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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993–2013

Alaa Tartir\*

This article provides a contextual analysis of the evolution and reform processes of Palestinian security forces over the last two decades. It categorises the evolution of security reform processes into three phases: the Oslo Accords phase; the Second Intifada phase; and the Fayyadism phase. The article argues that despite the attempt to reverse the conditions of insecurity through security reform under Fayyadism (the Palestinian Authority's state-building project between 2007–2013 in the occupied West Bank), fundamental tensions between the Palestinian Authority's security forces and the Palestinian resistance movement have emerged. This tension manifested in authoritarian transformations and trends and therefore the entire security reform project constituted yet another form of institutionalised insecurity, but framed in a state-building and good governance framework. This article concludes that the enhanced functionality of the Palestinian Authority's security forces and the reformed style of governance, resulted in the criminalisation of resistance against the Israeli occupation. In this way, the state-building project during the Fayyadism era directly and indirectly sustained the occupation. Conceptually, the Palestinian case demonstrates the fundamental flaws of conducting a security sector reform in the absence of sovereign authority and local ownership of the reform processes, and while living under a foreign military occupation.

## Introduction

Since the 1993 Oslo Accords through to the present, the role of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) security forces has transformed according to the evolution of political developments, conflict dynamics, as well as changes in the composition of Palestinian leadership, its strategies, and security doctrines. Those transformations remained within the framework

of the Oslo Accords and its security arrangements, which intended to protect Israeli security (Khan 2010), and to maintain law, order, and stability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

This article provides a contextual analysis of the evolution and reform processes of Palestinian security forces over the last two decades. It argues that the Oslo Accords and Arafatism (Yasser Arafat's style of governance) saw an increase in security force personnel but the proliferation was associated with higher levels of insecurity and coupled with high levels of corruption, patronage-based politics and personalised

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rule. Furthermore, this article highlights that while the state-building project in the occupied West Bank under the premiership of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad between 2007 and 2013 (Fayyadism paradigm) meant to reverse the negative outcomes of the Oslo Accords and Arafatism, it resulted in rising tensions between the PA's security forces and the armed resistance groups. This article will show that this tension under the Fayyadism paradigm created better stability for Israel but not better security for the Palestinian people. It also illustrates that despite the security reform processes under Fayyadism, the transformations, reforms, and paradigm shifts led to a deepening of authoritarianism in the OPT.

The evolution of the Palestinian security forces underwent three major phases: *The Oslo Accords Phase-Arafatism (1993–1999)*; *The Second Intifada Phase (2000–2006)*; and *The Fayyadism Phase (2007–2013)*. **Figure 1** below provides a thematic and chronological evolution of Palestinian security forces, and the main characteristics of each phase. This article is structured in chronological order: it starts by addressing the tensions between state-building and national liberation projects, and their impact on the evolution of Palestinian security forces, focusing in particular on the proliferation of the security forces, the complex dynamics of corruption, and Arafat's personalised style of governance. The second section discusses the road to reform, the dominance of armed groups in the security realm, and the clashes between the different security paradigms. Lastly, it reflects on the security model of Fayyadism, discusses its essence, technical successes, and national failures.

### **Building Security Forces: State-Building vs. National Liberation (1993–1999)**

During this phase, the process of building-up the PA's security forces was neither inclusive nor transparent, but rather fraught with corruption and nepotism, and exposed to inside-outside leadership clashes (Lia 2006; Khatib 2010). This resulted in the proliferation of

security forces, increased internal conflicts and competition, the absence of a unified security strategy or chain of command, and a failure to protect the Palestinian people. This failure to protect Palestinians was partly due to the lack of expertise and professionalism of the security forces, but more importantly it was the consequence of the Oslo Accords' design (Khan 2005) and the failure to resolve the dilemma of state-building versus national liberation. Meyers (2000: 91) argued that, 'it is an anomaly in the Palestinian case, created by the agreements, that the functions of the Palestinian security forces are very specifically limited, but for the interests of an outside state, not to protect Palestinian citizens.' Therefore, as was argued by Agha and Khalidi (2005: 88), the PA was 'torn between reining in armed elements and thus providing security to its adversary Israel, and indulging those elements and thus participating in the struggle for national liberation.' At the same time, the PA has been totally incapable of defending its people in the sense of actively confronting Israeli armed actions or incursions onto Palestinian soil, or raising the cost of the occupation (Agha and Khalidi 2005). The legacy of corruption, absence of professionalism, and Arafat's personalised style of governance allowed the Palestinian people to perceive the PA's security forces as ineffective and unreliable (Lia 2007).

### **The Origins**

The 1994 Cairo Agreement stipulated the establishment of a 'strong police force' with a maximum of 9,000 recruits (7,000 from abroad and 2,000 from the occupied territories) to guarantee 'public order and internal security within the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority' (Lia 2006: 96), and it led to the establishment of various Palestinian-Israeli joint security bodies. Ten days after signing the Cairo Agreement, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers and the returnees (*Al-taedin*) started to return back to Gaza and Jericho to set up the PA's security forces and institutions. The 1995

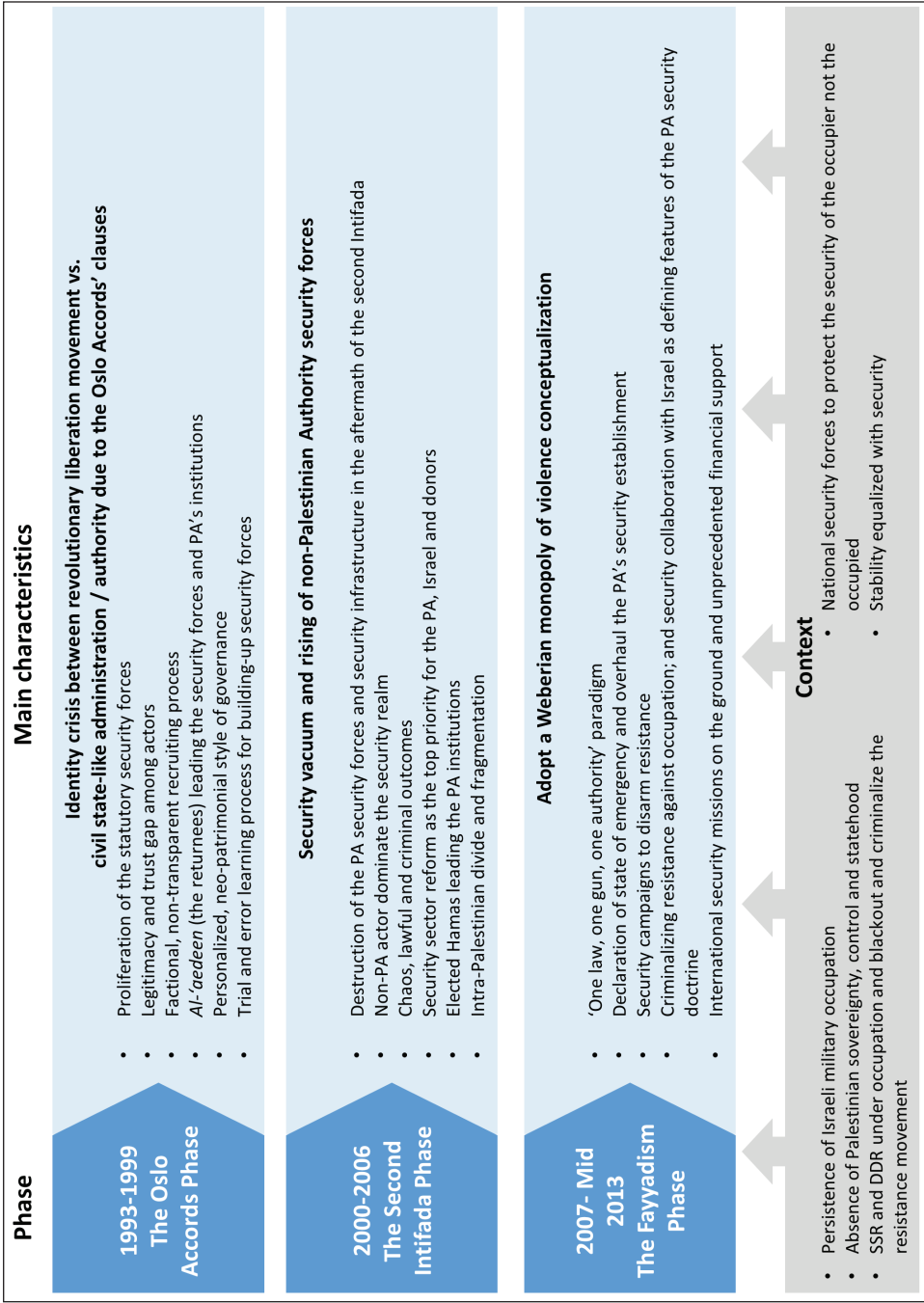


Figure 1: Thematic and Chronological Evolution of Palestinian Security Forces 1993–2013.

Oslo II increased the number of policemen to 30,000 (12,000 for the West Bank and 18,000 for Gaza); however, by then the Palestinian police force had already reached 22,000 in Gaza and Jericho alone. In 1995, Arafat arrived in the West Bank and Palestinian forces were deployed in 'Areas (A)',<sup>1</sup> touring in the Palestinian cities in their PLA military uniform in an act of revolutionary victory (Frisch 2008: 86–88).

In 1998, the number of security personnel reached between 30,000 and 40,000, increasing to 50,000 by 2000, and 53,000 by 2003 (Le More 2008). By 2004, there were more than 15 different security bodies operating in the occupied territories. This proliferation of security forces urged Ramadan Shallah, the leader of Islamic Jihad, to argue in 1996: 'Arafat has so many intelligence services in the self-rule areas that if you open your window, Preventive Security peeps in; if you open your door, the Presidential Security Service comes in; if you go out to your garden, you bump into Military Intelligence; and if you go out to the street, you come across General Intelligence' (Cited in Lia 2006: 307). While Edward Said stated that 'Arafat established several security forces, five of them were intelligence services all spying on each other' (Said 1995: xxxi).

### ***Proliferation, Patronage and Corruption***

The proliferation of the security forces did not occur incidentally. It was a tool that Arafat used to maintain control over the security establishment and to enforce his approach of divide-to-rule. He created a system in which the heads of security forces reported to him exclusively. In turn, they themselves were in rivalry in their operations, often leading to bloody clashes. This mode of personalised governance and patronage led to the establishment of self-interested groups that resisted reform. Arafat, up until 2003, refused to use the word 'reform' preferring, at the best of times, the word 'development.' Arafat once stated: 'no one can intervene between me and my children' in reference to the security forces leadership (Al-Shu'aibi 2012: 5). This

personalised style of governance was inter-related with corruption and nepotism, and as such generated negative consequences on the security forces' operations. Not only did it damage the forces' reputation, but it also impeded the security and safety of the Palestinian people. This de-institutionalized mode of governance was coupled with an intra-Palestinian conflict between the inside and outside leaderships. Additionally, there were problematic recruitment policies, as well as managerial and administrative weaknesses, which ultimately impeded the effectiveness of these forces and the services they provided.

One of the most striking manifestations of corruption was the distribution of cash salaries. The head of the security force (*Jihaz*) would visit Arafat's office, receive a bag full of cash; soldiers were supposed to queue up to receive their cash in hand (Le More 2008). This phase also featured the emergence of a 'gun culture' in the Palestinian society (Lia 2006; Najib and Friedrich 2007), whereby it was common to see men in plain clothes walking the streets with a gun on their side, ready to be used for the resolution of any small problem. The matter in which the PA forces dealt with such chaos and violence was also corrupted. The corruption dynamics expanded to reach both procurement and inventory systems, as well as the benefits systems with the misuse of resources, powers, and public facilities. All of these dynamics were felt and seen by the public, which intensified the legitimacy gap between the PA forces and people.

Additionally, there had been an absence of effective mechanisms to ensure inter-agency cooperation, which resulted in a waste of resources and inefficient performance. There was no space for developing effective civil-democratic oversight or accountability mechanisms, particularly since the Palestinian Legislative Council had been neglected and bypassed due to Arafat's mode of governance. The executive branch of the Authority was dominating the realm in the absence of effective judiciary or legislative branches.

The corruption thread was also reflected at the political level, which witnessed a divide between the Palestinian inside and outside leaderships. This divide proved to be problematic when the returnees arrived to the West Bank and Gaza and established the security forces. These forces and their leadership were returning from exile, an imposition that made the local Palestinians uncomfortable. Many felt that these security forces were 'theirs' not 'ours,' and the last thing local Palestinians wished for was to replace the foreign occupation with a local one (Lia 2007). Palestinians were not expecting practices such as the Black Friday in Gaza in November 1994, when Palestinian police fired live ammunition at civilian demonstrators killing 13 and wounding another 200, or the arresting and torturing of the opposition (Frisch 2008). Hence, inclusiveness was a challenge from the beginning.

This lack of inclusiveness was reinforced by recruitment policies, since the vast majority of the recruited security personnel belonged to one political party, Fatah. Such policies served to 'de-legitimize the whole institution and [were] not viewed as neutral national institutions by the public' (Al-Shu'aibi 2012: 2). The recruitment process lacked transparency and accountability. This meant that *wasta* (nepotism) was the marker of merit rather than actual training or skill set. As pointed out in 1997 by Mohammed Dahlan, then the PA Preventive Security Chief in Gaza: 'We have 36,000 people of whom we only need 10,000. This huge number is a burden on the PA and a burden on the security organ. We view it as a social issue because I cannot tell a prisoner who spent 15 years in jail that I have no job for him' (Cited in Le More 2008: 78). Thirteen years later in summer 2010, I asked Dahlan about the progress of the PA security forces, he told me: 'the major problem for our misery now and the defeat in Gaza in 2007 is attributed to prioritizing quantity over quality.'<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, technically, the PA's security forces fulfilled many of their obligations dictated by the Oslo Accords, as they

engaged in a process of dismantling the Palestinian 'infrastructure of terror' as well as protecting Israeli security. The PA forces, along with their duties to enforce law and order, targeted, arrested, and harassed many Palestinian members of the opposition. They also conducted a 'controlling campaign' to regulate, license, and organise the possession of arms. The PA forces managed to 'impress' the Israelis, despite their lack of expertise (Friedrich and Luethold 2007). This partially explains why Israel and the international community were silent about, and complicit in, sustaining the network of corruption and perpetuating the absence of reform in Palestinian security institutions. By 1999 and from the perspective of the PA's supporters, the mere existence of the PA's security forces, despite all the challenges, was their biggest success.

This phase was characterised by a clash between two parallel projects: state-building versus national liberation. While the former implied building the institutional underpinnings and capacities for the interim authority to transform into the statehood phase on the 1967 borders by 1999, the latter assumed that the PA security forces will be an extension to the PLO's PLA and therefore engage in a national liberation endeavour of historical Palestine based on 1948 borders. These are two parallel ventures: one implemented by state-like institutions and the other by a national liberation movement. These two contradictory approaches meant that the tensions that emerged between the two approaches were also reflected in the style of governance and the security doctrine of the Palestinian leadership. These tensions, in addition to the deep distortions in the evolution of the PA forces caused by the asymmetry of power relations, resulted in a mixed record concerning the PA's security forces' effectiveness.

However, Arafat's personalised style of rule and the complex network of corruption were not the only reasons to blame and such an explanation would be 'overtly simplistic, if not disingenuous' as argued by Le More (2008: 82).



Any contextualised analysis of the effectiveness of the PA's security forces should include a review of the complexity of the internal and external dimensions of the growth of authoritarianism and patronage-based system in the West Bank and Gaza. Robinson argued that the PA became an authoritarian polity because the exiled leadership of the PLO had to recapture and centralise power, thereby marginalising local political leaders (1997). Brynen argued that the Oslo Accords managed to create new Palestinian elite that sustained their operation with a framework of neo-patrimonial style of governance (Brynen 2000). Khan et al. (2004) argued that Israel's intention was to create a 'client state' upon which it could continue to exert considerable control and leverage through the rents it distributed to the PA, which was coupled with territorial fragmentation and a strategy of asymmetric containment. Therefore, the tenets of the Oslo Accords and Israeli policies were major factors in the breakdown of the PA security's effectiveness, as the next section demonstrates.

### **Destroying and Reforming Palestinian Security Infrastructure (2000–2006)**

A new round of violence began after the failures of Camp David and Taba Peace Summits in 2000. This was in addition to the infamous visit of Ariel Sharon, the leader of the Israeli Likud political party at the time, to *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* (Temple Mount) in September 2000 accompanied by 1,000 security guards. In the five days that followed his visit, 47 Palestinians were killed, 1,855 were injured, and five Israelis were killed. The second intifada erupted, and the PA security forces actively engaged. This intifada took on a militarised character from the Palestinian side as well, and all armed resistance groups intensified their operations. The newly established Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were influential and controversial, having acquired substantive resources from Arafat and the PA leadership.

### **Security Vacuum**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2000, a major incident in Ramallah signalled the PA's security forces engagement in the intifada. The PA police stopped two Israeli soldiers in plain clothes and dragged them to the main police station where they were beaten, stabbed, and killed. This incident deepened the Israeli security establishment's mistrust of the PA forces, resulting in the reconsideration of their relationship. On the same day, Israel launched airstrikes against PA security targets, completely destroying the security premises. In March 2002 Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield, and this military operation caused massive destruction and losses in both human and economic measures. Palestinian security personnel were detained and disarmed en masse, their facilities destroyed, and PA civil institutions ransacked. The destruction of physical infrastructure is estimated to have cost the economy \$3.5 billion, equivalent to 30 per cent of pre-2000 capital stock (UNCTAD 2005). The destruction of the PA's security apparatus and facilities exceeded \$38.5 million in the West Bank and \$34.5 million in Gaza Strip up to early 2002 (World Bank 2004).

With their diminished capacity, the activities of the security forces became more haphazard. Traffic police in civilian attire, the detainment of thieves by the city governor in his own home in the absence of prison facilities, became common occurrences. The destruction of the PA forces' capabilities, capacities, and resources created a gap that was soon filled by armed groups, including Hamas. This security vacuum filled by non-PA security actors imposed new challenges to security provision and governance, as Palestinian people perceived these actors as more trustworthy and legitimate than the PA-actors (PASSIA and DCAF 2006).

A national survey conducted in 2005 by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IUED) revealed that 34 per cent of the interviewees had great trust in the

Al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas), and 29 per cent had great trust in the Saraya Al-Quds (Islamic Jihad), as opposed to 21 per cent in the Civil Police and 18 per cent in the Preventive Security (DCAF and IUED 2005). In another national survey (a sample of 1,800 Palestinians) conducted by DCAF in 2006, more than 70 per cent of the respondents trusted non-PA forces very much or to some extent, while the trust in the PA security forces remained shaky. The most trustworthy groups were the military wings of Hamas (79 per cent) and Islamic Jihad (78 per cent), confirmed when surveyed on their views of how the PA should deal with armed groups. A majority of 86 per cent favoured dialogue and consensus over the use of force. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents rejected the use of force against the militias (DCAF 2006). **Figure 2** introduces the statutory (PA) and non-statutory (non-PA) security forces. It divides the PA's statutory security forces into internal security forces and national security forces (PA's 'Proto-army'), and combined they are comprised of some fifteen active bodies. By contrast, the non-statutory security forces and groups are mainly associated with political factions, social movements, families and clans, popular protection committees, and other informal bodies that are embedded in Palestinian traditions, and combined they are comprised of some thirteen active groups. The chart also introduces the major international security actors.

### ***The Road to Reform***

The rising influence of non-PA actors was a threat to Israeli security; therefore, under Israeli and international pressure, the PA was forced to start a reform project for its security sector and forces (Sayigh and Shikaki 1999). On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2002, one day before President Bush delivered a speech on his vision for peace in the Middle East, the PA announced its 100-Day Reform Plan.<sup>3</sup> The 100-Day Plan called for a 'comprehensive reform throughout the government, renewal of the legitimacy of elected officials through democratic elections, rearranged ministerial

structures, and reinforced separation of powers' (UNDP 2003: 3). It aimed to reduce the power of the president, increase the power of the parliament, institute the rule of law, and increase the scrutiny of Palestinian finances (Turner 2009) as a prerequisite for peace and state recognition (ICG 2002, 2004). In the domain of 'public security', the 100-Day Plan aimed to restructure the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and modernise its apparatus; attach the Preventive Security Services, the Police and the Civil Defence to the MoI; and activate the role of the MoI and its apparatuses in the enforcement of court rulings. It also aimed to reinforce loyalty to the Authority; end the role of the security services in civilian affairs; and give utmost attention to the needs of the population, whose support and cooperation would be acquired by inducing law and order (PA 2002).

By 2002, the role of the CIA was expanded, and the Quartet and its International Task Force on Palestinian Reform were established as international bodies to supervise the Palestinian security sector reform. With the proliferation of international controlling bodies, scholars argued that Palestine became under (financial) international trusteeship and lost any kind of ownership on the reform processes (Khalidi 2005; Brown 2010). As argued by Turner (2009: 568), 'the PA, still reeling from the 'shock and awe' of Operation Defensive Shield and lacking the resources to rebuild what had been destroyed, had little choice but to take the shock doctors' medicine'. This was further entrenched by the launch of the Road Map in 2003 by the Quartet.<sup>4</sup> Phase I of the Road Map demanded the PA to undertake 'visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere' (Road Map 2003: 2).

The plan demanded that 'rebuilt and refocused Palestinian Authority security apparatus' had to confront 'all those engaged in terror' and dismantle 'the terrorist capabilities and infrastructure' (Road Map 2003). The text stipulated that this included



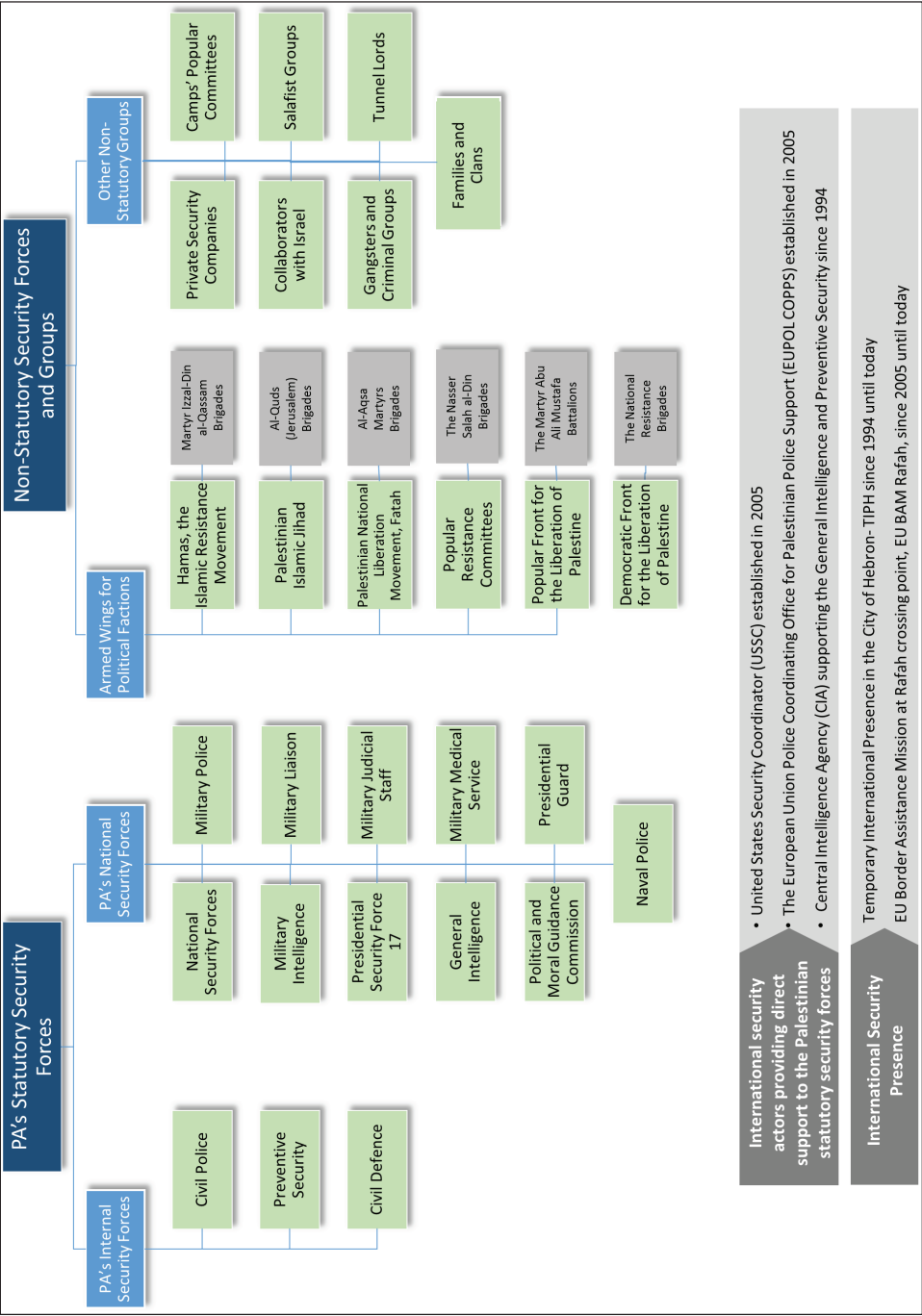


Figure 2: Mapping the Statutory and Non-Statutory Security Forces and Groups.

confiscating 'illegal weapons', and 'consolidating security authority, free of association with terror and corruption' (Road Map 2003). In other words, the PA's security sector was forced to: combat terrorism; apprehend suspects; outlaw incitement; collect all illegal weapons; provide Israel with a list of Palestinian police recruits; and report progress to the United States (Agha and Khalidi 2005). This, according to Friedrich and Luethold (2007) meant that the Palestinian security reform had,

remained, in essence, an externally-controlled process, driven by the national security interests of Israel and the United States, and characterised by very limited ownership on the part of Palestinian society...the primary Israeli and American interest is to transform the Palestinian security sector into an instrument in their fight against terror...[and] the Palestinian security interests play at best a subordinate role in the design and implementation of this transformation process (Friedrich and Luethold 2007: 192).

These reform plans forced Arafat to appoint Mahmoud Abbas as the PA's first Prime Minister, and a loyalist as the first Minister of Interior in 2003. Salam Fayyad was appointed as finance minister as per the World Bank's conditionality, and as far as security forces were concerned, he created a single treasury account and enhanced financial transparency. This meant that after a decade of its establishment, the PA's security personnel were able to receive their salaries through bank transfers; however, these reforms were superficial. Abbas remained Prime Minister for less than six months because he was marginalised, and within five months, four Ministers of Interiors were appointed. Thus, internal power dynamics dominated the reform scene (Friedrich and Luethold 2007).

### ***Clashing Paradigms***

The inconsistencies between the security reform efforts and the challenges posed by the dominance of non-PA groups continued to accelerate until the death of Arafat in November 2004. With Arafat's death, a new security doctrine started to emerge. In his presidential victory speech in 2005, Abbas declared his determination to establish the PA's monopoly of violence as the main priority, and to implement the electoral slogan 'one law, one gun, one authority'.<sup>5</sup> In an immediate reaction to this renewal of the security sector reform approach, Abbas forced the Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to agree in Cairo on a period of calm (*Tahdi'a*). This entailed a temporary ceasefire based on reciprocity. The international community reacted to this through organizing the London Meeting on Supporting the Palestinian Authority. In that international conference, the PA promised to 'create the conditions conducive to the peace process with the immediate objective of restoring internal law and order and preventing violence' (London Meeting 2005: 4), while the international community promised to provide advice and assistance on legal, structural, and organisational aspects to strengthen the security sector, through establishing the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) and the United States Security Coordinator (USSC).

As a consequence for this speedy entry into security sector reform processes, modest progress was made that can be categorised at five levels: (i) structural reorganisation through merging numerous security forces, sending long-standing security commanders into early retirement, disbanding the Special Forces and the Special Security, and reactivating the National Security Council; (ii) commence working on a White Paper to establish a normative-legal framework for the security sector; (iii) initiation of the Civil Police reform programme with the establishment of the EUPOL COPPS to assist

the PA in improving its law-enforcement capacity; (iv) the PA embarked on tentative Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes, such as dismantling Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades; and, (v) improving the capabilities of the PA security forces through better human resource management, increase in salaries and benefits, and local and regional training. Additionally, the MoI banned the PA's security bodies from receiving foreign aid directly and called for it to be channelled through the Ministry of Finance. The logistical and procurements procedures were reviewed, and an inventory check was developed (Friedrich and Luethold 2008; Hussein 2007).

However, despite these transformations, the overall evaluation of the security reform process by the end of 2005 was bleak. The DfID (2006: 19) concluded that:

The PA security forces lack a monopoly over the means of violence. Israel continues to control significant portions of the West Bank. Communications between West Bank and Gaza are difficult. Command and control of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) is factionalised and personalised. There are overlapping responsibilities among the different services and no unifying doctrine. The security services have limited political support, and there is an inadequate legislative framework to guide them. The judiciary is weak. Parliamentary and other forms of oversight are virtually non-existent.

The victory of Hamas in the 2006 parliamentary elections halted this one year of reform (Le More 2006). The attempt to impose a new security doctrine led by Abbas and donors was put on hold until the new dynamics were figured out. The victory of Hamas rearranged all the cards, confused all the actors, and challenged the PA security doctrine. This was mainly due to Hamas' legacy as a non-PA actor that provided informal but effective

public services, including security, through its committees, military groups, charities, and institutions. However, the existing Fatah-PA's security forces' leadership refused to deal with Hamas-government, and therefore the chain of command, responsibilities, interests, ideologies, and approaches began to clash. The refusal of Fatah to accept the electoral defeat made the year 2006 unstable and ambiguous, and thus a new round of archery and negligence of citizen's basic security needs emerged.

The international community's boycott of the Hamas-led Palestinian government resulted in the inability to pay salaries to 150,000 public employees, including the security forces. This led to deteriorating effects that further eroded the legitimacy and functionality of the PA institutions. Israel, in turn, withheld the transfer of tax revenues that it collects on behalf of the PA (UNCTAD 2005, 2006). The international community created parallel routes (DeVoor and Tartir 2009) to bypass Hamas and continue its support for the PA and its security apparatus; a selective process that supported the moderate and pragmatic Fatah leadership, and excluded the rest.<sup>6</sup> This represented a rejection of Palestinian democracy and a move that went against the principles of good governance that fuelled the Palestinian divide, and created new elite that were viewed as credible partners for peace (Turner 2011).

As a consequence for this Palestinian schism, the PA's President initiated measures to keep control over security forces. Abbas separated the National Security Forces from the MoI; nominated a Chief-of-Staff to report directly to him; appointed a loyal Fatah leader as the head of three internal security bodies; and, created new bodies and expanded others, particularly the Presidential Guard (Friedrich and Luethold 2007). In June 2006, the PLC became dysfunctional. Hamas in turn took its measures, first by establishing a 'unity' government and subsequently by violently taking over Gaza. Meanwhile, Hamas was building-up its back

up plans, particularly the Back-Up forces in Gaza, which later became the Executive Forces. Hamas managed to establish a strong military base in Gaza that combined both a state-like security apparatus and an armed resistance wing. However, in June 2007, violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas erupted and resulted in 118 casualties and 555 injuries, which brought a new phase of fragmentation and instability into the Palestinian polity (Brown 2009). This intra-Palestinian divide led to multi-level consequences on the security sector, its structures, and the further steps for its reform. The Fayyadist paradigm, discussed in the following section, emerged as the way forward to reform the security sector and build a Palestinian state.

### **The Fayyadism Phase: Re-Inventing Palestinian Security Forces (2007–2013)**

In the aftermath of the 2007 intra-Palestinian divide, Hamas controlled Gaza and Fatah controlled the West Bank. Both parties took parallel measures to sustain the fragmentation (Tartir 2012a). The PA President declared a state of emergency (Brown 2007; PCHR 2007),<sup>7</sup> and after dismissing the Hamas-led cabinet, appointed Fayyad to head an emergency government. With the appointment of Fayyad, a new era in the Palestinian polity and style of governance had emerged. Fayyad, through his West Bank First approach,<sup>8</sup> declared a commitment to both a strict reform agenda based on establishing a monopoly of violence by the PA security apparatus and the adoption of a neoliberal post-Washington economic agenda aimed at creating the institutional underpinning for a future Palestinian state (PA 2008, 2010a, b).

#### ***The Essence of Fayyadism***

Fayyad's major plans (PRDP, 13<sup>th</sup> Government Plan, and NDP)<sup>9</sup> spelled out a commitment to modernizing and professionalizing the Palestinian security services under the banner of 'One Homeland, One Flag, and One Law.' It aimed to reinvent the security forces through:

Rebuilding, restructuring and reforming the security services and developing democratic oversight mechanisms... creating an appropriate legal and institutional framework; enhancing the professional and operational effectiveness of security forces; ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the security forces; re-inforcing democratic governance and accountability; and addressing the legacies of conflict (e.g. unlawful ownership and use of weapons) (PA 2008: 38).

The 'Security First' approach under Fayyadism posited that security reform will prove that Palestinians are credible partners for peace and able to govern themselves despite the existence of the occupation. However, notwithstanding the glowing rhetoric, the major problem that remains unsolved is related to the meaning of security and political reform in the first place. Security reform under Fayyad meant the creation of a monopoly of violence through a weapons cleansing process, which was conducted to disarm or render dysfunctional the military groups committed to armed resistance of Israeli occupation. Hence, the PA security plan under Fayyad has several overlapping elements:

Checking Hamas and its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades; containing Fatah-allied militants through co-optation and amnesty; restoring public order by cracking down on criminals; conduct security campaign in Nablus and Jenin; and strengthening security forces through training, weapons procurement and security reform (ICG 2008: 4).

#### ***Technical Success, National Failures***

Although the Oslo Accords framework had not been altered in this phase, the Palestinian security forces became better defined. The international actors were able to dominate the reform process with their funds and

policy advice, stripping Palestinians of any level of ownership. Disarmament and security campaigns were conducted to enforce law and order and collect 'illegal' arms, the destroyed security sector's physical infrastructure was rebuilt, strategic plans for the sector were drafted, and the USSC and EUPOL COPPS, as well as the Palestinian Security Academy, became the major illustration of the new PA security doctrine. The security forces were reorganised into six main operational branches and two smaller ones, besides auxiliary services, with formal control divided between the PA presidency and the MoI (Friedrich and Luethold 2007). Corruption declined in the security spheres, and the security personnel were better equipped, trained, educated, dressed, and compensated. Many of the 'old security guards' appointed by Arafat were discharged and replaced by a new security élite. This phase witnessed a proliferation in the number of local and foreign NGOs working in the security realm (Tartir 2012b). These transformations were completely dependent upon donors' funds, with more than 30 per cent of total aid to Palestinians devoted to the security sector (Taghdisi-Rad 2010; UNCTAD 2010).

In technical terms, the PA's security forces became professionalised, well-trained, and engaged in daily coordination with the Israeli counterpart despite the existence of the asymmetry of power. Their technical achievements reached the highest levels since the establishment of the PA, and even won international and regional excellency prizes. The Palestinian security sector was reinvented under Fayyadism and an overhaul to its functionality was conducted,<sup>10</sup> which led many scholars to celebrate its success (Sellwood 2009; Bröning 2011).

However, this reform process was not without costs, and the implications of the enhanced functionality of PA security forces on the national struggle and resistance against the occupation were detrimental (Khan 2009). The reformed security forces were accused of human rights violations,

suppression of freedom of speech, and political affiliation (Amrov 2013). The PA has twice ranked lower in the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index than any Arab government, and it retains a 'note free' rating on the Freedom House political rights and civil liberties index (Thrall 2010; Danin 2011). They were accused of creating a police state and an authoritarian regime (Sayigh 2011). Moreover, they were blamed for adding another layer of repression, for failing to protect the foundation of a Palestinian democratic system, and for sustaining the occupation through their sub-contractor role that protected Israeli security through coordination mechanisms and disarmament process (Leech 2012). The excessive use of violence, torture, arbitrary detention, and intimidation by the PA's security forces has been documented by numerous local and international human rights organisations (HRW 2008, 2010; ICG 2008, 2010; ICHR 2010; MEM 2010; Al-Haq 2011). Further examples include political imprisonment, humiliation, torture, dismissal of public servants due to their political affiliation, the closing of Hamas-affiliated NGOs and civil society organisations, and money laundering regulation.

A 2010 International Crisis Group's (ICG) report warned that Palestinian security forces had violated human rights and circumvented the Basic Law through extrajudicial arrest campaigns and detention without a court order, as well as through torture and ill-treatment at PA detention centres. Following the brutal crackdown on protestors in Ramallah between June and July of 2012, an Amnesty International report argued that, 'The brutality that followed was shocking even by the standards of the PA security forces, whose use of excessive force on previous occasions and abuses against detainees had already earned them an unenviable reputation at home and internationally' (Amnesty International 2013: 1).

The practices of the security forces were observed by scholars as a reform unfolding in an authoritarian context. Nathan Brown

argued that Fayyadism had no domestic foundation, and that the maintenance of the existing institutions was done 'in an authoritarian context that robs the results of domestic legitimacy' (Brown 2011). Hence, the entire program was 'based not simply on de-emphasizing or postponing democracy and human rights, but on actively denying them for the present' (Brown 2010: 2). This made Palestinian authoritarianism different from the one under Arafat, insofar as it was 'regularised and softened' and 'less venal and probably less capricious. But it is also more stultifying' (Brown 2010: 10). Hence, 'the main problem with Fayyadism is not the way it undermines democracy in the short term but in the way it masks the absence of any long-term strategy' (Brown 2009: 5).

Likewise, Yezid Sayigh (2011) argued that although the security forces in the West Bank received \$450 million, their capacities were hindered. This was due to the lack of ownership in the Security Sector Reform process, lack of democratic governance and constitutional order, and an exclusive focus on technical issues. Sayigh concluded that the authoritarian and securitisation transformation in the West Bank will threaten not only long-term security, but also the ability to achieve Palestinian statehood (Sayigh 2011). Meanwhile, Leech (2012) argued that while the process of reforming the security sector may manifest a genuine, even existential, improvement in the lives of people, the regime treated this as a starting point for increasing authoritarianism, not the reason for its conclusion.

Finally, the evolution of security forces during the Fayyadism phase was influenced by the contested role of the international community and their security missions, particularly the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) and the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS). An aid official commented on this by arguing:

On one hand, we demand democratic processes, transparency and

accountability and constantly stress the importance of human rights. But on the other hand, we have for the most part been silent about the PA's extra-judicial campaign against Hamas. There is a huge contradiction in our message (Cited in ICG 2010: 33).

The USSC and the EUPOL COPPS missions were part and parcel to the transformations that took place in the security sphere under Fayyadism. As such, they bear a share of responsibility in the consequences of these security transformations on the lives of Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank. They are not only new actors, but also influential ones that shape discourse and strategies, and affect the dimensions of the Palestinian struggle. This constituted a major transformation in the role of external actors from being sponsors of the reform process to become real implementers of it through real presence on the ground. This shift from being observers to implementers had its own repercussions on the ownership of the security reform processes and opened-up a whole new section in the international aid industry as a further amplification of securitisation and the securitised development process.

However, both the USSC and the EUPOL COPPS failed to support democratic governance and improve civil oversight and accountability due to the technical nature of their intervention and their lack of local sensitivity. Both bodies focused on a conventional train-and-equip approach which created a more skilful security forces, but failed to generate a genuine institutional capacity to design, plan, and conduct training indigenously. Their support paved the way for moving toward authoritarianism and the establishment of a police state (Rose 2008; Sayigh 2011; Kristoff 2012).

Despite technical successes, such as the training of more than 3,000 Palestinian police officers and supporting the justice system, the EUPOL COPPS were criticised for their limited and technical scope, for their attempts to promote the rule of law



in an authoritarian rather than democratic manner, and for their role in sustaining the occupation through failing to challenge the Israeli measures (Bulut 2009; Persson 2011; Youngs and Michou 2011; Bouris 2014).

The USSC was criticised for ‘brainwashing’ the young Palestinians that were recruited, entrenching the security collaboration with Israel at the expense of Palestinian security, criminalising resistance, and also for protecting Israeli security through the creation of ‘new Palestinian men’ (as argued by Keith Dayton who headed the mission from 2005 until 2010). The people referred to forces that were trained by the USSC as the ‘Dayton forces’, and not only were they engaged in a brutal crackdown on Palestinians, they were also accused of an unprecedented level of human rights violations (Byrne 2009; Dayton 2009; Zanotti 2009, 2010; Thrall 2010).

In sum, the reinvention of Palestinian security forces during the Fayyadism era (PA’s post-2007 state-building project) constituted a major pillar that demonstrated the ability of the PA to govern the Palestinian people and build public institutions that are able to deliver effectively. However, the security reform agenda had detrimental consequences for the Palestinian national struggle, the everyday security of the people, the role of resistance movements, as well as intra-Palestinian politics (Amrov and Tartir 2014a, b).<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

This article provided a contextual analysis of the evolution and reform processes of Palestinian security forces since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1993 until the era of Fayyadism. It focused on three distinct phases: (i) 1993–1999 and the establishment and building-up of the PA’s security forces in the West Bank and Gaza according to Oslo Accords; (ii) 2000–2006 when the existing security forces were destroyed in the aftermath of the intifada and when the non-PA forces filled the security gap; (iii) and finally, from 2007 until the departure of Fayyad in mid-2013, the phase during which

the reinvention of the Palestinian security forces went through a major security reform project. The article concludes that the proliferation of the security forces under Arafatism resulted in further insecurities for the Palestinian people despite the attempt to reverse this condition under Fayyadism through security reform. This raised new tensions between the PA’s security forces and the armed resistance groups and eventually manifested in authoritarian transformations. Therefore the intended reforms constituted another form of institutionalised insecurity, but disguised in a state-building and good governance project.

The complex relationship between the PA and non-PA security forces and groups in the Palestinian context posed an additional challenge to the security governance reform initiatives. Despite the shifts in the security doctrines, what remained constant was the problematic reality and fundamental flaw of conducting a security sector reform and pursuing a disarmament strategy in the absence of sovereign authority, and while living under a foreign military occupation.

At best, the security reform under Fayyadism’s state-building project – and the leadership of PA’s president Mahmoud Abbas – resulted in better stability and more security to Israel and its occupation, but it did not result in better security conditions for the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank. At worst, the enhanced functionality of the PA’s security forces and the reformed style of governance that was defined through security collaboration with Israel, resulted in creating authoritarian transformations and criminalising resistance against the Israeli occupation, and as such directly and indirectly sustained it.

## Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> According to the Oslo Peace Accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas: Area (A) under the civilian and security control of the Palestinian Authority (17%); Area (B) under Palestinian Authority's civilian control only (24%); and Area (C) under full Israeli control (59%).
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Mohammad Dahlan in his office in Ramallah, Occupied West Bank, June 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> Following the 100-Day Plan, the PA worked towards implementing a 60-Day Action Plan in 2003 and a Six-Month Reform Plan in early-mid 2004, and put forward a One-Year Reform Action Plan in September 2004.
- <sup>4</sup> The full title of the roadmap is: *A Performance-based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. The Quartet was headed until mid-2015 by Tony Blair and consists of the United Nations, United States, European Union, and Russia.
- <sup>5</sup> See the 2005 electoral program of Abbas <http://president.ps/electoral.aspx>; and interview with Al-Jazeera in April 2004 <http://bit.ly/1eCnQgi>
- <sup>6</sup> TIM and PEGASE were the major EU mechanisms used to bypass Hamas. They aimed to channel aid directly through the EU to the beneficiaries' accounts (public servants and security personnel salaries) or through the Office of the PA's President.
- <sup>7</sup> A state of emergency can last up to thirty days. After that, it may be renewed only with the consent of two-thirds the Palestinian Legislative Council. Up to now Palestinians live under a state of

emergency, in violation of the Palestinian Basic Law.

- <sup>8</sup> West Bank First strategy was largely born out of the American and Israeli desire with the tacit approval of the PA to either isolate Hamas, weaken it, force it to moderate, or defeat it altogether. The aim of the strategy is to create two drastically different realities in the two Palestinian territories, whereby the West Bank prospers and Gaza despairs (for further discussion see (Samhoury 2007)).
- <sup>9</sup> PRDP refers to the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan; the 13<sup>th</sup> Government Plan refers to Ending the Occupation: Establishing the State plan 2009–2010 (PA 2009); the NDP refers to the National Development Plan 2011–13.
- <sup>10</sup> On the achieved successes please refer to: UN (2011); World Bank (2011a, b); PA (2010a, b, 2011a, b).
- <sup>11</sup> For further analysis on the consequences of the PA security campaigns between 2007 and 2013 on the lives of the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank, please refer to the author's forthcoming article entitled *Securitized development and Palestinian authoritarianism under Fayyadism* (Tartir 2015).

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