the diaspora;
- The decline of moral and material support for the PA, especially following the Arab Spring;

- The weakening of the Palestinian issue as an Arab and a global priority;
- The destructive impact of the Covid-19 crisis in terms of the political, economic, and social development of Palestinian society.

The Worldwide Governance Institute (WGI) measures political stability from a scale of +2.5 to -2.5 with the former representing good governance and stability and the latter instability. In the latest WGI assessment, Palestine scored -1.74, whereas 20 years ago the scoring stood at -1.55. When it comes to assessments on democracy, the index was 3.89 out of 10.

These two indicators clearly reveal that Palestine is transgressing away from resilience. The status quo and the trends related to it is a tinderbox with the potential of igniting chaos and violence. These volatilities are exacerbated by existing conflicts within the Fatah movement caused by the need to maintain political power within a single party, resulting in the inability to reach constructive solutions. This has led to the regression of democratic structures and the absence of a legislative council in Palestine.

Existing vulnerabilities have been further deepened by the political ramifications of Covid-19 and the measures taken to address the pandemic – resulting in an abuse of power by the ruling elite. The misuse of legislative tools made visible through the policy responses to Covid-19 brought the totalitarian nature of the current political system into light. The un-democratic structures of the political establishment have been able to cement themselves into Palestinian decision-making due to the longstanding absence of true democracy, political parties, and social partnerships in Palestine. This establishment is made up of segments of the governing political party making the bridging of the political divide a pressing necessity, yet a complex goal to reach.

In addition to the centralisation of power, the PA has taken over the public space and expanded its rule to the private sector leading to the diminishing of trust between the political system and the greater society. With no significant developments speaking of change, this trend is deepening in the form of gradual regressions to public freedom in all aspects.

It is thus clear that the political division between Hamas and Fatah is the most influential factor weakening the political leverage of Palestine and the mandates of Palestinian institutions. The domestic division has created a political status quo defined by a lack of trust in the political system, weak social and economic conditions, continuous threats to public order, extreme polarisation, ineffective diplomacy, and significant deviations from the goal of the struggle for freedom and justice for Palestine.

Economic Indicator

Palestinian economy continues to be restricted by:

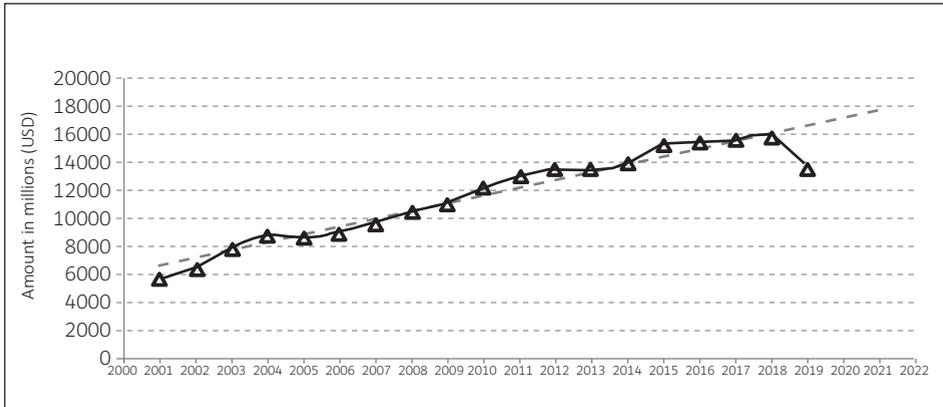
- The Protocol on Economic Relations also known as the Paris Protocol;
- The brain drain of young talent to more lucrative employment opportunities abroad;
- The concentration of investment in the construction sector stifling diversified growth;
- The disproportionate economic dominance of the private sector and commercial as well as service-based activities leading to dependencies on the Israeli economy;
- The ever-expanding Israeli settlements.

The economic challenges faced by Palestine are directly linked to Israel's control over land and water – the most fundamental natural resources of Palestine. According to figures from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) from 2019, Israel has confiscated 40% of the land of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The figure is the outcome of land-grabs that have taken place since 1967 by means including declaring territories state land or military zones, taking possession of properties by claims of absentee, or the claiming of land under the pretext of the public interest.

In addition to existing vulnerabilities, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the Palestinian economy. According to figures from the PCBS presented in Figure 1, the expected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2020 was 16.1 billion dollars. The pandemic resulted in a drastic drop to 13.6 billion dollars. By the end of the year, Palestine recorded a 2.5 billion dollar fall in its GDP when compared to the previous year. As it stands, the 2020 GDP represents that of 2015.

Figure 1: GDP of Palestine from 2000-2020.

Source: PCBS



Economic challenges have had their reflections on the macro-level too. Palestine witnessed an increase in poverty rates from 29% in 2017 to 31% in 2018, and when zooming in on the Gaza Strip only, the poverty rate rose to 52% during the same period. These developments have been accompanied by a decrease in the level of foreign investment in Palestine. Despite a decrease, foreign investments still exceed those made by Palestinians themselves, and in 2018, the balances of foreign investment totalled 2.7 billion dollars, while the balances of direct investment by Palestinians abroad stood at 347 million dollars.

During 2018, public debt represented 16% of the GDP of Palestine, and rose to 28% of GDP recorded in 2020.. During 2019, the share of consumption in the GDP rose to 114%, while the inflation rate reached 19%. Even if the GDP increased by 1.2% compared to 2018, the per capita share of gross income declined by 1.3%. This was due to the expansion of settlements, a decline in grants and foreign assistance, and the withholding of Palestinian clearinghouse funds by Israeli authorities. The PCBS expects a 4.5% decline in the per capita value of the GDP in 2020. This amounts to a decline of 1.2% in gross consumption and a decrease in the value of gross investment by 3.8%.

The Covid-19 crisis has mounted the weaknesses of the Palestinian economy and, for example, exacerbated the effects of the confiscation of clearinghouse funds in 2019 and the decline of international support and aid. The budget suffers from accumulated deficits, exacerbated by the fact that 75% of state revenues are subject to the authority of the occupier. It is thus no exaggeration to conclude that lockdowns, the suspension of internal movement, and the slowdown of production in all sectors have hit the economic foundation of Palestine hard. Meanwhile, the pandemic is all but contained, risking further deteriorations in the foreseeable future.

Research by Nasr Abdel Karim on the economic repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic reaffirmed that the pandemic caused the Palestinian GDP to plummet by 5 years, resulting in a loss of 2.5 billion dollars in 2020 compared to figures from 2019. The study found that the first quarter of 2020 witnessed an increase in internal and external governmental debt and that the suspension of activities across sectors raised the poverty of Palestine to be among the highest in the world, most notably so in the Gaza Strip. The study thus concluded that the pandemic has had and will continue to have enormously detrimental effects on the Palestinian economy.

The results of one of the baseline reports prepared as part of the project underscored the following as the overall trends in the Palestinian economy:

- A regression of the GDP in 2020 with losses amounting to 2.5 billion dollars, equivalent to 8.7 billion shekels, pushing the economy back to 2015 levels and causing significant growth in poverty rates across Palestine.
- A 24% increase in internal and external debt equalling 313 million shekels.
- Total or near-total economic paralysis with 74% economic activities and profit generating services in a standstill.
- A 9% decrease in exports and 11% decrease in imports.

The results of a survey conducted from May to June 2020 as part of the research project noted that out of the identified 72 factors undermining Palestinian resilience, 25% were economic. This means that Palestinian resilience rests on economic pillars and the strength of these pillars directly impacts the ability of Palestinians to pursue their struggle for freedom. Actions supporting the resilience of the Palestinian economy include the backing of entrepreneurial endeavours, small and innovative enterprises, and the agricultural sector by, for example, increasing their funding in the general budget.

Other resilience-building measures include limiting the prevalence and growth of monopolies and unleashing the potential of youth through economic policies encouraging new initiatives, such as start-ups. Furthermore, increased attention to the technological sector and the formation of incubators provide an opportunity to enhance economic resilience and tap into the full potential of the available human resources.

Social Indicators

The workshops convened in preparation for the drafting of the scenarios and ensuing research, indicated the following as the most substantial social risks threatening Palestinian resilience:

- Increased levels of poverty and unemployment coupled with a rise in crime rates;
- The migration of youth and fresh graduates;
- Growth of tribalism, regionalism, and other forms of allegiances based on secondary identities;
- Declining role of the PLO factions in, for example, awareness building and the mobilisation of communities;
- Perceptions of unfair hiring processes and employment opportunities;
- Discrimination of Palestinians living in the 1948 territories;
- Exclusion of Palestinians from the job markets in Lebanon;
- The relocation of Palestinian families in Syria.

Palestinian communities generally share common characteristics with each other, be they living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or in the diaspora, especially in Lebanon and Syria. These similarities include a young demographic and high rates of education. Despite these strengths, Palestinian communities share grave vulnerabilities, namely high unemployment and poverty rates, mounted by high population densities.

According to the PCBS, the global community of 13.4 million Palestinians are spread across the region in the following manner:

- 6.64 million live in historic Palestine out of which
- 1.6 million in the territories occupied in 1948;
- 3.02 million in the West Bank, including Jerusalem;
- 457 000 in Jerusalem with 65% residing in the areas of Jerusalem that were annexed by Israeli in 1967;
- 2.02 million in the Gaza Strip.
- 6 million Palestinians are estimated to live in the diaspora.

Palestinians thus constitute 49.7% of the population residing in historic Palestine, while Israelis represent 50.3%. Regardless of the even numbers, Israelis have access to more than 85% of the overall area of historic Palestine. The remaining 15% of land is all but immune to the authority of the occupier.

Huge disparities regarding population densities exist in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with 15% of the Palestinian population living in the governorate of Hebron (Al-Khalil) in the West Bank and 13.6% in the governorate of Gaza. Meanwhile, the Jordan Valley, a region representing 25% of the West Bank and 42% of its irrigated agricultural land, hosts only 1% of the residents of Palestine.

A worrying social indicator gaining traction is the rise in divorce rates and the decline in the percentage of marriages. This trend has been followed by a drop in birth rates from 45.9 per 1000 people in 2000, to 30.2 per 1000 people in 2019. In the 1948 territories, birth rates stood at 23.3. This denotes 7 birth less compared to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The figures contrast with Jordan, where latest figures on the population growth rate among Palestinians stood at 2.47%.

According to UNRWA, 2.3 million Palestinian refugees were registered in Jordan in 2019 with 17% living in refugee camps. In Syria, the number of registered refugees stood at 643 100 in 2019, compared to 631 111 in 2018. According to a study by the Fafo Foundation, 40% of the Palestinian residents of the refugee camps in Jordan are less than 15 years of age.

The ongoing war in Syria has resulted in rapid changes in the demographics of Palestinian refugees in the region with high levels of migration seen towards Europe, Canada, and the United States. In addition to migration, Syria is seeing high levels of internal movements – some of which forced.

As for Lebanon, the number of registered refugees stood at 533 800, with 51% residing in refugee camps. Data from PCBS reveals a sharp decline in the number of Palestinians in Lebanon, and emigration has been accelerated by restrictions imposed on immigrants regarding working conditions and the right to work put into effect in 2019. These measures have not only pushed Palestinians to emigrate but also caused severe social and economic damage for Palestinian communities in the region. The measures have resulted in the migration of Palestinian youth out of Lebanon, increasing the percentage of households headed by women to 17.5%.

Table 1: Distribution of Palestinians within historic Palestine and in the diaspora

Country	(%)
Occupied Palestinian territories	39.2
Jordan	27.2
(Arab states (especially Syria & Lebanon	16.2
Foreign states	11.2
Israel	5.7

The Interplay of Political, Social, and Economic and Factors

All listed political, social, and economic factors operate in an interplay with each other. The past years have seen this interplay manifest in the following manner:

- An increase in non-political violence throughout society.
- The results of a survey conducted by PCBS in 2019 revealed that one out of every three women (27%) was subject to some form of violence perpetrated by their husband. Out of the figure, 17.8% was physical, 56.6% psychological, and 8.8% sexual. As for non-married persons, the results showed that 39% of individuals aged 18-64 years were subject to psychological violence and 15.6% physical violence perpetrated by a family member.
- Despite the noted disparity in exposure to violence between male and female members of advanced age groups, the situation is reversed among children younger than 18 years, whether at the school or at home. According to research, male children under 11 are most exposed to violence by the person responsible for their care. 68% of male children in this age group were subject to physical violence during 2019, compared to 62% of females. Mothers were noted to be more violent against their children than fathers.
- The survey uncovered worrying results regarding violence in schools, particularly against male students. An estimation of 17% of children between the ages of 12-17 were exposed to physical violence by a teacher.
- According to work force surveys from 2019, 11% of Palestinian households are female headed. 12% of these are in the West Bank and 9% in the Gaza Strip.
- In 2019, the West Bank saw a rise in murder cases going up to 298.
- The divorce rate increased by 1.8% in 2019, reflecting deteriorating economic

and social conditions. In 2019, 3 216 divorces were registered in the Gaza Strip and 8 500 in the West Bank.

- The policy paper by Reema Nazzal written as part of the research project noted a rise in domestic violence in all forms during the pandemic when comparing recent statistics with those from 2019. The rise was noted to be due to numerous reasons, including the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the psychological, social, and economic well-being of Palestinians mounted by restrictions imposed on movement. These strains have been exacerbated by economic and health vulnerabilities and the challenges people have faced as searching for employment opportunities. The results of this pressure have taken the shape of outbursts of violence throughout society. This crisis has been exacerbated by lockdowns and restrictions imposed to movement pressuring victims who, in many cases, share the same household as the perpetrator. Resolving these tensions and ensuing negative cycles has turned out to be an unprecedented challenges due to the closure of Sharia courts, the complexities of entering women's shelters already subject to quarantine measures, and the challenges victims face as filing complaints or seeking consultations in-person and online due to the presence and influence of the perpetrators. In addition to all of the above, women are prone to prioritise the wellbeing and unity of their families over their own needs and personal safety. Consequently, the power of silence and silencing has surpassed that of laws protecting women from violence.
- In a report published in 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) stated that Palestine had the highest rate of unemployment globally, even when comparing to Asian and Arab nations, rising all the way up to 29%. According to the PCBS, the unemployment rate stood at 31% in 2019 and the unemployment rate among university graduates across specialisations averaged 56%. These figures represent pre-pandemic estimations. It is safe to assume that due to the measures put in place to curb the spread of the virus, unemployment rates and poverty levels have significantly increased.

Despite social indicators pointing in negative directions, the listed conditions can be reversed and transformed into pillars of Palestinian resilience. Such a change can be achieved by, for example:

- Enhancing networks between the Palestinian homeland and the diaspora;
- Mobilising the youth to harness their capacities for the national struggle;
- Activating the foundational elements of the collective Palestinian identity;
- Refining the educational curriculum to enhance resilience;
- Restoring the values of community work in order to address the needs of the most vulnerable and pave the way for strong Palestinian communities.

Technological Indicator

Results from the surveys and workshops exploring the trajectories of Palestinian resilience signify that technological opportunities have the potential of acting as significant springboards for Palestinian resilience due to the vast amounts of a qualified experts in the sector. More than 15 000 Palestinians possess professional certificates from technology, information systems, and online marketing providing a strong foundation for the enhancement of resilience. It is also worthwhile to note that more than 5000 Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip work remotely for foreign companies.

Opportunities to leverage this potential take the shape of developing software, artificial intelligence, and other technologies for both domestic and international use. Transforming Palestine into a hub of technological knowhow can enable considerable economic and social returns that support resilience and provide much needed professional opportunities to curb the current rates of emigration. On the other hand, it is vital to note that enhanced education opens doors for fresh graduates also abroad.

Supporting these trends and welcoming modern specialisations into Palestinian universities will greatly contribute to the ability of fresh graduates to find job opportunities matching their skills. Increased efficiency provided by remote work and technological advancements coupled with new, competitive areas of expertise will directly benefit the economic and social circumstances of Palestinians thus supporting resilience in the short- and long-term.

Environmental Indicator

The natural environment of Palestine is gravely shaped by the cumulative effects of the occupation. Israel's attacks on Palestine have fundamentally impacted existing natural resources and damaged the environmental map of Palestine and neighbouring Arab states resulting in accelerated environmental degeneration. Protecting the environment is thus an act of resisting the occupation.

A research paper by Akram Abu Amr titled 'Israeli Occupation and Environmental Deterioration in Palestine' examines the various forms of Israeli aggression on the environment and provides the following examples its effects:

- Levelling and confiscation of lands;
- Removal of vegetation;
- Sand theft;
- Dumping of wastewater polluting water sources, lands, and agricultural areas;
- Dumping of solid and toxic waste;

- Seizing of Palestinian groundwater;
- Deforestation;
- Disrupting of wildlife;
- Pollution of shores and water bodies.

As observing the occupiers conduct towards the nature and natural resources of Palestine, it is clear that the occupation is a threat to the wellbeing of environment. Out of these threats, Israeli settlements and their expansion rise above the rest. The colonialization and abuse of lands has rendered the possibility of a self-sufficient and stable state impossible, resulting in severe economic discrepancies due to the lack of control over natural resources. These financial vulnerabilities are taking a toll on social tensions too, knowing that 23% of Palestinians work in settlements.

The proliferation of more than 194 settlements around Palestinian cities has led to the degradation and partition of Palestine as an environmental entity. Such settlement hubs can be found in the Jordan Valley where they separate the valley from the rest of the West Bank and hinder access to the eastern banks of the Jordan River. Another example of such a division can be seen in the Ariel hub or Trans Samaria dividing the West Bank into two parts: a northern part including the governorates of Jenin, Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Nablus, and Toubas, and a southern part including the governorates of Jericho, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron. This division restricts the movement of people, animals, and vegetation leaving its mark on Palestinian biodiversity too.

The negative implications of the occupation on Palestinian wildlife have been coupled with the decline in the availability of quality water. The lack of water has also been exacerbated by sewage and sanitation problems and the severe challenges seen in the management of solid waste in the Gaza Strip. As population densities increase and the occupation deepens, these negative variables will expand their destructive impact. The environmental impacts of the policies of Israel thus represents the epitome of the occupation.

International Indicator

Various factors have resulted in the deprioritisation of the Palestinian issue from global geopolitical agendas. The inputs collected from the thematic workshops and elaborated on in the briefing paper by Mouin Rabbani underscore the following as the main reasons behind this shift in global priorities:

- The economic crisis cast in motion by the Covid-19 pandemic;
- New geopolitical alignments manifesting in tensions between China and the

United States as well as Iran and the United States;

- Conflicts over gas and natural resources in the Middle East.

Despite the headwind, Palestinian communities have the option and opportunity to utilize parallel international trends in support of Palestinian resilience. These trends include global political positions that reject the legacy of Trump's presidency and Israeli annexation plans as well signals from Arab and Islamic states rejecting normalisation with Israel. It is worth remembering the generally supportive stance of central European nations calling for the two-state solution. These calls are most notably voiced by France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, and are strengthened by European states, such as Luxembourg and Ireland, pressing for active steps to deter Israel from proceeding with annexations, coupled with clear measures put in place in case these plans are realised.

Going beyond Europe, China and Russia have vocalised their support for a fair settlement to the situation based on the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Global solidarity campaigns, particularly those taking shape within the realms of academia, are key elements boosting Palestinian resilience and strengthening political voices rejecting the deepening of the occupation. These global campaigns supported by favourable positions have the potential of manifesting in significant support for the Palestinian cause – as long as they are coupled with active, strategic Palestinian diplomacy and grassroots action.

In a paper by the future studies expert Walid Abdelhai titled 'The International Community and the Palestinian Issue', Abdelhai underscores the importance of international consensus on matters significant to Palestine, such as:

- The establishment of a Palestinian state on the borders of 1967 including Jerusalem;
- The rejection of Israeli colonies in the territories occupied since 1967;
- The right of Israel to securely exist within its recognised borders;
- The normalisation of Arab-Israeli relations as a necessary requisite for peace.

As long as there is no international consensus on the above, power-holders will continue to reject the demands for freedom and justice of the Palestinian movement. On the other hand, the lack of consensus also means that the international community will reject the use of force by Palestine and continues to favour negotiations as the means to reach a settlement.

Regardless of the leanings and preferences of the international community, the reality on the ground is changing at an accelerated pace. As Israel continues to expand its control over Palestinian territories and deepen the Judaization

of Jerusalem, Palestinian resilience is slowly stretched thinner and thinner. In essence, the international perspective is deeply contradictory: Palestinians have the right to establish a state, yet reality on the ground renders it impossible.

According to Abdelhai, the situation will eventually play out as a standoff between the international demand to establish a Palestinian state and the facts on the ground. This will lead to the re-enacting of national, regional, and international confrontations resembling those of the early days of the conflict.

With this in mind, one can expect that the variables related to the material – arms power – and moral – international law – characteristics of the conflict will eventually force a resolution to the question of Palestine. Indicators defining the developments expected to take place during the assessed timeframe underscore that the Arab and Palestinian side remains weak allowing Israel to push for a ‘neighbouring countries first’ approach to negotiations. Israel is thus expected to neutralise existing alternative proposals while benefitting from the ongoing exhaustive political turmoil draining the efforts of Arab and Palestinian actors.

Arab Indicator

Out of all the factors threatening the resilience of the Palestinian cause, recent Arab-Israeli convergences stand out as extremely worrying features. The growing list of Arab countries that have normalised relations with Israel represents the slow but certain cracking and crumbling of the ‘Arab Wall’ or the wall of support from Arab nations the Palestinians rely on in the international sphere. This deterioration is especially noteworthy in regards to Arab Gulf states, which have been known to provide financial support for Palestine but are fostering relations with Israel at an increasing speed.

2020 turned out to be a decisive year for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Israel. First clear indicators of change can be traced back to 2017, to the visit of former US President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia, followed by his visit to Israel, potentially reflecting the gradual, yet silent, expansion of Gulf-Israeli relations. These relations have since expanded to a number of sectors, manifesting in, for example, Saudi academics with ties to Saudi security apparatuses making appearances in Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) participating in military exercises with Israel and other allies. The first of these exercises took place in Greece in 2017 and then in 2021, following the normalisation of relations in 2020.

The building up of security collaborations between the UAE and Israel has been in the making for years with Israel opening a diplomatic office in Abu Dhabi in 2015 as part of the International Renewable Energy Agency. By 2017, Bloomberg Businessweek reported that the office had the capacity to work as a full-blown embassy. By 2020, the UAE had signed a peace agreement with Israel and in January 2021, the embassy was ready to open its doors officially.

In addition to the secret Saudi-Israeli meetings that have taken place in the course of the years, efforts to build relations with Arab counterparts have been supported by social media campaigns implemented by the department of communications at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. Since 2013, Israel has sought to create 'virtual embassies' in every Arab Gulf state by harnessing social media as its tool. These virtual embassies have been run by Yigal Palmor, the former spokesman of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and have provided channels for the fostering of trade relations via partnerships and third parties. These acts have grown the volume of trade to approximately half a billion dollars annually, according to the estimates of Yitzhak Gal, professor of political economy at Tel Aviv University. According to statistical information from Israeli sources, the volume of trade between Israel and its main Arab economic partners grew by 10% between 2017-2018, yet decreased by 5.6% between 2018-2019.

Table 2 details the volume of Arab-Israeli trade in 2018-2019. Since 2019, Bahrain, Morocco, UAE, and Sudan have all normalised relations with Israel raising the number of Arab nations with direct or indirect relations with Israel to 16. As Arab nations have built their relations to Israel, financial support to Palestine from the Gulf has become scarcer and scarcer. In a session organised for the ministers of foreign affairs representing Arab League nations in September 2020, the Arab League refused to condemn normalisation. This was noted as a direct approval for the growing tendency to formalise relations between Arab nations and Israel.

Table 2: Israeli trade with Arab states in 2018-2019 in millions (USD)

Source: Palestinian Strategic Report 2018-2019, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, Beirut, p. 30.

The report has been downloaded as taken from the Israeli Central Department of Statistics.

State	Israeli export		Israeli imports	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Egypt	112.1	109	72.2	75.1
Jordan	71.5	99.8	346	283
Morocco	4.9	3.8	8	9.8

As an increasing number of nations normalise relations with Israel, the urgency to establish pathways against and away from the plan laid out in the Deal of the Century put forth by former US President Trump has grown. This demand is gaining momentum especially due to the plight of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the weak cohesion and resilience of the Palestinian people as a whole.

The need for clear action plans and strategic steps was echoed in a seminar organized by the Al-Zaytouna Center in Beirut in 2019, where the necessity of reaching consensus and strengthening the internal and external Palestinian bond

was underscored on multiple occasions. Despite the destructive nature of the Deal of the Century, the urgency to act triggered by the proposal may help rectify the Arab position and induce genuine collaboration to confront the attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause. Popular support, resistance from a set of Arab nations towards normalisation, and agendas shared by political parties, nations, parliamentarians, and academics from fellow Arab nations are all pillars supporting the Palestinian cause and Palestine's fight for justice and liberty.

Israeli Indicator

To a certain extent, the 2019 elections in Israel represented a referendum for Netanyahu's continuation as prime minister – a post he had held since 2009. The elections resulted in a clear win for the extreme right, entrenching right-leaning politics in Israeli decision-making for the coming years. None of the major candidates featured a peace process with the Palestinians as a major component of their election campaigns, and as witnessing Israeli society slide to the far end of the right-wing spectrum, it is increasingly clear that establishing an independent Palestinian state in the near to long-term is all but easy.

A research paper 'Israeli Visions to Solve the Conflict' authored by Razi Nabulsi shows that despite the rise in right-wing politics and Israel benefiting from the ramifications of the Arab Spring, the political landscape of Israel can be harnessed for the benefit of Palestinian resilience too. This is particularly seen in the acts of racism perpetrated against Palestinians living in the 1948 territories, coupled with the deeply racist, if not fascist, conduct of settlers towards Palestinians in the West Bank, and the ever-worsening living conditions in the Gaza Strip exacerbated by the blockade and repeated Israeli military assaults. These negative trends are increasingly eating the international support Israel has relied upon and are thus expanding global solidarity with Palestine.

The deeply disturbing status quo can thus be explored and refuted by new historians and those opposing Zionism and racism, such as Ilan Pappé. These actors have the opportunity of becoming significant international influencers addressing the Israeli narrative and holding it accountable. These voices can and should be amplified by Palestinian research centres and think tanks as they themselves work to repudiate the Israeli narrative and building Palestinian resilience through knowledge creation.

According to Walid Abdelhai and his work titled 'Holes in the Spider's Web: Weaknesses in the Israeli Entity', Israel increasingly suffers from challenges such as:

- The loss of strategic depth due to restricted geographic space;
- Demographic imbalances;
- Anxiety regarding changes in the positions of major powers towards Israel;

- Repercussions from changes in regional power-balances;
- The availability of sophisticated security and high-end technology also in small organizations;
- The end of Israel nuclear monopole in the Middle East;
- The fear of repercussions of globalisation;
- Increasing class disparities in society;
- The disappearance of the traditional military occupation model globally;
- The absence of charismatic leaders;
- An increase in corruption;
- Sensitivity relating to the human losses in wars;
- Concern about the global image of Israel and Jews;
- The religious status of Jerusalem;
- Low levels of political stability.

According to Abdelhai, these vulnerabilities or holes in the spider's web wait to be exploited.

These weaknesses are also noted in the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). According to the most recent figures, political stability in Israel was noted to be -0.88 on a scale of +2.5 to -2.5. Israel was thus ranked 161st out of 195 countries in terms of stability. In terms of civil freedoms, Israel landed at 101 from 167 countries with an average of 5.88 out of 10. In terms of civil violence, Israel scored 4 points on a scale of 7, with 7 representing the highest level of civil violence.

The Future of Palestinian Resilience

Outlook or future study methods were deployed in order to generate three possible outcomes for the future of Palestine and support decision-makers in drafting and implementing policies enabling the building of resilience in Palestine. The tools used in the process included the Delphi Method, the Cross Impact Matrix, and the Futures Wheel Method.

The most significant factor defining the scenarios and their unfolding is the domestic division of Palestine into Fatah ruled West Bank and Hamas ruled Gaza Strip. The division has direct economic, social, and political implications interlinked with local, regional, and international dynamics. If the situation deteriorates, for example, in the case of decreased assistance, divisions are thus expected to deepen. Such negative trajectories are already seen in the dwindling of funding streams for the PA, Hamas, and civil society organizations eating away the foundations for resilience in Palestine.

One of the manifestations of the decline in resilience, funding, and political unity is seen in the increased levels of emigration, especially among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and refugees in Lebanon. In 2018, more than 30 000 individuals emigrated from Gaza, of which a third had a graduate degree. Thousands of Palestinians are known to have left Lebanon and Syria pushed and pulled by the same reasons. Emigration is not only a problem regarding brain drain as high levels of emigration will weaken Palestinian claims for the right of return and pave way for resettlement schemes.

Furthermore, the internal political division and decline of overall resilience have been noted to have given rise to the influence of tribalism within the Palestinian society. As the PA and Hamas struggle to address social and economic concerns faced by Palestinians, the effects of the division are expected to manifest in an increasingly fragile society both in financial and political terms.

As identifying underlying vulnerabilities, the project also noted elements of strength in Palestinian society. Factors rising above the rest included the legitimacy of the Palestinian cause and the sharp decline of the global reputation and image of Israel. The research leading to the drafting of the scenarios revealed that the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) campaign and criticism of Israeli politics act as levers strengthening solidarity both within Palestinian communities as well as the supporters of Palestine beyond the region. This solidarity is among the foundational elements of the Unity & Enhanced Resilience Scenario.

The second cycle of the futures wheel exercise noted that the expansion of the occupation will leave Israel increasingly isolated adding fuel to boycott campaigns. This projection is not without complexities and one can expect international pushback opposing the isolation of Israeli, especially in light of the increased normalisation of relations between Arab states and Israel.

When scrutinising the expected effects of the expansion of settlements and the further annexation of land through the future wheels methodology, it is apparent that the final consequence of the negative trajectory is the collapse of the PA plummeting Palestine into a state of chaos and collapse. If this case is to realise, Israel has the potential of establishing new leadership structure for Palestine in order to manage and maintain the occupation. An alternative trajectory for a state of collapse and chaos is a popular intifada leading to the creation of new, unified leadership and new centres or forms of leadership.

The outlook and future study methods applied to assess resilience in Palestine identified the following three scenarios as potential outcomes for Palestine:

1. **Status Quo:** Continued division, disunity, and fragility of Palestinian society
2. **Collapse & Chaos:** A downfall of the pillars of Palestinian society leading to a descent into chaos
3. **Unity & Enhanced Resilience:** A move towards growing unity and enhanced resilience in Palestinian society

1. Status Quo

Continued Division, Disunity, and Fragility of Palestinian Society

The Status Quo Scenario is a reflection of the existing state of affairs and a product of political circumstances echoing the economic and social conditions of Palestine. The scenario is defined by a set of vulnerabilities manifesting in political, socio-economic, and international fragilities.

Political Fragility

The factors and fragilities directly influencing the longevity and likelihood of the Status Quo Scenario are political by nature. The most significant of the existing political variables is the divide between Fatah and Hamas. Even if political by nature, this division has social and economic implications too taking the form of, for example, high poverty and unemployment rates as well as violence and instability within Palestinian society. The division shakes the structures of Palestinian society and has its role to play in the continuation of the physical separation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The implications of the divide are further deepened by the weakness of the reputation and capabilities of Palestinian political factions and parties, mounted by the reluctance of the youth to participate in political decision-making. The stagnated status quo is also hindered by the fragility of the PLO, which is no longer

able to initiate action to unifying the political system.

The feeble status of the PLO has led to the inability to utilise the capabilities and the potentially positive role of the Palestinian diaspora, including labour unions, associations, and communities. In the course of the years, the diaspora has begun to feel that the PLO is incapable of acting as a foothold to further Palestinian action in Arab and international arenas. As a result, political divisions have begun to replicate in Palestinian communities, ranging from Latin America to Europe.

Furthermore, the division has led to negative trends regarding secondary political variables such as a decline in the financial and political support from Arab nations and the spreading of political normalisation processes between Arab nations and Israel. These trends have also had an effect on international and regional polarisations with Qatar and Turkey siding with Hamas, whilst Egypt and Jordan taking the side of Fatah. The internal division and its impacts on the region directly benefit Israel's ability to render Palestine weaker than what it actually is.

In addition to alliances stretching beyond Palestine, the division has damaged the ability of Palestinians living in the 1948 territories to influence internal politics within Israel, despite the alignments enabled by the Joint Arab List. The coordination of Palestinian politics within the 1948 territories has the potential of becoming a pillar supporting Palestinian resilience within the territories as well as in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

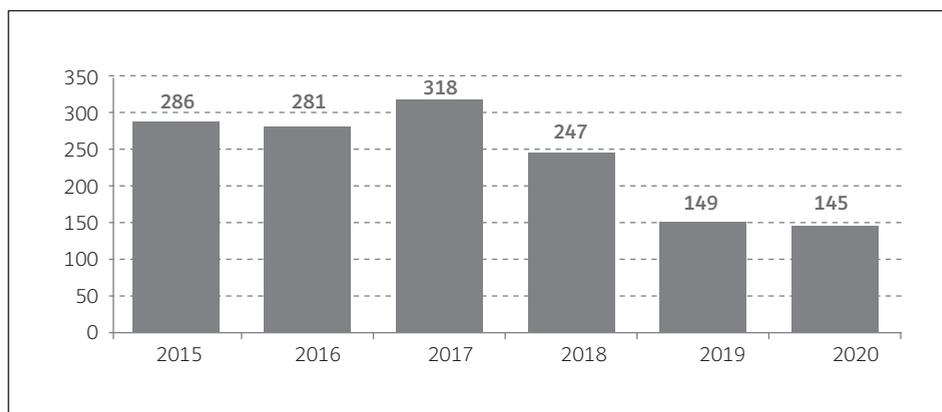
Socio-economic Fragility

Before diving into the negative effects of the internal division of Palestine, it is critical to note that the occupying power benefits from the status quo and the isolation and blockade of Gaza. The state of affairs enables Israel to, for example, justify the blockade of Gaza due to security reasons and the absence of a legitimate political system governing the strip.

Despite such claims, research and literature note that the blockade has had drastic negative implications on the economic and social conditions in Gaza, leading to a rise in poverty, unemployment, and emigration rates, not to mention the high levels of violence seen on the strip. These conditions render Palestinian society more fragile and vulnerable to shocks.

Figure 2: Social assistance provided by the Palestinian Authority in the first quarter from 2015 to 2020.
The figures are in millions of shekels.

Source: Calculations by researcher Nasr Abdel Karim in his reference paper on the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic based on the monthly and quarterly reports from the Palestinian Ministry of Finance.



Based on reports from the Ministry of Finance, families living in poverty have not received an increase in their disbursement despite the detrimental effects of the Covid-19 crisis. Increases in social support have taken place in several countries alleviating the strains felt in vulnerable households due to the crisis. The lack of enhanced support is expected to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities in Palestine even further. The domestic revenues of the first quarter of 2020 were around 3.34 million shekels, meaning that the gross revenues of the Palestinian government saw no change when comparing to pre-Covid-19 figures.⁴

In comparison to previous years, the amount of social assistance provided by the government totalled 145 million shekels in the first quarter of 2020, representing a lower level of disbursements than seen in previous years. For unemployment relief specifically, the Palestinian government spent 52 million shekels in the first quarter of 2020, amounting to almost the same expenditure as in past years. Consequently, there was no increase in governmental expenditure on unemployment support, despite the emergency budget and the global consensus on the significance of financial support in light of the Covid-19 crisis. It is key to note that financial support for the most vulnerable is a priority both as a measure alleviating the burden of poor families as well as an approach increasing the movement of cash in the markets.

⁴ The first quarter revenues of 2020 were approximately 3.367 million shekels, which is an increase of 38% compared to the revenues of the same timeframe in 2019. However, due to the invalidity of the comparison, and the need to refer to the average of the same timeframe in the last three years, it can be stated that there is no change in the gross revenues of the Palestinian government in the first quarter of 2020.

The decline of services provided by local government entities has had repercussions on Palestinian society, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The negative implications of the decline have been seen in various fields, ranging from the provision of health services to those related to waste management. These deteriorations have been coupled with a regression in the quality of services provided by UNRWA for Palestinian refugees, both in the homeland and for those living in the diaspora.

The decline of services has reflected UNRWA's downsizing policy enacted since 2014 featuring the closing or merging of schools, increasing the numbers of students in classrooms, laying off 13% of employees – most of whom doctors – as well as transferring 57% of employees to part-time work and transforming the rest into contractors with contracts ending by 2020. Additionally, Palestinian communities have been hit with the suspension of the summer games that target Palestinian refugee children in all areas and a cancellation of the emergency relief (“coupon”) program. The emergency relief program benefited a large number of refugees and has now been replaced with a system for basic food commodities.

International & Regional Fragilities

The pressure exerted by the previous US administration to implement the Deal of the Century prompted Arab states to scale back their financial support for the Palestinian people. Despite the change in administration, support has not returned to pre-Trump levels. The scaling down of funding has been intensified through the punitive measures implemented by Israel and the global shift in attention to domestic politics and the management of the Covid-19 crisis.

These factors have created fragilities that render the Palestinian society and the PA more malleable to accepting the Deal of the Century, especially if ongoing dynamics continue and deepen. Accepting the deal might be a natural outcome for the state of paralysis Palestinian politics finds itself in, accompanied by the lack of a foreseeable peaceful solution to the occupation and the decline of interest from the international community to facilitate a just solution to the question of Palestine.

The research conducted as drafting the scenarios demonstrated the accuracy of the Status Quo Scenario and highlighted the likely continuation of this scenario, be it in regards to the division, the degradation of economic and social conditions, the weakening of the Arab position, or the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic in Palestine or across the globe. The vulnerabilities related to the status quo coupled with the likelihood of its continuation, risk resulting in an even worse scenario marked by the collapse of the PA and the social disintegration of Palestinian society.

Despite the largely negative outlook, the Status Quo Scenario presents

opportunities for change. These elements include a deadlock or the significant plummeting of the economic and social situation leading to an outburst or an upheaval threatening the role and legitimacy of both Hamas and Fatah. This in turn could result in the rise of alternative forms of leadership or greater unity. The bridging of the division could also take the form of facilitating the creation of a government based on consensus or the establishment of a leadership framework supported by democratic elections. Despite the positive potential of the scenario, these trajectories are shadowed by the risk of the implementation of Israel's annexation plans.

The realisation of a low-probability, high-impact event occurring in the form of a popular uprising is not off the table. The situation in Palestine exists within the broader Arab context which is seeing the slow dwindling of the middle class and the expansion of populations living in poverty and suffering from unemployment. Furthermore, existing Arab and international tensions resulting from neoliberal approaches, coupled with weak economic and social conditions in the Arab world, may create the necessary momentum for a Palestinian uprising. Such an uprising could potentially fuel further demands for justice and sovereignty across the region pivoting the question of Palestine to the forefront of global agendas.

Another event that may open new horizons for the Palestinian political system, is the absence of President Mahmoud Abbas from the political arena. This could present the possibility of Fatah leaders opening up to Hamas in an attempt to reach an agreement regarding the coordination and management of the post-presidential phase. However, the consequences of the absence of Abbas, be it sudden or gradual, may backfire and manifest in internal fighting over succession within the Fatah movement, fuelled by Israeli, regional, and international interventions increasing polarisation, internal strife, and chaos. An international intervention could also result in attempts to impose a new Palestinian leader or a form of leadership willing to accept the annexation plan. Developments like this would push Palestine into a hazardous state risking the cohesion of the political and social landscape.

With these circumstances in mind, elections open a small window of hope for national unity and the reformation of the political ecosystem of Palestine.

Scenario Probability

The realisation of the Status Quo Scenario is defined by the following probabilities:

- The Palestinian political condition is expected to maintain the known status quo characterised by stagnation and inaction. This inertia is expected to pave the way for the further deterioration of political, social, and economic conditions especially in light of the normalisation of relations between Arab nations and Israel, the expansion of settlements, the isolation of the Gaza

Strip, the long-term repercussions of the Arab Spring, and the ongoing disputes over natural resources.

- Economic and social conditions are expected to deteriorate due to increasing pressures resulting from unemployment, especially among fresh graduates. Significant financial issues are further amplified by the Covid-19 crisis.
- The weakening of the performance and conduct of the PA is slowly crumbling the foundations of public order and paving the way for tribalism and regionalism.
- The conditions in Syria and Lebanon are expected to remain on the path of deterioration, resulting in the emigration of Palestinians residing in these regions. The PLO is not expected to strengthen and its political presence in Syria, Lebanon, and the diaspora is unlikely to grow.
- The decline of political networks and connections between Palestinians living in the 1948 territories, the occupied 1967 territories, and in the diaspora is expected to continue due to the weaknesses of the PLO. These fragilities are also stifling the ability of Palestinian political leaders to deal with possible alternative leadership bodies.

With the vulnerabilities of Palestine in mind, the Status Quo Scenario represents the best-case scenario for Palestine. The scenario assumes a gradual decline in resilience-maintaining and -building variables. Knowing the status quo, a slow decline comes with a pinch of hope, whilst a trajectory marked by rapid deterioration would plummet Palestine into a state of chaos and collapse.

If the decline is accelerated, the following secondary scenarios risk manifesting:

- Gulf countries, Israel, and the United States financially supporting the creation of alternative leaders further exhausting Palestinian society and tilting power balances.
- Societal and political chaos enabling substantial Israeli interventions dividing the West Bank into cantons in which local authorities are reduced into institutions providing administrative services.
- The flaring of Palestinian political infighting involving regional and international forces- yet with strong leanings towards a given side or actor.

The probability of these secondary scenarios would have significantly increased if Netanyahu, Trump, or both would have won their respective elections. This would have led to the almost certain rolling out of the Deal of the Century, annexation plans, and attempts to alter Palestinian leadership. President Biden represents an opportunity to revert back to the so-called path of peace, yet as of now, the

president remains immersed in internal American affairs and working on healing the wounds of Trump's presidency. For what is known, Biden has expressed his support for the two-state solution, his rejection of annexation plans, and his will to resume American assistance to the PA, the Palestinians, and UNRWA. Discussions on opening an American consulate in East Jerusalem and reopening the PLO office in Washington DC have also been voiced. These signs speak of the potential of resuming political processes similar to those adopted by the former Obama administration. These signs speak of a desire to maintain the status quo as long as possible.

2. Collapse & Chaos

A Downfall of the Pillars of Palestinian Society Leading to a Descent into Chaos

The Collapse & Chaos Scenario can be seen as one of the potential results of the Status Quo Scenario if the risks and vulnerabilities of the first scenario manifest. These risks include political, economic, social, regional, and international catalysts that can result in a collapse and ensuing chaos within Palestinian society.

Political Catalysts

The political landscape of Palestine might be catalysed into turmoil if political risks associated with the status quo grow. These risks include:

- A deepened political divide within Palestine;
- An increased number of Arab and Muslim states normalising relations with Israel;
- The declining role of the PLO;
- Other negative changes in political conditions.

Even though large numbers of Palestinians regard the PA as an accomplishment, the political and geographical division of the authority renders it weak. The division holds in itself the potential of the permanent separation of the Gaza Strip and the emergence of a domestic entity bolstered by the Gulf States, Israel, and the USA. A division like this could take place if Hamas is forced to change its conduct and Egypt is pushed to support the political divide. Economic incentives with the potential of tilting neighbour relations include the Saudi proposal of establishing a new city (NEOM) on the Red Sea.

Other variables risking the significant weakening of the PA and accelerating

disruptions in political stability in the West Bank include:

- The implementation of annexation plans;
- The expansion of settlement activities;
- Israel's expansion of control over natural resources;
- The worsening of economic and social conditions;
- Increased isolation of geographical areas;
- The accelerated Judaization of Jerusalem.

These trajectories may be accompanied by negative factors playing out in the regional sphere further weakening the implementation of Palestinian political decisions, whether at the international level led by the PLO or the domestic level led by the PA. These factors include:

- The displacement of refugees, especially from Lebanon and Jordan due to political and economic pressure;
- The weakening of opposition to annexation plans and Judaization schemes;
- The liquidation of the rights of refugees and Palestinians as a whole.

In the case of the total dissolving of the PA, all facets of Palestine will be affected – including Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The worst-case scenario is characterised by the disappearance of public funding rendering domestic authorities unable to fulfil their mandates. This would lead to the rupture of the social fabric of Palestine.

Economic and Social Catalysts

All studies, reference papers, surveys, and quantitative and qualitative variables point towards a regression in social solidarity in Palestine. The same outcomes allude to increased fragmentation of the Palestinian identity, especially in regards to the geographical divisions between Gaza, the West Bank, the 1948 territories, and the diaspora. The outcomes of this fragmentation take the shape of declining youth participation in political and economic life, increasing levels of violence in homes and schools, diminishing awareness of Palestinian identity, and a decline in the attempts of political parties to mobilize communities around the Palestinian cause. Other factors leading to the crumbling of social solidarity include:

- Emigration of the youth;
- Absence of collective cultural activities for Palestinians across the region;
- High levels of domestic violence directed towards women and girls;

- Rise of secondary identities existing parallel or above the collective Palestinian identity;
- High and increasing levels of unemployment among young professionals;
- Decreasing public freedoms;
- Absence of social justice;
- Lack of a shared strategy and action plan to integrate civil society organisations into Palestinian society.

According to the World Bank, the Palestinian economy shrank with 11.5% in 2020. The regression has resulted in an even more fragile economy that continues to suffer from lockdown measures and the stagnation of production in various sectors. This stagnation is deepened by the low levels of financial incentives, liquidity injection, and external lending.

A recent statement from the Red Cross underscored the destructive force of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Middle East by estimating that the pandemic and related policy measures risk destroying the lives of millions already struggling to survive in conflict zones.

Closures and quarantines have increased the economic vulnerability of Palestinian households due to the dwindling of income streams, the closure of production, and the challenges Palestinian migrant workers have faced in returning to their workplaces abroad – or even to their workplaces in Israeli settlements or the 1948 territories. The effects of unemployment are expected to manifest in the rise of consumer good prices due to the disruptions seen in value chains. Existing vulnerabilities are thus expected to mount, with the pandemic creating a new group of impoverished Palestinians.

According to estimates by the PCBS, 60% of the workforce employed in the informal economy will lose their jobs as a result of lockdown measures. Knowing this, it is worthwhile to note that 29% of Palestinians live below the poverty line, of whom 39% suffer from food insecurity, half of which extreme food insecurity. In the absence of support, severe income losses will push many vulnerable households into poverty. According to assessments made available by the PA, measures put in place to curb the spread of Covid-19 caused 100 000 Palestinians to fall into poverty during 2020.

Women are known to be particularly exposed to the risk of poverty. The growth of poverty amidst Palestinian society is also expected to have an impact on the rising rates of domestic violence especially during periods of lockdown, quarantine, and constrained movement.

PCBS data from 2018-2019 revealed that 24% of women in the West Bank and

38% in the Gaza Strip were subjected to a form of violence perpetrated by their partners. Among these women, 60% had preferred to remain silent and not report their abuse. When comparing these figures to the survey outcomes, the researchers noted an upward trend. An assessment of households revealed that a quarter noted an increase in domestic violence in Palestine during quarantine periods. 71% of respondents expected levels of violence to rise due to the extension of the lockdown. Similar trends have been seen across the globe.

Regional and International Catalysts

The deepening global economic crisis and its social ramifications in the Arab world increase the likelihood of the decline of international support for the Palestinian cause. The weakening of voices explicitly supporting Palestine has been further mounted by the growing assumption of widespread corruption within the structures of the PA. The lack of funding and the negative image associated with the authority significantly hinder the PA in meeting its social commitments.

The resilience of Palestine and its social structures greatly relies on international dynamics. Trends seen in Arab states, across the Middle East, Europe, the United States, China, India, and Russia set the tone for the realisation of the Collapse & Chaos Scenarios and resilience in Palestine as a whole.

Arab States and the Middle East

A decade has passed since the beginning of the Arab Spring revolutions. Numerous researchers agree that the region continues to face the negative aftermaths of the revolutions in the form of continued political instability and conflict – most notably in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. Amidst significant instabilities, the Gulf stands out as an area seeing relative harmony and the region has been able to isolate itself from protest and violent internal conflicts, with the exception of Bahrain. The past decade has thus led to a change in priorities within the policies of Arab states regarding internal and external risks and challenges. These changes have also resulted in the formation of new regional and international alliances.

Knowing the effects of the turmoil of the Arab Spring and the extent of its aftermath, the status of the Palestinian cause is no longer a central issue all Arab states agree on, even if declarations by the Arab League signal otherwise. Contradictions seen in the policies enacted by individual states speak of a clear deprioritisation and these voices have gained weight in the absence of statements underscoring Israel as the biggest threat to stability in the region. A notable reason behind the deprioritisation of Palestine is the question of Iran, which has also been used by Arab nations to justify the normalisation of relations with Israel.

Knowing the transformations witnessed in the region and the weakening of the Palestinian cause, Palestine risks being pulled and pushed back to the

negotiating table under unfavourable conditions. In other words, even if the human dimension of the occupation of Palestine is condemned in the Arab sphere, consensus on how to support Palestine in reaching the goals of liberty and justice are unaligned – even under threat. These threats have taken shape of, for example, increasing pressure towards Palestinian refugees living in Arab states, such as Syria and Iraq, culminating in the transfers of Palestinians within and beyond the borders of these countries.

Conversely, the regional environment remains largely unstable not only for Palestine, but for Israel too. Turkey and Iran are increasing their reach as regional powers and both have begun expanding their spheres of influence through, for example, the Iran-Syria-Iraq-Hezbollah axis and the Turkey-Libya-Qatar axis. On the other hand, the regional role of Egypt has regressed, and Israel has attempted to pressure Egypt through questions related to the Grand Renaissance Dam and the normalisation of relations with Sudan. These dynamics represent factors that can affect Arab-Israeli dynamics both positively and negatively.

Europe and the European Union

Although the European position diverged from the American one during the Trump era, European actors continue to shy away from political action, despite the strong stances taken on the issues of Jerusalem, settlement activity, and economic support for the PA. In a press conference held after a meeting of EU ministers for foreign affairs in May 2020, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joseph Borrell, affirmed that the EU will continue to employ all diplomatic means to avoid further annexations by maintaining relations with all parties including Israel, Palestine, and Arab partners. Borrell stressed the need to avoid unilateral actions and spoke strongly against any attempts from Israel to annex occupied territories in the West Bank. He also emphasized the need to respect international law everywhere and universally.

Despite these clear stances in favour of Palestine, the support voiced by the EU for the Emirati-Israeli and Bahrain-Israeli normalisation agreements sent a disconcerting message to Palestine. It is thus necessary to underscore that the European position is based on the demand of a return to negotiations and does not adopt positions deterring Israel. Question remains, what role can the EU play regarding the annexation issues.

Considering the complexities of the Palestinian issue, American leanings favouring Israel, and the increasing division and financial crises that the EU is facing, one cannot expect the EU to play a significant role in solving the Palestinian issue. This is especially true since the EU remains focused on internal problems and addressing its own migration crisis tied to the wars in Syria and Libya – coupled with its anxieties regarding the escalation of tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Covid-19 pandemic has and will continue to accelerate the unfolding of these negative trends and the economic crisis seen across the globe may result in political unrests in Palestine too. However, it is critical to note that the trends unfolding today are nothing new to the region. Indicators speaking of the regression of the role of regional systems, the modesty of goals related to the peace process, and the transformation of the international system towards increasing multipolarity appeared years ago. Knowing the long roots of these political dynamics, putting a hold on the trends is increasingly difficult.

The United States

The intensity of regional and international competitiveness will continue unabated and hopes that the pandemic will rebuild international relations on a more humane and just foundation is wishful thinking. The changes taking shape may pave the way for a global arena in which the centre of power is not the United States, thus harming Israel's political capabilities. The outcomes of international positioning, most notable those between China and the US, Russia and the US, and Iran and the US, may not settle in manners favourable to Israel. The European stance, however, does not present an alternative vision for the US approach in terms of political processes between Palestine and Israel. This alludes to the continuation of US leadership in regards to the question of Palestine.

The election of Biden may increase the probability of maintaining the Status Quo Scenario. However, this is dependent on Biden's vision and conduct towards the conflict, in addition to the performance of the new Israeli government formed in June 2021. Indicators regarding Biden's conduct are not promising, since he declared that he would maintain the US embassy in Jerusalem. Yet, Biden has voiced his commitment to the two-state solution and the restoration of assistance and relations with the PA. These acts speak in favour of maintaining the status quo – however unfavourable it is in the long-term.

China

Despite the support from Arab nations, Russia, and China, support from these actors cannot be relied upon when taking into consideration the rapid regional and international transformations taking place. These transformations include the expansion of trade and cultural relations between Israel and a number of new big players, most notably China. Knowing that China is a vast nuclear state that is expected to host the largest economy by 2030 and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the role and leanings of China is something to watch out for.

India

Similar developments are taking shape in India. By simply observing the volume of trade between India and Israel and the expansion thereof, one can conclude

a clear deepening of relations between the two countries. As an example, the averages amount of mutual trade between the two states jumped from 200 million dollars in 1992 to 4.52 billion dollars in 2016. Trade relations are especially noteworthy in the field of arms trade. Israel is the second-largest importer of Indian arms, right after Russia.

Russia

Russia-Israeli economic and trade relations have taken steps towards standardisation in the form of a series of trade agreements driven by the will to expand economic ties in sectors such as energy, gas, advanced technology, space, tourism, and agriculture. Russia and Israel signed more than ten cooperation agreements between 1994 and 2010 ranging from aviation to taxation to military cooperation. For Israel, Russia represents a market for technological goods that cannot be sold in Arab markets due to political reasons.

As for trade between Russia and Israel, the Israeli minister then in the Russian-Israeli intergovernmental committee for trade and economic cooperation, Ze'ev Elkin, stated that Russia and Israel are working on increasing the volume of trade: "We haven't yet summarized 2018, but we are working hard to surpass the number we reached in 2014." According to the intergovernmental committee, the volume of Russian-Israeli trade in 2017 was 2.5 billion dollars. The first seven months of 2018 saw an increase of 14% and a growth rate of 13% reaching 1.6 billion dollars. Even if the figures are old, they clearly demonstrate the commitment to expand and deepen economic ties between the two countries.

Scenario Probability

As highlighted in the country-specific examples, economic aspects play a significant role in the progression of relations between Israel and countries that have traditionally been regarded as allies to Palestine. These changes are clear signs for Palestine to start rebuilding its relations with the world in order to support its resilience and cause. The need to rebuild and strengthen relations is particularly high in light of the growth of Arab normalisation and figures noting that half of Arab states foster direct or indirect relations with Israel or support normalisation. This is an indicator that Palestine cannot afford to ignore.

By analysing the economic, social, and political catalysts and knowing the ongoing state of Palestinian politics and the world's preoccupation with the economic crisis, it is clear that Palestine is faced with serious challenges in terms of steering itself on the path of unity and enhanced resilience. With this grave challenge in mind, the Chaos & Collapse Scenario follows right on the heels of the Status Quo Scenario.

The realisation of the Chaos & Collapse Scenario may be the result of the

accumulation of negative indicators that produce secondary scenarios contributing to the deterioration of Palestinian resilience. These secondary scenarios include:

- The acceleration of Arab normalisation weakening the Palestinian position rendering Palestine more susceptible to political and financial pressures. Accelerating normalisation processes may pressure the Palestinian side to return to the negotiating table even if weak and facing an unprecedentedly strong Israel.
- An increase in violence and the rise of unrest due to the weakness of a central authority, giving rise to the influence of local actors.
- The expansion of allies favouring Israel through trade and financial relations as seen in the past. This risk is most notable in many African states due to the volume of Israeli investments in the continent.
- The continuation of the internal division of Palestine and its destructive effects both in the political and social spheres taking the shape of poverty and unemployment.

These secondary scenarios and the risks pushing Palestinian society towards collapse and chaos have led to the revival of approaches favouring local leaders or regarding Jordan as a security player. Alternatively, the realisation of the Chaos & Collapse Scenario might create the conditions for the flaring up of a new uprising.

3. Unity & Enhanced Resilience

Towards Growing Unity and Enhanced Resilience in Palestinian Society

Despite the negative indicators defining the status quo in Palestine, the climate of Israeli, international, and regional politics provides hints speaking in favour of strengthened unity and resilience and the prevention of a collapse and chaos of Palestine.

Palestinian Environment

Despite the negative outlook of the situation in Palestinian, indicators pointing towards opportunities to support Palestinian resilience exist. These indicators and factors rely on the moral superiority of the Palestinian cause, its foundation on internationally recognised agreements and laws, and the commitment of the Palestinian people to continue fighting for their cause.

Approaches supporting and enabling the realisation of the Palestinian cause include:

- Ending the internal political division;
- Rebuilding national representation within the framework of the PLO through elections at local and national levels wherever possible;
- Mobilising the energies and capacities of all Palestinians, especially those in the diaspora, to support the common Palestinian cause by addressing underlying issues that keep Palestinians from building resilience;
- Changing the forms and functions of the PA and readjusting its budget to enable resilience building activities, services, and functions;
- Reaching a consensus on a comprehensive national strategy;
- Developing forms of resistance in the homeland and beyond;
- Expanding boycott movements;
- Supporting economic, developmental, and productive sectors.

These measures are to support the already existing resilience enhancing initiatives and activities including:

- Outbursts of resistance in the form of popular action, such as, confrontations at the gates of the Al-Aqsa mosque and marches for the right of return;
- Established right of return committees active in Palestine and the diaspora;
- Volunteer- and youth-led social solidarity movements;
- Growth of home gardening and home-based economy;
- Improvements in the quality of education;
- Restoring trust between the political system and the people;
- Initiatives integrating youth into political life;
- Supporting the Joint Arab List in the 1948 territories and transferring learnings from the model into new political realms;
- Strengthening and empowering refugees living in camps in Syria and Lebanon;
- Enhancing national identity among all Palestinian communities.

Israeli Environment

Despite the political and financial strengths of Israel, the state suffers from deep societal vulnerabilities keeping it from implementing its vision for the region to the extent it wishes to. The interplay of the vulnerabilities as listed above under the “Israeli Indicator”, is linked to the political instability of Israel, seen recently in the series of elections held in Israel in 2020-2021.

Factors deepening volatility are further enhanced by the resilience and steadfastness of Palestinians living in the 1948 territories. Related gradual shifts in power balances can be seen, for example, in the strengthening of the political voice of Palestinians in the latest elections enabled through the Joint List and the High Follow-Up Committee. These steps, however small, boost resilience within the 1948 territories as well as beyond.

International and Regional Environment

A trend seen in the international sphere, most notably in the Arab world, is the growth of solidarity movements in support of Palestine. These movements are manifesting beyond the usual suspects at an accelerated pace, and these developments have been paralleled by the decline of Israel’s international reputation. The successes of the global Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) movement stands out as a concrete example speaking for the shifts in the international realm highlighting an opportunity to deepen the isolation of Israel for the benefit of the Palestinian cause.

The regional and international political shifts witnessed across the globe speak of an increasingly multi-polar world. Despite the changes, it is worth noting that European and international positions favouring the resolving of the conflict through, for example, establishing a Palestinian state, still exist. These positions and the changes seen in international leanings represent an opportunity for Palestinian diplomats to strategically consolidate an international front taking a clear stance against the annexation plans. The ongoing dynamics provide Palestine an opening to review its alliances and strategically pull the strings of interest groups in favour of its cause.

When assessing international factors influencing the Palestinian cause, it is vital to observe indicators measuring globalisation in the context of Palestine. Table 3 clearly outlines how Israel has a strong lead in terms of globalisation giving it significant advantages over Palestine in international social, political, and economic realms.

Table 3: Globalisation Indicators for Israel and Palestine

Source: KOF Index of Globalization, 2017

Globalisation indicator	Israel	Palestine
Economic globalisation	76.48	35.44
Political globalisation	62.56	49.01
Social globalisation	77.12	6.72
Average	72.88	30.39

Despite Palestine currently representing an underdog in the global landscape, numerous factors point towards pathways for strengthened resilience in the international, regional, and local spheres. The following potential change scenarios are examples of such trajectories:

1. Local Change

Local changes with the potential of leading to enhanced resilience include the ending of the internal political divide between Hamas and Fatah; formation of an inclusive political system; implementation of a plan to revive the role of the PLO; strengthening of relations within the diaspora; reviving unions, associations, and popular bodies abroad; restoration of trust in civil society; and the strengthening of the role of political factions and parties in order to enable the growth of a national identity.

2. Regional Change

Positive regional developments, particularly in regards to the stability of Arab neighbours such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, pave the way for stability in Palestine too.

3. International Change

The growing international demand to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially due to the deepening of a multipolar global system, has the potential of initiating significant positive change in Palestine.

Scenario Probability

The Unity & Enhanced Resilience Scenario is strengthened by elements speaking for the urgency to enact change. These elements include threats to the prominence of the Palestinian cause, growing demands to improve the political and economic performance of Palestinian institutions, the lack of youth movements in national politics, fears regarding the future of the Palestinian identity, and the fragile situation of Palestinian refugees. These elements push for change especially on the local level opening pathways towards positive change – yet carrying with them the detrimental risks of a slide to chaos.

Conclusion

Drawing a conclusion on the three scenarios and how they interact with each other sheds light on the interlinkages, vulnerabilities, and potential strengths of each trajectory. Table 4 provides a summary of the variables defining the realisation of the scenarios and presents an overview of the weights given to each variable. These weights have been set with the aid of the PESTEL framework, zooming in on political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors. The results of the PESTEL assessment have been compared and contrasted against the weights proposed in the various consultations of the research project.

In order to derive solid conclusions, the PESTEL methodology has been supported by the cross-impact matrix and scenario building approaches. These methodologies enabled the integration of the information from the reference reports with the assessed economic, social, technological, and political conditions together creating a clear overview setting the scenes for the three scenarios.

Based on the findings of the project, the researchers conclude the following:

- The Status Quo Scenario is the most probable scenario in the assessed timeframe. The defining factors of the scenario are the political division of Palestine, the stagnation of Palestinian politics, and the regression of the role of the PLO. The scenario assumes the continuation of a fragile, divided Palestinian society, and a deepening of the separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- Political variables are factors that have the most weight in the Status Quo Scenario and across all projections identified and analysed in the course of the research.
- The Status Quo Scenario is expected to continue for the next 2-3 years, even though there are strong indicators speaking for a shorter time span. If political and social vulnerabilities related to this scenario intensify, Palestine is expected to slide towards the Collapse & Chaos Scenario. On the other hand, if positive indicators strengthen, the probability of the Unity & Enhanced Resilience Scenario will grow.
- Variables defining the Unity & Enhanced Resilience and Chaos & Collapse Scenarios have clear correlations. These correlations are based on the two-sided nature of relevant variables: factors driving chaos are largely the same as those enhancing resilience. A deterioration in the given variable will push for chaos, while the strengthening of the same variable will pave way for resilience. For example, restoring national unity is the most important resilience-building factor. If this factor is absent, political and social factors risk a collapse leading to chaos.

Table 4: Overview of the identified variables and respective weights as per identified impact factors.

Scenario/ Indicator	Political	Social	Economic	Technological	Environmental	Total	Weight
1. Status Quo	62	36	37	5	3	143	
	32%	19%	26%	12%	11%		
	19.8	6.8	9.6	0.6	0.30		36.3
2. Chaos & Collapse	11	19	50	5	9	89	
	32	19	26	12	11		
	3.5	3.6	1.3	5	1		14.4
3. Unity & Enhanced Resilience	11	11	15	7	1	39	
	32%	19%	26%	12%	11%		
	3.5	2.9	2.6	0.84	5.1		14.9

Political Factor Decisive, Followed by Social and Economic Factors

As seen in Table 5, the political factor is the most significant factor defining Palestinian resilience, with a highly negative score of 2.36. The significance of the political factor has been confirmed in the cross impact matrix assessment. The political indicator is followed by the economic indicator and social indicator with scores of 0.6 and 0.63 respectively.⁵ These two figures are regarded as negative results.

On the other hand, political factors also render the highest positive returns and political components hold an average of 3.07 in terms of resilience-building potential. The positive impact of economic and social factors is also noteworthy, yet not as clear-cut as those of the political factors.

According to the cross impact matrix, political indicators are the most impactful, whereas social indicators the most impacted variables.

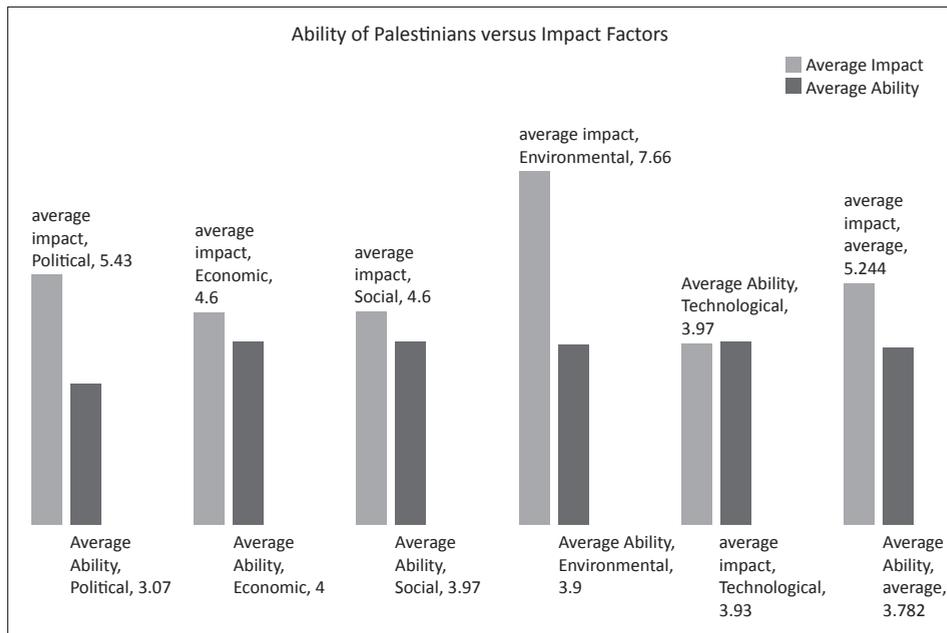
⁵ The score is (Average of secondary indicators impacting resilience - Average of secondary indicators supporting resilience).

Table 5: Capability rate for resilience in relation to weights of impact factors' averages

1) *Capability rate for resilience*: Average of secondary indicators supporting resilience and average of secondary indicators impacting resilience. 2) *Actual capability (%)*: Capability rate for resilience X weight of indicator. 3) *Impact*: Average of secondary indicators impacting resilience and average of secondary indicators supporting resilience.

Component	Average of secondary indicators impacting resilience	Average of secondary indicators supporting resilience	Capability rate for resilience	Weight of Indicator	Actual capability (%)
Political	5.43	3.07	56.5	0.32	18.08
Economic	4.6	4	86.9	0.26	22.59
Social	4.6	3.97	86.3	0.19	16.40
Environmental	6.6	3.9	59.1	0.12	7.09
Technological	3.99	3.97	99.5	0.11	10.95
Average	5.24	3.78	72.1		14.86

Figure 3: Matrix of impactful and impacted factors



Fundamental Impact of Regional and International Factors on National Resilience The realisation and ensuing effects of political, social, and economic factors are conditional to regional factors that define political stability, the strength or weakness of Arab states, the acceleration of normalisation processes, and the financial and moral support provided by Arab nations to the Palestinian cause. Regional factors are intertwined with international dynamics, most notably those related to developments regarding the Deal of the Century as well as the EU's, China's, and Russia's political leanings.

Maintaining Resilience Amidst the Political Division

Figure 3 highlights that the ability to maintain resilience in light of the current status quo remains low at 14.9%. This weakness is inherently due to the vulnerabilities of the status quo and the interlinkages of economic, social, and political variables that together form a negative projection for resilience-building in Palestine.

The connected nature of poverty, unemployment, and social fragmentation manifest in the division of Palestine, the emergence of social movements, and the poor domestic reputation of the PA are multiplied by the measures imposed by Israel, including the closure of the Gaza Strip. As per the questionnaire circulated as part of the project, the internal division of Palestine is a factor generating the highest level of instability.

The same was reiterated in through future table methodology, noting that factors impacting the fragility of society the most are, in order of significance:

- Internal division;
- Single-party domination of Palestine;
- Normalisation of relations between Arab states and Israel;
- Blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The role of internal politics in resilience building in Palestine is also underscored in Table 6, which notes that the possibility of enhancing Palestinian resilience relies on internal factors. In other words, opportunities to expand Palestinian resilience exist, yet rely on the strengthening of internal elements and the harnessing of international dynamics to support Palestine and amplify the critical voices directed towards Israel.

As scrutinizing Table 6, the researchers also concluded that the Chaos & Collapse Scenario is not inevitable and time-bound. The same factors defining the collapse to chaos are the same enabling the growth of resilience. This means that the direction the factors take is defined by the strategic ability to leverage timely dynamics and existing internal and international support. Knowing that

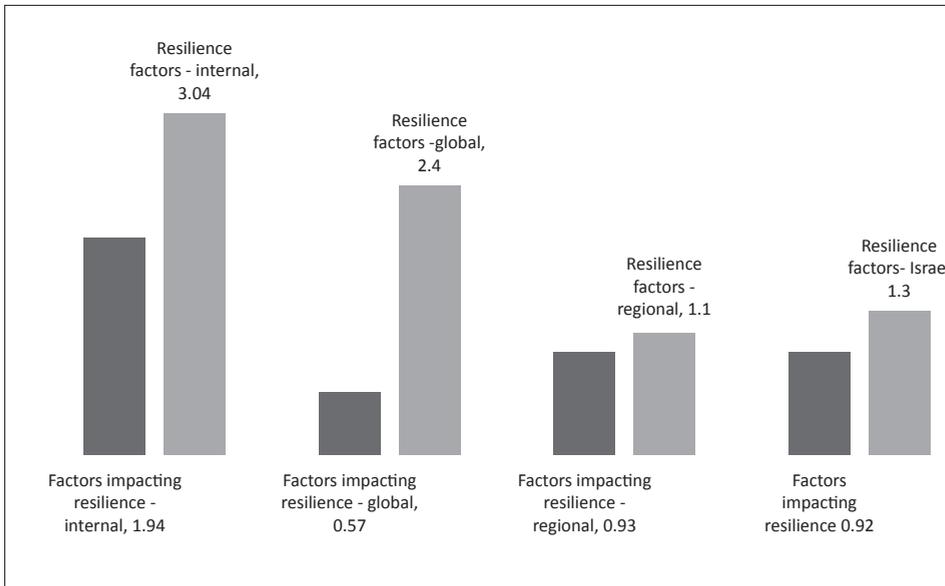
Palestine is defined by volatility, political, social, and economic developments are contingent on each other and the pace at which underlying vulnerabilities realise.

If resilience-building is a goal, Palestinian, international, and regional actors are to take decisive action towards sending the division, restoring unity, activating Palestinian diplomacy, and changing international narratives in support of Palestinian resilience.

Table 6: Factors that impact resilience and factors that increase it

Average of factors that impact resilience		Average of factors that can increase resilience	
Internal	1.94	Internal	3.04
Global	0.57	International factors	2.4
Regional	0.93	Regional	1.1
Israeli	0.92	Israeli	1.3
Average	1.09	Average	1.96

Figure 4: Comparison between resilience factors and impactful factors



Recommendations

Despite the fragility and dire state of Palestine, regional, international, and Israeli circumstances are in a state of rapid change. Knowing the volatilities, opportunities, and risks entailed, cornerstones of Palestinian resilience increase their relevance. Relevant resilience building priorities include:

Politically

- Harnessing holistic national partnerships and rearranging the affairs of the PLO.
- Focusing on strengthening the financial resilience of Palestine in order to enable a strong society across social classes.
- Developing internal relations in order to strengthen national unity paving the way for appropriate decisions and action plans for the future of the PA. These plans are also to include a national program with shared responsibilities, such as the programmatic and structural development of the PLO. The process is to include Hamas and the Islamic Jihad from the Gaza Strip.
- Strengthening national identity and ingrained solidarity among and between Palestinians wherever they may be.
- Restructuring political parties and factions by involving youth in leadership roles and decision-making bodies.
- Re-establishing a discussion regarding Palestinian parliamentary and presidential elections. Elections provide no guarantee for solving the domestic divide and related challenges, yet, in the best cases, elections provide an initiative to manage the divide constructively through the sharing of interests between the two sides.
- Building shared political, social, and economic activities between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the diaspora to fortify unity.
- Formation of a national unity government and strengthening the PLO by increasing its mandate in domestic and international politics.
- Establishment of clear and active Palestinian diplomacy that is capable of understanding the complexities of international relations.

Economically

- The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the Palestinian economy in an unprecedented manner, and this impact can be likened to that of Israel's invasion into Palestinian cities in 2002, coupled with a steep decline in international assistance. The situation can be managed by seeking guidance

from past governmental procedures on managing these contemporary challenges.

- The pandemic is known to have set the Palestinian economy back five years. Consequently, this situation requires effective and targeted measures avoiding – to the extent possible – all-encompassing and non-targeted measures. The goal of the Covid-19 measures is the minimization of financial losses while curbing the spread of the virus.
- Revisiting and rethinking the methods of creating an economic atmosphere that nurtures investments and stability.
- Strengthening the agricultural sector and encouraging partnership between public and private actors.
- Urging decision-makers, institutional donors, and philanthropic foundations to direct funds towards marginalised groups and individuals living in poverty.
- Outlining an action plan leading towards minimised economic reliance on Israel and ending the use of Israeli products in domestic markets.
- Enhancing the role of the Palestinians within the 1948 territories by supporting their social and political unity.

Socially

- Consolidating the role of the family. Palestinian families are considered to be among the pillars of Palestinian resilience, and when families are able to resist the impacts of the occupation and have the means to remain resilient, their role in enhancing resilience can exceed that of civil society organisations, associations, and Palestinian political parties.
- Enhancing the role of youth in volunteer projects.
- Creating programs that alleviate unemployment by fostering creative ideas and generating job opportunities that boost the role of the private sector in social responsibility.
- Supporting projects that enhance social peace and combat violence.
- Changing economic, cultural, social, and security-related policies that have sought to neutralise the masses from resisting the occupation and taking an active stance against the occupier.
- Restoring the status of public spaces and freeing them from party politics thus paving way for students and associations with the will to utilise relevant platforms to support national mobilisation.

- Advancing social movements and enabling them to fully harness their potential as the most significant entities inducing change, action, and resilience in Palestinian society. The strength of social movements relies on their ability to transcend exclusive affiliations based on political parties, sects, social classes, tribes, and regions. Latent potential exists with collaborative work between social movements and civil society organisations in enhancing the realisation of national goals. The role of these movement is exceptionally catalytic due to the inability of current power-holders to facilitate the birth of new political parties. If emphasis is laid on better coordination, the movements have the potential of becoming more organised and connected to institutional structures. In addition to their agility, the strength of these groups also lies in their leadership structures that tend to pave wave for the youth, the middle class, marginalised groups, and those hardest hit in society.

Regionally and Internationally

- Building new alliances, understanding regional and international changes, and harnessing these for the interest of the Palestinian issue.
- Changing with and adapting to global and regional variables as much as possible in order to minimise the impacts of political stagnation within Palestine.
- Strengthening Palestinian diplomacy in East Asia, China, and Africa.
- Supporting the international BDS movement against Israel.
- Bolstering popular diplomacy and connecting official measures with societies, unions, universities, and global think tanks.

As has become evident from multiple perspectives, Palestinian resilience is contingent on internal dynamics and performance firstly and its relations to international and regional dynamics secondly. Understanding the interplay of these two levels is key in effectively and strategically enhancing the conditions that enable resilience-building in Palestine.

Situation in 2025

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of indicators with negative political, social, economic, and environmental impacts, it has become clear that factors creating the vulnerabilities of Palestine escape quick fixes. It is thus highly likely that Palestinian society will continue on a path of fragility, especially knowing that the current state of resilience among Palestinian people is decreasing. Signs speaking of the continuous weakening of resilience can be seen in the youth's disengagement from politics, the ever-increasing poverty rates, the lack of political action, and the high levels of unemployment across Palestine. Based on the findings of the research project, it is probable that Palestine will continue on the path of fragility. The course is set largely due to the following factors:

- The results of the US elections;
- The looming risk of the implementation of the annexation plan;
- The acceleration of the normalisation of relations between Arab nations and Israel;
- The ongoing domestic division and the lack of indicators speaking of change;
- The realisation of a dramatic political change in the Arab sphere.

When assessing the scenarios with the help of the Delphi method, researchers concluded that the years between 2023-2026 will be crucial for the future of Palestine.

Table 7: Probability of scenarios occurring according to the Delphi method

Scenario	Before 2025	After 2025	Middle year	Reasoning
1. Status Quo	2022	2026	2023	A scenario defined by deepened fragility will realise before 2025 if the division of Palestinian society remains unchanged, poverty mounts, and emigration levels rise.
2. Collapse & Chaos	2024	2028	2026	A scenario of chaos will realise before 2025 in the case of the president's sudden absence from the political scene, the implementation of large-scale annexation, and the continued deterioration of social conditions. The likelihood of the trajectory is amplified if regionalism and the weaknesses within the PLO and political parties mount.

Scenario	Before 2025	After 2025	Middle year	Reasoning
3. Unity & Strengthened Resilience	2023	2025	2024	The realisation of a scenario marked by strengthened resilience is possible before 2025 if the division between Palestinian domestic political factions is bridged. The impact of this would manifest in cooperation and unity taking the form of a joint program enhancing the national struggle through a unified political system.

The most critical tool provided by future studies is the ability to identify and group variables on a Low Probability – High Impact scale. The ability to spot triggers that could lead to the unfolding of significant changes enables the identification of turning points and megatrends. These triggers can be grouped within three models:

The Black Swan model or event or a chain of events that represent unexpected dynamics. An example of such an event could be a war between Iran and Israel followed by an intervention from the Palestinian resistance forces. As there are no plans and strategies in place for a situation like this, all options would remain open and the outcome unknown.

The ‘known but unprepared for’ model referring to an expected event that has not been prepared for. Such an event could be Israel unilaterally announcing the implementation of the annexation plan in pursuit of the Deal of the Century. If this were to happen and the PA to return to negotiations without guarantees – the most important of which is the suspension of settlement activity – Israel would quickly be able to create new facts on the ground. This is a reality the PA has no tools or measures to address. The PA would thus be forced to join negotiations from a very weak position.

The ‘known and prepared for’ model or a model representing the continuation of the status quo, but with enhanced economic and social problems. An example of such a case would be the worsening of underlying economic and social conditions, especially in light of the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic. This will increase the gap between the PA and the masses and pave the way for further protests and uncertainty, the beginnings of which the region is already witnessing.

As it stands, Palestine is expected to remain fragile and resilience – to a large degree – will rely on acts seeking to reverse and mitigate the unfolding of negative trajectories.

Timeline of Scenarios Development

Status	Indicators trends	Results
<p>1995-2000</p> <p>Beginning of the state building process</p>	<p>Increasing international support</p> <p>Economy improved</p> <p>National institutions formed</p>	<p>Good resilience</p>
<p>2000-2007</p> <p>Failure of Camp David Negotiation</p> <p>Eruption of Al-Aqsa intifada</p>	<p>Postponing of the peace process</p> <p>Decreasing international funds</p> <p>Disappearing of President Yasser Arafat leading to weak leadership</p>	<p>Weak resilience</p> <p>Increased settlement expansion</p> <p>Separation wall erected</p>
<p>2007-2019</p> <p>Palestinian division</p> <p>Siege on Gaza</p>	<p>Poverty increased</p> <p>Unemployment increases</p> <p>International support decreased</p> <p>Democracy postponed</p> <p>Arab political support decreased</p>	<p>Fragmented society</p>
<p>2020-2025</p>	<p>The negative impact of division increased</p> <p>Poverty and unemployment increased</p> <p>Negative impact of the Arab Spring remains</p> <p>Weak Palestinian Authority</p> <p>No political process</p> <p>Covid-19 pandemic crisis</p> <p>Social fragmentation</p>	<p>Fragmented society</p> <p>CHAIOS</p>

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