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it's going to be a bloody struggle." ;?; HISHAM AHMED, a political scientist in Bethlehem Weakened Netanyahu, Arafat may imperil peace discussions said he will resign if a troop with' m US. fears successors drawal isn't carried out soon. The bickering isn't limited to Netanyahu's center-right coalition. will lack the strength to implement accord long-simmering feud between Labor Party leader Ehud Barak and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres boiled over on a few recent occasions when Peres pushed for a national unity government. Barak refused and the initiative died. Yasser Arafat Benjamin Netanyahu In the Knesset cafeteria, Peres lashed out at a group of Labor members of parliament: "If we had had a unity government today, as I suggested, the state would not look this way. . . , It's all because of you and your rotten egos." "We no longer have leaders who are willing to take dramatic decisions and ignore what the polls say," said Reuven Hazan, a Hebrew University expert on political parties. "We have leaders who are politicians, not statesmen. Whether it's Netanyahu p coupon or Barak, they try to stand for everything and yet they stand for nothing." Hazan believes Israel's new system is partly to blame for today's leaders, who he and others believe bear no resemblance to the old giants: Israeli politicians, sensing that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government could topple at any moment, are shouting at one another over cafeteria tables or plotting in secret. . Meanwhile, underlings of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat are maneuvering to be next m line when the 68-year-old leader dies. "After Arafat, it's going to be a bloody struggle," said Hisham Ahmed, a political scientist in Bethlehem. As the United States tries to patch together a deal to resuscitate the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, diplomats are expressing growing concern about the shaky political leadership . in both camps. Netanyahu's government survived a parliamentary no-confidence vote Monday. No-confidence motions brought by opposition parties were rejected 54-54 with two abstentions. It takes a minimum of 61 votes in the 120-member house to bring down the government. So long as the political discord and fragmentation continues, it is unlikely that Israel or the Palestinians will produce leaders strong enough to reach and implement a sweeping peace accord. President Bill Clinton will wade deeper into the conflict in one-on-one meetings with Netanyahu and Arafat at the White House later this month, knowing that the longer the peace talks remain stalled, the greater the likelihood that hard-liners and radicals on both sides could seize the Meir, Menachem Begin, Rabin and even Peres. The new system requires upper hand and kill the negotiations. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli leader who signed the Oslo peace agreement in 1993, creating the framework for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, was assassinated more than two years ago by a right-wing religious Jew. The Palestinian partner, Arafat, has narrowly escaped death on several occasions. After 35 years as the top Palestinian leader, he continues to work

superhuman hours but looks extremely fatigued, fanning periodic fears that his health is seriously deteriorating. Although the leadership issues with the Israelis and Palestinians are different, Arafat and Netanyahu are surrounded by circling sharks. Netanyahu, 48, pulled off a remarkable political feat Jan. 5, passing his budget by a six-vote margin only a day after Foreign Minister David Levy announced his resignation. But analysts believe Netanyahu remains one crisis away from losing his one-vote majority in the 120-seat parliament, which would force new elections. 4: The Land of Israel Front threatens to bring down Israel's government if Netanyahu gives away even "a single dunairi (quarter-acre) of territory now under Israel's control." The centrist Third Way party, with four members of parliament, says it will topple him if he doesn't give up more land. Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, a popular former army general, a prime minister to win 50 percent of the vote, and analysts say that encourages candidates to water down positions to appeal to the largest possible number of Israel's many political parties. , " In Gaza and the West Bank, Arafat is being challenged by radicals in the group Hamas and by more impatient leaders in his own ranks. Two of Arafat's most influential subordinates, Salah Khalaf and Khalil Wazir were assassinated. The two leading politicians below Arafat now are Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Ahmed Korei (Abu Alaa), an economist and the speaker of the Palestinian legislative Council. Neither has much popular support.