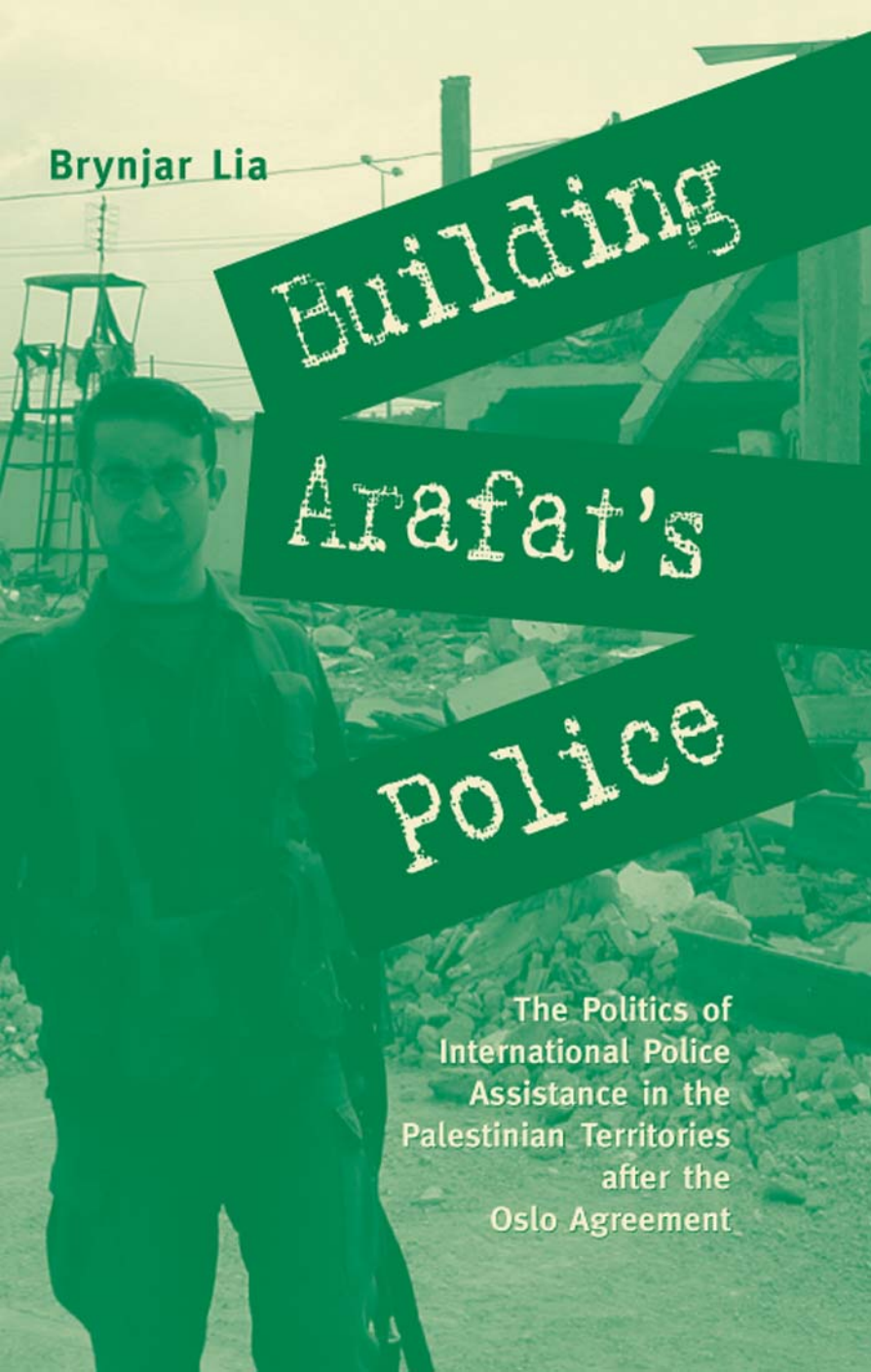
Brynjar Lia
Building Arafat's Police
The Politics of International Police Assistance in the Palestinian Territories after the Oslo Agreement

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Contents

1

Introduction

When the Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Israel signed the Declaration of Principles (DoP) on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993, a process was set in motion that led to the formation of a Palestinian self-government authority and a number of Palestinian state-like institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The largest and most resource-intensive of these was the Palestinian police force. An integral part of this formation process was international donor involvement. Shortly after the signing ceremony, representatives of a large number of states and donor institutions gathered in Washington, DC and pledged $2.4 billion to assist the implementation of the peace accords, believing that the Palestinian self-rule experiment would succeed only if it were bolstered by solid economic and technical assistance.

Despite the extensive academic literature on Palestinian–Israeli relations and the Palestinian self-rule experiment, little has been published so far on the Palestinian police and security agencies (hereafter 'the Palestinian Police' or 'the Police') and the role of the donor community in establishing and developing the Police.[1] This is rather surprising given the relevance of the Palestinian case in understanding the role of international police aid in war-to-peace transitions. The paucity of academic studies of the Palestinian case has a parallel in the dearth of studies of Third World policing, reflecting the tendency of police studies to concentrate on Western societies.[2]

The overriding theme of this study is the role of the international donor community in establishing the Palestinian Police. The time frame is roughly 1993–2000, beginning with the early donor consultations following the Oslo Accords and concluding with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000, when most police donor programmes were brought to a halt. As the critical establishment period is of most interest, less attention is given to developments after 1996, when the Palestinian Police's deployment to the West Bank cities and the Palestinian elections ended the first phase of self-rule.

An underlying theme of this book is how a police force can be created without the framework of a state. Inspired by the theoretical literature reviewed in the Introduction, this work attempts to answer two basic questions. First, how were the police donor efforts affected by the fact that the Palestinian Police was created by a liberation movement in the wake of an armed conflict (the intifada) and as part of a non-state entity still under territorial dispute? Second, given this unique political setting, what was the evolving triangular interplay in the formation of the new police between PLO demands and priorities, donor preferences and constraints and the interests of Israel as the hegemonic power? Put in simple terms, what kind of police force(s) did the PLO leadership promote and how did this fit with donor preferences and Israeli security interests? These two themes will remain at the forefront of our discussion in subsequent chapters.

The PLO was no newcomer in the area of policing and security. In 1993, it was still one of the world's largest and wealthiest national liberation organizations, with a long history of informal policing in Palestinian refugee camps and with extensive experience in protecting PLO fighters, personalities and institutions worldwide. Therefore, it was not a tabula rasa in the realm of policing; it possessed certain policing cultures. Its emphasis on armed struggle, the protection of the leadership and the prevention of infiltration and collaboration was a typical insurgent policing model in which the security needs of the resistance fighters rather than services to the community were given priority. This legacy inevitably influenced the new Palestinian Police, and manifested itself clearly in the PLO's initial preparations, for example its recruitment and training policies. This posed a tremendous challenge to the donor community, which at least in principle favoured a civil–democratic policing model.

The new political order created after the signing of the Oslo Accords presented another formidable obstacle to police donor efforts. As the occupying and colonial power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel viewed the Palestinian Police through the prism of its territorial interests in the Occupied Territories and the omnipresent terrorism threat. The dominance of Israel over the PNA in nearly every walk of life made its preferences and policies a major determinant of the evolution of the Palestinian Police, and hence also of the ability of foreign donors to offer relevant assistance. There was a fundamental anomaly in Palestinian

policing in that the Palestinian Police's main duty, according to the signed agreements, was the protection of Israeli security and colonial interests in the Occupied Territories.

The complex political setting and the conflictual relationship between the parties created a difficult environment for external donors and their development aid agencies, which in 1993 had little experience in working with foreign police and paramilitary organizations in conflict areas. A number of factors constrained their willingness and ability to offer effective assistance. One problem was the PLO's military units, upon which the Palestinian Police was built. Given their history as guerrilla armies and secretive terrorist organizations, they were unfamiliar with Western donor politics and often proved to be unable to meet stringent aid requirements. Also, the donors were extremely sensitive to any signs that Palestinian Police structures and policing practices violated the terms of the Palestinian–Israeli agreements. Still, as will be seen in this study, the fact that the Palestinian Police was understood as key to the success of the Oslo process induced reluctant donor agencies to go to considerable lengths in meeting its needs. In doing so, their policy approaches were determined by the triangular Israel–PLO–donor relationship, which offered more challenges than a bilateral framework.

This book seeks to answer the following questions: how did the police donors approach the difficult obstacles of mobilizing and channelling aid to a non-state entity with a 'terrorist' past that was dominated by a colonial power? How did donors organize themselves in order to overcome political constraints, technical obstacles and policy differences? How did the police aid process develop from early programmatic declarations to the actual delivery of aid on the ground? To what degree was donor aid effective in supporting essential donor goals such as democratic policing and/or support for the Middle East peace process?

Donor involvement in establishing police forces in war-torn societies is not unique to the Palestinian case, and I shall briefly review some of the recent literature devoted to this topic in order to provide a broad background for understanding the Palestinian process. It will also allow us to identify key themes and dilemmas in more detail.

Police Reform and Police Aid in War-to-Peace Transitions

The New Peacekeeping

The centrality of police reform in societies emerging from violent conflict has been underscored repeatedly in academic writing on international peacekeeping in the 1990s.[3] The reorientation of peacekeeping literature towards the issue of police reform was rooted in the growing international involvement in mitigating and resolving violent conflicts within states, as opposed to conflicts between states, which were the primary context for international peacekeeping during the Cold War.[4]

Starting in the late 1980s, there was a marked increase in international peacekeeping involvement, measured, for example, by the number of UN peacekeeping operations worldwide. The "new interventionism"[5] reflected the changing geopolitical climate of the post-Cold War era and the emergence of vastly different concepts of peacekeeping. These appeared under a wide variety of new labels, such as 'non-traditional peacekeeping', 'the new peacekeeping', 'second-generation peacekeeping', 'wider peacekeeping' and 'peace support operations'.[6] The Cold War concept of peacekeeping was one of lightly armed peacekeepers trying to minimize hostilities through ceasefire monitoring along a demarcation line.[7] In the late 1980s, however, a growing number of peacekeeping operations attempted to deal with the underlying causes of conflict rather than with simply avoiding its aggravation. Consequently, the new peacekeeping that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s involved a wide range of measures and transcended the limited objective of maintaining a ceasefire. It gave rise to the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding, introduced by the UN secretary-general Boutros-Ghali in *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992 and defined as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict".[8]

The new peacekeeping missions often had a substantial or predominant non-military mandate and composition, and involved a wider range of actors and tasks, sometimes termed the increased 'breadth' and 'depth' of non-traditional peacekeeping.[9] In *An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros-Ghali mentions weapons seizure and destruction, restoration of order, refugee repatriation, training police and security personnel, election monitoring, protection of human rights, reform of government institutions and promotion of political participation.[10] Peacebuilding has

also included demobilization and the reintegration into civil society of former combatants, economic reconstruction efforts and training or re-educating civil servants, judges, court officials, prison guards etc. In short, peacebuilding contains a broad variety of forms of international assistance and involvement.

Police Reform as Peacebuilding

In the myriad peacebuilding tasks and efforts, police reform was a priority. During the 1990s, the literature on the new peacekeeping increasingly acknowledged that police reform was an important and overlooked aspect of peacebuilding. Reforming brutal, corrupt or ineffective police forces or, alternatively, creating entirely new police forces gradually came to be accepted as perhaps one of the most central issues on the post-conflict rehabilitation agenda. The argument was that states and societies emerging from civil wars and protracted violent conflict suffered from a partial or total breakdown of elementary law enforcement and public order maintenance. This 'security gap' encouraged crime, fuelled discontent and heightened the risk of a resumption of hostilities.[11]

The surge in international police assistance during the 1990s was not only a result of a new peacekeeping agenda and greater international interventionism in internal conflicts. After the Cold War, development aid donors and institutions grew more attuned to the idea of spending funds to encourage police and military reforms, seeing them as basic preconditions for economic development. The increased emphasis in donor attitudes on human rights and democratization encouraged such aid too.[12] Otwin Marenin attributes the increase in US international police aid programmes to two main factors. First, the collapse of communism, especially the post-Cold War political changes in the former Eastern bloc states, paved the way for democratization, and assistance to police reform was seen as crucial to consolidate democracy in those states.[13] Second, increased police aid was also motivated by the need for more international cooperation to face the perceived risks associated with growing networks of transnational organized crime and international terrorism. Responding to the new threat environment, the US offered to provide more training and assistance to states fighting terrorism and various forms of organized crime, especially drug trafficking.[14]