

# Hamas and its Positions Towards Israel

Understanding the Islamic Resistance Organization  
through the concept of framing

Floor Janssen

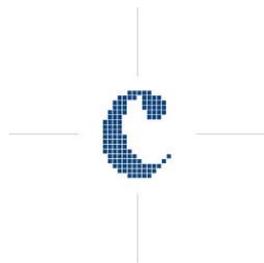
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# 1. Introduction

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The literature on radical Islamic organizations with roots in the Middle East is abundant. Anyone who seeks to increase his or her knowledge about this subject has a plethora of research to choose from. In fact, one can continue reading for days, if not months, as it is safe to say that the existing body of literature covers almost every aspect of various Middle Eastern Islamic activist movements and the actors involved.

The same holds true for the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Organization Hamas<sup>1</sup>, which was founded in the late 1980s as an offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. The movement emerged as a doubly-driven religious-nationalist liberation movement embracing the strategy of armed resistance against occupying Israel. Consequently, Hamas shocked the world with its suicide attacks in the hearts of Israeli cities, and its continued efforts of retaliation following Israeli attacks on Palestinian targets. Then, in 2006, Hamas shocked the world once again, winning the democratic elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Many scholars considered this victory to be shocking as well as unavoidable in the frustrated and suffering Palestinian

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1 Hamas is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, or Islamic Resistance Organization. The letter h comes from the word haraka (movement), the m from muqawama (resistance), and the s is the second letter in the word islamiya (Islamic). The a was added before the last letter to make the abbreviation meaningful on its own. Hamas means zeal, enthusiasm or vigour in Arabic

nation. In 2007 Hamas assumed full control over the Gaza Strip, taking over power from the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority and tightening Israeli sanctions already in place since Hamas's 2006 electoral victory. At the time of writing (January 2009) Hamas is enrolled in an all-out war with Israel, with the Israeli army waging both air raids and ground attacks against the Gaza Strip in retaliation for the continuous firing of Hamas's Qassam rockets into Israel.

Evidently, the war on Gaza receives the world's full attention. Observers not only question the tactics and decisions by the Israeli army in this conflict, they are equally concerned with understanding Hamas's infrastructure and the dynamics of the movement's following throughout the Gaza Strip. Many scholars seem to have a fascination with this radical but widespread Palestinian movement, which has resulted in a great number of studies and books.<sup>2</sup> As the current conflict between Israel and Hamas demonstrates, the Palestinian landscape is continually evolving and developing and enables us to continue discovering further relevant information.

Naturally, Hamas as a movement has undergone several developments and experiences that are for the most part closely linked to domestic political occurrences and its relationship to Israel. This study intends to shed further light on the development of Hamas as an organization. To this end, it focuses on maturational differences between Hamas's thinking about Israel in the movement's early years and its later phases.

## 1.1 Goals of this Study

The purpose of this study is to deliver a valuable contribution to the debate amongst scholars about the nature of Hamas as an organization. To some, Hamas is a straightforward fundamentalist terrorist organization<sup>3</sup>. On the other side of the spectrum we can find scholars who stress Hamas's pragmatism and its proven willingness to change its positions on fundamental issues.<sup>4</sup> Regarding Hamas's positions toward Israel, there are scholars who claim that Hamas will never deliver a stable and lasting truce, let alone a recognition of the State of Israel. Others argue that Hamas has in fact

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2 For a brief overview of the scholarly literature on Hamas, see section 1.4 of this study 'Debate amongst Scholars'

3 For example: Matthew Levitt (2006), *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and W.R.F. Kortenoeven (2007), *Hamas: Portret and Achtergronden*, Soesterberg: ASPEKt. See also section 1.4 of this thesis (Debate amongst Scholars)

4 For example: Khaled Hroub (2000), *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies. See also section 1.4 of this paper (Debate amongst Scholars)

abandoned its fundamentalist positions towards Israel and is heading for a possible settlement.

We intend to show that Hamas is far from being a moderate force. However, there are signs that, in practice, Hamas has ceased to be an extremely radical organization established in 1987. Especially since it entered the political arena, Hamas leaders have innovated ways to balance everyday effectiveness against its need to remain faithful to its ideology. By analyzing official Hamas documents and statements by its top leaders, we intend to show how Hamas's positions towards Israel have developed since its founding in 1987. Further, we aim to mirror these ideological developments against political events and to show how Hamas has framed its choices and decisions to its public. Our thesis is that Hamas's official documents show that there is a clear development in Hamas's stance towards (its dealings with) Israel, and that these positions can be explained when placed in the political context. Further, we contend that Hamas has found innovative ways to frame its message to its audience in statements about Israel by its top leaders – striking a delicate balance between fanaticism and everyday political practice.

Thus, this study is intended to assess whether Hamas's positions towards the State of Israel developed since the movement's foundation in 1987, and, if so, how such a development should be explained. Building on the findings of our study, we will answer the following questions in our overall conclusion:

- What developments concerning Hamas's positions with regard to Israel can be identified in Hamas's official documents throughout time?
- Do statements by Hamas officials reflect (the development in) these positions and how do they frame Hamas's message to their public?
- How should we place developments in Hamas's thinking in the Palestinian political context?
- Has Hamas proven to be able and/or willing to adapt its ideological thinking about Israel to certain political contexts?

To this day we have not come across a study containing an in-depth research of Hamas's official documents combined with important statements by its leaders, which includes Hamas's episode of being the largest governmental party. Further, the current crisis in Gaza makes it even more pressing to explain the contexts in which Hamas makes certain decisions, whether radical or pragmatic. We contend that by studying Hamas's history, we can better understand the (future) behaviour of this important Palestinian political actor.

## 1.2 Social Movement Theory

In this study, we build heavily on Social Movement Theory (SMT) which provides us with a relevant theoretical framework. SMT commonly defines social movements as ‘informal networks, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest’.<sup>5</sup> Further, the theory argues that collective action becomes contentious when people hardly have any means of voicing their protest through established institutions. Thus, SMT generally focuses on groups as the proper unit of analysis in explaining collective action<sup>6</sup> and can be of great help in understanding (Islamic) contentions.

As SMT can be applied to almost every social movement, the literature on how collective action takes shape is vast. SMT presents several aspects or variables that are crucial in understanding the behaviour of social movement organizations. For this study, we have borrowed from SMT the concept of ‘framing’. Framing refers to ‘the schemata of interpretation’ that enable individuals to ‘locate, perceive, identify and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large’.<sup>7</sup> In other words, ‘framing is the bumpersticker version of how issues get interpreted within a certain ideological context’.<sup>8</sup> Using frames, social movements aim to mobilize support for them among their target audience. By drawing on meaningful aspects of people’s lives, such as religion, social movements strive to increase their following. Frames need to appeal to the public, in that they resonate with general ideas on what the problem is, who is responsible and what should be done to solve it. The process of connecting with a public and making a message resonate with it is referred to as ‘frame alignment’.<sup>9</sup> One of the most common examples of framing in the Arab world is the slogan ‘Islam is the solution’ (Al-Islam huwa al-hall), frequently used by Islamists.<sup>10</sup>

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5 Donatella della Porta & Mario Diani (1999), *Social Movements – An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p. 16

6 Glenn E. Robinson, ‘ Hamas as a Social Movement’, in: Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed., 2004), *Islamic Activism – A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indianapolis University Press, p. 115

7 David A. Snow et al., ‘Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation’, *American Sociological Review*, 37, p. 464, quoted in Della Porta & Diani, p. 69

8 E. Robinson, ‘ Hamas as a Social Movement’, in: Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed., 2004), *Islamic Activism – A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indianapolis University Press, p. 116

9 David A. Snow & Robert D. Benford, ‘Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization’, in: Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi & Sidney Tarrow (eds., 1988), *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures*, Greenwich, Conn. & London: JAI Press, pp. 198-199

10 Ibid

In contrast to the numerous studies in which SMT is applied to various Western social movements, until recently, few studies of Arab and Islamic movements including SMT could be found. Recent and influential studies that do incorporate SMT and various Islamic movements include *Islamic Activism* by Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed.) and *Why Muslim Rebel* by Mohammed M. Hafez.<sup>11</sup> These authors have added to the body of literature by studying the impact of changing political circumstances on social movements in the Muslim world.

As for Hamas, similar studies exist that link political circumstances to the movement's ideology, for instance by Hatina<sup>12</sup> and Muslih<sup>13</sup>. Other authors, such as Mishal and Sela<sup>14</sup>, have analysed Hamas's behaviour using the SMT concept of political opportunities and constraints. Further, Robinson<sup>15</sup> depicts how SMT variables such as cultural framing can be applied in the case of Hamas. These authors all point to Hamas's pragmatic nature and its ability to keep up its ideology during major political events, while maintaining a large part of its Palestinian following as well.

The abovementioned authors have shown that SMT is an effective tool in understanding the behaviour of social movements in the Islamic world, including Hamas. More specifically and of great relevance for this study, SMT is useful in explaining how certain political ideologies are presented to the public through the concept of framing. However, the abovementioned studies focus mainly on the 1990s, and particularly on the period during and following the Oslo Accords. To a lesser extent, they cover the period usually referred to as the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005). Although these studies concentrate on significant episodes of Palestinian history, they fail to take into account recent developments. The same holds true for the numerous studies published since Hamas's electoral victory in 2006 – these studies place their focus on the electoral process and Hamas being the largest governmental party, but put less emphasis on the many years that led up to that

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11 Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed., 2004), *Islamic Activism – A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Mohammed M. Hafez (2003), *Why Muslims Rebel – Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, Boulder, Coll. & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers

12 See for instance: Meir Hatina, 'Hamas and the Oslo Accords: Religious Dogma in a Changing Political Reality', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 4, no. 3, Autumn 1999, pp. 37-55

13 See for instance: Muhammad Muslih, 'Hamas – Strategy and Tactics', in: Leonard Binder (ed., 1999), *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics in the Middle East*, Gainesville etc.: University of Florida Press, pp. 307-344

14 See for instance: Shaul Mishal & Avraham Sela (2000), *The Palestinian Hamas – Vision, Violence, and Co-existence*, New York: Columbia University Press

15 Glenn E. Robinson, 'Hamas as a Social Movement', in: Wiktorowicz (ed., 2004), *Islamic Activism – A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 112-139

achievement. This study aims to fill this void by employing an SMT approach in the study of the development in Hamas's stances towards Israel since its founding, including the movement's victory in the 2006 legislative elections and its aftermath until 2007.

### **1.3 General Outline**

This study consists of four chapters, which are each divided into a number of sections and sub-sections. In the first chapter, we will provide the background information for this study, focusing entirely on the role Hamas has played during important Palestinian political events, with each of the sections dealing with an important 'chapter' in Hamas's history. Being the basis for our study, the first chapter provides an insight into how Hamas as an organization has developed from its inception in 1987 until 2007. We will also touch upon the debate amongst scholars about Hamas's nature, the movement's long-term agenda, and Hamas's ability to adapt its ideology to changing socio-political circumstances.

The second chapter presents the first part of our research. We will thoroughly study and analyze some of Hamas's most significant official documents that it has issued during or after major political events. Employing the SMT concept of framing, we will identify the frames concerning Hamas's thinking about Israel which are most commonly used throughout these documents. We will also place these frames in their political context, in order to explain why Hamas has chosen to frame its message in a particular manner. In our effort to do so, we differentiate between Hamas's 'views on the current State of Israel', and Hamas's long-term objectives which we will discuss under Hamas's 'views on the future State of Israel'.

The purpose of our third chapter is to show how Hamas's 'current' as well as its 'future' positions and views towards Israel have developed over time. In doing so, we will build on our findings from chapter 2, mirroring developments in Hamas's ideology against important political events and circumstances. Again, we will focus on Hamas's predominant frames in explaining how the movement communicates its thinking to the public.

In our fourth chapter, we will study and analyze statements by two of Hamas's most significant leaders in several Arabic news sources. Chapter 4 shows to what extent the frames Hamas has used in the documents we studied in chapter 2 are reflected in comments by the movement's leaders. We will also discuss other significant frames by the Hamas leaders which we found in the press articles. With the findings of chapter 3 as our basis, chapter 4 subsequently concentrates on how Hamas leaders find their balance

between Hamas's overarching ideology and its long-term goals, and the movement's dealing with on-the-ground matters and issues.

The preparation for our research is entirely based on secondary studies such as books and academic articles (Chapter 1). A number of authors have made an effort to include English translations of some of the most significant Hamas documents in their work, which we were able to include in Chapter 2. We have completed our selection of documents by consulting the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, published by the renowned Institute for Palestine Studies. This Journal provides us not only with numerous articles about all issues concerning Palestine, but also includes official documents, statements and other valuable scriptures in full text. For Chapter 4, we collected media statements from the timeframe 2003-2007 by Hamas leaders from three online Arabic news sources: *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (an independent pan-Arab newspaper with a particularly accessible website); *Al-Jazeera Net* (the website of the famous broadcast network based in Qatar); and *Filastin al-Muslima* (Hamas's monthly magazine which also has its own website).

#### **1.4 Transliteration & Important Notions**

Due to the topic, this study contains many Arabic names and terms, which are written or transcribed using the Latin alphabet. Because various systems exist by which we can transliterate the characters of the Arabic language, there are many ways to transcribe a single Arabic word. Hence, for this study it is important to employ a system by which we can transliterate Arabic words correctly and consistently. As this is not a linguistic study, we have chosen not to use diacritical marks such as dots and lines in translating Arabic words. Instead, we have employed a system in which the original Arabic is still recognisable to readers who have a command of the language, but is also readable for those who are not familiar with Arabic or its various transliteration systems. However, in direct quotations and bibliographical references we retain the transliteration provided by the original source.

This study also contains several crucial notions which are used frequently and thus need to be explained in advance.

##### *1.4.1 Intifada*

The history of Hamas is thoroughly intertwined with the eruption of two mass-based uprisings in the Palestinian Territories. Due to the extensive worldwide media coverage of the course of both uprisings, the term 'intifada' is a well-known word outside the Arabic region as well. The first Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation started in 1987 and lasted until approximately 1993. The second uprising, also called the Al-Aqsa Intifada

because of the event that triggered its occurrence, erupted in 2000 and lasted until 2005.<sup>16</sup>

#### 1.4.2 *Islamism*

Throughout this study, the Hamas leadership and its members are referred to as 'Islamists'. Although the two adjectives 'Islamic' and 'Islamist' might be confusing and are certainly intertwined, we must make a clear distinction between 'Islam' and 'Islamism'<sup>17</sup>. By Islamists, we mean those who utilize Islam for political purposes. In other words, they give a political-ideological meaning to their religion.<sup>18</sup> Islamism emerged during the 1970s and 1980s in virtually every Islamic country. Over time, a large number of Islamic movements and groups emerged, often fuelled by public demands that posited a political role for Islam and emphasized the desire to apply many aspects of Islamic law (Shari'a<sup>19</sup>) to society and eventually to establish an Islamic state. Very often, these movements turned against authoritarian and dictatorial rulers who adopted Western technology, ideology, culture and institutions.<sup>20</sup> Not all of the movements that can be labelled 'Islamist' employ violent tactics to further their goals. However, certain Islamist groups, including Hamas, can also be labelled 'militant'.

#### 1.4.3 *Jews and Zionism in Hamas's thinking*

For centuries, the indigenous Muslims, Christian and Jewish people of the Middle East lived together with a remarkable degree of peaceful coexistence, particularly when compared with the lack of religious tolerance in medieval Christian Europe.<sup>21</sup> However, during the twentieth century, a European-type anti-Semitism developed across the Middle East. To many in the Islamic world, the establishment of the State of Israel proved the existence of a

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16 More about the first and second intifada in Chapter 1: Background to the Subject

17 Some who are labelled 'Islamists' oppose the term 'Islamism', while they maintain that their political convictions are an expression of their religious beliefs. Therefore, some scholars prefer using terms such as 'activist Islam' and 'political Islam' instead. See for instance: International Crisis Group, 'Understanding Islamism', *Middle East/North Africa Report*, No. 37, March 2005

18 See also: Jacques Waardenburg (ed., 2000), *Islam: Norm, Ideaal en Werkelijkheid*, Houten: Fibula, p. 451

19 The Shari'a is the Islamic sacred law. It provides moral instructions but also very practical regulations for ordering society. From: Meir Hatina, 'Hamas and the Oslo Accords: Religious dogma in a changing political reality', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 37-55

20 A dominant theme of nineteenth and twentieth-century Middle East history was the attempt by certain rulers to imitate the West. See also: William L. Cleveland (2004), *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 441-442

21 Khaled Hroub (2006), *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, London: Pluto Press, p. 31

worldwide Jewish conspiracy against the world in general and Muslims in particular. Nowadays, a voluminous body of Arabic literature exists about the Jews and their misdeeds<sup>22</sup>.

The strong anti-Jewish feelings that can be found throughout the Middle East today originated in Europe at the start of the twentieth century. While the Jewish people suffered constant persecution in Europe – a practice that escalated in Nazi-occupied Europe and during World War II – many Jews fled to the Holy Land. The change in Palestinian and Muslim attitudes towards the Jewish refugees was caused by the Zionist<sup>23</sup> movement, which was born in Europe and sought the creation of Israel in the heart of Palestine. With the establishment of this state in 1948, the Zionists came to be seen in the eyes of Palestinians and Arabs as colonial military occupiers, destroying the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Jews that had prevailed in the region for centuries.<sup>24</sup>

With the Zionist movement claiming to represent the Jews and Judaism, the terms ‘Jews’ and ‘Zionists’, and ‘Judaism’ and ‘Zionism’, became conjoined while many Palestinians and Arabs failed to differentiate between them. Nowadays, Palestinians often refer to Israelis as ‘al-Yahud’, the Arabic word for ‘Jews’. At the time of its inception, Hamas made little effort to differentiate between Judaism as a religion and Zionism as a political movement.<sup>25</sup> Hamas is strongly anti-Zionist, as it fiercely opposes the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Hamas’s main premise is that ‘the primary enemy of the Palestinian people as well as the Arab and Islamic Umma is the Zionist entity and the Zionist movement’.<sup>26</sup> Although Hamas did use the terms ‘Jews’ and ‘Zionists’ interchangeably in the past, in recent years it has consistently used ‘Zionists’ when referring to the Israeli occupying force.

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22 One of the most commonly known anti-Semitic texts is the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’, which was published in Russia in 1903 and circulated in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Although it was proven to be a forged document, it alleges that the Jews are engaged in a conspiracy to rule the world. The first Arabic translations of the Protocols were made in 1926. Although the Elders of Zion is often described as ‘anti-Semitic’, this term can be problematic when it is used for Arab perceptions of Jews and Judaism, since Arabs are Semitic themselves (for further reading about the Semitic people and their languages, see for instance Kees Versteegh (2001), *The Arabic Language*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

23 The term ‘Zionism’ originally refers to Mount Zion, a mountain near Jerusalem. Eventually, the term ‘Zion’ became synonymous with the city of Jerusalem and the entire land of Israel

24 Hroub (2006), pp. 31-32

25 Ibid, p. 33

26 Quote from an internal Hamas memo ‘Siyasat Hamas al-Marhaliya fi l-‘Alaqaat al-Siyasiya’ (Hamas’s interim policies in political relations), in: Hroub (2006), pp. 50-51

#### 1.4.4 Martyrdom and Jihad

Hamas is believed to have been the first Sunni movement to employ the strategy of suicide bombings.<sup>27</sup> Despite the sanctity of life in Islam and the fact that suicide is strictly forbidden, a Muslim can sacrifice his life for the sake of ending the oppression of Islam. He then becomes a martyr or 'shahid'. As such, we can define martyrdom as self-sacrifice for a sacred cause. Martyrdom is not solely an Islamic concept; it can be found in most religions, and particularly in the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam).<sup>28</sup> In historic times, Muslims engaged in a holy war to achieve either victory or martyrdom. Those who sacrificed themselves in a sacred struggle were believed to earn great rewards and the highest rank in Paradise.<sup>29</sup>

For Hamas, military action is central to its thoughts. The goal of its armed struggle is to liberate Palestine. Gradually it incorporated acts of martyrdom (or suicide bombings) into its military strategy, which eventually became one of Hamas's most 'successful' methods in fighting the enemy. Hamas considers the fight against the Israeli occupying force to be a holy struggle or 'jihad', a concept which is central to its thinking. Very often, and throughout this study as well given the topic, the Arabic term jihad is translated as 'holy war'. However, any translation of jihad that includes the word 'war' is rather controversial. Rather, we should translate it as 'struggle'. Within Islamic jurisprudence, a difference is made between jihad that involves warfare, and the non-violent jihad. Many Muslims regard the non-violent jihad as the 'greater jihad' or 'jihad of the soul'. In this case jihad is interpreted as a personal struggle against anything that might lead one from his or her faith (iman) or righteous living. The violent jihad, also referred to as 'jihad of the

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27 This practice caused an intense debate within Sunni circles. The Shi'ite tradition within Islam has a long tradition of martyrdom that is inspired by the death of Husayn, the son of the first Caliph 'Ali. There are clear differences between Sunni and Shi'ite concepts of martyrdom. For further reading, see: Farhad Khosrokhavar (2005), *Allah's New Martyrs*, London: Pluto Press

28 Farhad Khosrokhavar (2005), *Allah's New Martyrs*, London: Pluto Press, p. 5. The practice of suicide bombings as an act of martyrdom cannot be found in the Christian and Jewish tradition. Here we speak of martyrdom when a person is killed for the sake of his religion.

29 Azzam Tamimi (2007), *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, London: Hurst & Co. Ltd, p. 324. The blessings of Martyrdom are mentioned several times in the Quran and the Hadith (the Hadith are the oral traditions which report the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad). For example, see the Quran, Verse 111, Sura 9 and verses 1-6 of Sura 61. In the Hadith, both Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah reported that the Prophet said that a martyr receives seven rewards: he will be forgiven for all his sins, he will be able to see his place in Paradise, he will be saved from the ordeal of the grave, he will be secured from the Day of Great Fear, on his head will be placed the crown of dignity in which a single gem is better than life and what exists in it, he will be married to seventy two wives of the Hur Al-In, and he will be granted permission to intercede on behalf of seventy of his relatives.

sword', or the 'lesser jihad', includes a struggle with violent means. However, in the context of research on the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, we will focus on the latter of the two meanings, thus using jihad in a military sense.



## 2. Background to the Subject

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### 2.1 A Brief Outline of Hamas's History

In order to assess effectively any developments in Hamas's stance towards Israel, in this chapter we first present a brief historic outline of Hamas since its establishment. Our aim here is to provide an insight into the political context in which Hamas was established, and to clarify Hamas's role as a social and political actor in the Palestinian political arena throughout time. In order to do so, the sections cover the main historic events in which Hamas played a pivotal role. As such, this outline will provide a launch pad for the research further on in this paper.

The first section deals with what we call the 'first phase', in which Hamas transformed itself from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood to an independent resistance organization. The second section, or 'second phase', largely covers the 1990s and the second intifada erupting in 2000. Here we aim to describe how Hamas evolved from a relatively new resistance organization to a well-organized and influential political actor. The third section contains Hamas's transition from a popular movement to an elected governmental party, creating a remarkable political situation.

## 2.2 The 'First Phase' – Struggling for Liberation and Influence

### 2.2.1 *The First Intifada*

Hamas came into being on 14 December 1987, by announcing itself in an official communiqué only a few days after the outburst of the first intifada, or uprising, against Israeli occupation on 8 December. The first intifada, which lasted until late 1993, erupted first in the Gaza Strip, then on the West Bank, as a mass-based popular uprising. Some observers thought that the rebellion had occurred spontaneously, expressing Palestinian rage about what is described as a traffic incident in which four Palestinian workers were killed by an Israeli truck.<sup>30</sup> However, the years of frustration and depressing living conditions resulting from Israel's politics in the Territories must be seen as the real driving forces behind the intifada. Life in the Palestinian Territories had become increasingly unbearable, while Palestinian nationalism and Islamic revivalism fuelled the resentment against Israeli occupation.<sup>31</sup> To the Islamists and many Palestinians, the war of June 1967 (also referred to as the Six-Day War) in which Israel won new territories and that left the Arab countries disillusioned<sup>32</sup>, was clear evidence of the failure of Arab secular nationalism. Thus, 'the intifada could more exactly be described as the result and climax of accumulated historical experience'<sup>33</sup> of the Palestinian people since 1967.

### 2.2.2 *The Muslim Brotherhood*

Hamas is an offshoot of the Palestinian branch of Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin, or the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood is a religious and political organization founded in 1928 in Egypt by a schoolteacher named Hasan al-Banna. The organization opposed the drift towards secularism perceived to be taking place in Egypt and other Arab countries at the time, and sought to counter the foreign (Western) influence by encouraging a return to an Islamic

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30 On 8 December 1987, a traffic incident occurred in which four Palestinian workers were killed and seven were injured while travelling home from their jobs in Israel. Because the two vans that carried the workers were hit by an Israeli military truck, many Palestinians did not consider this event to be an accident. In fact, many regard this occurrence as the single event that triggered the first intifada

31 Azzam Tamimi (2007), *Hamas. Unwritten Chapters*, London: Hurst & Company, p. 12

32 In May 1967 the Six-Day War was fought between Israel and its Arab neighbours Egypt, Jordan and Syria. During this war, Israel gained control over the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Eastern Jerusalem. The results of this war have deeply affected the geopolitics of the region to this day

33 Andrea Nüsse (1998), *Muslim Palestine. The Ideology of Hamas*, Harwood Academic Publishers, p. 21

society based on the original precepts of the Quran.<sup>34</sup> Above all, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to ‘rehabilitate’ or Islamize the Ummah, beginning with the individual, then going on to the family and culminating with society as a whole, all through a process of gradual reform.<sup>35</sup> Instilling Islamic values and ethics in the hearts and minds of the Arab people lay at the heart of the Brotherhood’s many activities. Eventually, the Umma would be prepared and ready to establish an Islamic state in its Islamic homeland. For this purpose, the Brotherhood employed an extensive network of social services, including charitable organizations, schools, youth and women’s centres, among others. The Brotherhood’s message was also spread through mosques, and later through student councils and trade unions. To many Arabs, the Brotherhood provided ordinary people with much needed social services when the government failed to do so. Having established a great popular appeal, the Brotherhood movement grew rapidly within Egypt and beyond. The first activities of the Brotherhood in the Palestinian territories date back to 1935; later the first Muslim Brotherhood branch was established in Jerusalem in 1945. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood amassed strength and established footholds in all major Palestinian cities<sup>36</sup>, and managed to set up an efficient network of grassroots service organizations through the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The decision to establish Hamas was made by the leaders of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, Salah Shahada, Muhammad Shama, Isa al-Nashar, Abd al-Fatah Dukhan and Ibrahim al-Yazuri.<sup>37</sup> They decided to transform the Palestinian Brotherhood into an adjunct organization with the specific mission of confronting the Israeli occupation.<sup>38</sup>

Hamas was founded in response to several factors pressing the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. Firstly, the organization was witnessing deep internal strife concerning its passive approach towards the occupation. Traditionally, the Brotherhood adhered to its ideology in which the Islamization of society ought to be completed before any confrontation with the enemy. However, the push for a change in this non-confrontational policy became stronger on the eve of the eruption of the first intifada, which the Brotherhood had been anticipating since the early 1980s. The difficult living conditions in the Palestinian Territories, created by the Israeli occupation, reached an

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34 Matthew Levitt (2006), *Hamas. Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, p. 20

35 Tamimi, p. 4

36 Hroub (2006), p. 10

37 The first three have been assassinated by the Israelis. Salah Shahada was liquidated on 23 July 2002; Shaykh Ahmad Yasin on 22 March 2004; and Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi on 17 April 2004

38 Khaled Hroub (2006), *Hamas. A Beginner’s Guide*, London: Pluto Press, p. 10

unprecedented state. In other words, poverty combined with feelings of oppression and humiliation charged the Palestinian atmosphere with the ripe conditions for revolt.<sup>39</sup> Further, the Brotherhood felt the danger of losing ground to small but active competitors, such as Islamic Jihad.<sup>40</sup> The intifada was the 'golden opportunity' for the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood to take the lead in the uprising - it aimed to do so by creating Hamas.<sup>41</sup> Determined to end the occupation by starting a long-term jihad, Hamas mobilised its members and employed the Brotherhood's network of mosques and other institutions to spread the word. In the meantime, Hamas not only called for the occupation to end, but it went as far as to forecast the elimination of Israel.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.3 The 'Second Phase' – Changing Political Realities

### 2.3.1 *Hamas's Organizational Structure*

During the first intifada, Hamas forced itself to create a well-organized rank and file. It quickly convened its leadership, consisting of the abovementioned founders of Hamas with Shaykh Ahmad Yasin as its spiritual leader, throughout the Palestinian Territories. With its cadres distributed across the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Israeli prisons, and abroad, Hamas developed very effective ways to run its organization on a daily basis. Overseeing all Hamas activities is the Majlis al-Shura, or consultative council, which is the group's overarching political and decision-making body in the Syrian capital of Damascus<sup>43</sup>. Under this Shura council are committees responsible for carrying out formal decisions on the ground and supervising a wide array of activities, from media relations to social welfare. Hamas has repeatedly stressed that all decisions are made with the consensus of each of its officials. Although some analysts argue otherwise, it is difficult to determine whether

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39 Hroub (2006), pp. 13-14

40 Islamic Jihad (Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin) was founded in the early 1980s in Gaza by Fathi Al-Shiqaqi. This former member of the Muslim Brotherhood became disillusioned by the Brotherhood's ideology, as he prioritized the jihad for Palestine over other Brotherhood activities such as educational and social welfare. The Islamic Jihad thus marginalized the role of social activity in favour of militant activity, while Hamas gave prominence to social welfare activity and proselytizing, simultaneously with its militant activities

41 Hroub (2006), pp. 13-14

42 The first Hamas communique was distributed on 14 December 1987. In August 1988, Hamas published its Charter (Al-Mithaq), in which they declared that the jihad would continue until all of Palestine was liberated and the State of Israel was eliminated. Both documents will be discussed extensively further on in this paper

43 Hamas's Political Bureau is housed in Damascus and is led by one of Hamas's most prominent leaders, Khalid Mishal

the Hamas leadership abroad has more influence than leaders residing inside Palestine. It is equally difficult to ascertain if certain branches exist within the organization which are more radical than others.

During the first intifada, Hamas also set up a security branch (Jihaz al-Aman) and a military cell called the Majd.<sup>44</sup> Founded in 1982, five years before the official founding of Hamas, another body, the Al-Mujahidin al-Filastininun, was already entrusted with the responsibility of procuring weapons.<sup>45</sup> In 1991, half-way through the first intifada, Hamas incorporated both the Majd and the Mujahidin al-Filastininun into one military wing called the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.<sup>46</sup> At first, the Qassam Brigades continued the Majd activities of kidnapping suspecting collaborators, but soon it carried out the first terrorist attack against an Israeli civilian in December 1991. This event marked a turning point in the modus operandi of Hamas, and paved the way for more spectacular and indiscriminate (suicide) attacks. The development of Hamas's terrorist tactics eventually led to its first suicide car bomb attack on April 16, 1993 near the Mehola settlement in the West Bank. On April 6, 1994, the Qassam Brigades carried out its first suicide car bomb attack on Israeli soil. Since then, the group has committed countless acts of violence against both military and civilian targets, including suicide and other bombings, mortar fire, and shooting attacks. For Hamas, these attacks are an 'eye-to-eye' policy in response to the continual killing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of the image many in the West have of Hamas, it is not entirely a militant organization. It came out of the first intifada as a political, cultural and social grassroots organization with a military wing specialized in armed resistance against Israel. Although its political and social welfare wings are interrelated, Hamas officials often stress, probably for security reasons, that its military wing is completely independent, but acts in line with the Hamas ideology.

### 2.3.2 *The 'Oslo Era'*

The first intifada lasted roughly until 1993, when the Oslo Accords were signed between Israel and the PLO. After months of secret talks in Norway, the agreement was endorsed by the Clinton Administration in Washington. The Agreements created the first official form of Palestinian Authority in the

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44 Levitt (2006), p. 11. 'Majd' is an acronym for Majmuat al-Jihad w-l-Dawa, or the Holy Strife and Sermonizing Group

45 Ibid

46 Hamas's military wing was named after a Muslim Brotherhood leader who was killed in a revolt against British forces in 1936

47 Hroub (2006), p. XVII

West Bank and Gaza Strip, and were divided into two phases: a five-year interim phase starting in 1994, in which the new Palestinian Authority could explore and prove its competence, especially in controlling 'illegal' armed resistance factions, and a second phase in which a 'final settlement' should be negotiated.

Hamas considered this agreement as being designed to serve Israeli interests and as a 'sell-out' of Palestinian rights. To Hamas, it simply constituted surrender to the occupying force by acknowledging the State of Israel. Further, Hamas was not planning to abandon its armed struggle without concrete gains such as the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land and the dismantling of Israeli settlements. As such, Hamas considered the Oslo Accords to be capitulation treaties rather than peace agreements, and refused to abide by them. Throughout the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, Hamas claimed that it remained the real defender of Palestinian rights.

For Hamas, the Oslo Accords created an entirely different political landscape. The organization witnessed a strengthened and internationally recognized PLO and optimism among the Palestinian people about the possibility of a successful new peace process. Further, Hamas was no longer an alternative to the PLO, but became the main opposition force of the Palestinian National Authority. Despite attempts by the PA to persuade Hamas to renounce violence and to join the political process, Hamas announced a continuation and intensification of the violence. Armed attacks would remind Israel and the PA that Hamas could not be passed over in the absence of any durable solution.<sup>48</sup> In practice, however, Hamas witnessed a popular climate that favoured peace and renounced violence. Thus, although Hamas did not abide by the conditions set out in the Accords, it showed a relatively calm attitude. Practice showed that Hamas submitted to the PA because of the public's support for the latter and Hamas's aversion against civil war.<sup>49</sup> The most impressive confirmation of Hamas's calmness was the call from Shaykh Yasin for a 'truce' (*hudna*) with Israel in 1994, if Israel withdrew from the Occupied Territories.<sup>50</sup>

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48 Nüsse (1998), p. 152

49 See also: Menachem Klein (1996), 'Competing Brothers: The Web of Hamas-PLO Relations', in: *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 111-132

50 The classical Islamic concept of *hudna* is often translated as 'truce'. *Hudna* is recognized in Islamic jurisprudence as a legitimate and binding contract to bring about a cessation of fighting with an enemy for an agreed period of time. Once the *hudna* is concluded, it is considered sacred, and its fulfilment becomes a religious duty. The letters which Shaykh Ahmad Yasin sent from an Israeli prison in which he introduced the idea of a *hudna* with Israel were published in *Al-Wasat* magazine (London), No. 92, 11 November 1993

With the Oslo Accords as the source of the PA's legitimacy, Hamas opposed the elections for the Palestinian Authority in 1996. After all, any participation in the elections would implicitly mean recognition of the peace agreements with Israel. Although some analysts argue that Hamas's position towards the elections was not univocal<sup>51</sup>, the group's leadership rejected the elections in an attempt to isolate the PA, hoping it would discredit itself through its cooperation with Israel. In the meantime, Hamas confirmed it did not refuse the tool of elections and parliamentary institutions as a whole, and made sure that it still participated in political life through its presence in society and its participation in elections for unions, professional bodies, and other popular organizations.<sup>52</sup>

#### 2.3.4 *The Al-Aqsa Intifada*

In 1999, six years after the signing of the Oslo Agreements that promised the Palestinians a sovereign and independent state by the end of that year, the public lost its confidence in the peace process. In contrast with the initial agreement, major conflict issues such as the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the status of refugees had not been resolved. The PA struggled to keep militant Palestinian factions attacking Israeli targets in check, while all evidence pointed out that the Israeli occupation was in fact tightening its grip and that the PA was restricted in its administration.

The event that triggered the outburst of the second intifada was a visit by Ariel Sharon<sup>53</sup> to one of the holiest Muslim sites in Jerusalem, Al-Haram al-Sharif, in September 2000. Against the advice of the ruling Israeli Labour Party, Sharon decided to make a point that all holy Muslim places in Jerusalem fall under Israeli control and jurisdiction. His visit infuriated the Palestinian people, and sparked a second mass-based uprising.<sup>54</sup> Contrary to the first intifada, the Al-Aqsa intifada quickly turned into an armed confrontation. However, as was the case during the first intifada, Palestinians across the political spectrum supported the uprising.

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51 See for example, Nüsse (1998), p. 161: 'Until the run-up to the elections, ... an internal battle between pragmatists and radicalists was going on'

52 Nüsse (1998), p. 162

53 At the time, Sharon was the leader of the right-wing Likud, which was then the main opposition party

54 The second intifada is often referred to as the Al-Aqsa intifada. Sharon visited Al-Haram al-Sharif, or the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem, where the Al-Aqsa mosque is situated. Although he did not enter this mosque, Sharon's highly provocative visit triggered the outburst of the intifada, which therefore is frequently called the Al-Aqsa intifada

With its refusal to restrict its violent tactics, Hamas extensively contributed to the failure of the Oslo peace process in the late 1990s. However, during the Al-Aqsa intifada the violence from both the Israeli and the Palestinian side escalated. With a mood on the streets that was highly supportive of retaliatory attacks, the number of suicide attacks rose dramatically,<sup>55</sup> although other groups were responsible for this increase as well.<sup>56</sup> For Hamas, the outbreak of the intifada was clear evidence that it was right all along, and that the Oslo Accords were doomed to fail from the beginning. Again, Hamas could claim that it was the true defender of Palestinian rights.

In the meantime, Yasir Arafat found himself in a dilemma. He needed to maintain credibility in the eyes of Palestinian people attacked by Israeli fire, while at the same time he needed to reign in militant factions in order to give a new peace initiative any chance. As such, Arafat ordered a crackdown on Hamas, detaining and liquidating several Hamas officials, among which were two of Hamas's founding fathers, Shaykh Ahmad Yasin and Dr Abd al-Aziz Al-Rantisi, who were both assassinated by the Israeli army in 2004.

Eventually, in 2002, Jordan's King Abdullah came up with the idea of a Road Map towards peace during a visit to President Bush in Washington. Stressing the importance of an American initiative in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in 2003 'A Performance-Based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict' was drawn up. The so-called Quartet<sup>57</sup> took responsibility for the document. Both Hamas and Yasir Arafat, who was forced to delegate some of his power to the Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas, saw the Road Map as directly targeted at them. The Israelis, on the other hand, were displeased with the content of the Road Map as well, and they only accepted the document in a modified version that met with their specific security needs.

By the end of 2003, a new phase of the peace process was opened when Sharon<sup>58</sup> announced Israel's unilateral plan of disengagement. The plan was to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, and to evacuate all Jewish settlements there.

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55 See for instance: Bruce Hoffman (2006), *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 153. Between December 31, 1993 and September 30, 2000 thirty-nine suicide attacks took place, an average of 2.6 per month. However, in 2002 alone a total of fifty-nine events were recorded, an average of 4.9 per month. In other words, during 2002 nearly as many suicide attacks against Israeli targets were carried out as during the previous eight years combined

56 For instance, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the underground military wing of the secular Fatah party, began its own campaign of suicide bombings during the second intifada

57 The Quartet consists of the United States, Russia, the United Nations and the European Union

58 By then, Ariel Sharon was Israel's Prime Minister

Israel had its own reasons to come up with this initiative<sup>59</sup>, but to the Palestinian population it was clear that its resistance against the occupation had been fruitful. By the end of 2005, the 38-year occupation of the Gaza Strip was ended. The Palestinians in Gaza, led by Hamas, celebrated the liberation of the Strip, attributing it entirely to the defeat of Israel's superior military machine.<sup>60</sup> Hamas reaped the benefits of this popular attitude. In the eyes of many Palestinians, Hamas's approach of continuous violent attacks against the occupier, eventually forced Israel to withdraw. Hamas emerged victorious and ended up strengthened despite its many losses.

## **2.4 The 'Third Phase' – The Era of Political Integration**

### *2.4.1 Towards Elections*

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip also ended the second intifada. Despite Hamas's refusal to take part in the 1996 PA elections, it never refused the tool of elections and parliamentary institutions as a whole. Hamas's decision to boycott the January 1996 elections should not be considered anti-democratic, but arose from the conviction that the elections were conducted in circumstances that did not guarantee fair play<sup>61</sup>, in this case elections that implicitly recognized the peace agreements. In fact, Hamas did participate in several forms of elections such as student and trade unions, and the first municipal elections to be held in the territories since 1967.

The PA had decided to hold municipal elections in 2004. The elections consisted of three stages and would take one year to complete. For Hamas, political circumstances were now more favourable to take part, since the peace process had failed. In other words, the municipal elections were not considered to be a product of the Oslo Accords and Hamas decided to compete in them.

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59 A number of factors contributed to Sharon's decision to withdraw. Firstly, the Gaza Strip had become too expensive for Israel, partly due to the costs of the numerous security measures that had to defend Israel against mortars, rockets and suicide bombers. Secondly, rapidly changing demographics played a significant role. Due to high birth rates among Palestinians, the Palestinian population was growing explosively, posing a real threat to Israel's exclusive Jewish identity. Thirdly, by withdrawing from the Strip, Sharon hoped to win American support for his plan to permanently annex the major Jewish settlements on the West Bank, which would be a substantial gain for Israel

60 Tamimi, (2007), p. 206

61 Tamimi (2007), p. 211

The first round took place on 24 December 2004 across the West Bank. Fatah<sup>62</sup> won the majority (135 seats in total), while Hamas won 75 seats in total. What excited Hamas, however, were the elections held in Gaza on 27 January 2005. Here Hamas won 78 out of 118 seats, leaving Fatah with only 30 seats. Clearly, these results encouraged Hamas members in the Gaza Strip who became highly enthusiastic about participating in the forthcoming legislative elections.

#### 2.4.2 *The 2006 legislative elections*

On 11 November 2004, Yassir Arafat passed away in a Paris hospital. Nearly two months later, presidential elections took place, although the only candidate with a realistic chance of winning was Mahmud Abbas, a leading politician of Fatah. In contrast to the abovementioned municipal elections, Hamas considered the presidential elections to be futile, and decided to boycott them. Consequently, Mahmud Abbas was elected and took office on 15 January 2005. In an effort to bring about political reform, he quickly promised to conduct legislative elections on 17 July 2005, later to be postponed until January 2006.

Hamas, riding on a wave of optimism since the outcome of the municipal elections of 2004-2005, felt confident it could win a comfortable majority in the legislative elections.<sup>63</sup> Again, the political circumstances were favourable for Hamas, since the ending of Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip and the increasing disarray within the Fatah movement after the death of Yassir Arafat. Further, the public was disillusioned with the PA, due to its failure to establish peace and the prevailing corruption within the party. On 12 March 2005, Hamas announced it had taken the decision to participate in the elections. Abbas then announced that the elections would be held on 25 January 2006. As the election date approached, Fatah officials became increasingly nervous.

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62 Fatah, a reverse acronym for Harakat Al-Tahrir al-Watani Al-Filastini, or Palestinian National Liberation Movement, is a major Palestinian political party and the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The party, which was founded in 1954, espouses a secular nationalist ideology. Until the 1980s, the Fatah party, led by Yassir Arafat, was the dominant force in Palestinian politics. Although it maintains several military branches, Fatah is not internationally viewed as a terrorist party. The Islamist Hamas is Fatah's main political rival

63 However, some voices existed within Hamas and they opposed integration in the formal political arena, mainly on the West Bank. By remaining outside formal political institutions, they argued, Hamas could maintain its revolutionary élan and would have the luxury of informal power without formal responsibility. See also: The International Crisis Group, 'Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration', in: *Crisis Group Middle East Report no. 49*, 18 January 2006, p. 6

Between its electoral debut in 2004 and its participation in the legislative elections in 2006, Hamas took a crash course in electoral campaigning; organizers wore green baseball caps and distributed stickers carrying religious symbols and language, its campaign banners dominated city centres, voters in the Palestinian Territories received mobile phone text messages asking to vote in accordance with God's will, and so on.<sup>64</sup> Eventually, in the months preceding the elections, Hamas had the most professional, disciplined and calculating electoral team in the Palestinian Territories.<sup>65</sup> Or, in other words, Hamas went all out during the campaign for the PC elections.<sup>66</sup>

The Hamas election list registered under the name 'Change and Reform'. Some observers expected this was done to maintain some distance from Hamas itself, in order to attract more independently minded voters and candidates. However, eventually the organization publicly aligned itself with the list of 'Change and Reform' and thoroughly identified with it.<sup>67</sup>

#### 2.4.3 *Winning a Landslide Victory*

Palestinian observers, as well as their colleagues worldwide, expected Hamas to do well in the elections. However, few expected it to do so well as it did. Pre-election polls, including exit polls on election day, indicated that Fatah would stay ahead of Hamas. However, reality proved the pollsters completely wrong: Hamas won 74 out of 132 seats, while Fatah stayed behind with 45 out of 132 seats. Hamas's electoral triumph shocked all parties, including Hamas itself, proclaiming that the angels must have joined the vote.<sup>68</sup>

The most common explanation for this result was the assumption that the electorate voted for Hamas to punish Fatah. Many Palestinians felt that Fatah had failed both internally, with its management of day-to-day services to the people, and externally, in its peace talks with Israel. Corruption was widespread within the rank and file of the Fatah party, and the lavish lifestyle of senior Fatah leaders infuriated the public. Moreover, Hamas had taken advantage of Fatah's internal dissension about matters such as corruption and its relationship with Israel. Thus, many Hamas voters claimed they voted for

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64 The International Crisis Group, 'Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration', in: *Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 49*, 18 January 2006, p. 8

65 Ibid

66 Khaled Hroub, 'A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Summer 2006), p. 15

67 Nathan Brown, 'Aftermath of the Hamas Tsunami', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, article downloaded from [www.carnegieendowment.org](http://www.carnegieendowment.org), December 2006

68 Statement by imprisoned Hamas PLC candidate Shaykh Ahmad Hajj Ali, in: ICG Middle East Report, January 2006, p. 9

‘new blood’, for a nationalist liberation party that promised change and reform in all areas.

However, not all Hamas voters did so to punish Fatah. In fact, Hamas’s popularity built up over a much longer period. During the 2006 elections, Hamas reaped the fruits of many years of devoted work among the Palestinians and its helping hand to the poor and needy. Many voters compared the rampant corruption within the PA to the clean hands of Hamas officials. In spite of the millions of dollars of aid Hamas received on a yearly basis, Hamas officials continued to live as ordinary Palestinians, often inside refugee camps.

Another reason why people voted for Hamas concerned its stance towards Israel. The ever-increasing brutality of the Israeli occupation left many Palestinians with no faith in the option of a peaceful settlement. While Fatah recognized Israel’s right to exist and favoured a two-state solution, Hamas on the other hand offered a stark contrast to Fatah, by stating that Israel is an illegitimate political entity that will one day disappear. The failure of the peace process had only aggravated the suffering of the Palestinians. Hamas naturally claimed that Israel would never commit itself to a peace process, and that resistance is the only way to force the occupation to come to an end. Further, Hamas appealed to the electorate by claiming that Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was the outcome of Hamas’s continuous efforts to hinder the Israeli settlers and troops.

The final reason for voting for Hamas was its Islamic ideology which fitted the inclination towards Islam within Palestinian society. Since the 1970s, the Territories witnessed an Islamic revival, which was in part a reaction to the failure of secular Arab nationalism<sup>69</sup>, and was fuelled by the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the late 1970s. As an increasing religious community, the Palestinians came to identify more with the moral code espoused by Hamas than with the more liberal agenda of the leaders of Fatah.<sup>70</sup>

#### 2.4.4 *After the Earthquake*

Directly after the political earthquake of Hamas winning the first democratic legislative elections of the PA, the losing Fatah party could hardly conceal its bitterness. While Hamas spokesmen repeatedly invited Fatah for a political

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69 Many Palestinians attribute the loss of the remainder of Old Palestine during the 1967 Six-Day War to the failure of secular Arab nationalism

70 Tamimi (2007), p. 221

partnership or a coalition<sup>71</sup>, Fatah rejected this offering and planned to form a 'responsible opposition'.<sup>72</sup>

In the face of threats by the EU and US to cut off aid to a Palestinian government led by Hamas, the movement declared its commitment to agree with all Palestinian organizations on a unified political agenda. Further, Hamas emphasized it was willing to serve the best interests of the Palestinian people and that it would not adopt an authoritarian approach in doing so. Further, Hamas immediately announced it would extend its unilateral truce with Israel, hoping it would be given a chance to provide a model of good governance and implement its Change and Reform manifesto.

However, Israel's most prominent ally, the United States, quickly announced there would be no recognition, no dialogue and no financial aid for a Hamas-led Palestinian government until Hamas complied with three conditions. First, Hamas had to recognize Israel; then it had to renounce violence and disarm; and finally it had to accept all previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements.<sup>73</sup> Hamas, unsurprisingly, did not plan to abide by any of the conditions, claiming that the Americans should pressure Israel to end its violence, rather than the Palestinians, since they were the victims and not the oppressors.

Although the US, Israel and the European Union took joint action to exclude Hamas from the political arena, other countries did not refuse to deal with the movement. Both Russia and Turkey, as well as a number of Arab and Islamic countries, invited Hamas to visit for talks.<sup>74</sup> In the meanwhile, Fatah laid down two conditions which Hamas had to meet in order to form a national unity government: Hamas had to recognize Israel's right to exist, and second, Hamas had to recognize the PLO's claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>75</sup> Neither condition was acceptable to

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71 Although Hamas' victory was enough for the movement to claim government responsibility, it was not enough to push through constitutional changes (such as the implementation of the sharia, or Islamic law). In order to do so, Hamas needed a two-third majority (88 seats) in the legislative council

72 Quote by Jibril Al-Rajub, a Fatah official, in: Tamimi (2007), p. 224

73 Tamimi (2007), p. 225

74 Russia's invitation to Hamas was a major blow to the US-led campaign to exclude Hamas from the political arena. Although Russia insisted the invitation was intended to persuade Hamas to alter its positions, the Russians also saw an opportunity in Hamas to regain a foothold in the Middle East after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite pressure from the US to cancel the talks, Turkey offered to mediate between Israel and Hamas during the visit of the Hamas delegation to Ankara. Hamas officials also met with the leaders of Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Sudan, Oman, Algeria and Libya

75 Tamimi (2007), p. 230

Hamas, which proceeded to form a government on its own. This government, led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, took office on 29 March 2006.

#### 2.4.5 *Hamas in power*

With the Hamas government in place, Mahmud Abbas attempted to establish a parallel government, aiming to curb the powers of the elected Hamas government. With the full support and financial backing of the US-led international community, the Fatah-led PA made an effort to thwart Hamas where possible so as to cause the Hamas government to fail.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, the rift between the two movements became wider than ever and tensions mounted to unprecedented heights. Fatah officials seemed determined to hold on to the power and wealth they had gained over the years.

In the meantime, Hamas was trying to establish credentials as professional administrators. Asking the Palestinian people for time to develop good governance<sup>77</sup>, the movement effectively managed the municipalities under its control. Although facing an empty treasury and overwhelming fiscal obstacles due to international sanctions, Hamas's post-election performance won plaudits from local and foreign observers<sup>78</sup>, hailing the movement's success in enforcing the rule of law, its provision of services, its accessibility to the people, and its disciplined and fair administration. Although the government had difficulties with delivering on the foremost demand – jobs – its new security force successfully restored order curbing inter-clan blood feuds and reducing criminal activity. Further, Hamas officials consistently spoke of the importance of economic development, and personal and social security, relegating religious issues mostly to the background. Although instances occurred in which a 'morality police' surfaced, Hamas officials characterized them as aberrations instead of general policy. Thus, although the movement does carry out an Islamic moral code, there is scant evidence that Hamas sought to implement Islamic law (Sharia) in its municipalities.

While the row between Hamas and Fatah continued within the Territories, from the Israeli government's perspective, a PA that includes an organization that is committed to armed resistance against Israel, opposes its right to exist and opposes a two-state settlement was unacceptable. During the months preceding the January 2006 elections, Israel detained hundreds of Hamas

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76 In order to strip the newly formed Hamas cabinet of control, President Abbas issued a number of presidential decrees, such as exclusive presidential authority over the police force, authority over frontier crossings with Israel, and complete authority over the government-controlled media

77 Statement by Hamas leader Mahmud Al-Zahar, Gaza Strip (20 November 2005), in: Crisis Group Middle East Report (2006), p. 13

78 Crisis Group Middle East Report (2006), p. 11

activists in the West Bank, removed all signs of Hamas's participation in the elections, and urged the international community not to allow the empowerment of Hamas through the electoral process.<sup>79</sup>

After Hamas's victory in the elections, which stunned the Israeli public as well, the Israeli government declared it would cut off all ties with a government that consists of a movement that refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and terrorized the Israeli people for years with its rocket firings and suicide bombings. As such, the Israelis pursued their military moves and tightened their grip on Gaza. The Israeli attacks succeeded in provoking Hamas into calling off its unilateral truce that had lasted for 16 months.<sup>80</sup>

#### 2.4.6 *A Government of National Unity*

After almost a year of bitter fighting between rivaling Fatah and Hamas factions, on 8 February 2007 Palestinian leaders assembled in Mecca to sign an agreement brokered by the Saudi King Abdullah b. Abd Al-Aziz. In order to prevent Palestinian society from collapsing, Hamas and Fatah leaders agreed to form and participate in a new PA coalition. After five weeks of negotiations, the Mecca Agreement was concluded on 17 March 2008, giving way to a new coalition government led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya.<sup>81</sup>

By forming the coalition government, Hamas expected to gradually overcome its isolated position. Indeed, senior cabinet officials unaffiliated with Hamas resumed policies of contact with Western countries and sanctions were loosened. Furthermore, the fighting between Fatah and Hamas factions was brought to a halt. However, quickly after the coalition government was formed, signs of trouble between Hamas and Fatah appeared. Observers claim the agreement was doomed to fail as fundamental differences between the parties remained unresolved.<sup>82</sup> Many Hamas activists were convinced Fatah was aiming to prevent Hamas from governing, seeking hegemony over

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79 Eventually, with the accusation of thwarting democracy, the US and EU pressured Israel to end such practices

80 On 9 June 2006, Israeli fire struck a north Gaza beach, hitting a crowd of Palestinian civilians. The attack wiped out almost an entire family, killing seven people and wounding dozens. Several Hamas members, particularly commanders of its military arm, stressed that this event could not go unpunished. The Israeli attack left many Hamas members with lost confidence in the viability of the movement's political integration

81 For Haniyeh's cabinet speech of 27 March 2006, see Chapter 2: The Hamas Documents

82 These fundamental differences included different ideas about how to settle the Israeli Palestinian conflict (Hamas during this time still did not meet with the Quartet conditions: the recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence and the acceptance of all past agreements). Also the parties disagreed about who would control the security sector, and whether Hamas was allowed to join the PLO

the security sector. Eventually, clashes between the rivalling parties resumed, driving many Palestinians to despair.<sup>83</sup>

#### 2.4.7 *Taking over Gaza*

During the violent showdown between the two factions that followed the failure of the national unity government, Hamas overwhelmed Fatah by attacking strategic as well as symbolic targets in the Gaza Strip. Hamas managed to overrun PA security installations, while attacking the homes of Fatah adversaries and assassinating the residents. Although Hamas leaders apologized for some of the actions of its activists, all of the killings were tolerated without punishment.

By the night of 14 June 2007, all of Gaza – including President Mahmud Abbas’s house – was in Hamas’s hands. Proclaiming it to be the ‘second liberation’<sup>84</sup>, the Qassam Brigades triumphed over their victory. Whether Hamas’s seizure of power in Gaza was planned remains uncertain. Undoubtedly, the nature of its quick offensive shows a high level of preparedness, although its brutal methods show a lack of operational command by the official Hamas leadership. There is reason to believe that Hamas wanted to take action against a reinforcing Fatah. However, it ended up controlling Gaza.

Immediately after Hamas’s takeover of Gaza, President Abbas dismissed the Hamas-led government on 15 June 2007. He appointed Fatah politician Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister of the new government. Officially, the Palestinian government’s authority extends to all Palestinian Territories. However, after Hamas’s seizure of the Gaza Strip, its effect is limited to the West Bank.

As such, quickly after Hamas took over the 365 square-kilometre Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Authority embarked on a series of measures to hinder Hamas’s ability to govern in Gaza.<sup>85</sup> By boycotting the security, judicial and other government sectors, the PA created a vacuum Hamas dutifully filled. The Islamists asserted control over all PA institutions, making Gazans even more dependant on the new power.

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83 See, for instance, the interviews with Palestinian residents in The International Crisis Group, ‘After Gaza’, *Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 68*, 2 August 2007, p. 10

84 The ‘first liberation’ being Israel’s unilateral withdrawal in 2005, many Hamas activists view their seizure of power in Gaza as the ‘second liberation’

85 These measures include halting the public prosecution service (thus paralyzing the judicial system), reducing payments to Gaza’s governors, denying revenues to the Hamas government and denying access to PA accounts

Although Hamas caused the downfall of a corrupt regime in Gaza and improved security, it is facing severely tightened economic sanctions, rising poverty and unemployment, and a crumbling infrastructure.<sup>86</sup> Further, paying the price for the international boycott of the Gaza Strip, Hamas now has become the party that is asked to deliver on major Palestinian rights and issues over which it used to accuse its Fatah rivals of selling out. However, at the time of writing, the hardship continues, with no end in sight for the 1.3 million Gazans who are paying the price for Hamas's takeover of the Strip.

## 2.5 Debate amongst Scholars

In Western politics, Hamas is generally labelled as a terrorist organization. Although contacts with Western powers certainly existed in the past<sup>87</sup>, in 1992 the US classified Hamas as a terrorist organization, meaning that it no longer engaged in public contacts with it and denied periodic allegations of clandestine ones.<sup>88</sup> The EU's dialogue with Hamas lasted another decade. Although the Union already defined the Qassam Brigades as a terrorist organization in 2001, the classification of Hamas as a terrorist organization followed in 2003. Both US and EU bans were renewed in 2005.

Among scholars, however, less consensus exists about the nature of Hamas and the movement's long-term political agenda. During our search for literature in preparation for this study, we found significant differences amongst scholars in their characterization of Hamas as a movement and their interpretation of certain statements and political events. In our effort to contribute to the knowledge about Hamas concerning its positions towards Israel, we find it valuable to first provide an overview of different views by a number of prominent scholars on the subject. However, it is important to bear in mind that we do not aim to present the complete body of research on Hamas in this concise overview. Rather, using a number of recent studies, we will briefly touch upon the debate amongst scholars which discusses the nature of Hamas as an organization.

According to Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Hamas should be labelled and treated as a terrorist organization, rather than a social grassroots organization. Levitt argues that

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86 International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine 1: Gaza Under Hamas', *Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 73*, 19 March 2008, p. 21

87 For instance, during the 1991 Madrid Middle East Peace Conference, the US State Department initiated contact with Hamas political leader – and US resident – Musa Abu Marzuq. For further reading: Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela (2000), *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence and Coexistence*, New York: Columbia University Press

88 Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 49 (2006), p. 22

‘the battery of mosques, schools, orphanages, summer camps and sport leagues sponsored by Hamas are integral parts of an overarching apparatus of terror’.<sup>89</sup> Further, the author stresses that Hamas is exploiting the well-accepted premise - or ‘myth’, as Levitt calls it - that the movement consists of a separate socio-political and a military wing. In his view, Hamas makes use of its religious message and its social welfare network to radicalize the Palestinian population and to manage its terrorist activity. Thus, according to Levitt, Hamas should be seen as a movement with an agenda that is explicitly violent, as ‘virtually every Hamas political and social activity is inextricably bound up with its terrorist mission’.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Levitt states that although Hamas engages in political and social activities, the main purpose of each of these tactics is the jihadist principle of destroying Israel. Thus, relatively moderate statements by Hamas leaders<sup>91</sup>, for instance by Gaza-based leaders like the late Shaykh Yasin, should not be interpreted as a disavowal of violence, but as a ‘tactical planning based on a strategic commitment to violence’.<sup>92</sup>

Wim Kortenoeven is a researcher at the Centre for Information and Documentation of Israel (CIDI) in The Hague. Kortenoeven based his study of Hamas<sup>93</sup> on the movement’s founding charter of 1988, regarding this document as an outline of the movement’s goals, tactics and strategies. According to Kortenoeven, the Charter still retains its relevance, while its principles have been confirmed countless times by different Hamas officials throughout time.

Like Matthew Levitt, Kortenoeven depicts the institutional and functional intertwinement of the political, social, religious, educational, military and administrative branches of the organization and the movement’s terrorist mission. According to Kortenoeven, Hamas’s *raison d’être* continues to be the destruction of Israel based on religious precepts captured in its 1988 Charter, making a durable moderation of its ideology impossible: ‘there is no such thing as a moderated form of mass murder or destruction of a state’.<sup>94</sup> Further, Kortenoeven argues that the Charter is so pivotal for the movement, that its abolition, or even any alterations in the Charters’ text, would mean the end for Hamas as an organization.

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89 Matthew Levitt (2006), *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, p. 5

90 Ibid, p. 33

91 Here Levitt refers to the concept of a long-term *hudna*, or truce, with Israel. According to Levitt, a *hudna* never indicates an eventual end to Hamas’s struggle against Israel, rather it is proof of a shift in the movement’s prioritization of its means of doing so. Levitt (2006), p. 247

92 Ibid, p. 37

93 W.R.F. Kortenoeven (2007), *Hamas: Portret and Achtergronden*, Soesterberg: ASPEKt

94 Ibid, p. 192

Other scholars' views contradict the thoughts of Levitt and Kortenoeven mentioned above. Andrea Nüsse, for example, characterizes Hamas as a 'national organization that is surprisingly pragmatic and clear-sighted in its analysis of international politics. It demonstrates an impressive ideological flexibility'.<sup>95</sup> Nüsse argues that although the 1988 Charter certainly contains violent and anti-Zionist rhetoric, 'from 1990 to 1992 Hamas elaborated its specific ideology and became a mass movement ... these mechanisms of developing and adapting an ideology to changing political circumstances are of still greater relevance today'.<sup>96</sup> In his work, Nüsse aims to illustrate the 'enormous margin between Hamas' oral denunciations and its 'Realpolitik'<sup>97</sup>, which justifies optimism for the future.

According to Khaled Hroub, an expert on Arab politics and the author of several studies on Hamas<sup>98</sup>, it is erroneous to reduce Hamas to a mere 'terrorist group', while for many Palestinians, Hamas is a deeply entrenched and crucial socio-political popular force. Hroub stresses that Hamas charts two parallel paths of military occupation against Israel, and grassroots social work and peaceful religious mobilization. Further, in his view, the movement has undergone several developments and experiences, culminating in clear maturational differences between Hamas's early years and its later phases. Unlike Levitt and Kortenoeven, Hroub argues that the movement has distanced itself from the 1988 Charter in several statements. Furthermore, according to Hroub, the sophisticated language Hamas used after its electoral victory in 2006 proves that the Charter is rather obsolete and no longer functions as the movement's intellectual platform. Moreover, throughout the years, its discourse has become more developed and adaptive to modern realities. Therefore, Hroub argues, it is naïve to suggest that Hamas is still seeking to destroy Israel. Hroub goes even further by stating that the organization's pragmatism and its realistic approach to issues leaves room for a recognition of the State of Israel, if Israel creates a proper climate to do so.

Meir Hatina is the author of several works on Palestinian Islam and a lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. Hatina argues that Hamas has repeatedly showed its ability to adapt to a new political order without moderating its ideological outlook. This outlook, defined in the 1988 Hamas Charter, calls for the liberation of all

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95 Andrea Nüsse (1998), *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*, Harwood: Harwood Academic Publishers, p. 2

96 Ibid, p. 4

97 Ibid, p. 180

98 See: Khaled Hroub (2000), *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, and Khaled Hroub (2006), *Hamas. A Beginner's Guide*, London: Pluto Press

Palestine based on its religious sanctity, and remains unified and dogmatic.<sup>99</sup> The focus of Hatina's work is the new political context that evolved in the Palestinian arena after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. He argues that especially during the 'Oslo years', Hamas sought a balance between ideology and political reality, which for example is reflected in Hamas's quest for a *modus vivendi* with the Palestinian Authority.<sup>100</sup> According to Hatina, ultimately Hamas is an ideological movement. Thus, any accommodation the movement makes that seemingly contradicts its fundamental creed, reflects its political realism, rather than an ideological moderation.<sup>101</sup>

Azzam Tamimi is the founder of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London and the author of several studies on Islamic and Islamist movements with roots in the Middle East. In his works on Hamas<sup>102</sup>, Tamimi aims to redress any stereotypical images of Hamas as a mere terrorist organization, by providing an accurate account of Hamas's origins and the movement's thinking over the years. Building on the premise that Hamas consists of two separate sections – a socio-political and a military wing – Tamimi explains how Hamas is structured and how it sets out its objectives. Like other authors mentioned above, according to Tamimi, Hamas's behaviour can be explained when placed in the political context. Also, Tamimi argues that one of the most important factors influencing decision-making processes within Hamas is public sentiment.

Jeroen Gunning is a lecturer in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales and has published a number of studies on Hamas.<sup>103</sup> In his work, Gunning primarily focuses on the apparent contradictions between Hamas's ideology and the nature of its politics, challenging the approach that Hamas's ideology confines the movement's ability to accommodate and transform itself. In fact, Gunning argues that Hamas as a political

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99 See: Meir Hatina, 'Hamas and the Oslo Accords: Religious Dogma in a Changing Political Reality', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 37-55, p. 37

100 Ibid, p. 49

101 Ibid

102 See: Azzam Tamimi (2007), *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, London: Hurst & Co.; and Azzam Tamimi (2007) *Hamas: A History from Within*, Olive Branch Press

103 See for instance: Jeroen Gunning (2007), *Hamas in Politics*, Aberystwyth: University of Wales; 'Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation', in: *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 2 (2004), pp. 233-255; and 'Hamas: Socialization and the Logic of Compromise', in: Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary, and John Tirman (eds., 2007), *Terror, Insurgency and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 123-154

organization is mainly ‘concerned with political survival’<sup>104</sup> which means that a decline in its popular support might prompt Hamas to adjust its core goals of liberating Palestine and establishing an Islamic state without losing face. Gunning’s studies illustrate that Hamas certainly has the potential to transform itself whenever the circumstances dictate such a course of action. According to Gunning, since Hamas has already dropped one of its two ultimate proclaimed goals – the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine – over time Hamas might change its attitudes towards Israel and the liberation of Palestine as well. Gunning further argues that Hamas’s history has shown that Hamas is much more concerned with maintaining popular support than ‘safeguarding its ideological purity’<sup>105</sup> and that it has a ‘diminishing commitment to its core goals’.<sup>106</sup>

From the above we can conclude that the opinions and views among scholars on Hamas as an organization are rather diverse. Their differences of opinion primarily hover around the issue of Hamas’s pragmatism and to what extent the movement is willing and able to adapt its fundamentalist ideology to the ever-evolving political landscape. Our brief overview shows that no consensus exists about the importance of the Hamas Charter and to which extent it still functions as the organization’s leading platform. Further, and of great relevance for this study, disagreement exists about the possibility of Hamas settling for a two-state resolution to the conflict, or even recognition of the State of Israel. In the following chapters, we will shed further light on Hamas’ positions towards Israel, analysing the most significant political documents and statements the movement has released.

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104 Jeroen Gunning, ‘Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation’, in: *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 2 (2004), p. 238

105 Ibid, p. 251

106 Ibid, p. 252



## 3. The Hamas Documents

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### 3.1 Analyzing Hamas's Official Views

Having provided a historical outline of and an insight into the debate about Hamas among scholars in the previous chapter, we will now take a close look at some of the most significant Hamas documents to date. Although Hamas has in fact been quite productive in its publishing of statements and communiqués throughout the years<sup>107</sup>, due to the limitations of this study it is impossible to include every official document that Hamas has ever issued. Therefore, we have made an effort to include the best-known official Hamas documents, as well as documents that most clearly reflect Hamas's vision and ideology during or following major political events. Due to a careful selection of these documents, we are convinced that this chapter will provide a clear insight into Hamas's positions towards Israel since the movement's establishment.

We are aware that 'positions towards Israel' is a rather vague concept. In order to present a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the Hamas documents, we will subdivide 'positions towards Israel' into two key topics:

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107 Hamas publishes a monthly magazine called *Filastin al-Muslima* (Muslim Palestine), which includes many – but not all – of the movement's documents and statements. The magazine is distributed across the Palestinian Territories, but also has its own website: [www.fm-m.com](http://www.fm-m.com)

Hamas's 'Views on the Current State of Israel' and its 'Views on the future state of Israel'. By 'Views on the Current State of Israel' we mean issues which Hamas currently has to deal with, among which are its acts of resistance against Israel, but we will also focus on Hamas's rhetoric when speaking about Israel. 'Views on the Future State of Israel' deals with Hamas's thinking about its long-term objectives regarding Israel, such as the option of a two-state settlement and the recognition of the State of Israel. Using the SMT concept framing, we will determine which frames Hamas has used to present its views on Israel to the public throughout the twenty years since the movement's inception. Second, again by discussing the predominant frames we found in the documents, we will explain Hamas's views on the future state of Israel. We distilled the most recurrent frames which also most clearly reflect Hamas's positions throughout time.

To discuss the abovementioned key topics, we will again present the classification from the previous chapter, which consists of three sections, or 'first phase', 'second phase' and 'third phase'. In our view, this classification can be applied in this chapter as well, as the selected documents can be subdivided in each of the three sections. Each of the documents will be discussed at the beginning of the three sections. In doing so, we aim to present Hamas's positions towards Israel as clearly as possible.

### **3.2 The 'First Phase' – Struggling for Liberation and Influence**

To illustrate Hamas's thinking during the period we refer to as the 'first phase' (1987-1993), we have selected two documents that largely cover the movement's views on Israel: Hamas's first communiqué published only days after its establishment, and the official Hamas Charter of 1988.

#### *The First Hamas Communiqué*

Although the Hamas Charter is rightfully considered as the first official Hamas document, a pamphlet was drafted<sup>108</sup> on the eve of Hamas's establishment by its seven founding fathers, and distributed in the Gaza Strip on 11 and 12 December and across the West Bank on 14 and 15 December 1987. Hamas's first communiqué was issued only six days after the movement's foundation, and one week into the first intifada. The document is particularly interesting for our study, as it specifically provides Hamas's rationale regarding the Israeli occupation and the movement's position in the newly erupted intifada.

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108 The pamphlet is enclosed as appendix no. 1 in Khaled Hroub (2000), *Hamas, Political Thought and Practice*, Washinton, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, pp. 265-266

Like other official Hamas documents, the pamphlet starts with a quotation from the Quran (Verse 200 of Sura 3). The pamphlet is directed at Hamas's 'steadfast Muslim masses' and signed by the Islamic Resistance Movement.

### *The Hamas Charter*

The Hamas Charter, or Al-Mithaq, was published on 18 August 1988, less than nine months after the foundation of the movement. The Charter was Hamas's first attempt to cover its full ideology in a written document for the outside world. At the time, Hamas had just emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood; therefore the Charter had to be a representation of the ideological and political position of the movement. First and foremost, the Charter reflects how Hamas perceived the conflict in Palestine, but it also contains some of Hamas's views of the world. The Charter is believed to be written by one of the 'old guard' of the Muslim Brotherhood and one of the seven founders of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Abd Al-Fattah al-Dukhan.<sup>109</sup> However, the text was made public without revisions or consultation of the entire Hamas leadership. In recent years, an increasing number of Hamas leaders admitted that insufficient thought went into the drafting and publication of the Charter.<sup>110</sup> Throughout the years, the Hamas Charter was not frequently quoted from or referred to by Hamas leaders and spokesmen, as many of them do not perceive the Charter as a platform that fully embraces the movement's principles. Rather, it seems they are increasingly convinced that the Charter has been more of a hindrance than a help.<sup>111</sup> Despite these concerns by Hamas leaders<sup>112</sup>, disagreement about the importance of the Charter remains among Hamas analysts. The movement's critics consider the Charter as proof of Hamas's inflexibility and anti-Semitism.

The text of the Charter is written in utterly religious and ideological language, starting off with a quotation from the Quran and from the founder of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna<sup>113</sup>. Throughout the text we can find a

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109 Abd Al-Fattah al-Dukhan was the leader of the Brotherhood in Gaza, and often acted as the second-in-command to Shaykh Ahmad Yasin. From: Tamimi (2007), p. 150

110 Tamimi (2007), p. 149. Until the late 1990s, the issue of the relevance of the Hamas Charter did not appear to concern anyone within the movement. This is probably due to the leaders' primary concern of addressing the Arab and Muslim constituency inside and outside Palestine, rather than the rest of the world. After the outburst of the second intifada, however, Hamas became more visible in the worldwide media. Seeking to counter negative publicity, Hamas leaders began to voice their concern about the text of the Charter, admitting that the Charter no longer reflects the thinking of the movement

111 Ibid

112 Even in its early years, central Hamas figures such as its late leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin have voiced views that differ from the positions of the Charter. For further reading: Menachem Klein, 'Hamas in Power', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 2007, pp. 442-459

113 Sura 3 (*Al-Imran*), Verses 109-111

total of 35 quotations from the Quran and numerous passages from the Hadith. The Charter – or ‘Charter of Allah’, as it is officially entitled – focuses entirely on prophecy and the struggle or jihad against Israel.<sup>114</sup> In the Charter, society is only seen from the angle of combat – that is, it seeks to prepare society to battle Israel and the West and educate its young people in Islamic values.<sup>115</sup> In the following years after the Charter’s publication, the text has been criticized by Hamas itself for not having the correct tone for an official document, which should have been suitable for the introduction of Hamas’s ideas to the world.<sup>116</sup>

The Charter counts 36 articles that are divided into five chapters (Introduction to the Movement; Objectives; Strategies and Methods; Our Position [towards other movements and groups within the Arab and Islamic world]; and Historical Proof). Of these articles, a total of 14 articles and the Postscript directly refer to the conflict with Israel and the alleged Jewish/Zionist conspiracy.<sup>117</sup> Other articles indirectly refer to Zionists or the liberation of Palestine, such as the articles about Muslim women (17 and 18) and the article on Islamic art (19).<sup>118</sup>

### 3.2.1 *Views on the Current State of Israel*

#### 3.2.1.1 The Jews and Zionists Occupy Our Land

As mentioned before, in 1987 Hamas emerged as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. The newly founded organization not only aimed to rid Palestine of the occupation through resistance, at the time it also had a clear Islamist agenda. As might be expected from the documents Hamas published shortly after its inception and throughout the first intifada, Hamas’s attitude in both texts is extremely anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish. In these documents, the conflict with Israel is entirely explained in religious terms: ‘Our struggle with the Jews is long and dangerous...’<sup>119</sup> As a result, the authors of the texts have used the terms ‘Zionists’ and ‘Jews’ and their numerous derivatives repeatedly and interchangeably. For instance, Hamas’s first communiqué speaks of

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114 One of the Charter’s most notable passages can be found in Article 8, The Motto of the Islamic Resistance Movement: ‘God is its goal, the messenger is its Leader, the Quran is its Constitution, Jihad is its methodology, and Death for the sake of God is its most coveted Desire’. The combination between the importance of jihad and Islamic education of the people can also be found in Article 20: ‘The society that confronts a vicious enemy ... must be first in adorning its Islamic spirit’

115 Klein (2007), p. 451

116 Tamimi, p. 151

117 Articles 3, 7, 9, 12-15, 17, 20, 22, 28, 31, 32, 34 and the Postscript, respectively.

118 In these articles, Hamas emphasizes the important role of Muslim women and Islamic arts (such as newsletters, sermons, poetry and theatre) in the liberation of Palestine and the struggle against the Zionists

119 The Hamas Charter, Introduction

‘uprooting the Jews’ and claims that ‘... the Jews are committing Nazi crimes against our people...’ Further, the author of the Charter also mentions ‘the Jews and their helpers’, although the term ‘helpers’ receives no further explanation. In the Charter, the Zionists are also referred to as ‘reckless settlers’, ‘sinners’, ‘oppressors’, ‘occupiers’, ‘(vicious) enemies’, ‘infidels and unbelievers’, ‘saboteurs’, ‘Nazi Zionists’ and ‘merchants of war’.

#### 3.2.1.2 Our Homeland is Waqf

As mentioned in the above, during the first phase Hamas not only fought to liberate Palestine, it also had distinct Islamist goals. Even at an early stage, the movement combined both strategic goals into one frame: ‘our homeland is waqf’. In article 11 of the Charter we can find Hamas’s argument that the right of the Palestinians to their homeland is a divine decree: ‘The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic land entrusted to the Muslim generations until Judgment Day ... Palestine is Islamic land.’ This point of view, that Palestine is a religious endowment or waqf, is central to Hamas’s thinking and is expressed in many of the movement’s early statements. The lands conquered by Muslims from the time of the second Caliph Umar onwards are assigned as waqf, and are considered by Hamas as consecrated lands for the future Muslim generations: ‘giving up any part of Palestine is like giving up part of religion’ (Charter, Article 13). Both texts put into words the starting position of Hamas, which is rather theological and ideological and holds the liberation of all of historic Palestine as its strategic goal. Whatever flexibility Hamas has shown on this issue in later times, the first Hamas communiqué calls on the occupation to ‘lift your hands of our people, our cities, our refugee camps, and our villages’, while the Charter speaks of ‘freeing Palestine’ and leaves out the possibility of any negotiation on this point. Unsurprisingly, throughout the communiqué and the Charter no references can be found concerning the recognition of the State of Israel. Evidence for this stance lies in the fact that the word ‘Israel’ is not mentioned once in both texts. Further, what is known as the State of Israel is described by Hamas as ‘our homeland’ and the ‘Occupied Territories’ (see below).

### 3.2.2 *Views on the Future State of Israel*

#### 3.2.2.1 Palestine is Islamic

One of the most obvious frames reflecting Hamas’s doubly-driven agenda is ‘Palestine is Islamic’. As mentioned in the above, during the first intifada or the ‘first phase’ Hamas not only claimed it would liberate Palestine, but it also foresaw an Islamic state on Palestinian soil. The Charter explicitly expresses Hamas’s vision for Palestine when it is freed from Zionist occupation: ‘The goal of the Islamic Resistance Movement, therefore, is to conquer evil, crushing it and defeating it, so that truth may prevail, so that the country may return to its rightful place, so that the call may be heard from the minarets

proclaiming the Islamic state'.<sup>120</sup> Thus, according to the Charter, after the 'day of liberation' Hamas is intending to create an Islamic state. Moreover, in Article 31 the Charter also argues that when Palestine is liberated and its inhabitants live under Islamic law, 'it is possible for the followers of the three religions Islam, Christianity and Judaism, to live in peace and harmony. This peace and harmony is only possible under Islam ... Followers of other religions [than the Islamic religion] should stop fighting Islam over ruling this area [Palestine]'. As such, the text of the Charter clearly leaves room for a Jewish minority to live in an Islamic Palestinian state. Although in Hamas's first communiqué no direct mention is made of the need to liberate Palestine, the following phrase can be interpreted as such: 'lift your hands of our people, our cities, our refugee camps, and our villages'.

#### 3.2.2.2 Peace Initiatives are Contrary to Our Ideology

As might be expected from a movement whose *raison d'être* is resistance, the authors of Hamas's first documents clearly express their lack of faith in any settlement of the conflict. Exploiting the momentum of the uprising, to Hamas any solution other than the complete liberation of Palestine was out of the question. According to its first communiqué, Hamas views a settlement as 'subjugation [to] the Zionists'. Further, the authors state that the intifada 'comes to awaken the consciences of those among us who are gasping after a sick peace, after empty international conferences, after treasonous partial settlements like Camp David'. As such, they make a clear reference to the Camp David Accords of 1978, which were signed by Israel, Egypt and the United States. The Accords contained a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank. The parties also agreed to establish an autonomous self-governing authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, through its communiqué, Hamas gives expression to its discontent with the Camp David Accords, and any other peace initiative which it considered treasonous and incomprehensive.

The Charter does touch upon initiatives towards a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, it states in Article 13 that 'the initiatives, what is called a 'peaceful solution' and 'international conferences' to resolve the Palestinian problem, are contrary to the ideology of the Islamic Resistance Movement... [its members] perform jihad to raise the banner of God over their nation'. It goes on by stating that 'from time to time an invitation for an international conference is made to search for a solution to the problem ... Because of the Islamic Resistance Movement's awareness of the parties participating in the conference, especially their past and present opinions and positions on Muslim interests, it does not believe that conferences are capable of meeting demands, restoring rights, or giving justice to the oppressed ... As for

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120 The Hamas Charter, Article 9, 'Goals'

international initiatives and conferences, they are a waste of time, a kind of child's play.' (Article 13).

In sum, in both documents we have found no references that point to any susceptibility on Hamas's side for a settlement or negotiations that might end the conflict. On the contrary, the Charter also includes several passages in which Hamas alleges a worldwide Jewish conspiracy in which the 'Capitalist West' and the 'Communist East' are involved as well (Article 22). Hamas repudiates any possible settlement, as it considers peace conferences as 'no more than a means of forcing the rule of unbelievers in the land of the Muslims' (Article 13).

### 3.3 The 'Second Phase' – Changing Political Realities

In this subsection, we will discuss three documents that stem from the period we have called the 'second phase' (1994-2005): a statement by Hamas's Political Bureau about the Oslo Accords; a Hamas Memo of March 1996; and a Memo of June 2000.

#### *Statement by the Political Bureau on the Oslo Accords*

In September 1993 the Oslo Accords were signed between Israel and the PLO. The majority of Hamas's positions concerning the Oslo Accords are scattered throughout its literature and the numerous statements by its leaders. However, in April of 1994 Hamas's Political Bureau released an initiative, in which Hamas's thinking about the Oslo Accords materialized. The document, which we will discuss here<sup>121</sup>, deals with the issues which were also addressed by the Oslo agreement: an interim solution; an armistice; and the establishment of a Palestinian entity. It is the first document Hamas released after the signing of the Oslo Accords in which it comprehensively presented the positions it had adopted in view of the changing political context. As Hamas had become a major political force at the time, the document received considerable attention from Israeli and Arab observers. The document is written in the form of an appeal directed at the then Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and signed by the Political Bureau of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). The text does not include religious references or quotations from the Quran and Hadith.

#### *Memo of March 1996*

In the years following the signing of the Oslo Accords, Israel repeatedly attempted to establish a dialogue with Hamas in order to engage the

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121 We have used an English translation of the document, entitled 'Important Statement by the Political Bureau', which is included as appendix no. 4 in Khaled Hroub (2000), *Hamas. Political Thought and Practice*, Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, pp. 302-305

movement in the peace process. Given its political and ideological position on Israel, Hamas firmly rejected all Israeli proposals to open communication channels, accusing Israel of trying to push Hamas into concessions – like it did with the PLO during the Oslo talks. After a series of attacks by Hamas’s military wing in February and March of 1996 and the subsequent violent Israeli campaign against it, Israel tried once again to establish a liaison with Hamas.<sup>122</sup> Again, Hamas refused, explaining its underlying rationale in a memorandum which was addressed to the ‘Summit of Peacemakers’ held in the Egyptian city of Sharm al-Shaykh in March 1996.<sup>123</sup> As the conference took place in reaction to a number of suicide bombings by Hamas, its main objective was to enhance the peace process and promote security. The memorandum which is discussed here<sup>124</sup> reflects Hamas’s effort to voice its positions on the subject to the leaders present at the summit. The document is particularly interesting because the authors used a rather soft rhetoric to express Hamas’s stance. The text is written as a letter addressed to the ‘Majesties, Highnesses, Excellencies – the Conferees at Sharm al-Sheikh’<sup>125</sup>, and is signed by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in Palestine. According to the authors, the purpose of the memorandum was to inform the leaders at the summit about ‘the nature of the Islamic Resistance Movement and clarifying the imperatives that govern its political and military work...’<sup>126</sup> The document comprises a preamble and three subpoints entitled ‘Legitimacy of Resisting Military Occupation’; ‘The Bases for Palestinian Resistance to Occupation’; and ‘The Policies of Hamas in Resisting Occupation’. Again, we did not come across religious references or quotations from the Islamic sacred texts.

#### *Memo of June 2000*

Just before the eruption of the second intifada (or Al-Aqsa intifada) in September 2000, Hamas issued a memo in June 2000.<sup>127</sup> The memo was prepared and signed by the movement’s Political Bureau, which is situated in the Syrian capital of Damascus. By 2000, the Palestinian public had lost its confidence in the peace process that emerged from the Oslo Accords and that

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122 Ibid, p. 207

123 A number of Arab leaders, as well as the then President of the United States Bill Clinton joined the summit, which was hosted by the Egyptian President Husni Mubarak. The final statement of the conference can be found at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Summit+of+Peacemakers+-+Sharm+el-Sheikh+-+March+13-.htm>.

124 We have used the English translation of this memorandum published as appendix no. 5 in Khaled Hroub (2000), *Hamas. Political Thought and Practice*, Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, pp. 306-312

125 Ibid, p. 306

126 Ibid

127 We have used the English translation of the memo published as appendix no. 2 in Azzam Tamimi (2007), *Hamas – Unwritten Chapters*, London: Hurst & Co., pp. 253-265

promised the Palestinians a sovereign and independent state. Major conflict issues with Israel had not been resolved, while the Israeli grip on the PA and the Territories was tightening. Although the memo we are discussing here was published before the provocative visit by Sharon to holy Muslim sites in Jerusalem and thus the full eruption of the intifada, it does fully cover Hamas's views on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict at the time. The memo is made up of six chapters: 1) Definition; 2) Phases of Evolution and Development; 3) The Conflict with the Zionist Project in the Thinking of Hamas; 4) Hamas's Vision of Liberation; 5) Military Action in Hamas's Program; and 6) Political Action in Hamas's Program. The first two chapters describe the movement's historic roots and its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, yet they also contain a chronological outline of the founding stages of the movement and the development of its ideology and its organizational structure throughout the years. This might point to Hamas's quest at the time to present itself to a broader audience than the Palestinian and Arab people.<sup>128</sup> As their titles reveal, Chapters 3 to 6 of the memo directly address the issue of its struggle against Israel.

The document also lacks the extensive use of religious idiom and quotations from the Quran and Hadith – it explains the conflict in universal rather than religious terms. The authors refer to the 'Grace of Allah' once, and include two Quranic quotations from which they say Hamas takes guidance.

### *3.3.1 Views on the Current State of Israel*

#### *3.3.1.1 The Zionists Occupy Our Land*

As we have seen, in its early documents Hamas repeatedly used the terms 'Jews' and 'Zionists' interchangeably. However, the Oslo peace agreements with Israel created an entirely different landscape with a popular climate that favoured peace and renounced violence. As a result, Hamas adopted a rather calm attitude, although it refused to abide by the agreements. Being sensitive to the public mood, at the time Hamas also stopped explaining the conflict in religious terms, as well as referring to its initial goal of establishing an Islamic state.<sup>129</sup>

As a result, contrary to Hamas's early documents, in the documents we have selected for the second phase we found no references to the enemy using the term 'Jews'. In its statement about the Oslo Accords, Hamas refers to Israel as the 'Zionist project'; the 'Zionist enemy'; the 'Zionist occupation'; the

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128 Since the mid-1990s, and especially after the events of 11 September 2001, Hamas began to feel that an image-building initiative was needed and it had to present itself to the whole world, rather than to its Palestinian and Arab audience alone. Tamimi (2007), p. 150

129 Nevertheless, the movement did not forsake its Islamist identity, nor did it drop its Islamic message, as its social welfare activities flourished during the 1990s

'Zionist threat'; and the 'Zionist entity'. Moreover, in this statement the movement clearly differs between the Zionist movement and the Jewish faith, claiming that 'the conflict with the Zionists is not linked to their religious affiliation but is because they occupy our land, desecrate our shrines and violate our people' (Chapter 5). It goes on by stating that ' Hamas does not declare hostility against anyone on the basis of religious belief...' (Chapter 6). However, although Hamas avoids using the term 'Jews', the movement elucidates its position towards the Zionist project: 'the Zionist project was absolutely and radically contradictory to our religious beliefs...' (Chapter 2).

The authors repeatedly refer to Israel as their 'enemy' or the 'occupation'. As might be expected, an explicit recognition of Israel is nowhere to be found.

In Hamas's memo of 1996 the authors also omitted the term 'Zionists'. Instead, Hamas is presented to the conferees as 'a political movement resisting occupation...', presumably because the movement aimed to put emphasis on the fact that the Israeli presence in Palestine is occupational and thus illegitimate. However, in the memo of 2000, Hamas reverts to the terms 'Zionist' and 'Zionist entity', which it defines as 'a colonial settlement entity that is based on the idea of uprooting the Palestinian people and driving them away from their land by force to replace them with settlers using all means of terrorism' (Chapter 3).

Despite the emphasis on the occupation and the absence of a recognition of the State of Israel, we found that Hamas did use certain derivatives such as 'Israeli soldiers', 'Israeli occupation troops' and 'Israeli officer' throughout the documents of the second phase. This might imply that Hamas at the time refused to recognize Israel, but at the same time attempted to innovate ways to deal with or refer to Palestine's Israeli neighbour.

### 3.3.1.2 *Resistance is legitimate*

Initially, after the Oslo Accords were signed, Hamas stated it would intensify the resistance and its violent attacks against Israel. As we have seen, in practice Hamas adopted a rather calm attitude. Nevertheless, through its documents Hamas signaled that it would remain faithful to its ideology and it could not be persuaded to join the peace process.

The Hamas statement about the Oslo Accords directly addressed Yitzhak Rabin and his government as the main representatives of the occupation. The authors start by stating that 'Since assuming office, the terrorist Yitzhak Rabin has continued his repressive measures against all segments of Palestinian society'.<sup>130</sup> Throughout the text, Rabin is repeatedly called a 'terrorist' and is

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130 Tamimi (2007), p. 302

held personally responsible for the ‘murderous policies’ against the Palestinian people, the implementation of the ‘shameful’ Oslo Accords, and the failure to reach a lasting peace in the region (see below). Remarkably, the authors even accuse Rabin of failing to ‘fulfil the longing of the Zionist masses for peace and security’.<sup>131</sup>

Hamas’s memo of 1996 was directed at an international audience of dignitaries. As mentioned before, the text is written in a rather soft rhetoric – but, above all, Hamas aimed to use a type of language that would appeal to an international public. It vigorously attempts to present its resistance against Israel as a struggle that is legitimate according to contemporary international law: ‘We, in Hamas, are a political movement resisting occupation and its actions, which violate the canons of revealed law and many principles of international law in times of peace and war ... we regard the Israeli presence in all its forms ... to be an occupational presence – this being consistent with the text of successive UN resolutions and with the announced official positions of most of the governments in the world since 1967 ... International law and conventions give to every individual and group, especially those falling under military occupation by a foreign power, the right to self-defence with every available means.’<sup>132</sup> In the memo of 2000, we found similar expressions, in which Hamas claimed that its resistance efforts should be viewed as an answer to the Israeli misdeeds. Thus, throughout these documents, we found that Hamas attempted to frame its (armed) resistance as a legitimate struggle against an occupying terrorist force. Further, Hamas aimed to convince the public that it operates in accordance with international conventions – which do explicitly recognize the State of Israel.

### 3.3.2 *Views on the Future State of Israel*

#### 3.3.2.1 *We Have No Ideological Aversion to Making Peace*

As mentioned before, in its official documents Hamas adopted a relatively calm stance after the Oslo Accords were signed, primarily because the public favoured a peaceful solution. As a result, contrary to the documents from the first phase which had resistance as their most central concept, we found that Hamas cautiously introduced its positions on a peaceful solution throughout the documents we selected for the second phase.

Hamas’s statement about the Oslo Accords evidently deals with the movement’s positions concerning the peace initiative. The authors repeatedly and unequivocally express Hamas’s refusal of the Oslo Accords: ‘... The Oslo process is but a process of shameful capitulation on the part of the PLO and a submission to Zionist and American conditions and dictates. It is also a

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131 Ibid

132 Ibid, pp. 306-307

process that carries within the seeds of its own destruction, and its fate is one of complete failure because it is built on a false and unjust foundation.’ However, the authors also declare that ‘... Hamas does not oppose the principle of peace’.<sup>133</sup> This stance fits Hamas’s relatively calm attitude during the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, in which the popular climate favoured peace and renounced violence.

The authors of the 1996 Memo to the Kings and Presidents participating in the ‘Summit of Peacemakers’ explicitly call on the conferees to offer a mediation that demands an Israeli withdrawal: ‘We call on you to adopt your previous positions of demanding an immediate withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces ... We would welcome any even-handed mediation you might offer’.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, they do not specify what they think such a mediation offer should entail. However, the movement underlines that it ‘is for a peace based on truth, justice, and the restoration of rights’. It is the Memo of 1996 in which we also found a reference to the concept of hudna: ‘... Hamas has made many efforts for a ceasefire [hudna] on just conditions’.<sup>135</sup> Thus, in this memorandum Hamas hints at its willingness to establish an armistice and to open negotiations with Israel on its own terms.

In Chapter 6 of the 2000 Memo we can find a paragraph in which Hamas claims it has ‘repeatedly affirmed that it is not against the principle of peace; but the peace it seeks is that which restores to the Palestinian people their rights and guarantees, their independence and sovereignty over their entire land. Such peace can only be accomplished in the light of strength and steadfastness and not in the shade of weakness and capitulation’. They go on by stating that ‘The movement considers the agreements concluded between the occupation and certain Palestinian parties to be unacceptable concessions and comprises over the national rights of the Palestinian people and the rights of the Umma to its holy places ... The movement believes that the settlement agreements grant the enemy the right to exist’.

Thus, according to the views expressed in this document, Hamas refuses to abide by any of the settlement initiatives (which were initiated before June 2000). The movement accuses these initiatives of ‘liquidating the Palestinian cause’, while they ‘deny the Palestinian people the right to claim their legitimate rights in their lands and holy places, deny refugees the right to return to their homes and deny the Palestinians the right to resort to legitimate means to regain their rights. Additionally, they are aimed at denying the majority of the Palestinian people to live on their soil and in their homeland’ (Chapter 6).

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133 Ibid

134 Ibid, p. 312

135 Ibid

Thus, despite Hamas's efforts to stress that its ideology does not oppose peace, it simultaneously expresses its lack of faith in Israel's commitment to establish a lasting peace. Further, Hamas claims it will only abide by a peace agreement that upholds the rights of the Palestinian people. The authors further state that Hamas regards 'the Israeli presence in all its forms in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip to be an occupational presence...' <sup>136</sup> and appeal to UN Security Council Resolution No. 242 which calls for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories which were occupied in 1967. However, Hamas adds that Israel refuses to comply with the 'text and spirit of this resolution' <sup>137</sup>, which means Hamas will continue its resistance efforts.

### 3.3.2.2 The Liberation of Entire Palestine is Our Goal

Despite Hamas's calm attitude during the second phase and its abovementioned positions about peace, at the same time the movement expressed its commitment to its ultimate goals.

Hamas's statement about the Oslo Accords starts with a definition of the movement: 'The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) is a Palestinian Islamic struggle movement whose supreme frame of reference is Islam and whose goal is the liberation of Palestine' (Chapter 1). Thus, Hamas considers the liberation of Palestine through (armed) resistance against the Zionist movement as its primary goal. The movement speaks of 'eliminating' the Zionist entity and also refers to 'the battle for the total liberation of Palestine from the Sea to the River' (Chapter 3), '... occupied in 1948 and in 1967' (Chapter 5). Moreover, it presents the establishment of 'an Arab Islamic state in the whole of Palestine' (Chapter 6) as its ultimate goal (although it is only mentioned once in the document). The authors conclude the document by stating that 'Hamas, as it clarifies its positions to refute the allegations and utterances of the prime minister of the enemy, pledges to our people to continue on the road of holy struggle (jihad) and martyrdom until Palestine – all Palestine – is liberated'. <sup>138</sup> At the end of this document, the authors included three conditions that form – in Hamas's opinion – the correct beginning for a final solution: '1) Complete Zionist withdrawal from our Palestinian land and the dismantling and elimination of its settlements; 2) Conducting general and free elections in the West Bank and Gaza to choose representatives and a leadership for our people; 3) The elected leadership would be the ones to articulate the hopes and goals for our people and to decide on all succeeding steps in the future of our case.' <sup>139</sup> These three conditions demonstrate that Hamas at the time opted for an interim solution

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136 Ibid, p. 307

137 Ibid

138 Ibid, p. 305

139 Ibid

– a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – as the first step in the liberation of Palestine. Further, it declared its belief that the outcome of legitimate democratic elections would express the Palestinian people’s vision of a solution to the conflict.

In its memo of 1996, Hamas defines itself as a ‘political movement resisting occupation’ and ‘part of the national liberation movement of the Palestinian people’.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, as the greater part of the text focuses on Hamas’s military strategy resistance, the authors do not specify their vision of the Palestinian society once it is liberated. Hamas expresses its commitment to ‘constructing and building a Palestinian society’ but makes no references to the movement’s initial aim of liberating the entire Palestinian homeland or establishing an Islamic state once the occupation is ended.

The text of the 2000 Memo, however, starts with the following definition of Hamas: ‘The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) is a Palestinian Islamic struggle movement whose supreme frame of reference is Islam and whose goal is the liberation of Palestine’ (Chapter 1). Thus, although the aim of liberating Palestine was virtually absent in the preceding 1996 Memo, here Hamas claims it considers the liberation of Palestine through (armed) resistance against the Zionist movement as its primary goal. The movement even speaks of ‘eliminating’ the Zionist entity and also refers to ‘the battle for the total liberation of Palestine from the Sea to the River’ (Chapter 3), ‘... occupied in 1948 and 1967’ (Chapter 5). Moreover, the authors present the establishment of an ‘Arab Islamic state in the whole of Palestine’ (Chapter 6) as Hamas’s ultimate goal (although it is only mentioned once in the document).

### **3.4 The ‘Third Phase’ – The Era of Political Integration**

In order to study Hamas’s positions towards Israel during the period from 2005 to 2007 – or the ‘third phase’, as we call it – we have selected four documents which outline Hamas’s thinking on many affairs including Israel: The Change and Reform Election Manifesto; The Proposed National Unity Government Program; The Cabinet Platform; and an Open Letter to the Annapolis Peace Conference.

#### *The Change and Reform Election Manifesto*

As mentioned before, Hamas’s remarkable success in the municipal elections across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 2004 and 2005 encouraged the movement to participate in the first democratic Palestinian legislative elections since 1996. Its decision to participate under the electoral list of

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140 Ibid, p. 306

Change and Reform was publicly announced in March 2005. Directly after the announcement, Hamas published its Election Manifesto and started to plan its electoral campaign – which proved to be the most disciplined, professional and calculated campaign among the competing parties.<sup>141</sup>

The fourteen-page Electoral Platform for Change and Reform constitutes undoubtedly the broadest vision that Hamas had ever presented to that date concerning all aspects of Palestinian life.<sup>142</sup> Following the preamble and a section called ‘Our Essential Principles’, the following seventeen articles, each comprising a number of subpoints, form the body of the document: Domestic Policy; External Relations; Administrative Reform and Fighting Corruption; Legislative Policy and Judicial Reform; Public Liberties and Citizen Rights; Educational Policy; Social Policy; Cultural and Media Policy; The Question of Women, Children and the Family; The Issues of Youth; Housing Policy; Health Policy; Agricultural Policy; Economic, Fiscal and Monetary Policy; Questions Pertaining to Labour and Labourers; and Transport and Passages.

On the whole, the language of the Platform throughout the seventeen articles is secular and bureaucratic. However, the document does contain several religious references, although their number is relatively small. The most overtly religious references can be found at the beginning of the document and the final appeal, which are marked with quotations from the Quran<sup>143</sup>. Some of the platform’s policy initiatives are supported by quotations from the Quran and Hadith – but the combined religious references amount to a page and a half of the fourteen-page document.<sup>144</sup> Further, Hamas repeatedly declares that Islam is its permanent ‘frame of reference’ (Essential Principles) and a ‘...comprehensive system that attends to all aspects of life’ (Educational Policy). It concludes the platform by strategically stating that voting for Change and Reform is a divine decree: ‘Brothers and sisters the voters, when you stand before the ballot box, remember your responsibility when you meet with the Almighty Allah ... Your vote is a trust, so testify nothing but the truth’ (Conclusion). The blending of secular and religious idiom in one document might demonstrate a strategic decision by Hamas to appeal to voters who vote for Change and Reform because of its Islamic aspects, as well the constituency that supports Hamas for other reasons.

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141 See also: The International Crisis Group, ‘Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration’, in: *Crisis Group Middle East Report No. 49*, 18 January 2006

142 Khaled Hroub, ‘A New Hamas Through its New Documents’, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, Summer 2006, p. 9

143 Sura 11, Verse 88 and Sura 9, Verse 105, respectively. The preamble also contains a Quranic quotation (Sura 6, verse 153)

144 Hroub (2006), p. 13

### *The Proposed National Unity Government Program*

After its surprising victory in the January 2006 elections, Hamas attempted to form a power-sharing agreement with the other Palestinian factions within the framework of a coalition government. The abrupt move from non-representation in the government to assuming full power presumably caused Hamas's wish to form a coalition, although the movement had also emphasized the importance of national unity long before the elections took place.<sup>145</sup> Eventually, Hamas was unable to secure the participation of the other factions. Its main rival Fatah had no intentions of joining a coalition for two main reasons: Hamas's failure to acknowledge the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and Hamas's refusal to abide by the UN resolutions on Palestine and Israeli-PLO agreements.<sup>146</sup> Ostensibly, Fatah also chose to 'wait out' Hamas's days in power, hoping that they would be numbered. Despite the collapse of the coalition talks, the National Unity Government Program provides an insight into Hamas's thinking after it assumed full government power.

The document<sup>147</sup> consists of thirty-nine articles, of which nine are discussed below since they directly or indirectly deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As is expected from a newly elected government party, a number of articles reflect Hamas's attempt to grapple with issues which were of secondary value before its election, such as international relations and economic development. The first few articles of the text lay out the issues that have top priority for Hamas – and for this study for that matter: (resistance against) the occupation and the settlements; building a Palestinian state; the issue of (partial) solutions to the conflict; the rights of Palestinian refugees and prisoners; and Jerusalem.

The language which is used throughout the text is secular and bureaucratic, and aims to appeal to both international observers and Hamas's own constituency.<sup>148</sup>

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145 Hamas demonstrated its wish for national unity by its willingness to join PA structures and even the PLO – although on its own terms. See also: Khaled Hroub, 'A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Summer 2006), p. 15

146 Ibid, p. 16

147 We have used a translation by the Palestine Centre in Washington. The full text of the document can be found under 'Documents and Source Material' in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 35, pp. 163-164

148 Khaled Hroub, 'A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Summer 2006), p. 16

Although the text does refer to Hamas's Islamic identity<sup>149</sup>, it does not contain any religious idiom or quotations from the Quran and Hadith.

#### *The Cabinet Platform*

On 27 March 2006, the Prime Minister-elect Ismail Haniya delivered his cabinet platform speech before the newly elected Parliament.<sup>150</sup> Since the speech was drafted after the collapse of the negotiations for a coalition government with Fatah and the other Palestinian parties, Hamas did not have to make concessions to the factions. Thus, this document is especially interesting as it represents Hamas alone. Naturally, the primary purpose of this document was to present the government programme. However, Haniya's speech was not directed at Hamas's constituency alone. It also sought to address the wider Palestinian public; the neighbouring Arab states; the international community and especially Western regimes; other Islamist movements and adherents to political Islam in the Middle East; and moreover, it aimed to address Israel. As a result, the tone of the speech was moderate, conciliatory and carefully crafted<sup>151</sup>, particularly towards other Palestinian factions and their following. For instance, at the beginning of his speech Haniya praised PA President Mahmud Abbas for serving the Palestinian people – while Abbas had previously been the target of much of Hamas's criticism being a supporter of the Oslo Accords.<sup>152</sup> With this speech, Hamas expressed its wish for continuity with gradual changes, rather than a radical break with previous government policy, and its willingness to work together with all parties on a domestic and international level.

With the exception of the preamble and ending, the speech contains seven sections that form the government programme and thus the core of Haniyah's speech: The Political Level; In Terms of the Occupation; The Security Level; At the Legal Level; The Palestinian Value System; the Economic Situation; the Field of Reform; and International Relations. For our research, we have concentrated on the first two sections which directly deal with Hamas's

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149 Any references to religion seem directly linked to the national cause. For example, article 12 calls for 'working to revive the support of the Arab and Muslim world for Palestinians and their cause, given that we are Arab and Muslim'. From: Khaled Hroub, 'A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Summer 2006), p. 17

150 We have used an English translation by the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 36, no. 36, pp. 200-203. A translation of the preamble to the speech can be found in Khaled Hroub, 'A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Summer 2006), pp. 19-25. Another English translation of Haniyah's speech can be found at [http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Speeches/Haniyya\\_Speech\\_Unity.doc](http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Speeches/Haniyya_Speech_Unity.doc), (accessed in September 2008)

151 Khaled Hroub, 'A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Summer 2006), p. 19

152 Ibid, p. 20

relationship with Israel. To a lesser extent, we will also focus on Hamas's positions on international relations.

Throughout the programmatic sections, no religious references can be found. For the most part, the Islamic references are connected to Hamas's thinking about Palestinian society and the Islamic world in general, for instance: 'The Palestinian people are an integral part of our Arab and Muslim nation'; '... our government stresses its Arab and Islamic depth...'; and 'Our government will strive for the deepening of relations and consultations with the Arab and Islamic surroundings...'.<sup>153</sup>

#### *An Open Letter to the Annapolis Peace Conference*

After Hamas assumed full governmental power, the tensions between Hamas and its main rival Fatah increased significantly. The failure of the National Unity government including both parties resulted in a bitter showdown of violence between rival Hamas and Fatah factions. As mentioned before, after Hamas's victory, the Israeli government quickly stated that it had no intention of entering to any relationship with the Hamas-led government. Further, Israel claimed it would only participate in negotiations with PA President Mahmud Abbas. Eventually, the violent clash between Hamas and Fatah resulted in Hamas's takeover of the entire Gaza Strip, which immediately led President Abbas to dissolve the Hamas government. During the months following Hamas's seizure of Gaza, the PA severely limited Hamas's ability to govern in Gaza while Israel tightened its sanctions on the Strip.

By the end of 2007, the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took the initiative for a conference on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict which took place in the city of Annapolis in the United States on 22 November 2007. Among the attendees were U.S. President Bush, the Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, the Palestinian President Abbas, as well as a number of invitees.<sup>154</sup>

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153 Ibid, p. 26

154 The list of invitees to the Annapolis Peace Summit was published in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz and can be found at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/926297.html> (accessed in October 2008)

What makes the Annapolis Peace Summit significant is that both Israeli and Palestinian delegations entered the conference supporting a two-state solution as the final outcome to the conflict.<sup>155</sup>

Evidently, no Hamas diplomats or spokesmen attended the summit. Nevertheless, after the conference, the Hamas senior political advisor Ahmad Yusuf sent an open letter to Condoleezza Rice on behalf of the marginalized Hamas, expressing the movement's positions concerning the central issues discussed in Annapolis,<sup>156</sup> including Palestinian State borders, Jerusalem, refugees and their right to return. Yusuf's three-page letter is entirely directed at Secretary Rice and the U.S. government in general. Further, the writer claims he is not speaking on behalf of Hamas, but rather on behalf of the entire Palestinian population that democratically elected Hamas as its representative: 'Meaningful steps towards a resolution cannot take place while the legitimacy of the elected government in Palestine continues to be ignored by your administration ... Your administration cannot want peace more than the Palestinian people want and need peace'.

#### 3.4.1 *Views on the Current State of Israel*

##### 3.4.1.1 Israel is occupation

As mentioned in the above, the period after the second intifada or the 'third phase' is characterized by Hamas's integration into the PA. Its documents ceased to speak the language of fanaticism; instead, they were designed to appeal to a large (international) audience. At the time, Hamas seemingly aimed to manifest itself as a conventional political party.

As a result, throughout the four documents we selected, the term 'Jews' is absent in any description of the conflict with Israel. Also, no direct references are made to the Jewish religion or its followers, except for the subpoint in the Election Manifesto that deals with Hamas's efforts to resist 'the enemy's

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155 The Statement of Joint Understanding to the Annapolis Peace Conference can be found at <http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Speeches/Statement%20of%20Joint%20Understanding%20Annapolis.pdf> (accessed in October 2008). See also the statements by Bush, Olmert, and Abbas made at the Annapolis Peace Summit: <http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Speeches/Abbas%20Statement%20at%20Annapolis.pdf>; <http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Speeches/President%20Bush%20Statement%20at%20Annapolis%20Conference.pdf>; and <http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Speeches/Prime%20Minister%20Olmert%20Statement%20at%20Annapolis.pdf> (accessed in October 2008).

156 The full text of this letter can be found at [http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Ahmad\\_Yousef\\_Letter\\_to\\_Condoleezza\\_Rice.pdf](http://www.prospectsforpeace.com/Resources/Ahmad_Yousef_Letter_to_Condoleezza_Rice.pdf) (accessed in September 2008)

attempts to judaize Jerusalem' (Domestic Policy). It is interesting to note that the Election Manifesto does not even contain a section that directly deals with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Hamas's role therein. References to Hamas's struggle against Israel and the occupation in general are scattered throughout the document.

The authors of the documents preferred referring to Israel using the term 'occupation', and to a much lesser extent the term 'Zionists', which is only used in the Election Manifesto. In the proposed National Unity program, the term 'Israel' is not used at all. Here too, the authors chose to use the term 'occupation' in the articles that do attend to the subject: 'Remove the occupation...' (article 1); '... confront the occupation' (article 3); and '... bring an end to the occupation...' (articles 4 and 5). Nevertheless, we did not find any hints at Hamas's initial goal of destroying Israel. In Haniya's cabinet speech, the term 'Israeli' is used frequently, where Hamas would have used the term 'Zionist' in earlier documents. This might be interpreted as the beginnings of a recognition of Israel, especially with regard to the following statement from the speech's preamble: 'The government and relevant ministries will take into consideration the interests and needs of our people and the mechanisms of daily life, thus dictating necessary contacts with the occupation in all mundane affairs: business, trade, health, and labor'.<sup>157</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite intensive international pressure on Hamas, all documents explicitly refuse to recognize Israel. Instead, Hamas emphasizes that it regards the State of Israel as an occupational force, which can only be recognized when it ends the 'occupation of the Palestinian territories and [recognizes] the Palestinian people's right to self-determination' (Haniya's Cabinet Speech).

In sum we can conclude that Hamas aims to raise the banner of resistance throughout these documents by referring to Israel as the occupation. Moreover, instead of referring to the goal of destroying Israel, the authors signaled that Hamas is very aware that Israel is a fait accompli which it has to deal with on a daily basis. In the open letter to the Annapolis Conference, the author claims that 'we [Hamas, ed.] are not anti-American, anti-European, or anti-anyone'. Thus, these documents demonstrate that despite repeating claims that Hamas will continue its resistance against the Israeli occupation, it seems that factual recognition of Israel is everywhere between the lines.

#### 3.4.1.2 We Will Work With the International Community and International Decisions

A statement which we found repeatedly throughout the documents of the third phase, concerns Hamas's intention to abide by international agreements

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157 Hroub (2006), p. 22

and to work within the cadres of the international system. Again, this position reflects Hamas's willingness to profile as a reliable political party, which is typical of Hamas's attitude during the third phase. In its Election Manifesto, Hamas expresses its awareness that a governmental role brings along the responsibility to 'work with the signed agreements' (article 9) and to 'work with international resolutions and decisions'.

As mentioned before, one of the major problems confronting Hamas after its electoral victory was the external pressure to recognize international conventions and agreements on Palestine.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, in articles 9 and 10 of the proposed National Unity Program Hamas confirms its election commitments by stating that it will 'work with the signed agreements, with the highest sense of responsibility, guided by an obligation to protect the interests, rights, and principles of the Palestinian people' and 'work with international resolutions/decisions in a manner that protects the rights of the Palestinian people'. In Haniya's cabinet speech, we found statements almost identical to the ones we found in the proposed government programme: '... the government will work with the international community...'; '... the government shall respect international legitimacy resolutions and agreements that were signed by the PLO'.

These repeated statements by Hamas are particularly interesting, as they imply that Hamas is willing to abide by international agreements that do unequivocally recognize Israel's right to exist. In other words, although Hamas itself does not acknowledge Israel's right to exist, its documents since 2005 show that it is clearly aware that as a governmental party, it has to deal with Israel's existence.

### 3.4.2 *Views on the future State of Israel*

#### 3.4.2.1 A Comprehensive Programme for the Liberation of Palestine

As we have seen, during the third phase Hamas restrained its radical thinking in its effort to win the elections, and later, to appeal to an international audience. Thus, although one might think that the documents from an apparently uncompromising movement like Hamas, which derives a large part of its popularity from its continuous resistance to Israeli occupation, are crammed with articles that deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this was not the case after 2005.

In Hamas's Election Manifesto, we did not find a section that directly deals with the movement's relationship with Israel. In fact, the authors of the manifest did not extensively discuss Hamas's positions towards Israel, whereas the sections that do contain statements concerning the issue are

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p. 16

dispersed throughout the text. Nevertheless, particularly in the preamble, we did find several references to Hamas's ultimate goal of liberating Palestine: 'The Change and Reform list believes that its participation ... falls within the framework of the comprehensive program for the liberation of Palestine, the return of the Palestinian people to their lands and homes and the establishment of the Palestinian independent state with Jerusalem as its capital'. The movement also presents the goal of 'establishing the independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital' as one of its 'Essential Principles'. Moreover, it repeatedly speaks of the Palestinian 'homeland', the right to establish a fully sovereign Palestinian state and the illegitimacy of the occupation. Although Hamas casts the liberation of the entire Palestinian homeland as the main goal of its resistance, the document is rather vague about the future prospects for a Palestinian state. In fact, the text implies that the liberation of Palestine is left to future generations under the 'Educational Policy' section: 'Since education is the foundation for building the generation that is capable of sketching the future of the homeland and accomplishing the dream of freedom, liberation and independence...'. We did not find any direct references to the idea of establishing an Islamic state in Palestine once it is liberated, although the platform does express Hamas's aim to 'establish Islamic Shari'ah as the main source of legislation in Palestine' (Legislative Policy and Judicial Reform).<sup>159</sup>

Nevertheless, the document does not express Hamas's previous intentions of destroying or eliminating the State of Israel. Rather, the text implies that Hamas is very much aware that the Palestinian people have to deal with their Israeli neighbours on a day-to-day basis. It addresses the issues of Palestinian labours working in Israel and Palestine's dependence on the 'Israeli economy' (Economic, Fiscal and Monetary Policy).

We found that the relatively short Proposed National Unity Program, which failed to satisfy the international community, in fact shows a major shift on Hamas's part regarding its aim of liberating Palestine in article 5: '[We will] cooperate with the international community to end the occupation, remove settlements, and withdraw completely from lands occupied in 1967 [the West Bank and the Gaza Strip], including Jerusalem, to achieve calm and stability during this phase'. Articles 5, 9 and 10 of the proposed National Unity Program show that Hamas's positions on Israel hover around the concept of a two-state solution – although Hamas does hint at the policy of 'stages', in which a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is the first phase in the total liberation of Palestine. Moreover, in article 1 Hamas states its aim to '... establish an independent, fully sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem

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159 This statement about Islamic law is immediately followed by a number of points that focus entirely on the importance of establishing a sound and efficient legal system based on the separation of powers

as its capital; and reject all partial solutions...'. Nevertheless, the government programme reflects very little inclination towards Hamas's radical positions that it has expressed before. Instead, it cautiously demonstrates Hamas's tendency towards a two-state solution.

Ismail Haniya explicitly stated in his Cabinet speech that Hamas 'shall abide by the rejection of the so-called state with temporary borders because this idea is based on taking away from the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people' (The Political Level). Nevertheless, despite this refusal, the concept of a two-state solution is everywhere between the lines in Haniya's speech.<sup>160</sup> For instance, Haniya speaks of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as 'the two halves'<sup>161</sup>, without reference to the 'rest of the Palestinian homeland' in between. Further, Haniya repeatedly affirms his government will work in accordance with the PA's Basic Law, which is a direct outcome of the Oslo Accords which recognize the State of Israel. He also states that 'The government affirms the contents of the national conciliation document regarding the administration of negotiations, which is the jurisdiction of the PLO and the President of the Palestinian National Authority, on the basis of adhering to and achieving Palestinian national goals. Any offer on any final agreement should be presented to the new Palestinian National Council for ratification, or a general referendum should be held among the Palestinian people inside and abroad, with a law that organizes the referendum' (In Terms of the Occupation). Thus, here Hamas states that settlement negotiations with Israel are a task of PA President Mahmud Abbas, and that an outcome of such negotiations should be the topic of a referendum in which the entire Palestinian public decides – and not the Hamas government. Finally, Hamas very briefly touches upon its views of a final settlement. It does not speak of its wish to establish an Islamic state, nor its goal of liberating the whole of Palestine. According to this document, Hamas aspires to establish a 'free and independent Palestinian state' once the occupation has ended.

Thus, we found that throughout the documents Hamas has issued since 2005, and especially in the documents that stem from Hamas's governmental career, the movement held on to its final aim of liberating Palestine, which it also expressed in its documents from the first and second phase. Nevertheless, the aims of liberating the entire historic Palestine and establishing an Islamic state virtually disappeared from the texts. Instead, Hamas claims its strategic goal is establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state.

#### 3.4.2.2 We Will Work for Stability and Peace

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160 Ibid

161 Ibid

As we have seen, in the latter half of the 1990s after the Oslo Agreements, Hamas developed its thinking about peace. At the time the movement claimed it was not opposed to making peace, but it would not leave its initial objectives of liberating Palestine and attaining the rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, it is significant to note that throughout the documents of the third phase, Hamas has in fact put much emphasis on the need for security, stability and peace in the region and in the world. In the Cabinet Speech, Haniya even stressed that his ‘... government will work ... so that we can build a solid basis for peace, security and prosperity in the region’ (the Political Level); and that it ‘... shall work on establishing sound and solid relations with various countries and with international institutions ... in a manner that reinforces world peace and stability’ (International Relations). We also found his emphasis on the importance of peace in the open letter to the conferees at Annapolis. Throughout the letter, much is said about Hamas’s views on peace initiatives and the preconditions for a settlement. As mentioned before, the author emphasizes Hamas’s willingness to establish peace for the Palestinian people: ‘Our conflict with the Israelis is a grievance-based conflict. We want to end the occupation of our land and the systematic human rights abuses that our people suffer from daily’. He goes on by stating that ‘Many people make the mistake of presuming that we have some ideological aversion to making peace ... despite the fact that we entered the democratic process and held a unilateral ceasefire [hudna] of our own for two years ... [We have no] ideological problems with living side by side with Christians and Jews’. However, the author adds that ‘they [Muslims, Christians and Jews] cannot live in peace and security in a land that was usurped’. Nevertheless, in his speech Haniya also claimed Hamas is committed to establish a truce (hudna) with Israel under the right conditions.

Thus, in the latter two documents we selected, Hamas again aimed to signal its non-belligerency and its eagerness to promote peace in the region. Nevertheless, both documents lack a concrete proposal in which Hamas elucidates its views on achieving a lasting peace.

#### 3.4.2.3 No Political Concessions during Negotiations

Despite Hamas’s moderate stands on many issues after 2005, the documents also clearly reflect the movement’s faithfulness to its ideology concerning negotiations with Israel. Naturally, during its electoral campaign but also after its victory in the elections, Hamas had the task of keeping its large following contented. As a result, although Hamas has put much emphasis on the importance of peace and stability during its electoral career, we found several distinct statements about the possibility of negotiations with Israel showing a less moderate and pragmatic face of the movement.

In its Election Manifesto, the authors present the liberation of the entire Palestine as the party’s ultimate goal. Therefore, it is not surprising that any

intention or possibility of bargaining a settlement with Israel is left out. The text states that ‘... The right to self-determination and all our national rights are considered inalienable rights; they are fixed and cannot be compromised by any political concessions’ (Essential Principles). Furthermore, under ‘External Relations’, Hamas claims it aims to revitalise the resistance against the occupation, and rejects normalisation with it. Besides the Oslo Accords, which it describes as ‘a thing of the past’ (Conclusion), the text does not touch upon any other peace initiative for the conflict.

In its open letter directed at Condoleezza Rice, Hamas places a heavy judgement on the Annapolis Peace Conference: ‘The conference is faulty in its inception. It was conceived in a vacuum and hastily announced for political expediency ... You owe it to your sense of fairness to engage meaningfully with all relevant parties to the conflict’. Hamas also expresses its lack of trust in any previous peace initiative by the United States: ‘Our scepticism is based on experience. You know that despite every call for restraint by the U.S. over the last twenty years the Israelis have continued to expand and develop their vast network of towns and roads on Palestinian land...’ Furthermore, Hamas expresses its disbelief at Israel’s intentions for peace: ‘It is ... hard to imagine an Israeli government bent on a peaceful withdrawal from our land. We can only presume that they are paying lip-service to your request to participate, seeing it as a delaying tactic to talk about peace with no real intention to deliver’. As mentioned before, we did not find Hamas’s concrete views on a settlement in the open letter. This probably stems from the movement’s positions on the preconditions for such an engagement: ‘We [have to] accept certain conditions. Yet you [the U.S. government] don’t apply the same preconditions to the Israelis. You don’t require of them recognition of Palestinian rights or a renunciation of the terrible violence that they daily invoke on us. Nor do you require that they comply with previous agreements or the settlement building would long since have stopped.’ Thus, Hamas argues it is only willing to settle for peace on acceptable preconditions: ‘If you were even-handed in this conflict, if you engaged with us openly then the chances of peace would dramatically increase.’

Thus, regarding the issue of negotiating with Israel, Hamas not only expressed a severe lack of faith in Israel’s sincerity, throughout the documents it also repeatedly claimed it would not make any political concessions which might downplay the rights of the Palestinian people.



## 4. Developments

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### 4.1 A Maturing Ideology and Evolving Frames

In the previous chapter we have studied the ways in which Hamas has framed its message about Israel to its public in some of its most significant official documents. In this chapter, we aim to assess whether these positions and views have developed during the twenty years since the movement's inception. Further, we will mirror any ideological developments on Hamas's part against important political events in Palestine. We will then explain why we can find certain developments in Hamas's ideology. In order to explain any developments, we will again make use of the SMT concept of framing, including the predominant frames we identified in the previous chapter.

In our effort to present the developments in Hamas's thinking as clearly as possible, we will subdivide this chapter according to the two key topics on which we concentrate: 'Views on the current State of Israel' and 'Views on the future State of Israel'.

### 4.2 Views on the Current State of Israel

As we have seen, the documents Hamas has published in its early years – or during the 'first phase', as we have called it – are written in highly idealistic language. As Hamas expresses religion and the religious ideal as supreme

values in these early documents, the movement's views on Israel are laden with religious significance as well, holding that Israel was the culmination of a Jewish onslaught against Muslims and their holy places in Jerusalem. Hamas has even compared the establishment of Israel and the strong support it received from Western powers with the medieval Crusades.<sup>162</sup> As we have seen, Hamas at the time did not differentiate between 'Jews' and 'Zionists', which is clearly reflected in its rhetoric using the frame 'The Jews and Zionists occupy our land'. Another central concept from Hamas's early thinking is that Palestine is an Islamic endowment ('Our Homeland is Waqf'), which to Hamas consequently meant that every Muslim is obliged to engage in jihad to preserve this sacred land and that every diplomatic initiative with Israel is rejected. Hamas repeatedly expressed its steadfast commitment to liberate all historic Palestine in the name of God (Hamas's views on the establishment of an Islamic state will be discussed below).

Clearly, we should place Hamas's radical message illustrated by the abovementioned frames in the context of the first intifada – an uprising which had resistance as its *raison d'être* and the liberation of Palestine as its strategic goal. Also, Hamas stemmed from the Muslim Brotherhood, inheriting the Brotherhood's clear Islamic identity and an Islamist agenda. The early documents we studied not only provided Hamas with an ideological base and legitimized its identity; they were also meant to assert Hamas's presence in Palestinian society during the uprising and present the movement's ideology to the region. Thus, by using these frames, Hamas not only displayed its thinking to its observers, it also aimed to energize the masses during the uprising.

However, as we have seen, a new context evolved in the Palestinian arena in the early 1990s: the intifada declined and the peace process accelerated, culminating in the Oslo Accords and the emergence of the Palestinian Authority. As Hamas viewed the peace agreements as treason towards the Palestinian people and towards Islam, it held on to the ideology of resistance against the occupation as its strategy to liberate the entire Palestine (this will be discussed in 'Views on the Future State of Israel'). Nevertheless, Hamas faced a popular climate that favoured the peace initiative led by the PLO and rejected violence. During the 1990s, Hamas also became accustomed to its role as a large oppositional force to the PLO led by Yasir Arafat and to the increased attention by international observers. As a result, Hamas reacted to these circumstances by softening its language in its documents stemming from the mid-1990s, aligning with the Palestinian people as well as the international public. Regarding the content of its message, we found that Hamas expressed its commitment to liberating Palestine, while it simultaneously claimed that it is opposed to the Zionist project, not the

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162 Khaled Hroub (2006), *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, London: Pluto Press, p. 37

Jewish people. As a result, we found that by the mid-1990s, Hamas's initial frame 'the Jews and Zionist Occupy Our Land' developed into 'the Zionists Occupy Our Land'. Further, being aware of the general mood favouring peace, Hamas aimed to frame its resistance efforts as a legitimate response to a foreign occupational presence ('Resistance is Legitimate').

Nevertheless, by the end of the 1990s Hamas once again found itself in a changed political reality. Six years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the public had lost its confidence in the peace process as both parties seemed unable – or unwilling – to fulfil their obligations. As we have seen in our selected documents, Hamas – eager to frame itself as the true defender of Palestinian rights – again reacted by stressing it had predicted the failure of Oslo from the start – although the movement itself seriously contributed to this failure by continuing its military campaign. Thus, Hamas welcomed the eruption of the second intifada and the consequent fighting as an unambiguous repudiation of the policy of accommodation with Israel, and chose to revitalize its resistance approach.<sup>163</sup> When in 2005 Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, Hamas and many Palestinians celebrated the liberation of the Strip as a direct result of the armed resistance efforts led by Hamas, resulting in a return by Hamas to its rather flamboyant rhetoric. Unsurprisingly, Hamas also firmly rejected Israel as a legitimate state, and even reverted to its initial concept of waqf. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the documents, during the second intifada Hamas also explained the conflict in political rather than religious terms, claiming to be anti-Zionist rather than anti-Jewish.

Despite the ongoing violence, Hamas amassed popular support throughout the second intifada, which it strategically employed in what we have called the 'third phase', or the period of Hamas's political integration. As the Oslo era had come to an end with the outbreak of the second intifada, Hamas felt confident and justified to compete in the 2006 elections, which also forced the movement to broaden its vision on all aspects of life. Moreover, the 'whole world' witnessed Hamas's every move. In response, Hamas adopted a rather secular and bureaucratic language in its documents. Although it persisted in its rejection of the occupation ('Israel is occupation'), presumably to appease its large constituency and Islamists throughout the region, in the documents we found that Hamas's visions on Israel deserved no disproportionate attention. Further, it is interesting to note that after Hamas removed its hostile positions to the Jewish people from its documents during the 1990s, in its governmental documents it also virtually dropped the term 'Zionists'. Evidently, the documents from the third phase give expression to the process by which Hamas has become a political – and eventually, a governmental –

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163 Khaled Hroub, 'Hamas after Sheikh Yassin and Rantisi', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 24

party. On the whole this means we found a major shift in Hamas's rhetoric, including many statements that can be interpreted as a factual recognition of Israel on Hamas's part.

### 4.3 Views on the future State of Israel

'Resistance' as a concept has been the most central principle in the thinking and formation of Hamas.<sup>164</sup> Exploiting the momentum of the intifada, since its inception the movement expressed a clear aversion to any settlement with Israel – or, 'the occupation'. As we have seen, Hamas went as far as to call previous settlement proposals 'treasonous' and contrary to the ideology of the movement. As the Islamist movement Hamas considered Palestine to be a religious endowment, it declared that it would 'raise the banner of God over the nation' and eventually establish an Islamic state ('Palestine is Islamic'). Again, we should place these radical outlets in the context of the first intifada, an uprising entirely based on the concept of resistance against occupation. Also, the ways in which Hamas framed its message clearly reflect its Islamist agenda. Evidently, in Hamas's thinking, at the time negotiations with its main enemy were out of the question.

Matters changed after the Oslo Accords were signed; as mentioned before, during the mid-1990s Hamas witnessed a relatively calm public mood hopeful of a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict. Nevertheless, in its documents Hamas adamantly rejects the Oslo Accords, which it viewed as a 'sell-out' of Palestinian rights. Despite its flamboyant language regarding Oslo, in practice Hamas reacted moderately and non-violently – not only to align with the public mood, but also because of Hamas's aversion to civil war. Moreover, Hamas declared it did not reject the principle of peace ('We have no ideological aversion to making peace'), but it would only accept it on just terms. This statement stands in sharp contrast to Hamas's positions during the 'first phase', in which it vigorously expressed an ideological aversion to peace. Such a development in Hamas's expressions clearly reflects the movement's awareness of the public mood and its ability to react to it. Quite interesting are also the statements we found concerning the liberation of Palestine and the 'policy of stages': Hamas claimed it viewed the interim-solution designed by the Oslo Accords as the first step in the liberation of Palestine ('The liberation of entire Palestine is our goal'). Further, the concept of an Islamic state which Hamas initially presented as its final goal virtually disappeared from the documents we selected. As Hamas came under attack during the post-Oslo phase due to its violent agenda and its rejection of the peace initiative, Hamas made a strategic effort to adopt a relatively calm stance, declaring its willingness for peace. In the documents Hamas published during the mid-1990s, we can also find the movement's first references to the

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164 Hroub (2006), p. 43

concept of hudna (truce). Thus, although Hamas held on to its primary goal of liberating Palestine, it also expressed its willingness to establish a truce on just conditions. Nevertheless, it made no effort to specify its visions of such a peace initiative, nor the future of a Palestinian state.

As we have mentioned before, the outburst of the second intifada created a different and extremely violent political landscape. By the end of the 1990s, Hamas witnessed a changing attitude among the Palestinian people concerning what the Oslo Accords had gained for them. Through its documents we have seen that Hamas aimed to regain its position at the forefront of the 'national resistance project'<sup>165</sup> by reverting to its initial ideology of liberating the Palestinian waqf. As might be expected during periods of great vigour, Hamas claimed that any settlement initiatives would liquidate the Palestinian cause, thus refusing to abide by them. However, although Hamas claimed it did not oppose peace, during the uprising the movement did not issue a detailed declaration as to what it would consider acceptable in terms of a settlement, although it also did not revert to the concept of an Islamic state.

As we have seen, the period after the end of the second intifada is characterized by Hamas's integration into the political arena. Throughout the documents we studied from this period, we found clear attempts by Hamas to express its positions on a possible solution in more acceptable and moderate formulations which clearly reflect Hamas's awareness that the 'whole world' was watching it. At the same time, Hamas repeatedly claimed it views the occupation as illegitimate, holding on to the liberation of Palestine as its ultimate goal. However, it also declared its acceptance of a two-state solution as the first phase in establishing a liberated and independent Palestinian state. As a result of Hamas's governmental career, we found that the movement sharpened its positions on a settlement over time, although it remains rather vague about its own vision for a final settlement. Hamas eventually declared that any settlement proposal should be the topic of a referendum among the entire Palestinian population. It also emphasized it would not settle for a proposal which downplays the rights of the Palestinian people ('No political concessions during negotiations').

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165 Khaled Hroub, 'Hamas after Sheikh Yassin and Rantisi', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004), p. 26

#### 4.4 Overall findings

From the above, we can conclude that the official documents Hamas produced are not ‘cut from a single fabric’.<sup>166</sup> As a result, the plurality of positions expressed in the documents might be interpreted as lack of a central policy within Hamas. Nevertheless, despite Hamas’s tradition of lively political debate within its rank and file, the movement has shown that ‘Hamas members stand united behind any document or approach with the leadership’s imprimatur’.<sup>167</sup>

Our analysis of the selected official documents challenges the rather static approach that all Hamas documents reflect the movement’s fundamentalist creed first presented in the Hamas Charter. We have found that through its documents, Hamas has demonstrated its ability to frame positions that differ from its early and most radical communiqués, thereby distinguishing between principle and practice. We have found that events in the Palestinian political arena have heavily influenced Hamas’s means of expression and forced the movement to adjust its thinking to the political general mood. As Hamas is a political and social organization, its activists encounter the public on a daily basis. Therefore, we should not underestimate the impact public attitudes have on the positions Hamas voiced through these documents. On the other hand, Hamas as a strong political actor has also demonstrated its ability to affect the Palestinian political course – or, in other words, to ‘play the political game’<sup>168</sup> – and thus the general mood by its actions and statements. Evidently, the documents we have selected served different purposes. Some were used to mobilize and energize the masses, while others were written to appeal to a particular audience such as international dignitaries. Deferring to a certain audience, the documents show that Hamas has carefully messaged its thinking over time, employing frames that sometimes stand in sharp contrast to one another.

As we have seen, not only Hamas’s rhetoric has developed over time. As Hamas has transformed from a revolutionary organization into a strong oppositional actor, and from the most influential Palestinian resistance organization into the largest governmental party, it might not be surprising that its ideology developed simultaneously. It is impossible to ignore the fact that certain aspects we found in Hamas’s early documents have completely disappeared in later documents, while other aspects underwent serious alterations. Our analysis indicates that Hamas has demonstrated an ability to change its positions on fundamental issues such as Israel over time.

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166 Menachem Klein, ‘Hamas in Power’, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 61, no. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 449

167 Ibid

168 Ibid, p. 459

Concerning Hamas's views on the current State of Israel, we found a clear development in the ways Hamas perceives the conflict. Initially, the movement explicitly viewed the struggle against Israel as a religious conflict. However, shortly after the movement established itself as a strong political actor, Hamas chose to address the conflict in political rather than religious terms. Hamas's views on the principle of peace developed simultaneously; they evolved from an ideological aversion to peace to a clear willingness to establish a truce. Nevertheless, to date Hamas has declared its refusal to recognize Israel. As an explicit recognition means legitimizing Israel's existence, doing so would directly affect Hamas's foundation of resistance against the occupation. Although particularly in its early documents Hamas stated it would eliminate the occupation and vigorously reject contacts with Israel, later it repeatedly expressed its willingness to establish day-to-day contacts with the occupying force on behalf of the Palestinian population. Over time, Hamas's thinking on a recognition of Israel has developed into the concept of a plebiscite; as recognition would come in the name of the entire Palestinian people and therefore it is not an issue for Hamas alone.

Of course, the most significant question is whether Hamas is prepared in principle to abide by a lasting agreement with Israel as a final solution to the conflict. Studying Hamas's views on the future State of Israel, we found that in its early documents Hamas not only declared its commitment to resistance and liberation, but it also expressed its commitment to establishing an Islamic state in historic Palestine. Throughout the 1990s, presumably due to questions of attainability, the option of an Islamic state disappeared from Hamas's documents. Also, as mentioned before, Hamas carefully started to express its willingness for peace. Over time, but with the exception of the second intifada, Hamas developed the concept of a partial agreement serving as a stage in the process of liberating the entire Palestine as an acceptable solution. Thus, this scenario entails Hamas's acceptance of the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. Further, Hamas has stated that it leaves its main principle of liberating Palestine to future generations.

Overall, we found that the nature of Hamas's official documents developed from ideological and fundamentalist to pragmatic and action-orientated. Our analysis shows that Hamas engages in a constant process of 'reciprocal bargaining between fundamental and operative ideologies'<sup>169</sup>, which it skilfully frames towards its public. In other words, from its inception Hamas has demonstrated built-in methods by which it has pursued its primary goal of liberating Palestine through resistance, while also adjusting itself to changing circumstances. An analysis of Hamas's positions on Israel shows that Hamas retains its initial goal of liberating Palestine from the Israeli occupation, but

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169 Ibid, p. 443

has decided to shelve it until sometime in the future.<sup>170</sup> Hamas's positions on a solution to the conflict support the concept of realizing partial objectives, distinguishing between those that are possible and those that, in current circumstances, are unrealistic. Claiming that some issues are impossible to address in current circumstances, Hamas leaves the resolution of these issues to generations to come. Thus, our analysis supports the idea that although Hamas has not ceased to be a radical organization, over time it has created a framework of tactical flexibility in its positions towards Israel.

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170 Ibid, p. 444

## 5. Statements by Hamas leaders

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### 5.1 Disseminating a Message of Radicalism and Pragmatism

In the previous chapter we have analyzed the content of some of Hamas's most significant official documents and communiqués and assessed any developments in the movement's positions towards Israel. In this chapter, we will complete our research by thoroughly analyzing media statements by two of Hamas's most central figures.

We already briefly touched upon the existence of a lively political debate within Hamas's leadership. Despite this tradition, Hamas members stand united behind any of the movement's official documents and policies. As such, to this very day Hamas has not witnessed any radical splits resulting from internal conflicts. However, it is also known that Hamas members have expressed positions which diverge from the movement's official documents such as the 1988 Hamas Charter.<sup>171</sup> Our aim in this chapter is to assess to what extent the statements Hamas leaders have made in the Arab media reflect the movement's official positions expressed in the documents we studied before. Building on our previous findings, we will determine whether

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171 For instance, one of Hamas's central leaders, Mahmud al-Zahar, declared that Israel would forever remain Hamas's enemy. However, the same day al-Zahar said that he is not opposed to the opening of peace talks with Israel. See: Menachem Klein, 'Hamas in Power', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 61, no. 3, Summer 2007, pp. 442-443

or not Hamas officials use the frames we identified previously in their media statements. We will also examine other notable frames the Hamas leaders have used. In doing so, we eventually seek to explain whether Hamas officials ‘speak the language of fanaticism or pragmatism’.<sup>172</sup>

First, we will explain our choices regarding the news sources we used and the Hamas officials whose statements we studied. In order to show how Hamas leaders frame their message in their mother tongue, we will also include some of the most significant statements in Arabic.<sup>173</sup> This chapter is again subdivided according to Hamas’s ‘Views on the current State of Israel’ and its ‘Views on the future State of Israel’.

#### *Arabic News Sources*

In our effort to find statements by top Hamas leaders we turned to some of the best-known and relevant Arabic written media. As mentioned before, we based our selection on several preconditions: first, we aimed to include only reliable and/or significant sources which cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict extensively; second, since we consulted the media through the internet, we only selected sources that provide us with a well-working online archive; and third, we aimed to include various types of media such as newspapers, magazines and websites. From these news sources, we were able to collect a great number of articles which include statements and outlets by Khalid Mishal and Ismail Haniyya. Regarding our focus on Hamas’s positions towards Israel, we selected the articles<sup>174</sup> that deserved thorough reading – ending up with a large collection of articles containing numerous frames by the Hamas leaders. Due to practical limitations<sup>175</sup>, we primarily focused on the period from 2003 to 2007 (although we also studied some interesting articles published in the first quarter of 2008). We are aware that by doing so, we left out the periods we refer to as ‘the first phase’ and the ‘second phase’. We deliberately chose to do so, as the period before 2000 has already been studied extensively by others, and although the Al-Aqsa certainly created an extreme political climate, Hamas did not witness much ideological developments from 2000 to 2003. Thus, we will concentrate on the 2003-2007 period as it fully covers Hamas’s momentous integration into the PA. Moreover, during this period both Mishal and Haniya increasingly profiled as top Hamas representatives (see below).

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172 Ibid, p. 442

173 As we accessed the articles from *Al Jazeera*’s website in English (see: ‘The Arab Media’), this only applies to statements we found in *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *Filastin al-Muslima*

174 All articles we used were accessed in October 2008

175 Naturally, the research for this paper is bound by certain time limitations. Further, the news archives we used (except for *Al-Quds al-Arabi*) only date back to 2003

Because of time limitations we selected three Arabic news sources. First, we included the independent pan-Arab newspaper Al-Quds al-Arabi which is published daily from London. The newspaper has a very accessible website in Arabic<sup>176</sup> on which we found search options and an excellent archive dating back to 2002. Further, this newspaper is known for its extensive coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Second, we used the website of the well-known Arabic broadcast network Al-Jazeera, based in Qatar. The network owns a website in Arabic and English<sup>177</sup> which not only features the daily news, but also valuable analysis and background material. Moreover, on this website we found a well-working archive with search options dating back to 2003. Third, we aimed to include one of Hamas's own online publications. The movement publishes a monthly magazine called Filastin al-Muslima, which also has its own website<sup>178</sup> including an archive dating back to 2003<sup>179</sup>. Although we did experience some difficulties when trying to access some of the issues of Filastin al-Muslima, naturally this website provides us with a massive amount of news articles, background stories, and interviews. Most importantly, all of the articles are written from a Hamas point of view, thus including many statements by numerous Hamas officials.

#### *Hamas Officials*

As mentioned before, we have studied statements by two of Hamas's best-known and significant officials: Khalid Mishal and Ismail Haniya. Before starting our analysis, we will first briefly discuss the biographical backgrounds of both leaders.

Born in 1956 near the city of Ramallah, Khalid Mishal was a child when Israel occupied the West Bank from Jordan in 1967. Like thousands of Palestinian families, Mishal and his family fled their hometown in fear of the Israeli occupation. Eventually, Mishal came to live in the Gulf state of Kuwait, a country which was then known for its pro-Palestinian sentiments. He soon became affiliated with the Kuwaiti branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, Mishal left the country for Jordan, where he became the head of Hamas's Political Bureau in 1995. After the Israeli plot to assassinate Mishal in 1997, Mishal chose to live in voluntary exile in the Syrian capital of Damascus. To this date, Mishal is considered as one of Hamas's senior political leaders – a reputation cemented after Hamas's founders Shaykh Ahmad Yasin and Abd al-Aziz Al-Rantisi were killed by the Israeli military in 2004. Mishal is also considered to be a key engineer of

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176 See: <http://www.alquds.co.uk/>

177 See: <http://english.aljazeera.net/>

178 See: [www.fm-m.com](http://www.fm-m.com)

179 The archive is not entirely up to date. At the time of writing the most recent online issue of *Filastin al-Muslima* stems from July 2008. Moreover, contrary to the other sources we used, this website does not include a search engine

Hamas's policies towards Israel and notorious for his comments about (violent) resistance.<sup>180</sup>

Ismail Haniyya was born in 1962 to a poor refugee family in the Shati refugee camp outside Gaza City. In 1983 he joined the Islamic University in Gaza, where he became affiliated with Hamas during the first intifada. Due to his membership Haniyya was arrested and imprisoned several times during the first half of the 1990s. Following the release of Hamas's founding father Shaykh Yasin from an Israeli prison in 1997, Haniyya became one of Yasin's close aides and confidantes. During the Al-Aqsa intifada, Haniyya consolidated his position, becoming one of Hamas's central political leaders in Gaza next to Shaykh Yasin and Abd al-Aziz Al-Rantisi, who were both assassinated in 2004. Being one of Hamas's most respected leaders inside the Palestinian territories, Haniyya was eventually chosen to be the next Palestinian Prime Minister after Hamas's electoral victory in 2006. Known as calm, soft-spoken and approachable, Haniyya is considered among the more pragmatic figures within Hamas.<sup>181</sup>

In sum, we have chosen to include statements by Mishal and Haniyya because, first of all, both men are still with us. Both Mishal and Haniyya gained influence among Hamas's rank and file during the late 1990s and became important Hamas leaders after 2000. We also deliberately chose to include statements by a Hamas official living within the Palestinian territories (Haniyya), as well as an official living abroad (Mishal). Moreover, we intended to include statements about Israel by a Hamas leader who is known as pragmatic (Haniyya) as well as an official who is considered a hardliner within the movement (Mishal).

## 5.2 Views on the Current State of Israel

### 5.2.1 *The Zionists Occupy Our Land/Israel is Occupation*

As we have seen before, Hamas used the term 'Jews' and 'Zionists' interchangeably during the first intifada, while practically avoiding the term 'Israel' or any of its derivatives. At the time, the movement had a distinct Islamist agenda and aimed to explain the conflict in religious terms. However, our previous chapters also showed that Hamas virtually dropped the term 'Jews' in its documents of the early 1990s, especially in the post-Oslo era when Hamas adopted a relatively calm attitude in its official documents, using the term 'Zionists' instead. Moreover, during and especially after the second intifada when Hamas profiled as a national political party, as we have seen,

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180 Al-Jazeera Net (<http://english.aljazeera.net>), 'Profile: Khaled Meshaal', 18-04-2008

181 Al-Jazeera Net (<http://english.aljazeera.net>), 'Profile: Ismail Haniya', 19-02-2006

the authors of Hamas's official documents started to use the terms 'Zionists' and 'Israelis' interchangeably.

The same holds true for the media statements by Mishal and Haniyya we studied; both leaders use the term 'Zionists' as well as 'Israelis'. Nevertheless, we also found that both men generally refer to Israel as 'the Zionist entity' or simply 'the occupation'. As such, media statements from various news sources have shown that Mishal as well as Haniyya used the frames 'The Zionists Occupy Our Land' and 'Israel is Occupation' numerous times. In fact, almost every article we studied includes these frames or resembling remarks. Although Mishal and Haniyya do not explain the conflict in religious terms ('The Jews Occupy Our Land'), as Hamas has done in the past during the first intifada, the leaders repeatedly state that they view Israel as a Zionist occupying entity.

### 5.2.2 *Resistance is legitimate*

In their media statements, both Mishal and Haniyya go to great lengths in trying to explain Hamas's resistance project as a legitimate and natural response to Israel's ongoing aggression against Palestinians. More importantly, both view resistance as the right of the occupied Palestinian people to defend itself: 'The weapon of resistance is a legitimate right' ('...Silah al-muqawama haqq mashru') (Mishal)<sup>182</sup>; 'The Palestinian people continue to suffer under the occupation, thus it is their right to continue the resistance until the aggression against the Palestinian people stops completely' ('...Al-shab al-Filastini talama yarzuhu taht al-ihtilal fa-min haqqihi l-istimrar fi muqawamatihii hatta yatawaqqafu l-udwan al-shamil ala l-shab al-Filastini') (Haniyya).<sup>183</sup> 'Resistance is legitimate to defend oneself ... [We will] continue our determination, resistance and pressure on the occupation until they withdraw from our territories'.<sup>184</sup> 'As long as our lands are occupied it is the right of the Palestinian people to organize resistance next to political activity' ('Talama arduna muhtalla fa-inna min haqq al-shab al-Filastini an tajmuu l-muqawama ila janib al-amal al-siyasi') (Mishal).<sup>185</sup>

Although in this study we deliberately chose not to include Hamas's positions regarding violence against Israeli targets, the majority of the statements by Mishal – and to a lesser extent, by Haniyya – about resistance refer to violent

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182 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Mishal: Lan nuqbila l-musas bi-silah al-muqawama', 18 August 2005

183 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Hamas wa-l-Jihad turafadan talb 'Abbas waqf al-muqawama did Israil', 18 November 2004

184 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Khalid Mishal: Qimmat Sharm al-Shaykh khutwa ijabiyya li-fahs al-mawqif al-Israili', 2 April 2005

185 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: Lan nunajiru li-ihtirab dakhili', November 2005, p. 9

struggle. Particularly in statements made during the second intifada, Mishal attempted to explain (armed) resistance as a natural choice for the Palestinian people. Mishal: ‘The infrastructure of terrorism spreads because of Israeli actions and not the other way around (‘Al-baniyya al-tahtiyya li-l-irhab tutasiu bi-l-sabab al-amaliyyat al-Israiliyya wa laysa bi-l-aks’) ... Hamas employs suicide attacks because we do not have a choice ... We respond in a proper way so that they [Israel] lose their safety as well’.<sup>186</sup> We do not like to harm brothers of our people and our umma, but the battle forces us to kill, resist and defend (‘La nuhibbu an yaqtula ahad min ibna ummatina lakin huna tafardu alayna l-maaraka laysa amamina illa l-qatl wa-l-muqawama wa-l-difa’) ... Israel carries out a holocaust against the Palestinians’.<sup>187</sup> ‘Banning the occupation from Gaza is a result of the resistance (‘Indihar al-ihtilal min Ghazza injaz li-l-muqawama’) ... [But] as long as there are occupied Palestinian lands we will not end the battle (...’Talama hunaka aradi Filastiniyya muhtalla fa-lan nalqiya al-silah’) ... Hamas will understand any presence of the occupation ... [as a sign that] the Palestinian people need resistance.’<sup>188</sup>

Khalid Mishal does not only consider resistance as a Palestinian right, but he also speaks on behalf of the entire Palestinian population declaring that the Palestinians [have made] a conscious choice for resistance: ‘Israel’s policy of killings, assassinations and bloodshed ... is oil on the fire of resistance ... (‘Siyasat Israil fi l-qatl wa-l-ighthiyal wa-safk al-dama ... tasibbu al-zayt ala nar al-muqawama’) The Palestinian people have made a natural choice (‘khiyar tabii’) and that is the intifada and resistance.’<sup>189</sup>

Haniyya has expressed very similar positions, although in less vigorous language: ‘The terrorism by the Israeli enemy targets ... the entire Palestinian people and that is why it is the right of the Palestinian people to target this aggression on the entire Palestinian soil and with every possible means...’ (‘Al-irhab al-Israili ... tasthadifu kull al-shab al-Filastini wa li-dhalika min haqq al-shab al-Filastini an yustahdifa hadha-l-adw ala kull ard Filastin wa bi-kull al-wasail wa-l-imkaniyyat al-mutaha’).<sup>190</sup> ‘Factions have discussed how to supply the Palestinians with force elements to face this aggression and protect the resistance, as it is the only weapon through which the Palestinians can defend themselves, defeat the occupation and attain all their rights... It is

186 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Khaled Mishal: Al-baniyya al-tahtiyya li-l-irhab tutasiu bi-sabab al-amaliyyat al-Israiliyya wa laysa bi-l-laks’, 16 December 2003

187 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Mishal: Al-muqawama-l-musallaha did Israil satastamiru hatta wa-law qamat bi-ghazw shamil li-l-qita’, 4 March 2008

188 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), ‘Ustadh Khalid Mishal rais al-maktab al-siyasi li-Hamas: ‘Indihar al-ihtilal min Ghaza injaz li l-muqawama’’, September 2005, p. 9

189 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Masul al-maktab al-siyasi li-Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya Hamas Khalid Mishal: ‘Al-maruna laysat al-tafrit fi l-thawabit al-wataniya’’, 28 June 2006

190 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Qadat Hamas: ‘Israil fataht harban shamila bi-ighthiyal al-duktur al-Muqadima’’, 10 March 2003

obvious that there is a strategic Israeli plan being carried out to end the intifada, eliminate the resistance and break the will of the Palestinians... All international and regional establishments, including the Legislative Council, should not impose any pressure upon the resistance and Palestinians... The pressure should be imposed on the Israeli occupier as it is the one carrying out mass killings...'<sup>191</sup>

Although explicit statements about (the right to) resistance might be expected during the second intifada, we found that both leaders expressed similar positions after the intifada had come to an end. Just weeks after Hamas's electoral victory, the newly-elected Prime Minister Haniyya said that 'As long as the occupation continues, our people will have the right to defend themselves... What matters to us, are the interests and the rights of our people. They [the Israelis] should recognize the rights of the Palestinian people'.<sup>192</sup> In 2007, Mishal responded to the firing of rockets against Israeli targets by Hamas members, saying: 'This is the right of Palestine; it has the right to defend itself, and there were nine martyrs in one day and violations that must be responded to'.<sup>193</sup> And even in early 2008, Mishal made a statement with a similar tenor: 'Hamas's policy is a direct reaction to Israel's invasion and subsequent occupation of Palestinian territories ... Israel started the occupation and as a reaction came the resistance ... Hamas cannot be blamed, nor can the Palestinian resistance, for defending themselves in a war of necessity, not of race'.<sup>194</sup>

Thus, these statements by Mishal and Haniyya clearly reflect one of the predominant frames we identified from Hamas's official documents. It seems that 'Resistance is legitimate' is a rather steady frame in Hamas's discourse, not only in official documents, but used frequently by Hamas's officials as well. However, we also found that after the second intifada, Hamas's leaders increasingly present Hamas's (violent) resistance as a mere response to aggression by the occupying force, rather than an expression of a fundamental and continual right of the Palestinian people.

### 5.2.3 *We Will Not Give Up Resistance*

Another position we found in nearly every media statement by Mishal and Haniya is Hamas's commitment to resistance. Not only does the movement consider resistance as a legitimate right and a natural response to Israeli aggression, Hamas officials also repeatedly state that their movement will continue the resistance: 'Hamas holds on to the bold and crucial positions of

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191 Al Jazeera Net, 'Hamas vows to avenge Gaza 'massacre'', 8 April 2004

192 Al Jazeera Net, 'Hamas to rely on Muslim funds', 16 February 2006

193 Al Jazeera Net, 'Four Palestinians killed in Gaza', 29 April 2007

194 Al Jazeera Net, 'Profile: Khaled Meshaal', 18 March 2008

supporting the intifada and ... resisting American proposals and Zionist initiatives [for a settlement] ... We do not want to turn away from the intifada and resistance...' ('La nuridu an yansarifa an al-intifada').<sup>195</sup> The intifada shall continue in all its forms among which acts of martyrdom until our national goals are realized' ('Sayastamirru al-initifada bikull ashkaliha bima fi dhalika l-amaliyyat al-ishtishhadiyya hatta tahqiq ahdafina al-wataniyya').<sup>196</sup> 'The enemy loses its stability ... and the martyrs fuel the resistance that continues until victory'.<sup>197</sup> 'The problem is not ... resistance... the problem is the occupation and its persistent policy of holding on to the occupation of our land and the aggression against our people ('... al-mushkila hiyya fi l-ihtilal wa-fi siyasatihi wa-isdarihi ala ihtilal ardina') ... The continuous resistance and our right to defend our people [is an] answer to [the] continuous aggression.... Hamas... will not stop its operations defending its people and its land, its resistance against the occupation and the answers to [Israel's] aggression as long as the enemy does not meet the demands and interests of the Palestinians... It is a necessity to get rid of the occupation, because the occupation is the source of all evil and the Palestinian suffering ('...Hiyya dururat al-takhalus min al-ihtilal, li-anna l-ihtilal huwwa masdar kull sharr wa masdar kull al-maanat al-Filastiniya') ... Resistance is a strategic choice which forces the occupation to withdraw and end the Palestinian suffering.'<sup>198</sup> Presenting resistance as a means through which the Palestinians can attain their goals, Mishal also said that 'Israel could face another Palestinian uprising unless conditions in the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank improve ... The continuation of and international economic embargo of the Palestinian government and military actions by Israel would present a catalyst for such actions ... Current conditions could give notice to a huge explosion that would not only affect the Palestinians but the entire region, especially the Zionist entity ... I warn and say that I see that the current situation is heading in the direction of the conditions that prevailed in the late 1990s ... that paved the way for the Al-Aqsa intifada. I warn, and under 'warn' I put many red lines'.<sup>199</sup> Clearly speaking out in favour of (violent) resistance, Mishal even states that 'Resistance [represents] the honour of the people and the power of the umma.' ('Inna l-muqawama hiyya sharaf al-shab wa-izz al-umma').<sup>200</sup>

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195 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Munazzamat Filastiniya turidu mawaqif hasima fi l-qimma li-dam istimrar al-muqawama', 22 March 2002

196 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Al-muqawama al-Islamiya: 'Al-intifada lam tusibb bi l-inhak itlaqan'', 27 September 2002

197 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Khalid Mishal: 'Al-aduw yafqudu tawazinahu wa-l-shuhada wuqud al-muqawama'', 3 May 2004

198 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), Interview with Khalid Mishal, March 2004

199 Al Jazeera Net, ' Hamas chief issues intifada warning', 30 April 2004

200 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: 'Narfudu taslim al-jundi duna mubadila'', August 2006, p. 13

Haniyya, although known as being soft-spoken, has expressed similar positions, presenting resistance as the most important tool by which Hamas attains its goals: ‘Hamas shall continue her resistance against the Israeli occupation until it is defeated and the Palestinian people regained all of their rights (‘Hamas satastamirru fi muqawamatiha did al-ihtilal al-Israili hatta daharahu wa-istirdad kamil huquq al-shab al-Filastini’). There is no change in Hamas’s position on this point ... The occupation is the one that carries the responsibility of the chain of blood, and in the light of this aggression there is no other option for our people to return to their homeland... We demand the occupation to end its acts of aggression against the isolated Palestinian people and their holy sites’.<sup>201</sup> ‘The Palestinian people are in the phase of liberation of the occupation and that is why they should concentrate on that and continue the resistance in the face of the Israeli aggression...’<sup>202</sup> ‘Hamas shall not give up the weapon of resistance as long as the Israeli occupation remains on Palestinian land [because] our land is still occupied... thousands are still in Israeli prisons and holy sites are still under occupation’ (‘Hamas lan tatakhalan an salah al-muqawama talama baqiya-l-ihtilal al-Israili ala l-ard al-Filastini... fa-hunaka arduna la zalat muhtalla ... wa-l-afaf fi sujun al-ihtilal wa-muqaddasat yabathu bi-ha l-ihtilal’).<sup>203</sup> In 2003, Haniyya responded to the American-Israeli initiative to end the violence: ‘The Road Map will not succeed and we refuse to lay down the weapon of resistance (‘Kharitat al-tariq lan tanjahu wa-narfudu naz silah al-muqawama’)... The Road Map’s aims are to ... end the resistance, strengthen the occupation and provide security to the Zionist entity... Because of these reasons the Islamic Resistance Movement refuses the Road Map and summons all Palestinian brothers to ... continue the intifada and resistance (‘Inna Harakat al-muqawama al-Islamiyya Hamas rafadat al-kharita li-hadhihi-l-asbab wa-daat jami abna al-shab al-Filastini ila ... l-istimrar fi l-intifada wa-l-muqawama’)... Hamas cannot recognize this plan because it is a disaster for the Palestinian people ... The true option for the Palestinian people to fully attain their rights is the option of resistance and not the option of negotiations’ (Al-khiyar al-haqiqi alladhi yumkinu li shabina min khilalihi istiadat huquqihi kamila huwwa khiyar al-muqawama wa laysa khiyar al-mufawadat’).<sup>204</sup>

Again, one might expect such flamboyant rhetoric to stem from the second intifada only. However, in 2007 Mishal made the following statements: ‘I call on all our brothers ... to restrain themselves and to remember our real battle

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201 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Hiwar al-fasail yastaanifu l-thulatha fi l-Qahira’, 17 January 2003

202 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Qadat Hamas: ‘Israil fataht harban shamila bi-ighiyal al-duktur al-Muqadima’’, 10 March 2003

203 Al-Quds al-Arabi: ‘Hamas tujaddidu rafdaha iltakhali an al-silah wa-tuakkidu bi-an kull qadatiha mutadilun’, 22 October 2005

204 Filastin al-Muslima, Badr al-Din Muhammad, ‘Ismail Haniya al-qiyadi fi harakat Hamas’, June 2003

[with Israel] ... Our real and only battle should be aimed against the occupation, against the separation wall, defending Jerusalem and our Muslim and Christian holy sites ... Our battle is to release 11,000 prisoners, our battle is against the settlements, our battle is for the right of return, self-determination and implementation of our national project'.<sup>205</sup> '[Any] outburst on Palestinian soil will be against the Zionist entity ... We are in the eye of the storm. We are in the midst of the battle. We put our finger on the trigger while we remind ourselves of our struggle... The option of resistance is a proper tool in taking away the rights of the Zionist occupation' ('Al-khiyar al-muqawama huwwa l-khiyar al-kafil bi-intiza al-huquq min al-ihtilal al-Sahyuni').<sup>206</sup> 'The option of a settlement has been tested and has failed; the option of resistance has been tested and has succeeded' ('Khiyar al-taswiya jurriba wa-fashala wa khiyar al-muqawama jurriba wa-najaha').<sup>207</sup> During the same period, Haniyya said that '[Israeli] politics absolutely cannot break the administration of this umma, nor can they defeat ... the resistance'<sup>208</sup> and '... We shall not end our struggle until Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories are fully liberated' ('Lan nuqifa-l-jihad hatta-l-tahrir al-kamil li-Bayt al-Muqaddas wa-l-aradi al-Filastiniyya').<sup>209</sup> In response to the Peace Summit in Annapolis, Haniyya said: 'Only resistance will produce results for our people'.<sup>210</sup>

From the above we can conclude that Hamas leaders not only present resistance as a natural right, they also continuously claim that the resistance project will continue until the movement has achieved its goals – or, the 'Palestinians have attained their rights'. Furthermore, both leaders claim that Israel forces the Palestinians to continue the resistance. Thus, unlike what we have found in Hamas's official documents, both Mishal and Haniya make sure they persistently frame this message to their public.

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205 Al Jazeera Net, 'Meshaal: Mecca talks must not fail', 6 February 2007

206 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: 'Al-infijjar fi-l-saha al-Filastiniyya sayakunu did al-kiyan al-Sahyuni'', June 2007

207 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: 'Al-infijjar fi-l-saha al-Filastiniyya sayakunu did al-kiyan al-Sahyuni'', June 2007

208 Al-Quds al-Arabi: 'Haniya: 'Al-hujum al-Israiliyya ala Ghazza wa-Lubnan ibadihi akbar bi-kathir min qadiyya al-junud al-usri'', 18 July 2006

209 Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 'Ansar Hamas fi Ghaza yatamasakuna bi-biqa Haniyya raisan li l-hukuma', 11 December 2006

210 Al Jazeera Net, 'Haniya rejects Israel-Arab summit', 24 June 2007

### 5.3 Views on the future State of Israel

#### 5.3.1 *We Will Not Recognize Israel*

A notable message which we found repeatedly in media statements by Mishal and Haniyya concerns Hamas's explicit refusal to recognize Israel. Unlike Hamas's official documents after 2005, in which we found a tendency towards the factual recognition of Israel, media statements by Mishal and Haniyya paint a different picture.

Mishal claimed that 'Hamas does not see political merits in the recognition of Israel ('Hamas la tara ayy maksab siyasi fi l-itiraf bi-Israil') ... Hamas will not subject politically ('Hamas lan takhdau siyasiyan') ... we will not recognize Israel and we will not renounce resistance ('Lan nutarifa bi-Israil wa lan natakhlī an al-muqawama') ... We will engage in a lasting truce with Israel in case of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return... Peace across the Middle East comes with an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, or they will be confronted with a third Palestinian intifada'.<sup>211</sup> During a visit to the Iranian capital of Teheran, Ismail Haniyya stated that 'The Palestinians will never succumb under the pressure to recognize Israel, they will keep up the resistance until Palestine is liberated ('Al-Filastiniyyin lan yardakha abadan li-l-durut allati tumarisu alayhim li-l-irtiraf bi-Israil')... We will never recognize the ... Zionist system ('Lan natarifa abadan bi l-nizam al-Sahyuni')... We will not stop the jihad until entire Jerusalem and the Palestinian lands are liberated... The world and the Zionists have the arrogance to confiscate our land and to demand that we stop the resistance...'<sup>212</sup>

Further, both officials connect an acceptance of the state of Israel to Israel meeting the demands of the Palestinian people, but leave the recognition of Israel out of the question: 'It's true that in reality, there will be an entity or state called Israel on the rest of Palestinian land ... But I won't deal with it in terms of recognising or admitting it ... Mahmud Abbas is not a mediator. He is a Palestinian citizen and the Palestinian President, thus he can by no means act as a mediator between us and the Israelis. We do not seek mediation'<sup>213</sup>; 'We will not recognize the Zionist entity, we will not renounce resistance and we shall not reconcile with those who want to knock our land down ('Lan nutarifū bi l-kiyan al-Sahyuni wa lan nanbudha l-muqawama wa-lan nastaslimu liman yuriduna l-inqilab')... Concessions should come from the

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211 Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 'Mishal yadu li-qimmat Arabiya Filastiniya tutalibu bi-dawla bi-ghadun 4 sanawat', 16 October 2006

212 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Ansar Hamas fi Ghaza yatamasakuna bi-biqa Haniya raisan li-l-hukuma', 11 December 2006

213 Al Jazeera Net, 'Profile: Khaled Meshaal', 18 April 2008

Israeli side' (Mishal).<sup>214</sup> 'We will not give up our Jihadist movement until the full liberation of Jerusalem and Palestinian land. The Zionists ... want us to recognize the usurpation of our land ... but these things will never happen. We will never recognize the usurping Zionist regime' (Haniyya).<sup>215</sup> According to Haniyya, Hamas principally refuses peace accords because they generally recognize Israel's right to exist: 'A commitment to the accords is equal to recognition of Israel'.<sup>216</sup> Mishal further stated that 'The Palestinians need recognition, not Israel' ('Al-Filastiniyyin humma man yahtajuna li-l-irtiraf walaysa Israil')<sup>217</sup>. Haniyya expressed a similar view saying that 'The issue of recognizing Israel is secondary to [Israel] recognizing us...'<sup>218</sup>

Despite this fierce language, we did notice a hint of pragmatism in Haniya's positions. In July 2007, Haniya claimed that 'First of all, Israel has to end its occupation of Palestinian territory and put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people. When Israel does that, the Palestinian people will make their position [about recognizing Israel] clear'.<sup>219</sup> However, in general, both Mishal and Haniyya explicitly reject a recognition of Israel and both men frame this message in a similar manner.

### 5.3.2 *Palestine Will Be Liberated*

In the previous chapters, we found a clear development in Hamas's positions on its central concept of liberating Palestine. Initially, during the first phase, Hamas claimed it would not only liberate the entire historic Palestine, but also aimed to establish an Islamic state. Then, during the second phase, Hamas dropped the idea of an Islamic state, presumably due to questions of attainability. Instead, the movement signaled that the liberation of the entire Palestine and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state were its strategic goals. Further, we found that during the third phase, although holding on to the concept of liberating Palestine, Hamas's positions gradually moved towards the acceptance of a two-state solution, and therefore a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.

While researching the media statements, we found that Mishal – and to a lesser extent, Haniyya – expressed Hamas's commitment to liberating Palestine on multiple occasions. In 2003, Haniya stated that 'The Palestinian people are united in the trenches of resistance... [Our people] hold on to

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214 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: 'Lan natarifa bi al-aduw', November 2006

215 Al Jazeera Net, 'Haniyya vows not to recognize Israel', 8 December 2006

216 Al Jazeera Net, 'Mecca talks focus on coalition', 8 February 2007

217 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Mishal yu'akidu istimrar al-sawarikh did Israil wa-yatawaqau infija Al-Sharq al-Awsat', 2 June 2007

218 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Haniya: 'Mas alat al-irtiraf bi Israil takhdu u li itirafiha bina awalan'', 6 July 2007

219 Al Jazeera Net, 'Hamas: Israel must end occupation', 27 February 2007

resistance and the intifada [until they attain] their legitimate rights, among which the right to return to the Palestinian lands... The Palestinian people are always larger than pressure and force... When the Zionist occupation leaves Palestine and the Palestinian people return to their homeland... and the thousands of prisoners in Israeli prisons [are freed], when our people attain all of their freedoms and full sovereignty on our land, then the [Israeli] demands are realistic... But when we ask the Palestinian people to lay down their arms in the shadow of occupation and aggression ... it would mean surrender, and the Palestinian people have chosen not to surrender and not to subject to the Zionist cheat or [meet with] American Zionist demands' (Amma an nutalibu l-shab al-Filastini bi-ilqa al-salah fi zill al-ihtilal wal-udwan wa-l-ightiyalat fahadha yani l-istislam, wa al-shab al-Filastini qarrara an la yastaslimu wa-an la yakhduu li-l-ibtizaz al-Sahyuni wa-an la yatasawuqu maa l-mutalib al-Amrikiya l-Sahyuniya')<sup>220</sup>, thus implying that Hamas will not abide by American-Israeli settlement proposals. As might be expected, Khalid Mishal has made similar statements using stronger language, particularly after Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip: 'The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is an important step in completing the liberation and the beginning of the end of the Zionist entity' ('Al-insihab al-Israili min qita Ghazza khutwa muhimma ala tariq istikmal al-tahrir wa bidayat al-nihaya l-mashru al-Sahyuni').<sup>221</sup> 'The withdrawal from Gaza is a technical step by Sharon in order to realize [his] goals ... For us [it is] just one important step on the road towards expelling the occupation from all Palestinian lands and the complete realization of our national Palestinian rights... [We deny contacts with Israel because] the occupation has not changed and it has not withdrawn from our lands yet, and it has not recognized the Palestinian rights yet.'<sup>222</sup> 'The Zionist withdrawal from Gaza is the first step on the road towards victory and liberation and the beginning of the end of the Zionist entity.'<sup>223</sup> And in 2006, only weeks after the installation of the Hamas-led national government, Mishal claimed that 'Hamas holds on to its battle and the option of resistance ('Harakat Hamas mutamassaka bi-salahi wa bi-khiyar al-muqawama') ... until the last inch of Palestinian land is liberated and every Palestinian brother has returned to his homeland... Taking part in the legislative elections is part of ... the resistance' (Al-musharaka fi intikhabat al-majlis al-tashrii tati fi siyaq himayat al-muqawama')<sup>224</sup> and 'The Palestinian state won't be a state unless it is on liberated soil ('Al-dawla l-Filastiniya lan takuna dawla illa idha kanat ala ard muharrira')... Any government should be a government which is protective of

220 Filastin al-Muslima, Badr al-Din Muhammad, 'Ismail Haniyya al-qiyadi fi harakat Hamas', June 2003

221 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Mishal: 'Lan nuqbila l-musas bi-silah al-muqawama'', 18 August 2005

222 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown) Interview with Khalid Mishal, March 2004

223 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Ustadh Khalid Mishal rais al-Maktab al-Siyasi li-Hamas: 'Indihar al-ihtilal min Ghazza injaz li-l-muqawama'', September 2005, p. 9

224 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: 'Al-islah wa l-muqawama khiyaran li-l-shab al-Filastini'', February 2006

its people... They want battle, we are their people. They want war ... Then we will fight until the last moment... The Palestinian people will return to their homeland and no one can undo the Palestinian people from the right to return... Resistance is the basis and politics is a segment of it' ('Al-muqawama hiyya l-asl wa l-siyasa far laha').<sup>225</sup>

Despite these decisive messages, in-depth media interviews with Khalid Mishal showed us that Hamas has in fact come to terms with a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, as the first phase in the liberation project. In 2005, Mishal claimed that 'The fundamental issue is not ... a truce (hudna), which is just one step on the road; the fundamental phase is when we end the occupation and the Israeli aggression, and when we realize the Palestinian national project ... and all of our national rights ('Al-qadiya l-asasiya laysat al-hudna, hadha mujarrad khutwa ala l-tariq, ama l-asasiya gahiyya an nasillu ila marhala natamakinnu fiha min inha al-ihtilal wa waqf al-adwan al-Israili wa tahqiq al-mashru al-watani al-Filastini wa ... tahqiq li-kamil al-huquq al-wataniya al-mashru'ia') ... Ending the Israeli occupation of our lands occupied in 1967, gaining full sovereignty, Jerusalem, and the right of return are temporary achievements to the Palestinian people ... [We will hold on to our] determination, resistance and pressure on the occupation until it leaves our land'.<sup>226</sup> In 2006, Mishal implied the importance of a state within the borders of 1967 for Hamas, warning that the 'Palestinians will begin a third intifada ... if a political route to a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders is not found within six months ... If our demands are not met, the Palestinian people will close all political files and launch a third intifada ... We give the international community six months for real political horizons ... There is a historic opportunity for a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders'.<sup>227</sup>

Contrary to Mishal, we found no statements by Haniyya in which he directly mentions the option of a two-state settlement. Instead, Haniyya has put more emphasis on the direct needs and interests of the Palestinians: 'The realization of the Palestinian rights and interests, first and foremost the land, Jerusalem and the right of return ... are fundamental priorities to which resistance and jihad are strategic means... As long as there is occupation there will be resistance' ('Talama hunaka ihtilal hunaka muqawama').<sup>228</sup> 'My government, or any future national unity government, will work to preserve the Palestinians' right to return. We stressed our commitment to preserve

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225 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Mishal: 'Al-dawla takunu ala ard muharrara'', April 2006

226 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Khalid Mishal: 'Qimmat Sharm al-Shaykh khutwa ijabiya li-fahs al-mawqif al-Israili'', 4 February 2005

227 Al Jazeera Net, 'Meshaal warns of 'third intifada'', 26 November 2006

228 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Haniya: 'Al-haraka lan tatafawada maa Israil fi hall fawziha bi-l-intikhabat al-tashriyya'', 9 January 2006

Palestinian rights and principles, first, foremost among them the right of return and the right of resistance until defeating the occupation and establishing a Palestinian state with full sovereignty with Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>229</sup> ‘There will be no solution to the current political crisis without lifting the inhuman siege... Forty years have passed since 1967 and Israel has continued its occupation of the land, but not the Palestinian people’.<sup>230</sup>

As we have seen, in its official documents Hamas is rather vague about a final settlement with Israel, casting it as a decision to be made by future generations. Remarkably, Mishal – one of Hamas’s hardliners – has made a statement in early 2008 in which he clearly supports this position: ‘We accept a state on the June 4 line [1967 borders] with Jerusalem as its capital, real sovereignty and full right of return for refugees but without recognizing Israel ... Hamas will accept the right of Israel to live as a neighbour if a peace deal is approved by a Palestinian referendum ... Hamas would respect Palestinian national will, even if it was against our convictions’.<sup>231</sup>

Thus, media statements by Mishal and Haniyya largely reflect Hamas’s positions we found in its official documents. Both leaders expressed their commitment to the liberation of Palestine, and Khaled Mishal acceded that the first step in the liberation project should be a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. In line with the positions we found in official Hamas documents, Mishal’s statements also support the idea of a referendum as a tool to determine the future of Palestine. However, Mishal and Haniya’s remarks on this fundamental subject imply that both men are very aware that their statements in the press are consumed by the masses, and as such, both officials will make an effort to appeal to their audience and maintain the movement’s popularity. We will further clarify this analysis in ‘4.3 Other Findings’.

### 5.3.3 *We Will Work for Stability and Peace/Israel Does not Want Peace*

Our analysis in the previous chapter showed that Hamas has put much emphasis on the need for security, stability and peace in its official documents. Particularly during the latter half of the 1990s and the period after the second intifada, Hamas aimed to signal its non-belligerency by introducing the concept of hudna (truce). The movement also claimed that it would work to promote peace throughout the Middle East, although the selected documents lack a concrete proposal or peace initiative.

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229 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Haniya steadfast on right of return’, 6 December 2006

230 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Rallies oppose Israeli occupation’, 6 June 2007

231 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Hamas ready to accept 1967 borders’, 22 April 2008

In their media statements, Mishal and Haniyya only sparingly touch upon their views about a peaceful solution. Mishal clearly expressed his position that Israel must take the first steps to establish peace: ‘The price [Israel has to pay] for peace is a complete withdrawal from the Palestinian lands Israel occupied and an immediate end to the aggression and a recognition of the Palestinian people’s legitimate rights’ (‘Al-thaman alladhi yajibu an dafahu huwwa l-insihab al-kamil min al-aradi al-Filastiniya al-muhtalla wa l-waqf al-fawri li-l-unf wa l-itiraf bi l-huquq al-mashruat al-Filastiniyyin’).<sup>232</sup> ‘Israel must first change its positions and recognize our rights, then we will take steps which bring about true peace (‘Ala Israil awwalan an tughayyara mawqifaha wa-tutarifa bi-huquqina wa-nahnu bada dhalika sawfa nakhtu al-khutwa allati tasnau salam haqiqi’) ... Peace comes with the end of the occupation and giving the Palestinian people legitimate rights’ (Salam qaim ala inha al-ihtilal wa ata al-shab al-Filastini al-huquq al-mashrua’).<sup>233</sup> However, Mishal also clearly signaled his lack of faith in a wish for peace on the Israeli side: ‘Both Israel and the United States are not willing to realize peace’ (‘La Israil wa-la l-Wilayat al-Mutahidda jadatan bi-shan tahqiq al-salam’).<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, in line with Hamas’s official positions, Mishal stays true to Hamas’s central concept of hudna. After an incident whereby Palestinians fired rockets at Israeli targets, Mishal said: ‘It was a response to the Israeli killing of Palestinians ... but I hope a hudna can be expanded from Gaza to the occupied West Bank’.<sup>235</sup>

For a large part, statements about the possibility for peace come from the more moderate Ismail Haniyya. However, like Khalid Mishal, Haniyya claims the responsibility for a ceasefire or peace is in the hands of the Israelis: ‘[A truce] with Israel must be mutual... If Israel ends its aggression the Palestinian factions will do the same’.<sup>236</sup> ‘There won’t be any talks about a truce as long as the Israeli aggression continues’ (‘La hadith an ayy tahdia maa istimrar al-udwan al-Israili’).<sup>237</sup> ‘[We stand positive towards] achieving calm and stability in the region, but if the occupation wants to pursue its aggression, our people will have no choice but to stick to their right to defend themselves with the capabilities they have.’<sup>238</sup> ‘A ceasefire deal should be

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232 Al-Quds al-Arabi: ‘Khalid Mishal: ‘Thaman al-salam huwwa l-insihab al-kamil li-Israil min al-aradi al-Filastiniyya’’, 30 March 2006

233 Al-Quds al-Arabi: ‘Mishal: ‘Khuttat Olmert alana harb ala al-Filastiniyyin wa-l-alaqa maa al-Urdun tatajawazu mujarrad al-awda wa-jawaz al-sifr’’, 11 March 2006

234 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Khalid Mishal: ‘Mutamar al-Sharq al-Awsat mahkum alayhi bi-l-fashl’’, 30 August 2007

235 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Hamas chief issues intifada warning’, 30 April 2007

236 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Al-fasail al-musallaha: Al-tahdia al-muqtariha lan takuna majaniya wa mashruta bi-qubul Tel Aviv biha’’, 27 November 2006

237 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Haniya yuakkidu annahu la tujadu alaqa bayna liqa Abbas wa-Olmert wa-ilan hukumat al-wahda’’, 12 March 2007

238 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Hamas offers to halt rocket fire’, 25 November 2006

reciprocal, comprehensive and simultaneous... There must be a commitment by Israel to end all its aggression against our people, assassinations, killings and raids, and lift the [Gaza] siege and reopen the crossings.<sup>239</sup> Thus, according to Haniya Hamas is not opposed to making peace. Nevertheless, Haniya expressed a great lack of faith in Israel's good intentions: '...There can be peace [with Israel], but let me ask you a question: Is Israel ready to give up all the territories occupied in 1967 even in return for full peace with the Palestinians?'<sup>240</sup> 'Israel does not want peace' ('Israil la turidu l-salam').<sup>241</sup>

In sum, we certainly found statements by Mishal and Haniya in which they express their movement's willingness for peace. However, they framed their points of view differently than is the case in official Hamas documents. Both Mishal and Haniya claim that Israel is entirely to blame for the failure of peace. As a result, both men state that Israel must make concessions and take the first step towards a ceasefire and eventually a stability and peace.

#### 5.3.4 *No Political Concessions during Negotiations*

Concerning the topic of negotiations, we found a large discrepancy between the number of statements by Mishal and the number of statements by Haniya. According to Mishal the possibility of negotiations is heavily dependant on attaining fundamental rights for the Palestinian people: 'Political positions are very flexible, but the flexibility is ... dependant on Palestinian rights.' ('Mawaqif siyasiyya fiha l-kathir min al-muruna... Lakin al-muruna l-murtabita bi-l-huquq al-wataniyya al-Filastiniyya'). There is no flexibility on ... Jerusalem, the liberation of our land and the right of return...' ('Laysa min al-muruna fi ... al-Quds, wa natanazalu an tahrir al-ard, wa haqq al-awda').<sup>242</sup> About a US proposal for a detailed timeline for peace, Mishal said: 'I swear it's a farce ... the equation has now become: dismantling the checkpoints, in exchange for [giving up] resistance'.<sup>243</sup>

Haniya, on the other hand, has made many statements in the media about Hamas's positions towards negotiations. In the midst of the second intifada, Hamas was strongly opposed to any settlement initiative. In 2003, Haniya responded to the Road Map for Peace initiative, saying that: 'The Road Map will not succeed and we refuse to lay down the weapon of resistance... The Road Map's aims are to ... end the resistance, strengthen the occupation and

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239 Al Jazeera Net, 'Hamas sets terms for Israeli truce', 12 March 2008

240 Al Jazeera Net, 'Haniya pained by Palestinian fighting', 5 June 2006

241 Filastin al-Muslima (author unknown), 'Lan tamurra min duna iqab', December 2006, p. 28

242 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Masul al-Maktab al-Siyasi li-Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya Hamas Khalid Mishal: 'Al-muruna laysat al-tafrit fi l-thawabit al-wataniyya'', 28 June 2006

243 Al Jazeera Net, 'Hamas rejects US peace document', 8 May 2007

provide security to the Zionist entity... Because of these reasons the Islamic Resistance Movement refuses the Road Map and summons all Palestinian brothers to ... continue the intifada and resistance... Hamas cannot recognize this plan because it is a disaster for the Palestinian people ... The true option for the Palestinian people to fully attain their rights is the option of resistance and not the option of negotiations.<sup>244</sup> At the same time, Haniya aimed to invalidate all allegations that Hamas held secret talks with Israel: 'Only the Palestinian Authority negotiates with Israel, there are no direct connections between our movement and the Israeli entity.'<sup>245</sup> '... Israel uses conferences as a disguise for the killing of Palestinian people ('Al-janib al-Israili [yastakhdumu] aqd al-liqaat ka-ghata li-amal al-qatl allati yurtakibuha did al-shab al-Filastini')... Meetings with the Zionist enemy committing slaughter against our people are a façade for [Israeli] killing and terrorism ('Aqd ayy liqaat Filastiniya maa l-aduw al-Sahyuni alladhi yurtakibu l-mujazir al-wihshiya did shabina tuwaffiru lahu l-ghata li-l-qatl wa-l-irhab')... Attempts to redeem from the enemy by talks are intolerable under any circumstances ('Al-muhawalat li-inqadh al-aduw bi-aqd liqaat ala ayy mustawa wa-taht ayy zarf marfuda...') ... Israel shows a peaceful and political face to the world while on the ground it commits misdeeds and ... killings' ('Yaqdumu [Israil] li-l-alam wajh salam wa-siyasa baynama ala l-ard yanfudhu al-majazir wa ... l-qatl).<sup>246</sup>

As we have seen before, after the second intifada and particularly after Hamas's electoral victory, the movement fine-tuned its positions about negotiations with Israel, resulting in the stance that only the President of the Palestinian Authority is authorized to negotiate with Israel. At the same time, Haniya again expressed his lack of trust in Israel's intentions: '[President Abbas] can negotiate with every party among which Israel... We are not opposed to that... [But we have seen] that Israel has not lived up to the preconditions... The Israeli occupation has not met the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people which are the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, the right of return for refugees... Negotiations are an exhausted option for the Palestinian people' ('Al-mufawadat shayan murahiqqan li-l-shab al-Filastini').<sup>247</sup> 'We are a free nation that wants to live with dignity on its land...'<sup>248</sup>

244 Filastin al-Muslima, Badr al-Din Muhammad, 'Ismail Haniya al-qiyadi fi harakat Hamas', June 2003

245 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Qari yastaidu li-l-ijtima qariban bi-qadat Hamas li-bahth al-tawasil ila hudna jadida wa- Hamas tanaqiyya ittisalat maa Isra'il bi-khusus ishla Israil', 27 October 2003

246 Al-Quds al-'Arabi, 'Hamas tahdhuru min aqd ayy liqaat maa l-Israiliyyin tuwaffiru ghata li l-majazir', 13 February 2004

247 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Haniyya yalinu adam muaradatihi ijra mufawadat bayna Abbas wa-Israil', 1 May 2006

248 Al-Quds al-Arabi, 'Haniyya yadu ila hall mushkilat al-jundi Alasir Silmian', 29 July 2006

Unsurprisingly, Haniyya was also eager to state that Hamas would refuse to make any concessions to Israel: ‘We will not make political concessions or alter our positions because we believe that the future belongs to this generation that writes history regarding the future of our people and the victory of our nation (‘Lan naqduma tanazalat siyasiyya wa lan yakhtufa minna al-mawaqif wa-nahnu ala qinaa kamila bi-anna l-mustaqbal huwwa li-hadha l-jil al-raid wa-alladhi yaktubu l-tarikh an al-mustaqbal li-shabina wa-an al-nasr li-shabina’) ... We urge Israel to stop its aggression towards the Palestinian people... and end the suffering of the Palestinians quickly.’<sup>249</sup> ‘The aim of the [Quartet] pressures and the [Israeli] siege is to win political concessions. They will not win political concessions from us that will harm the rights of our people... We won’t surrender, and all the attempts to isolate the government will not succeed.’<sup>250</sup> Haniya even summoned PA President Abbas not to make any concessions during the Annapolis conference: ‘We tell President Abu Mazen not to fall into traps and illusions. Do not make concessions over the fundamental issues of Jerusalem, refugees and the land... The conference carries grave risks for the Palestinian cause and the entire region ... Israel and the US would use it as an occasion to provide new and more concessions’.<sup>251</sup> ‘Any hopes generated by the summit are a mirage and illusions.’<sup>252</sup> ‘No one has authority in expense of our rights, and no one has the authority to make concessions on any Palestinian right, first and foremost the right to return’ (‘La tawfid li-ahad ala hisab al-huquq, wa-la tawfid li-ahad yumkinu an yatanazalu an ayy haqq Filastini wa-fi muqaddimatiha haqq al-awda’).<sup>253</sup> ‘The Annapolis conference is doomed to failure... We will reject the decisions of Annapolis if they touch upon our rights. Any concessions on any Palestinian rights are unacceptable and the Palestinian people will not implement any decisions if they touch upon our rights... We are against any attempts at either direct or indirect normalization [with Israel] and are against the presence of an Arab delegation by the side of a Zionist delegation at the Annapolis conference... We will stand firmly in the face of any procedures or policies that aim to get at the will of our people, or factions and their weapons of resistance.’<sup>254</sup>

Thus, more so than in Hamas’s official documents, in the media Hamas’s leaders signaled the movement’s refusal to make any concessions to Israel. In principle, they claimed, Hamas is not opposed to negotiations with Israel by the PA President Mahmud Abbas. Nevertheless, both Mishal and Haniya

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249 Al-Quds al-Arabi, ‘Haniyya: ‘Hunaka khutta Israiliyya – Amrikiya did al-shab al-Filastini wa-l-ummat al-Arabi’’, 3 August 2006

250 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Defiant Haniyya criticizes aid freeze’, 14 April 2006

251 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Abbas urges to be firm with Israel’, 12 October 2007

252 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Haniya rejects Israel-Arab summit’, 24 June 2007

253 Filastin al-Muslima, ‘Aqwal’, September 2007

254 Al Jazeera Net, ‘Hamas says ‘Annapolis is doomed’’, 28 November 2007

made clear that Israel has to make concessions first; although they do not expect it to do so.

## 5.4 Overall findings

### 5.4.1 *Absent Frames*

In the above, we aimed to assess to what extent Mishal and Haniyya's words in the media reflect the predominant frames we identified in the previous chapter. Our findings indicate that Hamas's leaders stand behind their movement's general policies, which they attempt to frame to their public as well. In other words, the frames we identified in Hamas's official documents largely correspond with the frames Mishal and Haniyya used to communicate their messages.

However, through our analysis, we were also able to assess which frames we identified earlier were not cited directly or used otherwise by Mishal and Haniyya in the press. We already mentioned the absence of the term 'Jews' in any of the press articles we studied. It is most plausible that Mishal and Haniyya did not use the frame 'The Jews occupy our land', because Hamas as an organization decided to cease explaining its conflict with Israel in religious terms during the early 1990s. Instead, as we have seen, Hamas in general and its leaders specifically use the term 'Zionists' when referring to their enemy.

Another related frame we did not find throughout the statements by Mishal and Haniyya is that they consider Palestine as a religious Islamic endowment or waqf that should be liberated from a non-Muslim occupation. The explanation for this absence lies in the fact that the key concept of waqf also stems from Hamas's early thinking, and was replaced by the concept of an independent Palestinian state during the 1990s.

A third, more remarkable frame we identified from Hamas's official documents is Hamas's assertion that it would 'work with the international community and international decisions'. We did not find direct references to this frame in the press statements by Mishal and Haniyya. On the contrary; as we have seen both leaders have expressed their distrust in the intentions of the international community – in particular, the United States and the Quartet – for finding a proper and fair solution to the conflict. In contrast with the views Hamas presented in its documents after 2005, in their media statements Mishal and Haniyya also fail to refer to UN Resolutions or other international agreements which condemn certain Israeli practices. The fact that neither Mishal nor Haniyya has used this frame might be explained by the concept of 'frame alignment'. As mentioned in the above, in order for a frame to be successful, it needs to resonate with a target audience. It is possible that

Mishal and Haniyya deliberately avoided using this frame because they were attempting to connect with a certain audience – for instance, the movement’s own rank and file. To put it differently, the message that Hamas is willing to collaborate with the international community might not appeal to the movement’s following as it does to an audience of international observers.

#### 5.4.2 *The Significance of Framing*

Our aim in this chapter was to assess whether or not the public stances Hamas officials take are in accordance with the positions expressed in Hamas’s official documents. Employing the concept of ‘framing’, we aimed to provide an insight into the dynamics that a social movement organization like Hamas faces on a daily basis.

Our analysis of the frames used by Khalid Mishal and Ismail Haniyya in their media statements indicates that both officials innovate ways to take a stance in the ever-evolving Palestinian political landscape. Although both Mishal and Haniyya express positions that correspond with Hamas’s official policy, they are also forced to respond to the present reality. When reading and analyzing media statements by Hamas leaders or any other political figures for that matter, it is crucial to bear in mind that those statements are made to appeal to a certain audience. As mentioned before, the overall purpose of comments by Mishal and Haniyya is mass consumption by the Arab and Palestinian population, and generally not addressing (international) political observers. In other words, our research supports the Social Movement Theory premise that politicians predominately use frames that resonate with their target audience – even if this causes a discrepancy with the movement’s official documents. In this context, it is equally important not only to view Hamas leaders as radicals supporting violence against Israel, but also as ordinary politicians trying to maintain Hamas’s popularity and reputation among the people and other significant parties such as Fatah and the PA. Furthermore, our findings show that the comments and statements by Mishal and Haniya are often made immediately after certain events, such as the assassination of a Hamas member by the Israeli army. Consequently, from time to time their statements are a direct response to such an event, rather than a well considered expression of Hamas’s overall ideology.

Analyzing our findings, it seems that Mishal and Haniyya differentiate between so-called long-term fundamental ideologies, and operative ideologies. Fundamental ideologies consist of ‘a cluster of principles and absolute goals’, whereas operative ideologies are ‘policies whose political effects contradict or

significantly deviate from the overall vision.<sup>255</sup> Thus, the leaders of an organization are forced to achieve immediate goals and deal with day-to-day matters, while they cannot forsake their movement's principles at the same time. In other words, 'politics centre around a constant process of reciprocal bargaining between fundamental and operative ideologies'.<sup>256</sup> In Hamas's case this means that certain principles are more fixed than others and that its leaders have the task of putting this 'bargaining' into words. In doing so, they further have to assess whether their message will resonate with their audience. For instance, 'the liberation of Palestine' and 'resistance' are two of the most central and fundamental concepts in Hamas's ideology. Hamas views resistance as the right of the Palestinian people and a legitimate way to defend Palestinians against Israeli aggression. It is highly unlikely that Hamas will ever abjure the right to resist the occupation. However, as this appears to be a fixed principle, it is interesting and relevant to concentrate on how Hamas employs this principle. Our findings indicate that Hamas has innovated ways to alter the meaning of a certain fixed principle. For instance, after the second intifada Haniya claimed that participation in the elections and voting is a form of resistance as well. Thus, our analysis shows that while even Hamas's most fundamental positions are subject to change and development, it seems that Hamas's officials make sure that they frequently express Hamas's fundamental concepts through their statements. The findings of our analysis indicate that when talking to the press, Hamas's officials blend principle and practice in their attempt to justify Hamas's positions to its following.

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255 Martin Slieger, 'Fundamental and Operative Ideology: The Two Principal Dimensions of Political Argumentation', *Policy Science*, Vol. 1 (1970), pp. 325-338, in: Menachem Klein, 'Hamas in Power', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 443

256 Ibid

## 6. Conclusions

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The purpose of this study was to deliver a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about Hamas's flexibility and pragmatism, and the movement's ability to adapt its fundamentalist ideology to the political reality. This study contends that throughout time, Hamas as an organization has removed itself from its initial radical profile. Concentrating solely on Hamas's views on the state of Israel, we showed that Hamas has innovated ways to balance everyday effectiveness against remaining faithful to its ideology. Analyzing some of Hamas's most significant official documents of the past twenty years, as well as statements by its leaders in the Arabic media, we contend that Hamas's positions towards Israel have developed and matured over time, and that such a development can be explained when placed in the political context. Throughout our research, we employed the theory of framing, which is part of Social Movement Theory (SMT), according to which organizations try to use bits and pieces of their ideology in a flexible and rational manner to gain support among their audience for their goals and policies. Analyzing documents and press articles, we focused on which frames Hamas has used to appeal to its following and/or the public at large.

Hamas was established as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood shortly after the outburst of the first intifada, the mass-based popular uprising that culminated from years of depressive living conditions for the Palestinian people. At the time, Hamas asserted itself as a doubly-driven religious and nationalist organization, and a serious alternative to the secular PLO.

Hamas's early ideology was two-fold: the complete liberation of Palestine from the Israeli occupation through (armed) resistance, and subsequently the establishment of an Islamic state on Palestinian soil. As religion and the religious ideal were of supreme value in Hamas's early years, the movement addressed the conflict entirely in religious terms. Clearly, Hamas at the time made no efforts to distinguish between Jews and Zionists, while declaring that the concept of a settlement was opposed to its ideology. These positions towards Israel were reflected in the ways that Hamas framed its message to its public during the first intifada, blending religious and nationalist goals into one ideology.

Matters changed after the Oslo peace agreements with Israel were signed in 1993. Not only were the Palestinian people fed up with the chaos and violence of the first intifada, the peace accords also instigated optimism among the Palestinians about the possibility of a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict. With armed struggle against Israel as its basis, the seemingly uncompromising Hamas adamantly rejected the Oslo Agreements. Deriving a large part of its popularity from its resistance against the occupation, Hamas claimed it was not planning to drop its armed struggle and abide by the 'capitulation treaties'. However, in practice, due to the general mood favouring peace and the constraints of the diplomatic process, Hamas had no choice but to accept the nature of the Palestinian Authority and to adjust to the changed situation. In response to the new political reality, Hamas acted moderately, even softening its religious ideology in an effort to appeal to the Palestinian public. Although the movement declared that it held on to its primary goal of liberating Palestine and that its resistance is legitimate in response to Israeli aggression, Hamas during this period also made a strategic effort to cautiously introduce the concepts of a truce (*hudna*) and peace into its thinking.

By the end of the 1990s, many came to the realization that the peace process had not brought them what they had hoped for. By the end of 2000, with the peace process in a serious impasse, the Al-Aqsa intifada erupted. Again, we found that Hamas's positions on Israel evolved as a direct response to the changing political climate. Mirrored against Hamas's relatively calm attitude during the Oslo phase, unsurprisingly this period of great vigour caused a major shift in Hamas's rhetoric. Eager to assert itself as the true defender of Palestinian rights and the steadfastness of resistance, Hamas placed itself at the forefront of the second uprising, revitalizing its focus on (armed) resistance and the complete liberation of the Palestinian lands.

Despite many losses, Hamas managed to reap the benefits of the violent uprising. Many Palestinians celebrated Israel's long-expected withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as a direct result of the ongoing resistance project. Israel's withdrawal not only marked the end of the Al-Aqsa intifada, it simultaneously

marked the next chapter in Hamas's history. Feeling confident and justified, Hamas decided to compete in the democratic legislative elections, which it won convincingly in January 2006. Again, more clearly than ever, Hamas's rhetoric and thinking evolved as the Palestinian political arena changed radically. In sharp contrast with Hamas's positions towards Israel during the second intifada, Hamas adopted a secular and bureaucratic nature meant to appease its own constituency as well as international observers.

#### *Implications*

Our analysis of Hamas's official documents and communiqués has shown that Hamas has managed to frame its positions about Israel in such a way that it responded directly to changed political circumstances. Furthermore, Hamas's thinking is communicated effectively by its leadership, which not only reflects Hamas's official policies, but also adapts to the present reality. Our findings indicate that Hamas's leaders have built-in methods to not only continuously express Hamas's ideological principles, but also to achieve immediate goals – or, as Klein puts it – to 'speak the language of fanaticism alongside that of pragmatism'.

It is safe to say that Hamas is extremely aware of what the public thinks. Having assessed its positions towards Israel throughout time, we not only found Hamas's ability to adapt its ideology to external changes, the movement itself also makes continuous efforts to act upon its audience by employing certain distinctive frames. Although the movement has expressed positions that seem to hover around a recognition of Israel and a two-state solution, at the same time it holds on to its ideological goal of liberating Palestine from the occupation through resistance. However, the current situation in Gaza painfully demonstrates that it is too early to state that Hamas has become a moderate force. Although the findings of our study clearly reflect Hamas's flexibility and pragmatism, and more importantly that Hamas can take radical positions alongside moderate views, currently the movement once again shows its radical and violent side to the world. Nevertheless, throughout its history Hamas has shown that it is capable of asserting itself at all times and in every circumstance.

Due to the current situation in Gaza, it is highly unlikely that Hamas will renounce its methods of resistance or recognize Israel in the near future. On the contrary, Israel's military offensive into Gaza most probably invigorates Hamas's commitment to (violent) resistance. However, as our research shows, it is important to bear in mind that twenty years since its inception, Hamas's thinking about Israel has certainly developed and matured. Although the movement claims that it remains faithful to its initial ideology, it has the tendency to remain vague about its future views about Israel and pushes off its objectives until some time in the future.

Although our research has indicated that throughout its lifetime Hamas has shown a great deal of flexibility and manoeuvrability, Hamas's leaders claim that their movement sticks to its objectives of liberating Palestine and retaining the rights of the Palestinian people. The ways in which Hamas has framed its message during the past twenty years proves that it is a movement not only capable of responding to the political reality, but capable of affecting the course of history as well.

#### *Final Remarks*

As the current situation in Gaza demonstrates, Hamas's continuous violent attacks against Israel have caused a large-scale military offensive which not only damages Hamas's infrastructure, but causes devastation to the entire population of Gaza as well. At the time of writing the course and outcome of this conflict are unsure. Nevertheless, the conflict itself proves that Hamas is a strong political force that needs to be reckoned with. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the Palestinian political landscape is ever-evolving which makes it difficult to come up with conclusive answers to some of the most pressing questions concerning Hamas. Hence, further research on Hamas is crucial in order to be able to explain the movement's ideological thinking, tactics and strategy. More importantly, it might provide more insight into the future behaviour of Hamas and the ways to deal with this radical movement.

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For our research we derived a large number of Arabic articles from the following online news sources:

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|---------------------|--|
| Filastin al-Muslima | <a href="http://www.fm-m.com">www.fm-m.com</a>                     |
| Al-Jazeera          | <a href="http://www.aljazeera.net">www.aljazeera.net</a> (Arabic)  |
|                     | <a href="http://www.aljazeera.com">www.aljazeera.com</a> (English) |
| Al-Quds al-Arabi    | <a href="http://www.alquds.co.uk">www.alquds.co.uk</a>             |

We have also used extensively the websites listed below:

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs | <a href="http://www.mfa.gov">www.mfa.gov</a>                             |
| Prospects for Peace by Daniel Levy | <a href="http://www.prospectsforpeace.com">www.prospectsforpeace.com</a> |
| Hamas Official Website             | <a href="http://www.hamasonline.com">www.hamasonline.com</a>             |
| Hamas Semi-official Website        | <a href="http://www.palestine-info.net">www.palestine-info.net</a>       |

Other (Arabic) online news sources that provided us with background information on the subject are:

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Al-Ahram   | <a href="http://www.ahram.org.eg">www.ahram.org.eg</a> (Arabic)      |
|            | <a href="http://www.weekly.ahram.org.eg">www.weekly.ahram.org.eg</a> |
| (English)  |  |
| Al-Hayat   | <a href="http://www.alhayat.com">www.alhayat.com</a>                 |
| Al-Arabiya | <a href="http://www.alarabiya.net">www.alarabiya.net</a>             |
| Ha'aretz   | <a href="http://www.haaretz.com">www.haaretz.com</a>                 |