THÈSE PRÉSENTÉE POUR OBTENIR LE GRADE DE
DOCTEUR EN SCIENCE POLITIQUE
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE BORDEAUX

École Doctorale SP2 : Sociétés, Politique, Santé Publique
SCIENCES PO BORDEAUX
Laboratoire d'accueil : Centre Emile Durkheim

Par Qossay HAMED

The Constant and the Variable in the Ideology of Hamas (2006-2018)

Sous la direction de Mme. Lætitia BUCAILLE

Et

M. René OTAYEK co-directeur

Présentée et soutenue publiquement
Le 30 / 03 / 2021

Composition du jury :

Mme Laetitia BUCAILLE, Professeur de sociologie, Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (Inalco), directrice de thèse.

M. René OTAYEK, Professeur émérite, directeur de recherche au LAM (Les Afriques dans le Monde), Sciences-Po Bordeaux, co-directeur.

M. Luis MARTINEZ, Directeur de recherche, Centre de Recherches internationales CERI Sciences-Po Paris, rapporteur et président du jury.

Mme. Aude SIGNOLES, Maitre de conférences, CHERPA, Sciences-Po Aix, *rapporteur.*

Abstract

Since 2006, Hamas has started to play new role in the Palestinian political arena after winning majority in the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and seizing power of the Gaza Strip in 2007. These events have fundamentally changed the status of Hamas. Besides being an Islamic Resistant Movement, Hamas has been a ruler and is responsible for the Gaza Strip. Its coming to power has posed a serious challenge in its ability to govern without sacrificing its ideological positions, in light of the various factors such as the obligations of governance, regional polarization, the struggle for power against Fatah, the international environment and the Israeli occupation. This dissertation investigates Hamas' ability to remain true to its ideology and principles towards the borders of the Palestinian statehood, the Armed Resistance and the Peace Process, between the ones articulated in its Charter of 1988, and the ones articulated in its 2017-issued Document of General Principles and Policies.

Key words: (Hamas), (Political islam), (Liberation Movements), (The Israeli-Palestinian conflict)

RESUME en français

Le Constant et Le Variable Dans l'idéologie du Hamas

(2006-2018)

Depuis 2006, le Hamas a commencé à jouer un nouveau rôle dans l'arène politique Palestinienne après avoir obtenu la majorité aux élections du Conseil législatif Palestinien (CLP) et pris le pouvoir dans la bande de Gaza en 2007. Ces événements ont fondamentalement changé le statut de Hamas, en plus d'être un mouvement de résistance islamique, il est dirigeant et responsable administratif de la bande de Gaza. Gouverner sans sacrifier ses positions idéologiques a constitué un sérieux défi dans un contexte défini par la lutte de pouvoir avec le Fatah, le blocus israélien occupation, la polarisation régionale, les pressions internationales. Cette thèse se propose d'investiguer la capacité de Hamas à rester fidèle à son idéologie sur les questions des frontières de l'Etat palestinien, de la résistance armée, du processus de paix, et sur les principes énoncés dans sa charte de 1988, et ceux énoncés dans le document des principes généraux et politiques, publié en 2017.

MOTS-CLES: (Le Hamas), (Islam Politique), (Mouvements de libération), (Le Conflit israélo-Palestinien)

Résumé substantiel

En 2006, le Hamas est entré dans une nouvelle étape de son histoire en tant que Mouvement de résistance islamique (*Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiya*), après avoir participé aux élections du Conseil Législatif Palestinien (CLP). Cette participation contredisait son attitude politique et ses convictions idéologiques à l'égard d'un système issu des accords d'Oslo de 1993, que le Hamas rejette. Néanmoins, sa participation aux élections législatives a marqué un changement d'attitude à l'égard de l'adhésion au système politique de l'autonomie palestinienne. Le Hamas a depuis longtemps une position idéologique et politique claire quand à la négociation d'un règlement politique avec Israël; d'où son refus de rejoindre l'Autorité palestinienne (AP).

Cette attitude controversée est liée aux orientations politiques et idéologiques adoptées par le Hamas. L'idéologie et les attitudes politiques du Hamas étaient en conflit avec celles de l'AP et des accords d'Oslo, ainsi qu'avec l'approche du processus de paix. Lorsque le Hamas a décidé de participer à l'exercice du pouvoir, des questions ont été soulevées concernant la position du Hamas dans l'environnement, les structures et les références fondatrices de l'AP. Premièrement, se posait la difficulté de la compatibilité de l'idéologie du Hamas avec les règles qui définissent le système politique palestinien? Deuxièmement, comment cet environnement pourrait influencer ou modifier les références de l'AP, étant donné le positionnement idéologique du Hamas. Les opinions politiques adoptées par le Hamas se sont largement exprimées dans ses discours, ses déclarations et sa charte publiée en 1988. Elles reflètent son identité islamique et militaire. Elles définissent également ses positions à l'égard du conflit israélo-palestinien et ses prises de position à l'égard de plusieurs domaines connexes tels que le processus de paix, la reconnaissance d'Israël et l'action militaire comme moyen stratégique d'éliminer l'occupation.

Les croyances religieuses du Hamas définissent le conflit comme un conflit entre musulmans et juifs. Ainsi, sa position sur la Palestine envisage *«la Palestine historique comme une terre de dotation islamique* (Waqf Islami) *consacrée aux futures générations musulmanes jusqu'au jour du Jugement dernier. Elle ne doit pas être dilapidée, en tout ou en partie: elle ne doit pas être abandonnée»*.[1] Par conséquent, il a considéré *«l'agression de toute partie de la Palestine [comme] une agression dirigée contre une partie de [la] religion»*.[2] Le Hamas pense que le processus de paix et le règlement politique du conflit avec Israël sont une « perte de temps». Il pense également que l'Autorité palestinienne (AP) a été créée pour jouer un rôle fonctionnel visant à assurer la sécurité d'Israël

[1] Hamas' Charter, 1988, Article Eleven. (See. Annexes)
[2] Ibid, Article Thirteen.

au détriment des droits du peuple palestinien.[3] En outre, son approche militaire, qui est une partie essentielle de son identité et de son idéologie pour résoudre le conflit, est en contradiction avec les obligations de l'AP envers l'accord de paix signé avec Israël.

Compte tenu de ce qui précède, il convient d'examiner les perspectives des orientations politiques et idéologiques du Hamas à la lumière des changements en cours, ainsi que son rôle futur dans le conflit israélo-palestinien. Plusieurs questions peuvent être soulevées: Où le Hamas se dirige-t-il ? Qu'est-ce qui a changé au sein du Hamas? En outre, d'autres questions portent sur les raisons et les motifs de sa décision de participer aux élections du CLP en 2006, qu'il avait rejetées en 1996.

Les développements électoraux ultérieurs ont donné davantage d'importance à ces questions. Après avoir obtenu suffisamment de voix lors des élections, le Hamas a pu former le gouvernement palestinien en mars 2006. Le gouvernement était dirigé par le leader du Hamas Ismail Haniya, en tant que Premier ministre. Ce gouvernement était principalement composé de membres du Hamas après que le Fatah et d'autres factions aient refusé de se joindre à un gouvernement d'unité nationale. En réponse à cela, le Quartet (les Nations unies, les États-Unis, l'Union européenne et la Russie) a suspendu son programme d'aide étrangère. Israël a imposé des sanctions économiques et un blocus de la bande de Gaza. En 2007, le Hamas n'était plus en mesure de payer les salaires ou d'obtenir la reconnaissance des pays donateurs européens et des organisations internationales. Des combats centrés sur la lutte pour le pouvoir ont éclaté entre le Hamas et le Fatah, après que ce dernier ait perdu les élections parlementaires de 2006. Le président Mahmoud Abbas avait imposé l'autorité présidentielle exclusive sur plusieurs attributions administratives et sécuritaires. La prise de contrôle de la bande de Gaza par le Hamas en juin 2007 a entraîné la dissolution du gouvernement d'unité formé en mars 2007, conduisant à la division *de facto* des territoires palestiniens en deux entités, la Cisjordanie, gouvernée par l'Autorité palestinienne, et Gaza, gouvernée par le Hamas.

Ces événements, en particulier les dernières cités, ont fondamentalement changé le statut du Hamas, le transformant en dirigeant et responsable administratif de la bande de Gaza. Ce nouveau statut se reflète dans les fonctions du Hamas, qui est à la fois un mouvement de résistance et un parti exerçant le pouvoir. Son arrivée au pouvoir a posé de sérieux défis au Hamas, à sa capacité de tenir fermement ses positions idéologiques, à son aptitude à gouverner sans sacrifier son idéologie.

En mai 2017, le Hamas a publié son document Des Principes Généraux et Politiques (*A Document of General Principles and Policies*) qui, selon Khaled Mesha'al, le chef du bureau politique du Hamas (à l'époque), était considéré comme la plus profonde révision intellectuelle,

[3] Ibid, Article Eleven.

juridique et politique de ses positions sur le conflit israélo-palestinien faite par la direction du Mouvement.[4] Le Hamas s'est redéfini et a redéfini sa position concernant l'État palestinien, la résistance et les relations avec Israël. Le moment choisi pour publier ce document est significatif, puisqu'il intervient après dix ans de prise de contrôle et de gouvernement de la bande de Gaza par le Hamas. Au cours de cette période, le Mouvement a expérimenté plusieurs événements politiques, économiques et militaires, dont les plus importants sont le blocus et les guerres israéliennes contre la bande de Gaza, les restrictions financières et politiques imposées par la communauté internationale, en plus des divisions territoriales et politiques nettes avec le Fatah et leurs conséquences (par exemple les mesures prises par l'AP contre les institutions et les membres du Hamas en Cisjordanie). Cette situation est également intervenue après une série de bouleversements régionaux, dont les plus importants sont le Printemps arabe et ses suites, notamment l'essor et la chute des Frères musulmans, en Égypte notamment.

Le nouveau document exprime l'évolution des fonctions du Hamas. Il a été publié dans des conditions et des circonstances différentes de celles de la Charte de 1988, en termes de calendrier, d'évolution des rôles et des fonctions, de conditions objectives et subjectives et de calculs politiques du Hamas. La Charte a été publiée alors que le Hamas était dans l'opposition et qu'il jouait le rôle d'un mouvement de résistance, tandis que le Document a vu le jour alors qu'il était devenu un parti exerçant le pouvoir, ce qui reflète donc deux étapes différentes dans l'histoire du Hamas.

Une grande partie de la littérature a défini le succès ou les échecs de la transition par la participation au processus électoral, car sans elle, le Hamas n'aurait probablement jamais fait la transition. Ceux qui adoptent ce point de vue ont peut-être négligé l'analyse en profondeur des changements de perspectives idéologiques du Hamas, les modifications de ses calculs politiques dans les différentes étapes et les défis auxquels il a dû faire face. La participation électorale pourrait être un indicateur, mais elle ne reflète pas nécessairement un changement dans l'idéologie du Hamas. Quoi qu'il en soit, les critères pour juger de la transition du Hamas peuvent aller au-delà de sa participation à la politique, pour inclure le fait qu'il renoncerait à la violence contre Israël et qu'il accepterait les accords signés avec lui.

La plupart des ouvrages sur le Hamas fondent leur jugement et leur analyse de ses prises de position sur le fait qu'il est historiquement un mouvement politique et de résistance lié idéologiquement aux principes islamiques. Depuis 2006, et plus tard en 2007, après avoir pris le pouvoir sur la bande de Gaza, la nature du Hamas a changé, mais pas de manière spectaculaire, avec des réorientations claires de ses fonctions et de ses

[4] Meshaal, Khaled, Head of Hamas' Political Bereau (1996-2017), during the announcement of Hamas' New Policy Document, Doha (1 May 2017).

évaluations politiques. Le Hamas a assumé un nouveau rôle en tant que parti politique exerçant le pouvoir, ce qui a affecté son caractère traditionnel. Compte tenu du rôle qu'il joue dans la vie politique palestinienne, il ne peut plus être considéré uniquement comme un mouvement de résistance. Le comportement politique du Hamas, ses analyses politiques et ses stratégies doivent être mesurés et comprises différemment. La majeure partie de la littérature s'est concentrée sur le traitement des contradictions entre les pratiques politiques du Hamas et son idéologie, ou sur le degré d'adhésion du Hamas à son idéologie. Néanmoins, cette littérature a négligé le développement interne et intellectuel du Hamas à la lumière de sa nouvelle réalité après son accession au pouvoir. Cela a nécessité de reconsidérer les critères sur lesquels nous pouvons juger le comportement et les calculs politiques du Hamas, ainsi que la manière dont ses politiques peuvent être comprises.

Par conséquent, il est nécessaire de considérer le comportement politique du Hamas durant sa gouvernance en tant que parti exerçant le pouvoir avec ses calculs politiques et ses ambitions visant à contrôler et à rester au pouvoir ainsi qu'à jouer un rôle avancé dans le système politique palestinien. Les tentatives du Hamas pour surmonter sa crise idéologique et identitaire une fois qu'il a pris le pouvoir ont également été négligées, y compris les mesures qu'il a prises pour tracer une nouvelle ligne politique correspondant à sa nouvelle réalité de pratique du pouvoir. La littérature a également examiné le Hamas d'un point de vue unique, sans tenir compte de son interaction avec les conditions objectives qui ont entraîné une nouvelle définition du Hamas et de nouveaux rôles. Étant donné que le Hamas influence et est influencé par l'environnement et les variables qui l'entourent, une seule description ne suffirait pas à expliquer les comportements politiques du Hamas.

Cependant, le problème de la recherche tourne autour des défis que doit relever le Hamas pour rester fidèle à son idéologie et à ses principes, à la lumière des questions de l'État palestinien, de la résistance armée et du processus de paix, après avoir accédé au gouvernement en 2006. Le débat oppose ceux qui pensent que le Hamas est un mouvement militaire soumis à une idéologie rigide qui détermine et restreint ses positions sur ces trois questions, à ceux qui avancent que le Hamas, en dépit de son idéologie et de son identité, est un mouvement pragmatique qui peut évoluer, s'adapter à un environnement politique changeant, élaborer des stratégies pour défendre ses intérêts et conserver le pouvoir. La thèse s'est écartée de l'étude du Hamas à partir d'une seule perception. Elle a plutôt examiné les différents rôles qu'il joue sur la scène palestinienne, en particulier après avoir participé au processus politique et pris le pouvoir à Gaza en 2007 et être devenu un parti de gouvernement.

Ce passage aux affaires a nécessité des changements dans ses priorités et dans ses évaluations politiques par rapport à ses considérations antérieures lorsqu'il a été créé en 1987 en tant que mouvement axé sur la résistance. L'étude suppose que les changements de positions du Hamas

sur les questions relatives aux frontières de l'État palestinien, à la résistance et au processus de paix, sont directement liés aux changements relatifs à la volonté du Hamas d'accéder au pouvoir.

L'objectif principal de la thèse est d'étudier les aspects constants et variables de l'idéologie du Hamas à l'égard des frontières de l'État palestinien (solution des deux États), de la résistance armée et du processus de paix ; entre ceux énoncés dans sa Charte de 1988 et ceux énoncés dans son Document de principes généraux et de politiques publié en 2017. Elle tente d'expliquer la perception du Hamas sur ces questions après qu'il ait accédé au pouvoir et qu'il soit devenu un parti de gouvernement. Un autre objectif est d'analyser les variables qui ont influencé les calculs politiques du Hamas et les motivations qui sous-tendent sa participation au processus politique et la publication du nouveau document politique en mai 2017 qui a articulé sa position sur les trois principales questions discutées ci-dessus.

Cette étude se compose de trois parties et est divisée en plusieurs chapitres. La première partie fournit une analyse historique des conditions qui ont abouti à la montée du Hamas en 1987 en tant que mouvement de résistance islamique en Palestine, avec les racines idéologiques et son analyse du conflit israélo-palestinien, ayant conditionné le raisonnement du Hamas sur Israël et ainsi façonné son programme à long terme. Cette partie traite de la nature du Hamas à travers différentes définitions afin de comprendre les rôles que le Hamas joue dans le conflit et dans la société palestinienne. Enfin, elle tente de donner une définition précise du mouvement.

La deuxième partie est divisée en deux chapitres. Elle comprend une analyse des raisons et des évaluations politiques qui ont poussé le Hamas à rejoindre le processus politique. Elle porte également sur les raisons pour lesquelles le Hamas a révisé sa charte de 1988. Le premier chapitre débat des facteurs qui ont influencé la décision du Hamas de privilégier l'action politique plutôt que l'action militaire. Le deuxième chapitre traite des facteurs qui ont intensifié la pression sur le Hamas et créé l'environnement opérationnel dans lequel il a connu l'exercice du pouvoir et qui ont amené le mouvement à repenser ses positions.

La troisième partie traite de l'objectif principal de la thèse. Elle est divisée en quatre chapitres, qui font une analyse comparative et de contenu de deux documents officiels (la Charte du Hamas de 1998 et le Nouveau document politique du Hamas de 2017). Sur la base des conclusions de la première partie, le premier chapitre explore la manière dont le Hamas a reconstruit son image, son identité et ses objectifs dans le nouveau document politique de 2017, en considérant l'évolution de son rôle depuis 2006. Le deuxième chapitre traite de l'acceptation par le Hamas d'un État palestinien basé sur les frontières de 1967, par opposition à sa Charte de 1988. Le troisième chapitre investigue la réinterprétation par le Hamas des méthodes de libération, depuis qu'il est devenu un parti de gouvernement,

notamment concernant le concept de résistance. Le quatrième chapitre traite de l'évolution de la position du Hamas vis-à-vis du processus de paix. Il aborde la fonction du Hamas, qui est passé d'un rôle de saboteur total à celui de saboteur limité. Il s'intéresse à l'évolution des positions du Hamas concernant Israël depuis qu'il est au gouvernement. Il porte sur sa conception concernant Israël en tant qu'État et de son droit à exister.

La thèse conclut que la lutte pour le pouvoir et la légitimité contre le Fatah, le défi de présenter un programme politique clair, outre le défi de maintenir sa cohésion interne, et le fait que l'échec du Printemps arabe ne lui ait pas offert un environnement idéologique favorable, sont autant d'éléments significatifs qui ont incité le Hamas à repenser ses objectifs et à redéfinir son identité. Le Hamas a ressenti le besoin de réévaluer ses pistes afin de combler le fossé entre ses positions idéologiques générales et ses pratiques politiques. Proposer un programme politique pragmatique qui tienne compte de l'évolution des rôles du mouvement dans l'arène politique palestinienne, et à la fois renforcer sa capacité à maintenir son pouvoir et sa position dans la politique régionale après avoir perdu deux alliés importants, l'Iran et la Syrie, est l'une des conclusions du Hamas pour ouvrir davantage d'options politiques et diplomatiques aux niveaux national et régional.

L'acceptation d'un État palestinien dans les frontières de 1967 est une nouvelle-ancienne position du Hamas. L'offre de *hudna* [trêve] a montré la flexibilité et l'ouverture du Hamas à une telle solution. En dépit des efforts déployés pour redéfinir le conflit avec Israël de manière à ce qu'il soit plus politique que religieux, il est toutefois jugé compliqué de procéder à une véritable transformation des principes religieux du Hamas. Il est convaincu que le conflit avec Israël est une bataille de longue haleine. Sur le plan idéologique, le Hamas reste inflexible sur la reconnaissance de la solution à deux États comme solution ultime au conflit avec Israël. La perspective d'une Palestine unifiée n'est pas complètement abandonnée, et n'apporte donc aucun changement dans la perception du Hamas concernant les frontières de la Palestine comme patrie. La Charte et le Nouveau Document ont tous deux un seul point de vue et ne reconnaissent qu'une seule "Palestine historique", de la mer Méditerranée au fleuve Jourdain, ou celle de 1948. Cependant, le Hamas peut manœuvrer pour accepter des options politiques qui peuvent être compatibles avec le niveau minimum de ses fondements intellectuels et idéologiques, sans pour autant renoncer à ses principes fondamentaux. Le Hamas fait la différence entre la politique et la tactique à court terme qui sont nécessaires à l'intégration politique aux niveaux international, régional et national, et ses objectifs à long terme en tant que mouvement de résistance islamique. En acceptant la solution des deux États, le Hamas tente de paraître aligné sur l'intérêt national. Il s'efforce de faire la distinction entre sa position de mouvement politique en matière de gouvernance et sa position de mouvement de résistance qui adhère à ses principes idéologiques.

La reconnaissance du droit d'Israël à exister constitue un conflit majeur avec l'identité intellectuelle et islamique du Hamas et ferait renoncer ce dernier à ses principes fondateurs et à ses croyances sur la Palestine. Elle détruirait son récit religieux. Le Hamas rejette *de jure* la reconnaissance du droit d'Israël à exister, étant donné sa perception d'Israël comme État occupant, et de la terre de 1948 comme territoire occupé, ce qui justifie sa raison d'être en tant que mouvement de résistance et son recours à la lutte armée. Cependant, bien que le Hamas ne légitime pas la reconnaissance d'Israël, le fait d'être ouvert à une reconnaissance *de facto* d'Israël démontre sa flexibilité et souligne la nature négociable de sa position à l'égard d'Israël.

L'examen de la stratégie globale de résistance du Hamas informe que les interventions armées sont un élément constant. Le Hamas a souligné à plusieurs reprises sa position: dans la mesure où Israël continue d'occuper la terre palestinienne, et où les droits du peuple palestinien ne sont pas réalisés, la résistance armée doit rester au cœur de la stratégie du Hamas. Cependant, le Hamas a montré la tendance à adopter une approche moins militante et plus politique pour traiter le conflit, laissant une place importante à la résistance populaire et non-violente. Il est peu probable que cette approche évolutive soit une introduction à un désarmement volontaire. En pratique, le Hamas tente d'améliorer sa situation relative en affinant ses options de résistance. Mais tout degré de non-violence constituerait un écart spectaculaire pour le Hamas qui, au fil des ans, a attaqué Israël en utilisant des moyens différents. Si nous considérons le rôle des différentes variables discutées qui peuvent affecter le comportement du Hamas pour encourager ou restreindre le recours à la violence, nous pouvons conclure sans risque que l'avenir de la stratégie non violente du Hamas et l'adoption d'une approche plus pragmatique et moins violente sont aussi prometteurs qu'incertains.

L'engagement du Hamas dans le processus de paix semble compliqué mais pas impossible. Depuis qu'il est au pouvoir, le Hamas a fait montre de réflexions de realpolitik et d'une volonté manifeste de donner la priorité aux exigences politiques. L'analyse de la position du Hamas à l'égard du processus de paix suggère que le mouvement cherchera probablement à modifier les conditions et les résultats du processus de paix ainsi qu'à en changer les fondements plutôt que de le saper. Contrairement à l'inflexibilité de la Charte envers les solutions politiques, le Hamas a fait preuve, à différentes occasions, d'ouverture à des approches plus pacifiques et politiques pour construire la paix avec Israël. Proposer la *hudna* marque le pragmatisme politique au sein du Hamas et sa volonté de déployer des efforts diplomatiques pour négocier une solution et établir la paix. Les modifications progressives de sa position à l'égard de la voie politique avec Israël témoignent de l'adaptabilité de la position du Hamas.

Les enquêtes sur l'impact de l'expérience du Hamas en matière de gouvernance sur ses positions politiques permettent d'affirmer sans risque

que les changements de ses positions sur les questions relatives à la solution de deux États, la résistance armée et le processus de paix, étaient directement liés à sa volonté de renforcer sa position au pouvoir. En termes de moyens, de positions et de politiques, le Hamas a donné la priorité à l'action politique sur l'action militaire, contrairement aux positions initiales énoncées dans sa Charte de 1988. Le nouveau document politique du Hamas, publié en mai 2017, s'écarte de plusieurs de ses positions controversées antérieures et fixe des objectifs pragmatiques qui portent sur les moyens et les fins, les étapes et les besoins du moment, plutôt que sur des objectifs théologiques et idéologiques. Ce qui indique que le mouvement islamique est prêt à adopter une nouvelle perspective.

Remerciements

I express my sincerest gratitude to my family and friends, who have offered me their generous support and inspiration during the writing of my thesis. I am deeply grateful to Mme. Mireille RUMEAU, Mrs. Fairouz NAJI, Mrs. Suzan MASHAL and Mr. Nihad KHANFAR, for their unwavering support and belief in my abilities. Without their tremendous encouragement, it would be impossible for me to complete my Ph.D. I also dedicate a special thanks to the members of the Jury committee; M. René OTAYEK, Mme. Aude SIGNOLES and M. Luis MARTINEZ for their help to make my Ph.D. true.

Last but not least, if the Ph.D. were a battle, it would have never been won without a great leader. Therefore, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Laetitia BUCAILLE, to whom I owe so much for her generous support since my first step in Ph.D. Mme. BUCAILLE, you taught me to never give up; I found you always supportive in my downs. I am deeply grateful for your thoughtful comments, patience, sincerity and credibility.

Dedication

To my parents, brothers and sister, and friends who wish the best for me…

À mes parents, frères et soeur, et amis qui souhaitent le meilleur pour moi…

Abbreviations

FATEH:	Harakat al-taḥrīr al-waṭanī al-Filasṭīnī
	(Palestinian National Liberation Movement)
FLN:	Le Front de Libération Nationale
HAMAS:	Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamia
	(The Islamic resistant Movement)
IJM/IJ:	Islamic jihad movement
IRA:	Irish Republican Army
MB:	Muslim Brotherhood
NLM:	National Liberation Movement
PA:	Palestinian Authority
PLC:	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO:	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNM:	Palestinian National Movement
UNLU:	Unified National Leadership of the Uprising

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Introduction

In 2006, Hamas entered a new stage in its history as an Islamic resistance movement (*Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamia*). This stage contradicted Hamas' political behavior and ideological beliefs toward the participation in a system that emerged out of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, which Hamas rejects. Hamas has had a long clear ideological and political position in negotiating a political settlement with Israel, hence its refusal to join the Palestinian Authority (PA). Nevertheless, it participated in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections in 2006, thus signaling a change in its attitude toward joining the PA. Its position ranges from complete rejection to obstruct the PA (the security obligations particularly), to a conditional non-objection participation (reforming the Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO) prior to joining it). This position culminated in its participation in the 2006 elections, after an agreement was signed in Cairo in 2005 with other Palestinian factions, including Fatah, allowing for participation of all Palestinian factions in the PA.[5]

This controversial step is related to the political and ideological trends adopted by Hamas. Hamas' ideology and political attitudes conflicted with the obligations of the PA and Oslo Accords, as well, with the approach to the Peace Process. When Hamas decided to enter the Palestinian Authority, questions were raised concerning Hamas' position within the environment and the founding structures and references of the PA. First, on whether Hamas' ideological background can be compatible with the components of the Palestinian political system, and second, how this background would influence or change the references of the PA, given the fact that despite Hamas' pragmatic behavior, its ideological tendencies may still influence its political behavior. The political attitudes that Hamas adopt, are widely expressed in their speeches, statements and their Charter issued in 1988, reflects its Islamic and military identities, and defines its positions towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and its attitudes toward several related areas such as the peace process, recognition of Israel, and military action as a strategic mean to eliminate the occupation. The religious beliefs of Hamas defined the conflict as Muslim - Jewish conflict, for this, its perspective toward Palestine consider "[The historic] Palestine [as] a land of Islamic Endowment (*Waqf Islami*) consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up".[6] Therefore, it considered "abusing any part of Palestine [as] abuse directed against part of [the] religion".[7] Hamas views the track of the peace process and the political settlement with Israel as a waste of time, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) founded to play a functional role that aims at providing security to Israel at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people.[8] These considerations underline Hamas' positions concerning the two-state solution and the recognition of Israel.

[5] Asfour, Adnan, Hamas' former Political Leader (Author, Interviewer), Nablus (10 January 2019).
[6] (Hamas' Charter, 1988. Op. cit. Article Eleven).
[7] Ibid, Article Thirteen
[8] Ibid, Article Eleven.

Furthermore, its military approach, an essential part of its identity and ideology to deal with the conflict, contradicts the obligations of the PA toward the peace agreement signed with Israel. Therefore, within Hamas, the decision to participate in the Palestinian political system that is restricted with such political and security commitments to Israel, has been largely subjected to these considerations, in addition to other considerations related to Hamas' ideological, organizational and readiness to enter the political system, and the political price it should pay as a result, which will be analyzed in Part II.

Based on the above, the outlook of Hamas' political and ideological orientations in light of the changes taking place, and its future role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is worth examining. Several questions can be raised like: Where Hamas is heading? What has changed within Hamas? In addition, other questions related to the reasons and motives behind its decision to join the PLC's elections in 2006, which it rejected in 1996.[9] The subsequent electoral developments have added more significance to these questions. Hamas was able to form the Palestinian government in March 2006, after obtaining enough votes in the elections. The government was led by Hamas leader Ismail Haniya as Prime Minister and comprised mostly of Hamas members after Fatah and other factions refused to join in a national unity government. As a response to this, the Quartet (the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia) suspended its foreign assistance program, and Israel imposed economic sanctions and a blockade of the Gaza Strip. By 2007, Hamas was unable to pay salaries or get recognition from European donor countries and international organizations. Fighting broke out between Hamas and Fatah, centered on struggle for power, after the latter lost the parliamentary elections of 2006, with President Mahmud Abbas imposing exclusive presidential authority over several administrative and security powers. Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007; resulted in the dissolution of the unity government formed in March 2007, leading to the *de facto* division of the Palestinian territories into two entities, the West Bank governed by the Palestinian Authority, and Gaza governed by Hamas.[10]

These events, particularly the latter, have fundamentally changed the status of Hamas, turning it into a ruler that is administratively responsible for the Gaza Strip. This new status was reflected in Hamas' tasks, being both a resistance movement and a ruling party. Its coming to power has posed a serious challenge to its ability to stand firmly on its ideological positions, its ability to govern without sacrificing its ideology, in light of the various factors that confront Hamas such as its obligations as a government, regional polarization, the conflict of power with Fatah, the international environment and the Israeli occupation.

In May 2017, Hamas released its Political Document (A Document of General Principles and Policies),[11] which, according to Khaled Mesha'al, Hamas' politburo chief (then), considered as the deepest intellectual, legal and political

[9] We will attempt to analyze the circumstances that led Hamas to this transformation.
[10] BBC, *Palestinian split: Views from Hamas and Fatah, six years on*, BBC (17 June 2013).
[11] A Document of General Principles (Hamas' New Political Document), Hamas Official Website (1 May 2017), (See. Annexes), https://bit.ly/2PcKLXy

revision done by the leadership of Hamas to its positions on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.[12] Hamas has redefined itself and its position on the Palestinian state, the resistance and the relations with Israel. The timing of this Document is significant, coming after 10 years of Hamas' takeover and rule of the Gaza Strip, whilst experiencing several political, economic and military events, the most prominent of which was the Israeli blockade and wars against the Gaza Strip, the financial and political restrictions imposed by the international community, in addition to the sharp territorial and political divisions with Fatah and its consequences (for example the measures taken by the PA against Hamas' institutions and members in West Bank). This also came after a series of regional upheavals, the most important being the Arab Spring and its aftermath, and the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt in particular.

The New Document expressed the development in Hamas functions. It was released under different conditions and circumstances compared with the release of The Charter of 1988, in terms of timing, changing roles and functions, the objective and subjective conditions and Hamas' political calculations. The Charter was issued when Hamas was in the opposition playing the role of a resistance movement and focusing on military actions, whilst the Document came into being when Hamas assumed political power and became a ruling party, thus, both reflect different stages in the history of Hamas. This dissertation tries to identify the *constant* and the *variable* aspects in Hamas' ideology, between the ones articulated in its Charter of 1988, and the ones articulated in its Document of General Principles and Policies issued in 2017. It addresses three main areas: the first concerns Hamas' view of the borders of the Palestinian state, in term of what has changed. Second: Hamas' exercise of power in relation to its concept of resistance (shifts in its interpretation of the resistance action), and third: Hamas' orientation towards the peace process.

However, the case of Hamas is controversial, since it is, in one hand, seen as a 'terrorist' organization by the Quartet (except Russia), it refuses to renounce violence, neither it recognizes Israel nor the agreements signed with it, and held a strong regional alliances with Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. On the other hand, Hamas plays an influential role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and able to impede any effort to find solution to the conflict, and poses a security threat to Israel. Hamas outside the PA means augmenting the dangers posed by Hamas, while its entry into the PA poses other risks to control it, or becoming a strong opposition, affecting the PA's function in a manner that is inconsistent with the agreements signed with Israel, and therefore affecting the function of the security apparatus. Hamas' intention to enter the PA may also strengthen its power and the influence of its allies (Iran and Syria) on the PA. Although the Quartet did not press decisively to prevent Hamas' participation, it still attempted to influence voters' attitudes by disclosing their plans towards Hamas and the PA in the event that Hamas gains a majority or a good percentage of the votes allowing it to affect the role of the PA. However, the estimation did not reach a percentage that qualify Hamas to obtain

[12] (Meshaal, *The announcement of Hamas*, 2017. Op. cit.).

enough votes to take control of the political system, but enough to make it a strong parliamentary opposition while maintaining the control of Fatah.[13]

However, public support for Islamic movements may be affected if these movements gain access to power. Graham Fuller, the author of The Future of Political Islam stated that access to power and having to rule challenge the capabilities of these movements, and may expose their weakness in governance. The failure to govern effectively may dent the image of these Islamic political movements. Upon gaining power, they are expected to face a host of challenges and problems, affecting their earlier popularity and future electoral performance.[14] Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State (2005-2009), assumed this as a way to contain Hamas. She stated, shortly before Hamas joined the Palestinian Legislative Council's elections in 2006, "[the participation of Hamas] could evolve in the right direction once it enters the democratic process. When people start getting elected, and have to start worrying about constituencies, and have to start worrying not about whether their fire-breathing rhetoric against Israel is being heard, but about whether or not that person's child down the street is able to go to a good school or that road has been fixed or life is getting better, that things start to change."[15] The theory implied, (as Daniel Pipes explained in his article: Can Hezbollah and Hamas Be Democratic?) that running for office, with emphasizing on such mundane matters, will temper Hamas.[16]

Containing Hamas is also a concern of Fatah and the PA. They were under significant pressure from the Quartet to reform especially in term of security, as pre-conditions for the resumption of the Peace Process and financial aid according the Roadmap.[17] The containment of Hamas militarily is part of the political and diplomatic approach to achieve statehood, and meeting the Quartet's requirement to re-launch the Peace Process.[18] President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) perceived that involving Hamas in the political system could contain it and undermine it militarily, to stabilize the political system and improve relations with Israel. He hoped that the integration could transform it from an armed resistance movement into a political movement and to re-shape its relationship with the Palestinian political system and limit its ability to influence the course of a political settlement through resistance action, and bounding its influence to an internal political opposition.[19]

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[13] Hamed, Qusai A., The United States of America and the Democratic transformation process in Palestine: (George W. Bush's Term of Office 2001-2008), Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for studies and consultations, 2009, pp: 91-94 [in Arabic].

[14] Fuller, Graham E., *The Future of Political Islam* (Mohamed Mahmoud El-Tawba, Translator), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, P: 156.

[15] Rice, Condoleezza, quoted in: Pipes, Daniel, Can Hezbollah and Hamas Be Democratic? New York Sun, (22 March 2005), https://bit.ly/31U63dM

[16] (Pipes, Can Hezbollah and Hamas, 2005. Op. cit.).

[17] The Roadmap for Peace: A plan to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, proposed by the Quartet on the Middle East, released on 30 April 2003.

[18] (Hamed, Qusai A., *The United States of America*. 2009, P:137)

[19] DW: The Possibilities of Political Containment of Islamic Extremist Movements, Politics and Economy, 10.06.2005 http://dw.com/p/6kkw

However, various works have discussed the changes that affect national liberation movements (NLMs), precisely the changes that affect their paths, thoughts and practices, and the conditions under which these movements resort to military action or political action. Some studies focused on defining the liberation movements as either political movements or military movements, and the circumstances that lead them to switch or to combine between political and military actions. They argued that military action begins when political action fails to achieve the goals of liberation, and the political action under occupation that oppresses the society; must be accompanied by military action, to provide balance in the face of occupation.[20] There are two streams of literature, the first tackles the shift of the NLMs from military action to political action, and their attempts to handle both internal and external influences, and to what extent their decisions and positions are affected.[21] The second examines the experience of the NLMs when they come to power, in terms of their positions, structures, organizations and their internal dynamic, and the form of regimes and political systems they produce. The works of Anisseh Van Engeland and Rachael Rudolph (From Terrorism to Politics) addressed the first stream. The authors tracked, comparatively, the steps of selected armed groups (some of them classified as NLMs),[22] to achieve (full or partial) political transformation, and their shift from military action to political action. The study outlined similar characteristics among the groups who have made the transition, for example the existence of both political platform and political will, for instance, in the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah, the ANC and IRA/Sinn Féin.[23] Different lessons can be learned from the experience of the IRA in Ireland and FLN in Algeria. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe's (The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland) focused on analyzing the transformations in the approaches and the methods adopted by IRA towards achieving their objectives whilst confronting the occupation. The work showed that the IRA switching its methods, to achieve both internal and external legitimacy.[24] Tim Pat Coogan in his work accounted for these transitions as ramifications of internal conflicts, within the liberation movements themselves, on the unity of the movements and on their options and future practices. Each of them have different visions, perceptions and ideologies to which they adhere to confront occupation. The conflict may emerge

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[20] Sluka, Jeffrey A: National Liberation Movement in Global Perspective, TamilNation, 1996, https://bit.ly/2L5oNAq, See also: Danzell, Orlandrew E: Political Parties: When Do They Turn to Terror?, Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2010 https://bit.ly/2MBqloK

[21] Acosta, Benjamin, From Bombs to Ballots: When Militant Organizations Transition to Political Parties, The Journal of Politics, 76(3). The University of Chicago Press, 2014 Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2Rhy6zS See also: Dudouet, Veronique, From War to Politics: Resistance/Liberation Movements in Transition, Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009.

[22] The cases are about: The African National Congress (ANC), the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Féin, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and Batasuna, The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, The Islamic Salvation Front, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Union Patriotica (UP): the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Philippine, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Abu Sayyaf's Group (ASG).

[23] Engeland, Anisseh van and Rudolph, Rachael M., From Terrorism to Politics, Aldershot, England and Burlington, USA: Ashgate Publishing, 2008 (Chapters: 1, 2, 3 and 5), https://bit.ly/2ZwzyEW

[24] Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland*, 1st ed, New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1997.

between those who adopt political action as a means of liberation and those who adopt military action in movements that lack the internal dynamics to switch between them, thus, enhancing the potentiality of a split exemplified in the case of the IRA.[25] This is also evidenced by Muhammad Harbi's work on the FLN. The work highlighted the influence of conflict in internal leadership on the choices and directions of the movement, especially those movements that suffer from a conflict between the military leadership and political leadership, as either one attempts to marginalize the other to control the movement.[26]

Roger Southall's Liberation Movements in Power: Party and State in Southern Africa looked into the second stream of literature. Southall comparatively examined the performances of three liberation movements (the ANC in South Africa, ZANU in Zimbabwe and SWAPO in Namibia), whose liberation struggles had a military component, though to different degrees, but ended transforming themselves to become rulers in their countries in the post-liberation stage. He analyzed their evolution in the political system, the character of the government formed by each movement, their relation with the state and the society and the effect of the movement's historical legacy in shaping the character of the system, and the nature and quality of their rule.[27] Southall argued that such movements are characterized by paradoxical qualities, both emancipatory and authoritarian, and concluded that they will survive organizationally, but not as a progressive forces, and genuine liberation depends upon political realignments alongside with intellectual regeneration.[28] The work of Christopher Clapham's (From Liberation Movement to Government), focused on the challenges that NLMs face when they shift from being liberation movements to becoming political parties in charge of a state, and their ability to respond to governing. The transition from struggle to government may spark differences and dissent between members of the movement, and hinder cooperation. One obvious difference lies between those who are prepared to respond pragmatically to the challenges of government, those who may just enjoy exercising power, and those with a stronger commitment to the ideological goals underlying their struggles. Internal conflict of interest may also arise between military oriented leaders and politically oriented leaders.[29]

The above literature discusses the various factors that may influence the positions and ideology of the NLMs and the means to liberate their countries. Legitimacy is an important factor that may motivate the NLMs to revise their methods in conflicts, and encourage them to become political parties. The different

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[25] Coogan, Tim Pat, The IRA, London: Fontana Paperback, William, Collins Sons, 1989; See also: Bishop, Patrick & Mallie, Eamonn, The Provisional I.R.A, 1st ed, London: Heinemann, 1987.

[26] Harbi, Muhammad, Le F.L.N: Mirage et des origines la prise du Pouvoir (1945-1962), Paris: le Scorplon, 1980.

[27] Southall, Roger, Liberation Movements in Power: Party and State in Southern Africa, Woodbridge, USA; Scottsville, South Aflica: Boydell & Brewer; Universety of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013; See Also: October, Lauren Sue, Liberation Movements as Governments: Understanding the ANC's Quality of Government, Master Thesis, Stellenbosch, South Africa: Stellenbosch University, March 2015, https://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/96657

[28] Ibid

[29] Christopher, From Liberation Movement to Government: Past Legacies and the Challenge of Transition in Africa, Johannesburg: The Brenthurst Foundation, 2012, P: 8.

sources of legitimacy poses the question about the ability of the NLM to maintain its existence, to assert its authorities and to gain the legitimacy only through military action. Some questions remain unanswered like: Why should NLMs seek legitimacy through politics, when they feel justified to use violence and supported by part of the population? The failure of political action to achieve the goals of the NLMs may be a reasonable reason to resort to military action, but the opposite reason can also be rationalized. This invites a discussion into the effect of the movements' calculations, in terms of their interests and means of self-preservation when deciding on their future direction. Another influential factor is the movements' internal dynamic, the internal conflict of power and trends, and their role to shape the positions of the movements. The two main issues highlighted in the literature are, first the conflict between military leadership and political leadership in decision making inside the NLM. IRA and Sinn Fein are suitable examples of such conflict. Second is the ability of NLMs to adopt new paths and to maintain their internal coherence. This would aid in discussing the motives that drove Hamas to participate in the political process and prioritizing the political action over the military action.

The need for self-preservation is another important factor that influences the paths of NLMs when confronted with issues of popularity and leadership. In power, NLMs are tasked with new duties and face changes, for example the status of the movement. Political calculations while ruling and the challenges of maintaining political power are important elements that affect the ideology and positions of these movements. These studies are useful in the attempt to understand the political behavior of Hamas after taking part in the political process and seizing power in Gaza in 2007. Theses works could therefore contribute usefully when studying Hamas, since Hamas also exercises political power without abandoning the armed struggle, has not achieved a full political transition nor the justifications for military action disappeared.

Two different schools of thought may explain the position of Hamas. The first sees Hamas as a violent organization constrained ideologically to pursue armed resistance as the only method to deal with the Palestinian- Israeli conflict. The Charter of Hamas justifies their argument that Hamas may resort to armed resistance once it loses power. Shai Gruber's (Hamas: Pragmatic Ideology) claimed that armed resistance is synonymous with Hamas. Its charter presents rigid ideological views incompatible with the actual situation in Palestine. Although, since the foundation of Hamas in 1987, it has been unable to strictly adhere to its ideology in practice, specifically its long-term goal of liberating Palestine via *Jihad* and establishing an Islamic state, but it remains uncertain on the combination of ideology and realpolitik that drives Hamas' decision-making.[30] Matthew Levitt (Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad) portrayed Hamas as a radical, non-moderate organization that uses political and social actions to reach its ideological goals, whilst maintaining its military

[30] Gruber, Shai, Hamas: Pragmatic Ideology, Al-Nakhlah: The Fletcher School Journal for Issues Related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization (Spring 2007), https://bit.ly/2Nt9eVZ

structure and its ultimate goal to destroy Israel.[31] Eli Bermannin's (Radical, Religious, and violent the New Economics of Terrorism) argued that Hamas is not moving towards moderation but gearing up militarily to implement its ideology, especially towards Israel.[32] Anyhow, these analyses exclude the interests of Hamas as a political party, and avoid the political developments within Hamas serving as a basis for analyzing Hamas' political behavior.

The second school of thought stresses on Hamas being a liberation and socio-political movement with a degree of political realism and flexibility. This view claims that Hamas, despite of its ideological affiliations and linkage to the Muslim Brotherhood, it remains a Palestinian movement with national goals, with a pragmatic nature, and able to be developed politically. The analysis involves understanding Hamas in terms of it seeking power, to grow, gain legitimacy, and to be integrated politically, more than just analyzing Hamas based on its ideological charter. They tend to consider Hamas as a political party capable of adapting and turning away from armed resistance given a safe environment for its survival.[33] Floor Janssen (Hamas and its Positions towards Israel) argued that Hamas has been able to balance effectiveness whilst remaining faithful to its ideology. Hamas has been able to become a less radical organization. It has been able to adapt its ideology to external changes, and work with various audiences and within various frameworks.[34] Khalid Hroub stressed on Hamas' pragmatism and its willingness to change its positions on fundamental issues. He claimed that Hamas, throughout its history, has shown its capability to always assert itself, and can take radical positions alongside moderate views.[35]

Hussein Abu An-Namel's (Hamas from opposition to power or from ideology to politics) emphasized on the ambiguous nature of Hamas, both as a liberation movement and/or a political organization. He raised a few questions affecting Hamas. His study didn't consider the dispute within Hamas as a geographic dispute, (between inside and outside, or between the West Bank and Gaza) but instead, it is a dispute between those who see Hamas as an ideological organization which must commit to its principles and should not deviate from it, and others who see Hamas as a political resistant organization that ought to deal with changes in its surrounding.[36] The study claimed that Hamas did not violated its ideological principles, but it adopted a political criterion based on the rule of profit and loss

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[31] Levitt, Matthew, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006; see also: Levitt, Matthew, Hamas' Ideological Crisis, Hudson Institute (6 November 2009), https://bit.ly/2ZmWYIP; Levitt, Matthew, Hamas from Cradle to Grave, Middle East Quarterly, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter 2004): PP: 3-15.

[32] Berman, Eli, Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London : The MIT Press, 2009

[33] Janssen, Floor, Hamas and its Positions Towards Israel: Understanding the Islamic Resistance Organization through the concept of framing, The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, January 2009, https://bit.ly/3cUhvOB

[34] Ibid.

[35]. Hroub, Khaled, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000.

[36] Abu An-Namel, Hussein, "Hamas from opposition to power or from ideology to politics" in Saleh, Mohsen M. (Editor): Critical assessment of the experience of Hamas and it's government 2006-2007, Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, 2007.

criteria, pursuing its interests in light of the surrounding circumstances in order to achieve political gains.

The experience of Hamas in governance allows for discussion on the new role of Hamas within the Palestinian political system in terms of presenting different ruling example compared to its rival. It allows for analysis on Hamas' positions, policies and behaviors whilst in power. Mohsen Saleh's (Critical assessment of the experience of Hamas and its government) studied how Hamas dealt with the internal tensions with Fatah and external pressures after leading the Palestinian governments in 2006 and 2007, and attempts to undermine the government, and to what extent it succeeded to deal with these complexities. The work raised the question of Hamas' priority, between the obligations towards its identity as a resistance movement and the obligations of the governance, and the political price that Hamas paid in order to stay in power. The study argued that the combination of being a resistance movement whilst in government was very challenging in light of the internal and external pressures soon after transitioning from being the opposition to governing in the aftermath of the second Intifada 2000-2005. The study highlighted the complexity behind the implementation of Hamas' program that contradicted the obligations of the PA toward Israel, particularly the security obligations.[37] In the contrary, Ishtiaq Hossain's (Hamas in power) claimed that Hamas was able to maintain its ideological principles and adapted itself to the prevailing environment without sacrificing its ideology. In spite of this, the study believed that Hamas' political flexibility or pragmatism was limited and its political actions remain guided by its ideology. Hossain and Shobaki argued that Hamas' Charter is no longer the basic source of its policies despite its ideological underpinning. Such argument is justified based on two evidences that Hamas exceeded its charter; the first is demonstrated in letters sent from prison in October 1993 by Ahmad Yassin (the spiritual leader of Hamas) who referred to the possibility of accepting a Palestinian state based on the 1967's borders in return for a long-term truce.[38] The second, it overlooked its ideological opposition to the elections of 2006, after Hamas had refused to participate in the PLC's elections in 1996.[39]

Bilal Al-Shobaki discussed the dilemma facing Hamas having to balance between governance and armed resistance. The study negated the change in Hamas' resistance ideology. It discussed the ability of Hamas to overcome this dilemma without retreating from its ideological principle concerning the armed resistance. He cited Hamas' unconventional reinterpretation of the concept of resistance beyond the armed resistance to include governance as an avenue to serve the resistance, besides reforming the PA and fighting corruption. This reinterpretation requires internal cohesion among Palestinians, social, economic and cultural reconstruction that embraces the resistance, and to prepare the society

[37] Saleh, Mohsen M. (Editor). Critical assessment of the experience of Hamas. Op.cit

[38] The letters of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin to the leadership and members of Hamas, from inside Kfar Yona prison, cited in (Hroub, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 2000. Op. cit. P: 94).

[39] Hossain, Ishtiaq and Shobaki, Belal, Hamas in Power: A Study of Its Ideology and Policies, 2006–2012. In Saleh. Mohsen M. (Ed). Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS): Studies of Thought and Experience. Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations. 2015.

culturally, politically and economically as an incubator for armed resistance.[40] This reinterpretation has broadened when Hamas held power and highlighted Hamas' different practices in government. This indeed lights on Hamas' different interpretations before practicing the governance and after.

Mahmoud Jarab'a's (Hamas: A hesitant march toward peace), tackled the developments in Hamas' positions and considerations towards the two-state solution and recognizing Israel. The study assessed Hamas' positions from an ideological point of view, arguing that Hamas refused to compromise on its principles based on religious considerations that support its political positions and vision. Added to this, considerations related to Hamas' organizational structure that contributed to reinforce Hamas' commitment against recognizing Israel and the agreements signed by the PLO. The study also tackled the implications on Hamas' political behavior towards the peace process and the recognition of Israel whilst exercising power. It concluded that Hamas tended to deal with these issues with political realism away from ideological considerations, especially with regard to the establishment of a Palestinian state based on 1967's territories. The study analyzed Hamas' two different positions and orientations towards recognizing Israel. It categorizes them chronologically into two different periods; before and after Hamas' participation in the legislative elections of 2006. Leaders like Salah Al-Bardawil rejected direct and explicit recognition of Israel. Proponents of this view did not show any flexibility or pragmatism on this. Some leaders held ambiguous positions, neither accepting nor rejecting the recognition of Israel. They preferred to leave the door open to different interpretations to explain their positions, for example the position taken by Aziz Duwik, the head of the PLC.[41]

Indeed, Hamas' participation in the elections signaled an important transition in its position taking into account its historical position against the Oslo Accords and its outcomes, although, it is not possible to assess the impact of the changes on its position. Much of the literature defined the success or the failures of the transition by the participation in the electoral process, since without it Hamas would unlikely to have made the transition. Those who adopt this point of view may have neglected to deeply analyze the shifts in Hamas' ideological perspectives, the changes in its political calculations in the different stages and challenges that it faced. Although electoral participation could be an indicator, but it does not necessarily reflect a shift in Hamas' ideology. Anyhow, the criteria to judge Hamas' transition may go beyond its participation in politics but also subject to it renouncing violence against Israel, and accepting the agreements signed with it.

Most of the literature on Hamas based their judgment and analysis of its behaviors on being historically a sociopolitical and a resistance movement bounded ideologically to Islamic principles. Since 2006, and later in 2007, after seizing power over Gaza Strip, the nature of Hamas has changed although not

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[40] Shobaki, Bilal. *Political Change from the Perspective of Islamist Movements: The Model of Hamas*. Ramallah: Muwatin. 2008. See also: Ibid.

[41] Jarab'a, Mahmoud, *Hamas: A hesitant march toward peace*, Ramallah: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2010.

dramatically, but with clear shifts in its duties and political calculations. Hamas assumed a new role as a political party in power that affected its traditional character. It can no longer be seen only as a resistance movement in light of the roles it plays in Palestinian politics. Hamas' political behavior, political calculations and policies need to be measured and understood differently especially in its governing role. Most of the literature focused on tackling the contradictions of Hamas' political practices with its ideology, or to what level Hamas adheres to its ideology, but neglected to consider Hamas' internal and intellectual development in light of its new reality after gaining power. This requires reconsidering the criteria upon which to judge Hamas' political behavior and calculations, and the manner in which its policies can be understood. Therefore, considering Hamas' political behavior in governance as a ruling party with its political calculations and ambitions to control and remain in power and playing an advanced role in the Palestinian political system, is necessary though. Hamas' attempts to overcome its ideological and identity crisis once it gained power have also been overlooked including the steps that it took to draw a new political line to correspond to its new reality after practicing Power. The literature also looked at Hamas from a single perspective, without considering its interaction with the objective conditions that resulted new definition and roles of Hamas. Since Hamas affected and was affected by the surrounding environment and variables, a single description would not be enough to explain Hamas political behaviors. This dissertation deals with Hamas as both a ruling party beside its traditional definition as a resistance movement.

The primary objective of the dissertation is to discuss the changes in Hamas' stance towards the borders of the Palestinian statehood (Two States Solution), the Armed Resistance and the Peace Process. It attempts to explain Hamas' perceptions on these issues after assuming power and becoming a government. The sub-objective is to analyze the variables that affected Hamas' political calculations and motivations behind its participation in the Political Process and the issuance of the New Political Document in May 2017 that articulated its stance toward the major three issues discussed above.

The research problem revolves around the challenges facing Hamas remaining true to its ideology and principles, in light of the issues of Palestinian statehood, the Armed resistance and the Peace Process, after becoming a government in 2006. The debate pitted those who believed that Hamas is a military movement that subject to a rigid ideology that determines and restricts its positions on these three issues against those who believe that Hamas, in spite of its ideology and identity, is a pragmatic movement that can evolve, manage the changing political environment, strategize to champion its interest and maintain power. The main hypothesis revolves around Hamas' roles after moving from opposition to government in 2006, which necessitated changes in its priorities and political calculations compared to its previous considerations when it was established in 1987 as an opposition movement that focusing on military action. The study believes that the changes in Hamas' positions on the issues pertaining to the borders of the Palestinian state, the resistance and the peace process, are directly related to the changes in Hamas' desire to achieve power.

This study consists of three parts, and divided into a number of chapters. The first part provides a historical background of the conditions that resulted in the rise of Hamas in 1987 as an Islamic resistant movement in Palestine, with ideological roots toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which conditioned Hamas' thinking about Israel and thus shaping its long-term agenda. This Part discusses the nature of Hamas through different definitions to understand the roles that Hamas plays in the conflict and in Palestinian society. Finally, it tries to answer the question what is Hamas?

The second part is divided into two chapters, which involve analysis of the reasons and political calculations behind Hamas joining the Political Process, and reasons for Hamas to revise its charter of 1988. The first chapter involves a discussion of the factors that affected Hamas' decision to prioritizing the political action over the military action. While the second discuss the factors that increased the pressure on Hamas and created the operational environment under which it has experienced governance and made the movement to rethink its positions.

The third part deals with the main objective of the dissertation. It is divided into four chapters, which involves making comparative analysis and content analysis of two official documents (Hamas Charter of 1998 and Hamas' New Political Document of 2017). Based on the findings from part one, the first chapter deals with how Hamas reproduced its image, identity and goals in the new Political Document of 2017, considering the evolution of Hamas' role since 2006. The second deals with Hamas' acceptance of a Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967, as opposed to its Charter of 1988. The third chapter deals with Hamas' re-interpretation of the methods of liberations, since becoming a government especially on the concept of resistant. The fourth chapter deals will the development in Hamas' position toward the Peace Process. It discusses Hamas' role from being a total spoiler to a limited spoiler. It deals with Hamas' changing views of Israel once it is in government in terms of its views of Israel as a state, and its right to exist.

This dissertation consulted several secondary resources. For part one, various academic works were reviewed like; the works of Khaled Hroub (Hamas: Political Thought and Practice), Jawad Al-Hamad (A Study in the Political Thought of Hamas), Asher Susser (The Rise of Hamas), Yousef Al-Qaradawi (The Islamic Solution is a Requirement and a Need), in addition to the Messages of Hassan Al-Banna. These were used to trace the rise of Hamas in the Palestinian scene, and to study root its ideology and principles. For part two and three, the study referred to different statements, articles (particularly the ones that analyzed Hamas new political document from various aspects: terminologically, politically, legally and ideologically). It also consists of the contributions of Hamas' political bureau in critical academic sessions, such as the contributions of Khaled Mesha'al, Ismail Haniya and Musa Abu Marzouq that explained Hamas vision, its experience in government, in a collective work organized by Al-Zaytouna research center. Communiqué and media statements from 2006-2018 were also consulted. These sources provided different opinion and analysis on the changes that happened to Hamas, and the challenges that it encountered since 2006. Other documents were also reviewed particularly in part three like the Charter of Hamas and the new

official Political Document issued in 2017, the signed accords with Fatah, such as the Mecca Accords 2007, the Cairo Accords 2009, 2011, 2017 and Doha 2012. These documents help to trace Hamas' positions on the major issues. The new Political Document assist with the discussion relating to the identity crisis facing Hamas and its attempt to Palestianize its long-term objectives.

Several interviews were conducted for the purpose of the study. Various obstacles were faced in attempts to interview Hamas leaders or activists in the West Bank and Gaza, which affected the study's timeline. Many in the West Bank when contacted were scared either to talk or to talk freely about their positions and impressions and did not want their names to be mentioned. The main reason for this was security. It was very difficult to get access to the leaders and activists in Gaza, since access to the Gaza Strip is restricted and permission to enter Gaza is required. Further, a face-to-face contact, with Hamas in Gaza, by a resident in the West Bank attracts unwanted attention of the PA and the Israelis. Activists in Gaza (who were contacted by email or phone) hesitated or refused to be interviewed due to lack of confidence. Some Hamas leaders did not want to respond to the questions asked, even after accepting firstly to be interviewed. We did manage to contact former members of Hamas' Political Bureau, such as Adnan Asfour, who closely witnessed the discussion over the participation in the PLC's elections in 1996 and 2006, the debates over revising the Charter of Hamas, whether outside or inside prison. We spoke to Ahmad Youssef, besides being an academic researcher, was a former senior adviser to Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, who was involved in decision-making in Hamas between 2006-2014. Academics like Raed Nu'rat, Bilal Al-Shobaki and Nihad Khanfar, who gave different explanations of Hamas' political behaviors were also interviewed. Interviews done by the mass media were also referred to such as the interview conducted with Khaled Mesha'al with Al-Jazeera, shortly after Hamas issued their New Document, in addition to interviews conducted by other researchers and included in academic works. However, it must be assumed that these interviews may not represent all the different opinions within the movement, as many of them were conducted with former West Bank members of Hamas' political bureau, former prisoners and student union members. These interviews may to some extent be valid and can provide some hints on Hamas' changing policies and priorities.

Political ideology, in political science, refers to the set of thoughts to which the leaders and thinkers of a group are widely committed. These thoughts inspire their speeches, influence their political activity, further determine, to a large degree, their goals and behavior, and later become their guide to political action.[42] It also provides a sense of belonging and political existence, and represents everything that comes to the human mind about his/her political organization and general principles.[43] Hamas ideology, in this dissertation, refers to the pattern of thoughts, beliefs, symbols and values that stems from religious references, Islamic

[42] Giddens, Anthony (1989): Sociology, a Brief but a Critical Introduction, (Zayed, Ahmed and others), (Translators), Cairo: the Center of Research and Social Studies, Cairo University, 2006, p. 215

[43] Barakat, Nitham and others, Principles of Political Science, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Carmel Publishing House, 1989, P:31.

law and historical contexts, from which it derive its orientations, attitudes and general outlook towards the universe and life. These principles also guide its understanding of such concepts like nation and state, regime and society, politics and governance, loyalty and belonging, legitimacy and participation, its understanding towards the other, and towards Palestine and Israel. It also shapes Hamas' intellectual outlook on the conflict with Israel, the resistance and statehood. This dissertation identifies Hamas' constant by what Hamas expressed repeatedly since its inception in 1987 as per its charter, statements and articles. Through them, the movement have articulated its attitudes and positions on various issues related to the conflict with Israel, on governance and the armed resistance. For this dissertation, a fundamental or partial change in the stated principles of the movement constitutes a variation.

When checking the ideological constant and variable of Hamas, this dissertation will make a departure from other literature which only investigating Hamas from one perception. Instead it will consider the different roles that it plays in the Palestinian scene particularly after participating in the political process and sized power in Gaza in 2007 and becoming a ruler.

Part ONE

The Rise of Hamas

This part is divided into two chapters. The first provides a historical background of the conditions that resulted in the rise of Hamas in 1987 as an Islamic resistant movement in Palestine. The second attempts to improve the understanding on the different definitions and roles of Hamas, and the role of its Islamic and military identity in shaping its stances toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

1.1 Chapter One
The path toward Hamas

The declaration of allegiance to the Muslim Brotherhood, that Ismail Haniyya, the head of Hamas political bureau, echoed after Abdel Fattah Dukhan, the writer of Hamas' Charter, and one of its founders, in the 21st anniversary of Hamas in Gaza 2008, indicated the deep links between his movement and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).[44] This declaration aimed at emphasizing Hamas' loyalty to the Muslim Brotherhood. Since the formation of Hamas in late 1987, it has emphasized its links with the Muslim Brotherhood in its charter, political speeches, and statements. In August 1988, eight months after the outbreak of the first Palestinian uprising (*Intifada*) in late December 1987, Hamas declared, in its charter, that it is the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the broad-based group established by Hassan al-Banna in 1928.[45] Although Hamas made efforts to classify itself within the historical broad spectrum of the Palestinian resistance, but its characteristics as an Islamic movement, and its political ideology, have always expressed its organizational roots and historical relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. Understanding the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, its evolution through time, provides the needed conceptual structure, to then understand the emergence of Hamas. It helps with the understanding of its organizational structures, which enabled the movement to emerge as a major player in the Palestinian arena. It also facilitates understanding of Hamas' political thoughts and ideological positions and to identify its most prominent characteristics. To do this it is necessary to discuss the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and politics, and the presence of the Palestinian cause in their ideology, as one of the most important source of Hamas' ideology.

Chapter One examines the objective and subjective conditions experienced by the Muslim Brotherhood, that later gave birth to Hamas, as their mean to enhance their presence within the Palestinian resistant movements. The study begins by tackling the presence of Palestine and the Palestinian cause in the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood, focusing on the ideological references and considerations that formed the key pillars to their presence in Palestine. The study also discusses the Muslim Brotherhood's philosophy towards the Islamization of the society, the issue of liberation, and the implications of this philosophy on their strategies and means. Chapter one also tackles the evolution in the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, their internal crisis related to the question of *Jihad*, and the harmonization of priorities, leading up to the emergence of Hamas.

[44] Hamas' 21st anniversary gathering in Gaza Strip, 14/12/2008, shorturl.at/lnsxT
[45] Hamas' Charter, 1988.

1.1.1 The religious and national questions in the Palestinian struggle

Until the *Nakba*[46] occurred in 1948, the Palestinian territories had never witnessed a clear Islamic political movement or Islamic intellectual programs like the ones that emerged in Egypt, Syria or the Arabian Peninsula.[47] This was despite the role Islam played in fueling the resistance, through the participation of Muslim scholars in resisting the British occupation and the Zionist project. In addition, Islam served as a unifying factor in Palestinian society and a component of its cultural heritage.[48] However, the rise of political Islam, as a movement, was delayed to the post-*Nakba* period, when the Muslim Brotherhood began gradually positioning itself in Palestinian political life.[49] This does not negate the existence of Islamic elements that viewed the Palestinian issue from an Islamic point of view especially since Zionism made Judaism as the underlying point of its ideology, but they remained far from expressing themselves politically throughout this stage. The Islamic organizations, until the *Nakba* were limited to charity-based associations as well as educational and sports clubs. The most prominent of which was the Islamic-Christian Association, which was located in the main cities, through which, its members exercised general political action, as well as through other regulatory frameworks.[50]

The political life in Palestine remained limited to short-term regulatory frameworks influenced by powerful families who were rivals in their attempts to lead the Palestinian National Movement, and represented by schisms among the political elites.[51] The rivalry between the leaders was also along tribal lines instead of religious belief.[52] The organization reflected this environment and the number of organizations far exceeded the needs of the society in that period.[53] Historically, Palestinian political thoughts had been influenced by the trends that existed in the Arab World during the period of the British Mandate and beyond.[54] These currents were represented by three main streams: nationalism, Arab nationalism, and communism.[55] These frameworks also influenced politics in Palestine. Thus, the

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[46] Palestinians use the term Nakba to refer to the defeat of the Arabs in 1948 war, while the Israelis call it the Independence War, which was followed by the declaration of the State of Israel.

[47] Abu Fakhr, Saqr, *The Palestinian National Movement: From Armed Struggle to a Demilitarized State*, Beirut: The Arab Institution for Studies and Publication, 2003, P: 135.

[48] Susser, Asher, *The Rise of Hamas In Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World*, Boston: Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Feb 2010, P: 42.

[49] Zawawi, Khaled, *Authoritative Sources of Islamic Political Discourse in Palestine*, Ramallah: Muwatin: The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 2012, P: 52

[50] Mahafatha, Ali. "Palestinian Political Thought Before 1948", Palestinian Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, 1st Ed, Beirut, 1990, p. 553

[51] (Abu Fakhr, *The Palestinian National Movement*, 2003. Op. cit. P:136).

[52] Abu Karim, Mansour, *The Evolution of the Concept of the Resistance of the Palestinian National Political Thought (Fatah mode)*, Master Thesis, Gaza: Al-Azhar University, 2016, P: 35.

[53] Faisal, Noman Abdel Hadi, *The Palestinian Division under the British Mandate and the Palestinian National Authority*, (Master Thesis). Cairo: Al-masriya- Al-Almaniya for Printing, Publishing & Distribution. 2012, P. 82.

[54] (Mahafatha. *Palestinian Political Thought*. 1990. op.cit. p: 563)

[55] Sharif, Maher, *Palestinian Political Thought Before 1948*, Palestinian Affairs Journal, Vol (240-241). 41 - 58. Palestine: PLO's Research Center. April 1993. p. 42

prevailing trend and the political discourse in Palestine had ranged from calling for a Palestinian national entity or calling for Arab unity.[56]

The Islamic ideological discourse in Palestine is relatively recent, and started in the post-*Nakba* period, specifically since the mid-1950s. Nevertheless, Islam remained represented e.g. in the speeches of the Palestinian Arab community prior to *Nakba*. The notion of Islamic unity is often used to mobilize Muslims to support the struggles of the Palestinian people. Palestinian Muslim leaders worked to keep the Arab-Islamic dimension of the Palestinian cause as an important concern for Arab and Islamic governments and existing political parties.[57] Islam remains an important component of Arabism, and not an alternative.[58] Politician have used the religion for personal purposes, and it has been exploited in the battle for national liberation.[59] However, Islam has been challenged by other ideologies like communism and secular nationalism,[60] but it remains an obstacle to full secularization of the Palestinian identity.[61]

Many scholars in the history of the Palestinian National Movement such as Bashir Nafie' explained the absence of explicit Islamist political movements in Palestine, to the absence of the controversy between what is religion and what is national, or even about the role of religion in the national struggle. This issue remained far from Palestinian political life because of the weakness of the Palestinian identity and the specificity of the conflict with the Zionist project as a struggle for existence.[62] The leaders in the Palestinian national leadership like Haj Amin al-Husseini, Izz Addin al-Qassam, and Abdul-Qader al-Husseini were also Islamic scholars and religious personalities who were both political leaders as well as religious leaders in the Palestinian national movements.[63] Haj Amin Al-Husseini, for example, was the Grand Mufti of Palestine, and the Chairman of the Palestinian *Shari'a* Council and the President of the Islamic World Conference.[64] The nature of this integration made using of religious discourse, often normal and necessary, but the political discourse of these leaders didn't distinguish between what is national and what is religious, and generally was relating to Arabian and national discourse.[65] However, the religious discourse (non-partisan or ideological) provoked religious emotions by invoking a combination of national and spiritual meanings to mobilize the public, and religious terms supported the national discourse, rather than dominating it.

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[56] Ibid, pp:50-51

[57] Qasimia, Khayria, *The Palestinian National Movement in the Two-thirds of the Present Century (1900-1964)*, The Palestinian Encyclopaedia, Vol 5, 1st ed, Beirut, 1990, p.97

[58] (Sharif, *Palestinian Political Thought*, 1993. Op. cit. P: 42).

[59] (Susser, *The Rise of Hamas*, 2010. Op. cit. P: 42).

[60] Nafie, Bashir, *Palestinian Islamists and the Palestinian Question: 1950-1980*, 1st ed, Gaza: Palestine Center for Studies and Research, 1999, P: 7.

[61] (Susser, *The Rise of Hamas*, 2010. Op. cit. P: 42).

[62] (Nafie, *Palestinian Islamists*. 1999, op.cit. p:10)

[63] (Abu Fakhr, *The Palestinian National Movement*, 2003, Op. cit. p: 135).

[64] Al-Husseini. Muhammad Amin, Memoirs of Hajj Muhammad Amin Al-Husseini, Al-Omar, Abdul Karim (cont.) Damascus: Al-Ahali for Printing and Publishing, 1st ed, 1999, p. 5

[65] (Zawawi, *Authoritative Sources*, 2012. Op. cit. P: 52).

Both Religious and Nationalism trends contributed to the efforts of the Palestinians to search for their identity and freedom from occupation, without implementing certain intellectual programs. Added to this, rescuing Palestine became the central priority for the Islamists and others.[66] Khayria Qasimia, a Palestinian historian who studied the political and social reality in Palestine, indicated that the Palestinian struggle brought together Muslims and Christians, in addition to the fact that secular and leftist intellectual currents were more pervasive than those who were addressing religious sentiments.[67] This period of Palestinian history did not promote the objective conditions to produce a dynamic Islamic movement as an effective phenomenon in the context of Palestinian political action.

The *Nakba* in 1948 was a great earthquake that cast a shadow over the Palestinian political scene, which ushered in new political and ideological force that adopted a different ideology and political programs apart from national and secular trends.[68] The Palestinian *Nakba*, and the loss of the Palestinian identity, facilitated the emergence of the Islamic trend as a consequence on the Palestinian national movement. *Nakba* led to the dismantling of the Palestinian organizational frameworks and deepened the fragmentation of the political leadership who lost their role in the Palestinian struggle. This atmosphere created a political and leadership vacuum in the Palestinian arena.[69]

1.1.2 Muslim Brotherhood: Breaking into the Palestinian political scene…

The Muslim Brotherhood has gradually entered into the in the Palestinian arena beginning in the 1930s under the guises of various religious associations, such as Makarem. But until 1946, these associations were not organized in one unified organization. The first branch was established in Jerusalem in 1946, and later multiplied its branches in the West Bank and Gaza.[70] Volunteers affiliated with the MB, who came to participate in the 1948's war, contributed to the rapid proliferation of the MB and attracted increasing numbers of those who viewed the MB as a way to resume the armed resistance.[71] The establishment of the MB, in its strictest sense, meant an organization that exceeded cultural-religious boundaries to becoming an Islamic political movement, with the stated goal of establishing an Islamic state, and applying Islamic *Shari'a* to make Islam the general and prevailing political and social order.[72]

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[66] (Nafie, 1999, *Palestinian Islamists*. op.cit. p:7)
[67] (Qasimia, *The Palestinian National Movement*. 1990, pp 122-123)
[68] Abu Amr, Zead, *Hamas: Historical and Political Background*, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 13 (Winter 1993). P: 84.
[69] Al-Masri, Zuhair Ibrahim, *Trends of Palestinian Political Thought Between Armed Struggle and Settlement*, 1st ed, Gaza: Yazji Library, 2008, P: 38; See also: (Faisal, *The Palestinian Division*, 2012. Op. cit. P: 219).
[70] (Mahafatha. *Palestinian Political Thought*. 1990. op.cit. p: 555)
[71] (Qasimia, *The Palestinian National Movement*. 1990, pp122-123)
[72] Sarah, Fayez, *The Islamic Movement in Palestine: The Unity of Ideology and Political Schisms*, Beirut: *Almustaqbal Alarabi* Journal, Vol 12*(124)*, 1989, p. 49

However, until 1967 (the defeat in the Six Days' War), the actual presence of the MB in Palestinian politics was affected by three main factors; first, the deteriorating fortunes of the mother movement, in Egypt, faced with rising nationalism, and the emergence of *Nasiriyah* as a phenomenon linked to Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1970) which contributed to the growth of national parties in Arab countries. The Palestinian national movement was also influenced by this phenomenon, who saw Jamal Abdel Nasser as a savior of Palestine.[73] Second: the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as a new Palestinian entity involved in Palestinian politics. Third, the commitments to the armed resistance against Israel, as the most prominent feature of the Palestinian factions. These commitments were reinforced specifically after the establishment of the Fatah Movement, led by Yasser Arafat, as a Palestinian model to imitate the Algerian model of popular war against France.[74] For several reasons, MB was not prepared to join the armed resistance as a dedicated organized body. In the West Bank, it was not prepared politically, ideologically or militarily to engage in direct military action against Israel, unlike the Palestinian resistance movements who were originally founded for this purpose. In the Gaza Strip, the MB was weakened and dispersed as a result of suppression of its mother movement, in Egypt by the Egyptian government. As a result, the MB lost some of its active cadres in favor of other national movements and factions, especially to Fatah, whose foundation cadres were originally affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.[75]

1.1.3 …To Latency and Isolation:

In the wake of the above, the work and the expansion of the MB was seriously affected. The MB experienced a state of latency and isolation. The MB was not involved in public affairs and mass activities, as well as in political and military actions in Palestine. Their activities were confined to *Da'wa* (Islamic Call). This stage is known as the preparation stage, it focused mainly on the educational and orientation program aimed at preparing the society, on different levels, waiting for the moment that allows it to move actively, and to build its power to become a strong and solid political force. Since the mid-1950s, Palestinian Islamists have promoted the idea of giving priority to the Islamic transformation in the Arab countries rather than engaging in the armed resistance against Israel.[76] For different reasons, including, the nature of the ruling regimes in Jordan and Egypt, the quality of the Brotherhood's leadership, and its political and intellectual background, the MB adopted two different approaches in the West Bank and Gaza. In the West Bank, it adopted an educational and political orientation, in Gaza it tended more towards military action, whether under the banner of the MB or under the banner of other military factions. As a result, the MB did not appear united as a single body in Palestine. In the West Bank, it

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[73] (Qasimia, *The Palestinian National Movement.* 1990, p:123)
[74] Ibid
[75] Al-Hamad, Jawad & Al-Barghouthi, Iyad (eds), *A Study in the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)* 1987-1996. Amman: Dar Al-Bashir for Publications. 1999. p. 31
[76] Hroub, Khaled, *Hamas A Beginner's Guide*, 1st ed, London: Pluto Press, 2006, P: 9.

became part of the Jordanian branch, while in Gaza, administratively, it was attached to the mother movement in Egypt. The two branches lacked coordination with different tendencies and working relationships between their two leaders. This situation persisted until the establishment of Hamas, which brought together the two branches in one organizational framework. Either way, the Muslim Brotherhood was latent and isolated for thirty years. [77]

The policy of latency and isolation affected MB's role and engagement in resisting the occupation and liberating Palestine, which was the major slogan raised by MB at that time. The MB was unresponsive to various calls to abandon the state of latency and isolation, and be active to liberate Palestine. It neglected a proposal submitted in 1957 by Khalil al-Wazir (a former Brotherhood's member and one of the founders of Fatah later) to the MB's leadership in the Gaza Strip that envisions the establishment of a Palestinian movement that is not ideologically bounded to Islamic characteristics and slogans, and champion the liberation of Palestine through armed resistance.[78] This proposal put the MB at a pivotal crossroad, either to engage itself with a new militarized secular movement, that sharply contradicts its Islamic principles, and thus helps it to resolve its current dilemma, or to engage in a comprehensive civilizational revival of the Islamic nation (*Ummah)* in order to revive Islam as a principle base to move towards the liberation of Palestine. The MB decided to commit itself to the policy of isolation, claiming that the establishment of a new organization that does not adopt the Islamic ideology is only repeating the mistakes of Palestinian national movements. To the MB, the alternative solution is to strengthen itself and to mobilize the whole Islamic *Ummah* for the *Jihad*. Restricting the liberation to Palestinians alone cannot win the battle, and mobilization cannot be achieved unless strong Islamic foundations are built, with a generation devoted to Islam and is ready to sacrifice itself. Then the liberation becomes a holy duty imposed on every Muslim.[79]

The Fatah Movement's commitment to armed resistance, pursued a different course of action, and became a serious threat for the MB by attracting its supporters. After the 1967 war, the general trend in Palestine favored armed resistance against Israel under the slogan of the National Project of Liberation, and the Palestinization of the armed resistance. It also signaled the shift away from the great slogans relying on Arab countries to liberate Palestine, and the need for Arab unity and armies to achieve liberation. The continued commitments of the MB to prepare the next generation, and mobilizing the Islamic *Umma*h, as a prerequisite to liberating Palestine, affected its active presence in the field in favor of Fatah and the other Palestinian military factions.[80]

The MB claimed that it was still in the preparation stage, getting ready for the armed resistance, and the work for launching the *Jihad* project continues by preparing the next generations seen as an essential part of it. It criticized Fatah's armed resistance as being dependent on the Palestinians, and neglecting its Islamic

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Abu 'Azah, Abdullah, *With the Islamic Movement in the Arab Countries*, Kuwait: Dar Al-Qalam for Publishing and Distribution, 1986, P: 19 [in Arabic].
[79] (Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought*, 2000. Op.cit. pp:24-25)
[80] Ibid, P: 26.

and Arabic dimensions. The MB tried to justify its stance to postpone the *Jihad* and the expected failure of Fatah's armed resistance to its supporters, and to ease its own conscience for not joining the public calls for armed resistance against Israel.[81] However, the MB was very convinced of the need to form a new Islamic generation before confronting the enemy.

1.1.4 Palestine in the Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood describes itself as an all-inclusive Islamic reform movement, founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, who initially targeted Egyptian society, but soon, expanded to include other Arab and Islamic countries. Hassan al-Banna stressed on the internationalization of the movement that is not confined to a specific country without other Islamic countries.[82] Its goal is to liberate the Islamic lands from every non-Islamic authority, seeking to unite Muslims as one nation and to establish an Islamic State.[83] The ideology of the MB demands an Islamic State as the final form of the regime that it seeks, which is based primarily on the movement's slogan: Islam is the Solution.[84] The fundamental principles of the MB are derived from the contributions of Islamic reformist thinkers in the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Rashid Rida, Jamaluddin Afghani, Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, who wanted it to become a movement to revive the spirit and reason of Muslims,[85] and believed that the only way the Muslim world could meet the challenges it faces from the West is to return to the origins of Islamic values.[86] Islam for these intellectuals is a remedy for the world's problems, and is a comprehensive system that is capable to respond to all the problems facing humanity, and provide adequate solutions to these problems, and able to offer an alternative to the prevailing non-Islamic systems.[87] Its founder, Hasan al-Banna, in his speeches and intellectual contributions, expressed this comprehensive view of Islam. He believed that Islam is not only a religion or a set of worship, but also a state, that has a complete system that includes governmental and international relations' aspects, cultural and educational system, as well as legal structures and economic rules, that makes the political system able to address all aspects of social, economic and political life.[88]

Based on the MB's understanding of the universality of Islam, it views the unity of the Islamic *Ummah* as bringing Muslims together in a single large

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[81] Ibid

[82] Abdul Aziz, Juma, Papers from the history of the Muslim Brotherhood, House of Islamic distribution and publishing, part 3, (n. d.), http://www.ikhwanwiki.com

[83] The General Order of the Muslim Brotherhood, 1994, available at www.wikisource.org

[84] Hassanein, Sabri: «Islam is the Solution» complementary of Brotherhood's Luck in the Egyptian Elections, Elaf Electronic Newspaper, London, 26-10-2010

[85] Al-Banna, Hasan: *Majmoo'at Rasa'il Al-Imam Alshaheed Hasan al-Banna*. (The Collection of the Letters of Imam Hasan al-Banna). (n.d.). Retrieved from Ikhwan Website. See also: Qutb, Sayyid: *The Future of this religion*, Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 1988

[86] Pargeter, Alison. The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power, London: Saqi. 2013, p.9

[87] Al-Banna. *Majmoo'at Rasa'il. Op. cit.*

[88] Ibid. See also: Qutb. *The Future of this religion, Op. cit.*

homeland. The Islamization of societies, aims at unifying individual Muslim societies into one state that represents the Islamic *Ummah*.[89] Since its establishment, the MB has rejected the concept of a nation-state that is a Western invention, imposed on Muslims whilst hindering the renaissance and independence of the *Ummah* a for the MB, the Islamic State, transcends the narrow concept o [90]. homeland, which is confined to geographical boundaries, to a homeland build on the basis of the Islamic Faith and Islamic Brotherhood, as per the teachings of the Quran and *Hadith* (the sayings of Prophet Mohammad), that described the meaning of brotherhood in Islam.[91] In the eyes of its thinkers, the geographical borders were designed by the West to divide the *Ummah*, and control their wealth.[92] This vision is deeply rooted in the thinking of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. They considered that no homeland for Muslims except in the lands in which the law of Allah is established and they denied the importance of ties of race, gender, nations, and others.[93] The Islamic faith, for them, is the identity of Muslims and the basis of Islamic nationality, Al-Banna stated: "Every land testifies that no God but *Allah*, Muhammad is the Messenger of *Allah*, is a part of our homeland, has its sanctity and holiness, and deserves our loyalty and struggling for the sake of its best".[94] Thus, the MB conceived all Muslims as one nation, bounded by Islam, from which the principle of Islamic brotherhood is conceived.[95]

The interest in Palestine stemmed from this fundamental understanding to the concepts of the Islamic *Ummah* and *Jihad*. For MB, Palestine is the first *Qiblah* (direction of prayer), and a Sacred Land where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven in the Night Journey (*Israa*). Therefore, in the understanding of the MB, "Palestine is an Islamic land until the Day of Judgment, and it should not be compromised, nor any part of it, which is not only the property of the Palestinians or the Arabs, but also a property of all Muslims, and Muslims everywhere, must contribute practically to provide money and blood to defend it".[96] In accordance with the principle of defending the Islamic *Ummah* and the requirements of Islamic brotherhood, *Jihad* become a Sufficiency Duty (*Fard Kifayya*) or a Collective Obligation imposed on the whole community of believers to interact with issues of interest to Muslims and defend them in the face of their enemies. Palestine, accordingly, meets with the five conditions, outlined by Hassan Al-Banna, to mobilizing the *Ummah* and the declaration of *Jihad*: the response to aggression and self-defense, securing freedom of religion and belief for believers,

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[89] Graham, Kevin W., *Hamas Defined*, Master Thesis, Washington: Georgetown Univ, 2009, p.8
[90] General Order of the Muslim Brotherhood: Article II. Op. cit.
[91] Al-Qaradawi, Yousef, Memoirs of Yousef Al-Qaradawi: The Son of the Village and the Book: Profiles of a Biography and a Journey, in Hussein, Safwat: The Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinian Cause: 1936-1949: Studies in the History of the Islamic Movement, ikhwan encyclopedia website, (n.d).
[92] Al-Banna. *Majmoo'at Rasa'il. Op. cit*. See also: Qutb. *The Future of this religion, Op. cit*.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid
[95] Masoud, Gamal Abdul Hadi, *Mistakes Must Be Corrected in History: The Road to Jerusalem*, Mansoura: Dar Al-Wafaa, (n.d), 2ed, pp. 192-193
[96] Saleh, Mohsen Muhammad, *Imam Hassan al-Banna and the Palestinian Cause*, Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations cause, (January 23, 2012), p. 4

protecting the Islamic call and deterring the aggressor against the Islamic nation.[97] Anyhow, not merely the historical and religious dimensions raised the importance of Palestine for the MB, but also the existence of Israel poses a serious threat to Egypt, to the Arab-Muslim world and their economies. It also endangers the plan to establish an Islamic state. Thus, the MB sees the issue of Palestine as critical to its project and the main issue facing Muslims. Hence, *Jihad* for the liberation of Palestine became an imposed duty on every Muslim.[98] Besides the objective factors, other subjective factors enhanced the interest of the MB in Palestine. Palestine is seen as a fertile working ground for the MB in line with its desire to expand beyond narrow and specific country borders, into a regional, national and international player.[99] It also reflected the development in its intellectual, political, and organizational structure. This was not only in response to the objective circumstances felt since the 1930s, but also is an expression of the MB's desire to be politically involved in the Palestinian cause to strengthen its presence in the societies in which it is located.[100]

It is clear that the MB linked religious Islamic considerations and the establishment of an Islamic state with the liberation of Palestine. It sees the victory and liberation of Palestine as part of the Islamic Renaissance Project, and a way to achieve Islamic unity.[101] However, this view can be seen as a conflict between priorities, namely, what precedes the other? Is achieving Islamic unity a prerequisite for the liberation of Palestine? Or will the liberation of Palestine pave the way for Islamic unity? Theoretically, the MB believed that the victory in Palestine requires both unity and *Jihad* to support each other. The MB sees a reciprocal relationship between the liberation of Palestine and achieving Islamic unity, and the unity itself as a basic requirement for the liberation of Palestine. On the one hand, the liberation of Palestine requires a renaissance of the *Ummah* to build strength and unity able to respond to the challenges of liberation and to defeat the Zionist project. On the other hand, the *Jihad* in Palestine and resistance are important elements in the process of mobilizing the *Ummah* to face challenges. This apparently poses the question of priorities of the MB. This will be later explained when we come to analysis the ramifications of the establishment of the Islamic Jihad movement on the MB.

It can be concluded that there are several interrelated factors like religion, political, intellectual or strategic factors that increased the Muslim Brotherhood's interests in Palestine. Some are ideologically driven, as Palestine was seen as sacred Islamic land that needs to be defended and synonymous with the vision of

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[97] Al-Banna, Hassan, *Collection of Letters of Imam Hassan Al-Banna*, Cairo: Dar Al-Shehab, The Message of our Call, (n.d) p.19.
[98] Masoud, *Mistakes Must Be Corrected.* (n.d), *Op. cit*, pp. 200-201
[99] (Hroub, *Hamas Political Thought and Practice*. 2000 Op.cit. p. 10)
[100] Ibid. p. 12
[101] Many of the Muslim Brotherhood's intellectuals focused in their writings, intellectual contributions and speeches on analyzing the dangers of the Zionist project on Arab and Islamic national security and considered it a fundamental impediment to their project aimed at establishing the Islamic state. For further on this and on the status of the Palestinian issue to the Muslim Brotherhood, the writings of Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Rashid Ghannouchi and Yousef al-Qaradawi can be considered.

promoting Islamic Brotherhood and the *Ummah*. Politically and strategically, Palestine was seen as fertile ground for the MB to strengthen its presence in line with its ambition to establish an Islamic State, whilst combating the Zionist project that curbs and endangers this vision.

1.1.5 Soft Power over Hard Power: Islamization of the society and postponement of Jihad

The successive defeats of the Palestinian National Movement, which worsened the Palestinian situation was interpreted by the MB as the failure of the policies, strategies and ideologies of the liberal, communist and nationalist currents to defeat Zionism, or even confronting it ideologically. This was exemplified after the defeat in the war of 1948 and in subsequent wars with Israel.[102] The MB explained the series of defeats, crises, and retrogression of the Muslims and Arab worlds as a result of Muslims having deviated from the true path of Islam, which caused their failures and weakness.[103] This interpretation meant giving priority to empowering the community over the priority of launching *Jihad.* The MB believed that for the Muslims to heal the *Ummah* needs to be reawakened, rehabilitated and converted from their current state of ignorance.[104] The slogan Islam is the Solution is deemed most suited, as it represents a total transformation of Palestinian society able to confront all challenges. In its view, Islam needs to be leading the change in society in all fields.[105]

To this end, the Muslim Brotherhood adopted the strategy of soft power, which involved a slow penetration of society, through mass education, starting from the family and extended to the rest of the society, through various platforms, most notably mosques, cultural and community centers. In addition to the provision of social and economic services and cultural activities, the MB also targeted society's general behaviors. Members of the MB were keen to highlight good behavior in dealing with the people, by avoiding bad behaviors and practices like corruption, nepotism, and discrimination, and by providing their services to all segments of society.[106] Soft power ultimately aims to create a community environment based on the teachings and ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, and garnering supporters to the cause.[107]

Muslim Brotherhood's interest in the process of social and ideological construction is seen as a prerequisite to building a generation focused on liberation. This affected its conduct in promoting the Palestinian cause,

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[102] Ridwan as-Sayyid, *The Movements of Political Islam: Questions of the Present and the Future*, Beirut: Sho'oun Al-Awsat Journal, No. 39, March 1995, p.33
[103] Khalidi, Ismail, *Sixty years in the Muslim Brotherhood*, Gaza: Center for Palestinian History and Documentation, (2011), p. 21
[104] (Hroub, *Hamas A Beginner's Guide*, 2006, op.cit. p:14)
[105] Al-Qaradawi, Yousef, *The Islamic Solution is a Requirement and a Need*, Beirut: Al-Resalah Foundation, (1974), p.33
[106] (Graham, *Hamas Defined*. 2009, Op.Cit. p:8)
[107] Husseini, Sunni, *The Muslim Brotherhood between Thought and Power*, Beirut: Shu'un Al-Awsat Journal, Vol 146, Autumn 2013, p.42

particularly, the armed resistance. It is clear that the MB had linked the concept of *Jihad* and its strategies with community building. The community is critical to the *Jihad* providing it with protection and resilience. Society is seen as the main instrument of change and lies at the top of the MB's priorities. To the MB, the process of social construction is necessary and related to ideology, and works in tandem with the process of liberation and confronting the enemies. These two processes are integrated; education strengthens the community making it more resilient in confronting the occupation. Soft power, thus, is the tool of the Muslim Brotherhood to seek for legitimacy through social action, unlike other factions who sought legitimacy through military action.

1.1.6 The rise of the Islamic currents

The rise of Islamic currents in the Arab World, and then Hamas in Palestine, was closely related to a wider regional phenomenon that spread after during 1980s, called *Sahwa* (Islamic Awakening). This phenomenon manifested itself in the religiousness and the increased number of people who resorted to Islam in their daily lives as a cultural preference and recognition of the failures of leftist and secular intellectual currents. For example, the increase in the number of women wearing *Hijab* (headscarves), the growing number of young worshipers going to mosques, in addition to the emergence of the Islamic banking system and non-usurious businesses. Other manifestation appeared in the increase of the Islamic books and the number of *Doa'at* (preachers), in addition to the emergence of Islamic charitable organizations working in Asia and Africa.[108] Intellectual transformations at the individual level also flourished as some of the Arab thinkers with secular, liberal or Marxist tendencies, such as Sayyed Qutb, Tariq al-Bishri and Abdel Wahab al-Messiri became more became critical of their previous convictions.[109]

However, the most prominent manifestation was the appearance of new Islamic movements in the Arab countries like *Al-Shabiba Al-Islamia* (The Islamic Youth) in Morocco in 1972 and *Hizb Al-Nahda* in Tunisia in 1981. In addition, more Islamist representatives participated in parliamentary and unions' elections, and they achieved increasing electoral success in more than one Arab country, and ended up occupying many parliamentary and union seats. Jordan, for example, witnessed the rise of the Islamic trend in the parliamentary elections in 1989, when *Jabhat al-A'amal al-Islami* won (22) seats in addition to (12) seats won by other independent Islamists. In Egypt, the MB was represented, for the first time, in the Egyptian Parliament in 1984 after winning (7) seats in the elections, and this number increased to (36) seats in 1987.[110]

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[108] (Sara, *The Islamic Movement in Palestine*, 1989, pp: 54-55)

[109] Nassira, Hani Ali, Nostalgia for the sky: a study of the shift towards the Islamic trend in Egypt in the second half of the twentieth century, Beirut: the Center of Civilization for the Development of Islamic Thought, series of civilizational studies, I 1, 2010, p. 256

[110] Ibrahim, Hassanein Tawfiq, Islam and Politics in the Arab World during the Twentieth Century, p:112, available online: https://bit.ly/2P0xGjP

In fact, several objective variables played important roles in paving the way for the Islamic Awakening in the Arab and Islamic countries. The most important of which are the consequences of the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1967 war and Israel's occupation of Jerusalem and other Arab lands. This stirred up both religious emotions and Islamic awareness in the region.[111] The Gulf countries increased their influence due to their oil wealth. Countries like Saudi Arabia contributed to strengthening the influence of Islamists in the Arab countries as a counterbalance to secular and leftist intellectual trends, especially communism. Since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states increasingly supported the Islamists and Islamic organizations, which manifested itself in the spread fundamentalist thought whilst improving the status of Islamic movements in the Arab region.[112] The most influential contribution, and considered as a turning point in the rise of the Islamic trends and Political Islam, was the Islamic revolution in Iran. This revolution contributed significantly to the development of Islamic movements in the Arab and Islamic world in general. Islamists viewed the success of the Iranian revolution in taking power in Iran as a proof of the capability and potency of Islam to triumph and build an Islamic State. The Islamic Revolution provided a model for other Islamic movements that can be emulated.[113] Abdul Karim Bakkar, author of Islamic Awakening: Awakening for the Awakening, refers to the left-wing analysts to the role of some Arab rulers in allowing the Islamists to enter the political sphere for the sake of confronting leftist movements. They pointed notably to the role of Anwar Sadat in promoting the Islamic student movement in Egypt to confront the Communists and leftists especially the followers of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egyptian universities after 1970. They also cited Habib Bourguiba's policy to allow Islamists to work in Tunisia to limit the influence of the communist movement there.[114]

The awakening must also be seen in the context of the deteriorating economic conditions experienced by some Arab and Islamic countries, and the failure of the existed ideologies and strategies to overcome the situation that prevailed in the 1960s in third world countries. This caused Arab countries to be economically dependent on the West, coupled with poverty, underdevelopment, and burdened with high debts.[115] These factors may not be the decisive factors but merely supporting factors in the awakening. For example, the consequences of the 1967 defeat were not a decisive factor in countries like Tunisia and Turkey, who were not directly affected by the defeat. Meanwhile, poor economic conditions did not impact the more stable and prosperous countries in the Gulf and precipitated the Islamic awakening.

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[111] Abu Amr, Ziad, *Islamic Movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1989, pp. 29-31

[112] Al-Sadmi, Noha Abdullah, Political Islam in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, [In Arabic], Cairo: Madbouly Bookshop, 2014. pp. 47-56.

[113] Khawaldeh, Saleh, *Political Islam: Concept and Dimensions*, in: Abash, Aisha (ed.), The Problem of Political Statehood and Islam before and after the Revolt of the Arab Spring: The Arab Maghreb States as a Model, Berlin: The Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies, 2018, p.15

[114] Bakkar, Abdul Karim, Islamic Awakening: Awakening for the Awakening, Cairo: Dar es Salaam for Printing and Publishing, 1, 2011, p. 15

[115] (Al-Sadmi N. A., 2014, Op.Cit. pp: 47-56)

Some researchers may cite the above as justification for the awakening. These factors may have created the appropriate conditions for expansion of the Islamic currents in these societies. However, it is difficult to identify the primary reasons behind it without placing it in a wider context related to identity conflict and intellectual conflict within these societies. Muqtedar Khan in his study: What is Political Islam? believed that the identity crisis in Arab-Islamic societies was the result of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 and the loss of power and authority. Colonization by the West also paved the way to overall Western intellectual, cultural, political, social and economic domination over the Arab and Islamic societies.[116] For instance, British and French colonization of Arab and Islamic countries contributed to the spread of the Western thoughts and weakened religious ties. The prevailing social, legal and legislative foundations existing in the Arab and Islamic societies were replaced by Western models be it intellectual, social, political or economic system based on interest. The Western model dominated Arab and Islamic societies and strengthened the influence of communist, secular and liberal thoughts, which consequently led to a conflict between two identities and two contradictory projects, the Western secular identity and project, and the Islamic religious identity and project.[117]

The state of the Westernization of Arab and Islamic societies was deeply entrenched and have caused profound cultural, civilizational and social crises. In fact, although the several events and factors that have hastened the Awakening; however, the Awakening is a reaction to a cultural and ideological replacement over other culture and ideology, in a process that neglected the historical factors and the deep ties of these societies to Islam. These societies have suffered numerous political, social and religious crises related to national and political legitimacy, economic downturns, corruption, and authoritarianism. The secular Western model has failed to advance Arabs and Muslims lives. Most post-independence regimes and local political forces have failed to solve the political, social, economic and cultural crises and are drowning in corruption and authoritarianism. This contributed to the growing frustration in the prevailing political and social ideologies, and paving the way for the growth of the Islamic tide as an alternative identity.[118] The Islamists promoted the Islamic solution to solve the problems through Islam, taking advantage of the state of frustration with Western models. In fact, the Islamic solution reflects the deep civilizational crisis experienced by the Arabs and Muslims, and was an attempt to resolve the identity crisis and conflict of identities. In addition, an Islamic response to colonial attempts to strip the Islamic *Ummah* of its culture and history.[119]

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[116] Khan, Muqtedar, *What is Political Islam?* Mar 10, 2014, https://bit.ly/2F5v8Xm
[117] Al-Tawba, Ghazi, *Islamic Awakening: Causes and Truth*, 08 April 2007, https://bit.ly/2YOyehc
[118] Amara, Muhammad, The Islamic Awakening in Western Eyes, Seta Uktober-Giza: Dar al-Nahda for Printing and Publishing, 1997, p. 20
[119] (Bakkar, *Islamic Awakening*. 2011. Op.cit. p:15)

1.1.7 The crisis of secular ideological streams

In the aftermath of the wars of 1967 and 1973, the political and intellectual repercussions that resulted from the two wars fueled the Islamic Awakening and contributed to the rise of Islamic currents. Israel's conquest of Arab lands, most notably Jerusalem, was a shock to Arabs and Muslims. Perhaps Israel's victory, as a state fighting on a religious basis, made the religious dimension of the conflict more prominent, and thus directed people to look at the conflict from an Islamic perspective.[120] In the wake of this, Arab nationalism and slogans that called for Arab unity subsided since the secular and leftist movements were seen to be unable to contribute to the Arab Renaissance Project and confront Israel. These intellectual currents failed to achieve many of the promises and aspirations they preached whether it be Arab unity, return of the occupied Arab lands, or promoting equal rights and better living conditions within their societies. This led to the loss of the confidence and support of a large part of the society.[121] This was also reflected in the decline of the influence of the Arab regimes and the secular ideologies, especially the Nasserite stream.[122] These objective factors became an impetus for the Muslim Brotherhood to provide an alternative to the prevailing intellectual trends, and to emphasize on the importance of returning to Islam to solve the critical political, cultural and economic dilemmas of the nation, whilst confronting the Zionist threat to the Islamic world.[123]

The most prominent streams that emerged in the post-1967 era paved the way for regional consolidation at the expense of Arabism and Arab unity. It created an ideological vacuum due to the decline in national and leftist ideological currents that opened the door for the Islamists to introduce concepts that emphasized on Muslim unity and reforming societies in accordance with Islam. Prior to the rise of the Islamic movements, Arab societies had multiple identities and dimensions to these identities.

1.1.8 Palestine: Steadfastness of secular and leftist currents

As leftist currents faced crises in the Arab World, partly due to the gradual rise of the Islamic trends, the *Sahwa* needed more time to make itself felt in Palestinian politics. In contrast to other Arab states, Palestine remained peculiar putting liberation from occupation as top priority. During the first ten years of the Israeli occupation after 1967, the secular and leftist movements managed to restructure the Palestinian Liberation Movement (PLO), giving room to various political factions, such as Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to control the leadership. As a result, these political factions were able to

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[120] Ibid

[121] (Khawaldeh, *Political Islam*. 2018, pp.17-18)

[122] Barghouthi, Iyad, Islamization and Politics in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jerusalem: Al-Zahra Center for Studies, I 1, 1990, pp. 37-39

[123] Abu Al-'Omreen, Khalid, Hamas, The Islamic Resistance Movement: Roots, Origin, and Political Thought. Cairo: Markaz Al-Hadara Al-Arabiya. (2000). p 151

direct the strategies and means of liberation adopted by the PLO. The intellectual crisis in the Arab World forced the PLO to be self-reliant and independent rather than relying on Arab armies. These trends were reflected in its slogans and priorities, moving away from ambitious Arab nationalistic slogans to the Palestinian national slogans, and adoption of military action as a basic strategy in dealing with the conflict with Israel. The PLO gained popular support for its focus on the liberation through armed resistance, and it also gained the support of some Arab regimes, as reaction to the 1967 defeat. The PLO also evolved as an organization into an entity acting as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.[124]

In fact, this constituted one of the difficulties faced by the Muslim Brotherhood in the race for political and ideological legitimacy and integration into the Palestinian political scene. Islam was not yet the basic argument for legitimizing the struggle for liberation. Military action remained as the source of legitimacy for Palestinian movements, a trend that distinguished the strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood from the PLO. The Muslim Brotherhood continued to be absent from military action, which convinced a number of Islamic elements to join the PLO in order to participate in the armed resistance, which affected the organizational power of the Muslim Brotherhood.[125]

However, the turning point that facilitated the rise of the Islamic movements in Palestine came when the PLO was confronted by certain issues, which opened the door for the MB to actively participate in Palestinian politics.[126] The crisis was two-fold: first, in terms of power and influence, a number of factors contributed to the decline in influence of the PLO, the most important of which was its clash with some Arab regimes for a variety of reasons including interference in its internal affairs, notably with the Jordanian and Lebanese regimes. The PLO was also affected by the debacle in Lebanon in the wake of the Israeli invasion in 1982 that led to its fragmentation. It was also isolated at the regional and international levels, both politically and economically, whilst facing Arab and Israeli attempts to create alternative leaders of the PLO. It also suffered organizational mismanagement like financial corruption, bureaucracy and seen to be undemocratic in managing its institutions and practices.[127] Fatah and the Popular and Democratic fronts also saw a decline in their influence due to internal splits.[128] Secondly, the most important factor working in favor of the Islamists was the intellectual shift in the PLO. These factors played a decisive role in driving the PLO to re-position itself regionally and internationally, and to reassess its leadership on Palestinian issues. This involved a re-think of its goal to liberate historic Palestine, and instead look into establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip. This made the two-state solution and recognition of

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[124] Sayegh, Yazid, *Armed struggle and the formation of a Palestinian state*, Journal of Palestinian Studies, Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 8(32), (Fall 1997) P:4-7

[125] Legrain, Jean-François, *La religion et son statut en Palestine*, Institut de Recherches et d'études sur Les mondes arabes et musulmans (Iremam), Décembre 2003, shorturl.at/ctIM3

[126] (Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought*, 2000. Op.cit. p:10)

[127] (Barghouti, *Political Islam in Palestine*, 2000, Op. cit. p:49)

[128] (Abu Al-'Omreen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance*. 2000. Op.cit. p:28)

Israel possible. This was articulated in the Ten Points Program[129], announced in 1974 by the Palestinian National Council in Cairo, in which the Palestinian leadership implicitly hinted at its acceptance of a Palestinian state in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions, as well as to consider seeking a political settlement of the issue as an alternative to armed struggle.[130]

This marked the beginning of an important debate over national objectives, and not just the mechanisms for achieving them. The earlier disagreements revolved around the means to achieve liberations, including the debate over the requirements of the armed struggle (Islamization, Arab Unity). However, the Ten Points Program questioned the general goal of the Palestinian struggle for liberation namely the shift in the primary objective of the liberation from freeing historical Palestine to accepting only parts of it, whilst implicitly recognizing Israel. These transformations have intensified the division in Palestinian society. The intellectual debate among the factions skipped certain issues like nationalist sentiments, Islamic versus secular content, Islamization vis a vis secularization of Palestinian society, or the priority of Islamizing the society before peruse the armed struggle, to a dispute over the holistic view of the Palestinian rights, which strengthened the debate over the political and social contract involving Palestinians. As a result, two trends emerged within the Palestinian society. The first adjusted to the new objective conditions arising from the 1973 War (especially after Egypt entered into peace negotiations and political compromise with Israel) to achieve several Palestinian demands. The proponents articulated their views that mirrored the Ten Points program. Meanwhile, the detractors fundamentally rejected the principle of compromise, whilst calling for full liberation through armed struggle. This trend came to be known as the Rejectionist Front.[131]

1.1.9 Muslim Brotherhood: Attempts to fill the vacuum

The decline in the intellectual currents in Palestine and the series of military defeats caused an ideological vacuum and crises related to the political identity. The Islamists sought to fill this vacuum and reshape Palestinian national identity.[132] They blamed the defeat of 1967 as a failure of the Western models be it national, secular or liberal thoughts, which led to the decline of Arab and Islamic societies.[133] This view was obvious in the literature of the MB's intellectuals criticizing these thoughts as deviant and the defeats were God's punishment for the

[129] See the phased program (Ten Point Program), https://bit.ly/2YSVwCO
[130] (Barghouti, *Political Islam in Palestine*. 2000. Op. cit. p:49)
[131] The Rejectionist Front included: Arab Liberation Front (ALF), As-Sa'iqa, Abu Nidal's Fatah-Revolutionary Council, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC).
[132] (Susser, *the Rise of Hamas*. 2010. Op.cit. p:10)
[133] Bani Salama, Muhammad, *The Future of Political Islam Groups and the Positions of the Great Powers*, 2008, http://www.ammonnews.net/article/24850

Muslims having strayed from the path of Allah.[134] For the MB, the result of the 1967 war was a landmark in the intellectual and theoretical debate over the validity of the alternative Islamic slogan, in contrast to the Nasserite nationalistic slogan that fought and lost the war.[135] The MB thus employed two successive strategies, seeking to control society and fill the vacuum created by the failures of the Palestinian national movement and other intellectual currents.[136] Each strategy was employed and integrated afterward with subsequent strategies to form the general framework for the Muslim Brotherhood to control society.

1.1.9.1 The first strategy

This involved preparation and education, by which the MB intensified its activities in order to increase loyalty, recruitment, and legitimacy within Palestinian society.[137] It hoped to overcome the consequences arising from the restrictive policies of the Egyptian regime as well as to re-promote itself to the younger generations and mobilize them, in order to frame their orientations and enhance their faith.[138] The MB concentrated on the quiet construction of Islamic power and the establishment of a broad organizational structure.[139] This involved building the hard nucleus (1967 to 1975), which means building the nucleus capable of carrying out the burden of the Islamic call and rebuilding the movement's organizational structures. The MB focused notably on building and controlling mosques, where the Islamic *Doa'at* (clerics)[140] worked to spread the Islamic call among the people, especially the youth, while others worked to recruit new members for *Jihad*.[141] At this stage, the MB avoided military clashes with Israel, which influenced their direct impact on the Palestinian cause.[142] It argued that resisting the occupation is not feasible without strong foundations, a new generation that embraces Islam holistically. This will not be achieved unless there is a comprehensive social change that leads to political change that turns the MB into a mature resistance organization.[143] Thus, it made social change as its priority in all its activities in Palestine.[144]

The MB held firm to the policy of preparing the generation for action, which justified its non-confrontational approach to Israel during the 1950s, 1960s,

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[134] (Barghouti, *Political Islam in Palestine*, 2000, Op. cit. p:43)
[135] (Hroub, *Hamas Political Thought and Practice*. 2000 Op.cit. pp. 29-30)
[136] (Barghouti, *Political Islam in Palestine*, 2000, Op. cit. p:39)
[137] We will come to explain the following stages when discussing the Islamic Awakening and the development of the MB activities in Palestine, and the dialectic of empowerment and change that led the MB towards taking practical steps to move towards military action.
[138] (Abu Al-'Omreen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance*. 2000. Op.cit. p:201)
[139] Al-Maqadameh, Ibrahim, Landmarks on the Road to the Liberation of Palestine, Al-Yam Foundation, I 1, 1994, p. 254.
[140] These Islamic *Doa'at* were the leaders of the MB and later became leaders of Hamas, such as Sheikh Hamed al-Beytawi, Ahmad al-Haj Ali in Nablus, Sheikh Fadl Saleh and Ibrahim Abu Salem in Ramallah
[141] (Abu Al-'Omreen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance*. 2000. Op.cit. p:117)
[142] Ibid. p:201
[143] (Hroub, Hamas: *Political Thought*, 2000, Op. cit. p: 32)
[144] Hamad, Jawad, A Study in the Political Thought of Hamas, Amman: Center for Middle East Studies, I 2, 1988, p.36

1970s, until 1987. It looked to build an army with strong religious foundations instead of an army with misguided beliefs. This policy led to numerous criticisms to the MB's role in the Palestinian struggle from Palestinian national and leftist organizations. They criticized linking the individual's ability and religious adherence, with the commitment to confront the occupation, and if preparing the generation can be effective in light of the deterioration in the Palestinian cause, and the occupation of historic Palestine.[145]

It can be concluded that both the objective and subjective circumstances justified the MB's stance to distance itself from military action and giving priority to social issues to develop an Islamic community. All its actions precluded it from making the critical decision toward confronting Israel militarily. This reflected the MB's belief that such a move was organizationally, militarily, ideologically and politically unsound, besides claiming that it was not in a rush to complete the cultural renaissance of the *Ummah* in order to revive Islam and then to move towards liberation.

1.1.9.2 The second strategy

The second strategy involved a period of organizational expansion (1976-1982). This marked the beginning of a new phase of the MB trying to control Palestinian society and replicate the Islamic Awakening happening in other Arab countries, in line with its strategic goal to create an Islamic community.[146] The MB formed two new bodies, which contributed significantly to the proliferation of the movement, and (later) influenced its strategies. The first was *Al-Mujama' al-Islami* (the Islamic Compound), founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in Gaza, and the second was *Al-Kutla Al-Islamia* (The Islamic Student's Block).[147] *Al-Mujama' al-Islami* focused on charitable and humanitarian causes through building a wide network of institutions, such as the youth centers, educational charitable and health services institutions, and others. These centers targeted mainly the poorest areas in the Gaza Strip and the refugee camps and fitted into the soft power strategy of the MB to gain popularity.[148] Sheikh Ahmed Yassin emerged as a charismatic figure leading this network of institutions, and to make *Al-Mujama' al-Isla mi* later the foundation of Hamas.[149] The social services provided by the MB created a link to Palestinian society, and the MB saw its support grew in Gaza, Hebron, Nablus, Jerusalem and other cities. It used this support to further its goal to Islamize society as a path towards liberation.[150]

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[145] (Hroub, *Hamas A Beginner's Guide*, 2006, op.cit. p:15)
[146] Abu Amer, Adnan, The Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip 1967-1987: Between Advocacy and Politics, Cairo: Arab Media Center, 2006, p.29
[147] Ibid. p: 30
[148] Abuirshaid, Osama, The Dialectic of Religion and Politics in Hamas' Thought and Practice, (Phd Dissertation), Loughborough University Institutional Repository, 2013, p. 113-114
[149] (Legrain, *La religion et son statut en Palestine*. 2003. Op.cit)
[150] (Graham, *Hamas Defined*. 2009, Op.Cit. pp: 37-38)

Al-Kutla Al- Islamiyah manifested the Islamic Awakening in the Palestinian society.[151] It recruited students from schools and universities, and later played a role in strengthening MB's ideological presence within the Palestinian educational sector. It also played a key role in confronting other ideologies and slogans adopted by the PLO's student blocs. This enabled the Islamic trends to compete in the student councils' elections at the Palestinian universities.[152] For example, in 1979, it won 10 out of 11 seats in the student's election at An-Najah University in Nablus, and in 1980 it defeated Fatah at Hebron University.[153] In general, the growing university scene in the West Bank and The Gaza Strip was very attractive to the MB, besides being the scene of political wrangling between the Palestinian factions since the late 1970s. It became an important platform to the MB to express its political and intellectual positions.[154] In light of the importance of the educational sector in the MB's soft power strategy, it founded the Islamic University as the first Palestinian university in the Gaza Strip in 1978, which was considered the most important indicator of the rise of the Islamic tide in Palestine.[155] These universities supplied the MB with well-oriented, educated and enthusiastic young cadres, who later championed the armed struggle and became the backbone of Hamas.[156] The return of young Islamic cadres to the Gaza Strip after graduating from the Egyptian universities such as Abdel Aziz Al-Rantissi, Ibrahim Al-Maqadmah, Mahmoud Al-Zahar and Musa Abu Marzouk, also helped the MB to intensify it focused on national, social and political issues.[157]

This stage, in general, involved the MB expanding its geographical presence, exiting from the organizational isolation, focusing on public works and interacting with societal issues. The universities were not the only arena of competition with other intellectual currents, but the MB actively participated in labor unions, professional syndicates and administrative bodies of educational institutions in an attempt to gain control of these organizations. In public works, the MB was keen to exhibit good behavior, it targeted all segments of society without discriminating between them to foster a positive image of itself, as opposed to other institutions who suffered from corruption and cronyism.[158] As a result, the Islamic movements became a real competitor to the leftist, nationalist and secular movements.[159]

At this stage, the MB remained a service-oriented organization. Through this it was able to proliferate and expand to meet some of its objectives. It also became a strong competitor to Fatah and other national and leftist factions. It was

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[151] Barghouthi, Iyad, Political Secularism and the Religious Question in Palestine, Ramallah: RCHR, 2012, p. 11
[152] (Hroub, Hamas: *Political Thought*, 2000. Op.cit. pp:31-32)
[153] Al-Kutala Al-Islamiya fi Falasten: https://bit.ly/2Ky65lK
[154] Sunsehaugen, JarleOpedal, Hamas in the West Bank: A study of the political position of the West Bank branch between 1987 and 2007, Master thesis, University of Bergen, Spring 2011, P:28-29
[155] Salah, Aqel, Hamas: Its Political and Democratic Practices, 1992-2012, Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2016, P: 72
[156] (Sunsehaugen, *Hamas in the West Bank*. 2011. Op. cit. pp:28-29)
[157] (Al-Hamad & Barghoti (eds). *A Study in the Political Thought*. 1999. p. 234)
[158] Ibid.
[159] (Susser, *the Rise of Hamas*. 2010. Op.cit. p:25)

obvious that the MB preferred to provide public services as opposed to the armed struggle as a tactic. Its active public work served as a source of legitimacy for MB since it was not fully committed to the armed struggle, unlike the other factions. The network of institutions helped the MB to improve the image of the Islamists, which was reflected by it winning seats in several students and union elections. The growth of the Islamists can be seen as a public reaction and backlash resulting from the failures of other Palestinian factions, notably the PLO. This allowed the MB to exploit the situation and present itself as a defender of Palestinian National Rights. These circumstances allowed the MB to exit from its self-imposed isolation and to work in stages toward achieving intellectual and institutional control over the society. It was helped by the society's growing interest in Islam as an alternative to the other ideologies espoused by the other factions who failed in their tasks to liberate Palestine.

The importance of the two strategies adopted by the MB to fill the ideological vacuum and to demonstrate the manifestations of the Islamic Awakening in the Palestinian society is clear. The ideological transformation served to support the political and military struggles. Islamization pursued at different levels helped to increase the number of young supporters and members of the MB. This subsequently challenged the MB to remain steadfast to its commitment in avoiding military confrontation with Israel. However, the younger generation did influence the MB to abandon its traditional position and to respond to the internal demands for armed struggle. The following discusses how the establishment of the Islamic *Jihad* movement reflected on the Muslim Brotherhood and provoked a debate over its priorities in the context of empowerment and liberation.

1.1.10 A new generation of Islamists

We referred earlier to the role of the Iranian revolution in 1979 in the rise of the Islamic movements in the Arab and Islamic countries, when it succeeded to overthrow the Shah's regime through an Islamic popular revolution. This gave hope to the Islamists to access the power and to establish an Islamic State. The Iranian revolution left a distinct impact on the young Islamic generations and the Islamic movements in Palestine, notably on their strategies to realize their aspirations. There has always been a prolonged debate over strategies to achieve the liberation of Palestine, in light of the objective circumstances. The Iranian revolution forced a rethink by the Islamists on the armed struggle to be pursued in an organized manner. The Islamists were forced to abandon their earlier thinking that did not set any specific timeline pertaining the armed struggle.[160] The establishment of the Islamic Jihad Movement (IJM), in early 1980, as an Islamic movement geared towards military action against Israel, demonstrated the shift in the ideology of the Islamists. This shift posed a serious challenge for the MB, especially since IJM espoused the same ideological principles compared to the

[160] Jarbawi, Ali, Hamas, *The Brotherhood's Introduction to Political Legitimacy*, Journal of Palestinian Studies, Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies. Winter 1993. 4 (13), p. 75

MB, but with a major difference in regards to priorities.[161] While the MB perceived that the fundamental problem confronting the Islamic *Ummah* is the absence of an Islamic State, with Palestine being only part of the issue, the Islamic Jihad considered Palestine at the heart of the Islamic world and the central issue for Muslims, and its liberation is a prelude to the establishment of an Islamic state.[162]

The critics of Islamic Jihad to the MB concerned its policy of preferring *Huda* (Islamization of the society) at the expense of *Jihad*, and to its ideological inertia in dealing with the Palestinian issue with new methods, that caused the absent of the Islamists from the Palestinian arena, politically and militarily, from the 1950s to the 1970s. Further critics concerned the ill-defined timing in pushing for *Jihad* and linking it with the general goal of Islamization the community, in light of the decline of the Palestinian national movement and its inability to confront Israel. In fact, The MB received sharp criticism, particularly from the Islamists in Palestine, for neglecting *Jihad* in Palestine, unlike its practice in other countries such as Bosnia and Afghanistan.[163] This is in addition to the lack of harmonization between the national and religious issues in their practices.[164] The Islamic Jihad became a serious rival to the MB and threatened its influenced in Palestine, as it became the first Islamic movement to focus on Palestinian concerns and confronting Israeli militarily, unlike the MB who adopted various international and multi-national Islamic issues at the expense of the Palestinian issue.[165] This threat was further enhanced when the core founders and elements of the IJM split from the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, objecting to its non-confrontational approach.[166]

For Islamic Jihad, the absence of the MB from playing an active role in the resistance, and putting Islamization of Palestinian society as a precondition to conduct the resistance, had contributed to the weakness of the Islamic movement and its failure to rally mass support against Israel. These criticisms were based on the fact that the MB failed to establish an Islamic state, and was unable to determine the dimensions of the conflict with Israel and its relationship in the absence of an Islamic state.[167]

In fact, since the 1970s, there began an intellectual discussion among the young cadres of the Islamic stream in Palestine especially the ones in Israeli jails, amongst Palestinian students at home and abroad on the need to reform the Palestinian National Movement based on Islamic values, absent from the secularism of the PLO, and to rebuild the Palestinian National Project along

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[161] (Legrain. *La religion et son statut en Palestine*. 2003. *Op.cit*)
[162] Hindi, Muhammad: *Islamic Jihad Movement*, in Zaqout, Nahed (Ed), The Experiences of the Palestinian political movement in the twentieth century, Gaza: The National Center for Studies and Documentation. (2000) I 1. p. 181
[163] Ibrash, Ibrahim, *Toward Correcting the National Dimension of the Palestinian Issue*, Cairo: A-siyassa aldowalia Journal, December 1, 2015, http://www.siyassa.org.eg/News/6497.aspx
[164] (Hindi. *Islamic Jihad Movement*. 2000, Op. cit. p. 181)
[165] (Hroub, Hamas: *Political Thought*, 2000, op.cit. p:p: 32-33)
[166] (Ibrash. *Toward Correcting the National Dimension*. 2015)
[167] (Abu Al-'Omreen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance*. 2000. Op.cit. p:222)

similar lines.[168] On this base, the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the rise of *Jihadist* actions in Afghanistan against the Soviet invasion, encouraged a number of Palestinian youth during their studies in Egypt, such as Fathi Shikaki, to establish Islamic Jihad to respond to the need for a revolutionary Islamic alternative that combines nationalism, adopted by the PLO, and the Islamic approach as per the Muslim Brotherhood.[169] This alternative aimed at promoting the armed struggle inside Palestine, and to fill the gap created by the absence of the Islamists from the Palestinian political and military arena.[170] However, the Islamic Jihad was not bounded, ideologically, to one school of thought. It drew its ideology from various thinkers, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian Islamic thinker Sayyid Qutb, the Algerian thinker Malik bin Nabi, the Iranian sociologist Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Khomeini, whose revolutionary Islamic ideology clearly influenced Fathi Shikaki, the founder of Islamic Jihad.[171]

Anyhow, the emergence of Islamic Jihad reflected the impacts of the political and the social contexts in Palestine. The political context reflected the deep dispute over the objectives and orientations of the Palestinian struggle after the announcement of the PLO of the Ten Points Program that implied an interim liberation of Palestine rather calling for full liberation. The social context reflected the Islamic Awakening and the state of religiosity in Palestinian society, as well as the ideological and political impact on the young, especially in the Gaza Strip.

These two contexts produced a politicized Islamic generation, influenced by the thoughts of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, but yet able to express themselves militarily. Their thinking was incompatible with the Muslim Brotherhood's stance on the armed struggle in favor of Islamization. Neither did their religiosity made them to identify themselves with the PLO, a secular military organization, who had its own problems. The absence of a movement that embraces both Islam and the armed struggle was obvious to them.

We conclude that the Islamic Jihad marked the rise of a new generation of Islamists in Palestine, who combined Islamic goals with national goals, with a different philosophical outlook compared to the traditional Islamists. This shift, from the traditional stance to a military stance, affected the priorities of the Islamic trend in Palestine -excluding *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (the Liberation Party), who focused its work on Da'wa-, to prioritize the armed struggle and liberation over changing society, and see the liberation of Palestine as the path to establishing an Islamic state, and not the reverse. As well, it made preceding the application of *Shari'a* (Islamic law) as a secondary matter before liberation. The IJM represented the dissent of the young and educated, especially those who were influenced by the Iranian Islamic Revolution, inspired by Izz –Addin Al Qassam as a symbol of the armed struggle, and several members of the PLO who were disenchanted with its

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[168] Abu Taha, Anouar, Islamic Jihad's leader, Interviewed by Olivier Moos, 20 October 2007, https://bit.ly/30eXGZT

[169] Ceccaldi, François, Le Jihad Islamique en Palestine, le 22 Avril 2015, la vie des idées, http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Le-Jihad-en-Palestine.html

[170] (Hindi. *Islamic Jihad Movement*. 2000, Op. cit. p. 181)

[171] (Abu Taha, Islamic Jihad's leader. 20 Oct. 2007. Op. cit)

new policies. This dissent reflected the intellectual dilemma over the final objectives of the Palestinian struggle, the role of the Palestinian National Movement, the rigid Islamization policy of the Muslim Brotherhood and its failure to respond to the objective circumstances affecting the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, the threat posed by the IJM to the MB forced the MB to change its political calculations. The following discusses further the impact IJM had on the internal dynamic of the MB.

1.1.11 Empowerment or liberation? The conflict of generations

The implication of these factors posed both objective and subjective challenges to the Muslim Brotherhood. The MB needed to reassess its position in Palestinian society and politics to survive and remain relevant. The objective circumstances, particularly, the crises of the Palestinian political forces, the lack of faith from large segments of the Palestinian community increased the pressure on the MB to be an alternative force to lead the political and military struggles in Palestine, whilst meeting the challenges posed by the Israeli occupation. The subjective circumstances meanwhile were caused by internal pressures to rethink its priorities and positions on the armed struggle after the establishment of the IJM, besides the threat of losing its supporters and members in favor of the IJM, whose policy on the armed struggle was supported by a large segment of the community. These subjective dilemmas facing the MB, may be able to explain the conflict between the two movements to lead the Islamic trend in Palestine. Subsequently their relationship became characterized by competition, rivalry, and dissent.[172]

The schism involving the founders of Islamic Jihad from the main body of the MB can be seen as a conflict between generations over orientations, priorities, and policies of the Muslim Brotherhood.[173] This debate affected both the leadership and grassroots members of MB, a debate over the efficiency of their adopted strategies and policies to deal with the Palestinian cause, and the role of their movement in the national struggle. Further, it revolved around on the efficacy of Islamization as a prerequisite to *Jihad* in light of the deteriorating situation in Palestine.[174] As a result, two major trends that are poles apart emerged within the Muslim Brotherhood. The older leadership generation, who were considered the first leading group of the MB, defended their traditional view of the necessity to complete the systematic and slow transformation of the society as the right approach to achieve their vision, regardless of the question of time. Meanwhile, the younger generation, or the Revolutionary Generation, who were well-educated, were influenced by the revolutionary thoughts of Sayyid Qutb,[175] and inspired by the struggles of other Islamic figures, adopted the call to change the nonviolent

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[172] Shaikh Khalil, Nihad, The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the Gaza Strip 1967-1987, Gaza: Center for Palestinian History and Documentation, 2011, pp. 244-247
[173] Ibid. p.355
[174] (Abu Amr. *Islamic Movement*. 1989. Op.cit p:50)
[175] Much of Sayyid Qutb's thoughts were presented in his two books "*Fi Thel Al Qur'an*" (In the Shadow of Qur'an) and "*Ma'alem Al-Tariq*" (The Milestones of the Path).

policies of the MB towards Israel and to launch an organized *Jihad*. This generation criticized the strategy of Islamization at the expense of military action as per the policies of other Palestinian factions.[176] In the face of the rigid policies of the MB, this generation struggled against the different trends within the MB, whether those who were late in launching a process of self-understanding and considering the variable changes, or those who were focusing on applying part of the obligations of Islam and neglected other obligations such as practicing Jihad.[177]

The MB proceeded to re-formulate its priorities, trying to address the internal pressures on the issue of armed struggle, as well as the need to develop new mechanisms of decision-making and problem solving, especially to deal with the major strategies of the MB. The latter was entrusted to a new body called the *Shura* (the consultation) council. On the armed struggle, the MB reached a solution that combined various methods targeting both empowerment and liberation whilst trying to overcome any contradiction between them. The timeline to begin the armed struggle however remains subject to the readiness of the movement in terms of its military and human capacity.[178] This constituted the third stage of the activities pursued by the Muslim Brotherhood (1981-1987). It was characterized by preparing for military confrontation with Israel. It also began distributing the roles between the external and internal leadership. The external leadership played a political, financial and public relations role, whilst the internal leadership led the military action. This stage witnessed the formation of two military and security apparatuses in 1983, the Palestinian *Mujahedeen*, led by Sheikh Salah Shehadeh (who later became the leader of the military brigades of Hamas, Izz al-Din al-Qassam), and the security apparatus, *Majd* Organization, led by Yahya al-Senwar.[179]

The above discussion leads us to conclude that the commitment of the MB to stick to its ideology to the end, delayed conducting a deep revisions to its policy during the various stages to respond to the variable conditions. This ultimately delayed its decision to play an active role in the armed struggle, and to distance itself from national issues. The rise of a new Islamists generation, who aspired to the armed struggle, with the absent of developing new policies to accommodate their desires, made the MB to suffer from internal conflicts involving different generations that threatened its position in Palestine. This conflict entails a clash in terms of orientations and objectives that highlighted issues such as the status of the Palestinian cause, Palestinian national goals within its national and religious goals, and the justification to postpone the *Jihad*. These proved to be critical to the MB, affecting its power, influence and position as an Islamic movement in Palestine, being compared with the Islamic Jihad.

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[176] (Graham, *Hamas Defined*. 2009, Op.Cit. p:49)
[177] Jihada, Rafiq, and Sadiq Ahmed, *Why the History?* At-talee'aa al-islamia Journal, Vol. 11. (November, 1983), London: The Islamic Center for Studies and Publishing. shorturl.at/ikAO8
[178] (Hroub, *Hamas Political Thought and Practice*. 2000 Op.cit. p. 36)
[179] (Abuirshaid, *The Dialectic of Religion and Politics*, 2013, Op.cit. p:115)

1.1.12 Hamas: the MB's exit from the dilemma of Jihad

Although the decision to prepare for military confrontation against Israel was taken in 1981, it only began in earnest in late 1987, when different political, social and economic factors appeared as a result of the Palestinian *Intifada* (Uprising) in 1987. In the context of the Muslim Brotherhood, the internal and intellectual development of the movement in the occupied territories, notably in the Gaza Strip, the growing influence of the military group formed by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in the early eighties, the internal pressures to be in the frontline, added extra pressure on the MB to change its priorities and to join the armed struggle.[180] The most urgent goal for the Muslim Brotherhood was to control the *Intifada*, which already had the involvement of other Palestinian political movements. It attempted to play a leading role in leading the *Intifada* and exploiting the physical absence of the PLO's leadership from Palestine.[181] The establishment of *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah* (Hamas) constituted the most prominent shift in the ideology and thinking of the MB in Palestine, and a proper tool to serve its political objectives to overcome its internal and external impasses. Hamas, as a political wing of the MB, put the issue of national liberation and armed struggle at the head of the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood, and formed the appropriate outlet from the impasse of the contradictory positions toward *Jihad*, and the dilemma associated with Palestinian national goals. In fact, through Hamas, the MB attempted to reshape the Palestinian national goals in Islamic terms. This did not mean that the MB had abandoned their broad religious objectives, but instead it could be argued that the Muslim Brotherhood worked through Hamas to bridge the intellectual gap between the broad religious goals and the limited national goals.

The issue of *Jihad* represented a challenge to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood because of its reliance on Quranic interpretations and the intellectual contributions of their thinker. However, it remained concerned over the possibility of failure, which would reflect on its credibility. Although the MB supported *Jihad* in other countries, such as Afghanistan, but in Palestine, it remained apprehensive over its intellectual and societal capacities to initiate the *Jihad*. Therefore, it needed to find a formula without jeopardizing the mother organization. These reservations were reflected by incorporating a new organization and naming it Hamas. According to Kevin Graham and Ziad Abu Amr, the name was chosen without clear reference to the Muslim Brotherhood, although it supported it logistically.[182] This addressed the above reservations in case that Hamas fails in the *Jihad*, and if the *Intifada* de-escalates. In case of failure, the MB can distance itself and claimed that Hamas failed whilst its own *Jihad* project is ongoing.

The rise of Hamas in Palestinian politics was not only a response to the *Intifada* in 1987, but it coincided with it. It rose due to both internal and external

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[180] (Hroub, *Hamas Political Thought and Practice*. 2000. Op.cit. p. 39)
[181] (Graham, *Hamas Defined*. 2009, Op.Cit. p:51)
[182] Ibid. pp: 50-51

factors that interacted with each other and produced an essential shift in the behaviors of the Muslim Brotherhood. This shift reflects the changes that could happen to political parties and movements because of their interaction with the surrounding environment in search of legitimacy, sustainability, influence, and power. The *Intifada* saw the beginning of the active political and military emergence of the MB in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The MB was able to exploit the weaknesses of other Palestinian factions to fill the vacuum created, and to break the monopoly of the PLO on Palestinian politics. The MB saw the opportunity to be in the frontlines through interactions with the *Intifada*, as well as penetrating the society through mosques, community work, and others, as part of its soft power.

This chapter discussed the path towards the establishment of Hamas. It tackled the intellectual approach of the Muslim Brotherhood, and circumstances that led to significant changes in its behavior towards the Palestinian cause. The MB's decision to actively participate in the Palestinian struggle through First intifada did not point that it achieved the precondition for such involvement - Islamizing the Palestinian society-, instead, it signified its response to the dilemmas it faced that pitted its policies and the realities and demands confronting the Palestinians. It needed to make a major shift in its policy towards Palestine, to adopt a more nationalistic position at the expense of its wide ideological goals.

1.2 Chapter Two

Hamas: the principles and Identity

This chapter discusses the other definitions of Hamas beside its definition as a national liberation movement, based on the different roles that it plays in Palestine. It tries to shed light on its identity as an Islamic movement that adopted armed struggle to achieve liberation, and how its identity ends up shaping its position and understanding on the Palestinian cause.

1.2.1 How to define Hamas?

Many scholars tend to focus often on military behavior and reliance on violence as the most prominent behavior when defining organizations that rely on military action to achieve their goals. This tendency ignores the social and political roles it plays in order to achieve its goals. This applies to a movement like Hamas. There is a sufficient justification to identify Hamas within a military framework. Hamas in the Arabic language is an abbreviation of the first letters of the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah*).[183] Based on the name, Hamas was mandated to pursue armed struggle as a reflection of the changes that took place in the policies of the Muslim Brotherhood to deal with the Palestinian cause, and that it possesses a military identity. However defining a movement like Hamas using a single definition is not so simple since it also performs other roles. It is important to have a holistic view of Hamas in order to understand its political behavior and its response to various changes that have taken place. The study does not try to define Hamas in terms of its legitimacy, legal classification or how other parties namely the Palestinians, the Arabs, the international community and Israel, describe it. Each of them has their own perspective of Hamas. For example, many Western countries, especially the United States and the European Union, adopt the Israeli definition of Hamas as a "terrorist" movement that uses violence and targets civilians.[184] This chapter is more concern to define Hamas in terms of the different roles that it plays and its characteristics to form a comprehensive definition of Hamas.

To give an accurate definition of what Hamas requires linking four basic elements that has shaped its political development, and its behavior and principles, and their interactions. The first is the spatial and temporal environment in which Hamas emerged. Spatially, Hamas is linked to the occupied lands, and the notion of liberation. Timing wise, Hamas was found shortly after the outbreak of the Palestinian popular uprising (The first *Intifada*) in late 1987, and the MB through Hamas tended play a leading role in it. The second element is that Hamas is an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood with an Islamic ideology, which seeks to Islamize societies, control them and to establish an Islamic state. This is clear in

[183] The name of the organization, Hamas, is both an acronym for Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyah (Islamic Resistance Movement) and an Arabic word meaning (zeal)

[184] U.S. Department of State: Foreign Terrorist Organizations, https://bit.ly/2U9RKPT, see also: the Official Journal of the European Union: https://bit.ly/2L6szt9

Hamas' identity and its general or ultimate objectives. The third element relates to the peculiarity of the Palestinian situation, which Hamas operates. Hamas operates in a semi-state with limited political power and government institutions still under occupation. And the forth is related to the different roles and actions it plays within the Palestinian arena. Working within these environments has contributed to Hamas' complex and interconnected composition.

Hamas, in its literature and in the words of its leaders, presents itself as a Palestinian national liberation movement, with an Islamic reference, which was launched for the liberation of Palestine and for the recognition of Palestinian national rights.[185] The aim of liberation has shaped Hamas' identity as a movement aimed to achieve a national liberation and to resist the occupation. National liberation movements have various characteristics that define them. NLMs are non-state actors that appeared predominantly prior to decolonization and include those who are involved in political struggles and/or military struggle with the aim of liberating the occupied national territories and achieving sovereignty, independence and self-determination. These characteristics apply to Hamas as a movement seeking liberation from occupation, making Hamas a National liberation movement[186].

The political aspect of Hamas' character was managed by the mother movement (the Muslim Brotherhood) because of its recent birth of Hamas and it was focused on the *Intifada*. But Hamas freed itself from the MB administratively and organizationally in 1992 when its established its own Political Bureau, and worked out mechanisms to select in own *Shura* Council, while maintaining its intellectual links to the MB. This new body became responsible for shaping Hamas politically, its internal and external relations, and dealing with various developments in line with its interests. Hamas also became more involved in national issues and the issues of the Palestinian community in line with the relevant objectives. The turning point in Hamas' history came when Hamas transitioned itself from being an armed resistance movement that boycotted the national elections and stood outside government, to a movement that participated actively and won the local and national elections. Hamas became involved politically with direct participation in the student councils, trade unions, later in the municipal elections in 2004-2005, and then in the legislative council election in 2006. Hamas' decision to participate in Palestinian politics, seek public support and contest for power fits the definition of a political party, in line with its main objectives of seeking political influence since establishment.[187]

Besides these definitions, Hamas has the characteristics of movements seeking social change. These movements are defined as an intentional attempt by a

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[185] This definition was mentioned in many of Hamas' literature such as its charter, 1st article, and was mentioned in several occasions by Ahmed Yassin, Khaled Meshaal, Ismail Haniyeh, Musa Abu Marzouk and others. http://hamas.ps/en/post/749

[186] Mastorodimos, Konstantinos, National Liberation Movements: Still a Valid Concept (with Special Reference to International Humanitarian Law) University of London- Queen Mary Department of Law, June 14, 2015, p: 71, Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2PsslSP

[187] Duverger, Maurice, Political Parties, (A. Muqalad, & A.-E. saa'd, Trans.), Cairo: the General Authority of the Cultural Palaces, 2011, p: 23

group of people who adopt a certain thoughts and seek to modify, replace or destroy an existing social order through specific activities and discourse aimed at changing society to be closer to their philosophy, values and vision.This [188] definition is applicable to Hamas' behavior as it seeks to achieve social change through its various charitable, social, health and educational institutions. It hopes to produce a society that is compatible with its Islamic ideology under the slogan of Islam is the Solution, as it sees Islam as the solution to Palestine's problems. Nevertheless, it is important to see it not only as a national liberation movement engaged in military action, but it is worthwhile to consider Hamas' other commitments in non-military activities.[189]

Therefore, we conclude that the definition of Hamas developed during the several stages that it passed, as well, considering the different roles that it plays whether military, politically, socially or charitably. The narrow and classic definition of Hamas as a resistance movement based on its objectives, ideological structure, and geopolitical environment is not enough to give a comprehensive picture of Hamas. In the beginning, it featured largely as a national liberation movement (NLM) with an Islamic ideology and considered itself a resistant movement. However, the nature of its work in Palestine and its ties to the Muslim Brotherhood necessitate going beyond defining Hamas as a NLM, and to additionally define it as a social change movement espousing Islamic values. Its participation in Palestinian politics with its own interests, tactics and goals to seek political power also makes Hamas a political movement. Hamas cannot be properly defined without considering the complexities in terms of contexts and roles played by Hamas. This mixture constitute Hamas in its entirety, in its daily work, its driving force that complements each other to reach its stated goals.

Based on the above, Hamas can be defined in three basic ways. First, Hamas is an Islamic political movement that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood and supports the long-term global project of the MB. Second, Hamas is a Palestinian national liberation movement with an Islamic ideology. Third: Hamas is a social movement active in various fields in Palestinian society namely intellectual, religious, economic and charitable areas aiming to shape Palestine, both ideologically and politically.

1.2.2 The Islamic and Military identity: How to understand Hamas' positions?

Hamas can be characterized by the Islamic and military identities at the heart of its work, ideology and culture that shape its positions, policies and outlook toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the means to deal with it.

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[188] Tilly, Charles, Social Movements: 1768-2004, (R. Wahbh, Trans.) Cairo: Supreme Council Of Culture, 1st ed, 2005, P: 13

[189] Aljamal, Yousef M., Hamas: *A Terrorist Organization Or Liberation Movement?* Politics and Religion Journal, 8(1), University of Malaya, (Dec 28, 2014), p:47 https://bit.ly/30FVZ8h

Military thinking occupied a central position in Hamas' ideology and this gradually developed in later stages when it established a military wing called *Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades* in 1992. This was a significant development in Hamas' efforts to develop its military ideology and methods to confront the occupation. It developed from limited participation in the *Intifada* such as demonstrations, strikes and some military action, into an organized military wing responsible for arming, recruitment of members, establishing military cells and carrying out organized attacks. The military approach was further strengthened through the establishment of two other wings, each with specific roles; the Public Wing (1987) (*Al-Janah Al-Jamahiry*) responsible of issuing statements and leaflets, carrying out strikes, confrontations and demonstrations, while the security wing (*Majd*), established in 1991, became responsible for collecting security data on Israel and its collaborators. Hamas' interest in military action stems from the role it plays in the conflict with Israel, and its views of *Jihad* as the only way to liberate Palestine and defeat Israel. According to Moussa Abu Marzouk, military action is the basis and of greater importance than political action for Hamas. To quote him: "Military action is a continuous strategy. If there is a change, it will be a change in the choice of tools and times". In another words, political action follows military action and not vice versa.[190]

Hamas' charter justifies and supports this line. For example, it emphasized, "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through *Jihad*. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors".[191] Militarism did predominate over the politics, and the Charter justified the duty of *Jihad* using Koranic verses and prophetic traditions. It states in Article XV "The day that enemies usurp part of Moslem land, *Jihad* becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In face of the Jews' usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of *Jihad* be raised".[192] Hamas considered the peaceful solution to be in contradiction to the doctrine of the Islamic Resistance Movement, and "Abusing any part of Palestine is abuse directed against part of the religion".[193] Thus, it is safe to conclude that military identity has been a fundamental component of Hamas' thinking. It is obvious that enhancing its military might is critical to Hamas since it views the conflict as a long struggle. Its military identity is an essential component of Hamas' characteristics, and any change in this identity touches on one its principles.

The Islamic identity is spelled in Hamas' definition to itself as a part of the Islamic Awakening and an extension of the Islamic movement since the 1930s. It also regards itself as a historical extension of the Righteous Ancestor (*Al-Salaf Al-Saleh*) (the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad) and part of the Islamic message. Generally, Hamas views Islam as a guide and way of life, raising the main Islamic logos: "Allah is the target, the Prophet is the example and the Koran is the constitution".derived from are e vThus, its programs, and intellectual dri[194]

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[190] Filastin AL-Muslimh Journal, June 1994
[191] Hamas' Charter, Op.cit, Article Thirteen
[192] Ibid. Article Fifteen
[193] Ibid. Article Thirteen
[194] Ibid. Article Five

its ideological roots based on religious motives represented by the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition (*Sunnah)*. These roots have crystallized its views, concepts and perceptions toward the universe, life and Man, as well as shaping its political, social, economic and cultural principles. Thus, it interprets the Palestinian cause through religious lenses.[195]

The intellectual contribution of the Muslim Brotherhood has also helped to shape Hamas' Islamic identity and its political thinking. The founding members identified intellectually with the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and others, nd the Islamic who originally were the leaders of the MB, a[196] Call in Palestine. These leaders were influenced by the MB and the struggles of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who led combat operations against the British forces during the British mandate, and later his name was used to name the *al-Qassam* Brigade.The MB also influenced the intellectual, leadership and organization of [197] Hamas, which contributed to its political and intellectual *mentality*.[198] Therefore, the emergence of Hamas was not a revolt against the philosophical and intellectual line of the MB, but rather an acceleration towards military action in response to various circumstances, and its long-term goals remained in full harmony with the objectives and thoughts of the Muslim Brotherhood.[199]

In the attempts to enhance its Islamic Identity, Hamas has found a fertile ground in the legacy of the MB. This legacy is clearly represented by its institutional network, and working methodology. On one hand, the institutional network has helped Hamas to grow by maintaining close links with the community through various educational, social, charitable and health institutions. On the other hand, Hamas adopted MB's work tactics by recruiting individuals and families, and then building Organizational Divisions where individuals can meet to discuss their affairs and plan their programs. This helped Hamas to mobilize support for its ideology. Hamas also inherited the organizational structure by establishing a Unified Command Office consisting of various bodies in different fields namely, *Da'wa*, education, charitable works, health and education, student blocs, trade unions, political bureau as well as the military wings. For internal decision-making, Hamas adopted The *Shura* Council and the principles of Listening and Obeying the movement's leader as set forth in Islamic thought. This legacy helped Hamas to strengthen its present within the Palestinian community as an Islamic movement and helped it to maintain a coherent organizational system.[200]

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[195] Ibid. Article One

[196] Notable leaders included Abdul Fattah Dukhan, Abdul Aziz Rantissi, Issa Al Nashar, and Salah Shehadeh, Ibrahim al-Yazuri, Muhammad Shama'a and Khairi al-Agha, who later became the first Head of Hamas.

[197] Brackman, Harold, Hamas: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: No partner for Peace, The Simon Wiesenthal Center, March, 2011, available at: https://bit.ly/2NtiTM1

[198] Lawson, Matthew, *Religion and Resistance: The Role of Islamic Doctrine in Hamas and Hezbollah*, Master Theses, University of South Florida (2010).

[199] Saleh, Mohsen, *The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas): An Overview of its Experience and History 1987-2005*, in Saleh, Mohsen, (ed.) Hamas: A Study in Thought and Experience, Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, 1st ed, (2017), p: 25

[200] Qaseem, Abdul Sattar, *Introduction*, in Al-Hamad & Barghoti (eds). 1999. Op. cit: P. 44

The two identities of Hamas were clearly reflected in its charter. The Charter showed its Islamic character in a language full of religious terms and quotations from the Koran, *Hadith* and lines of poems. It employed the religious justifications for launching the *Jihad* project,[201] and interpreted the Palestinian cause in religious terms, using rhetoric to encourage *Jihad* and invoke religious feelings among its supporters.[202] Samer Khwaierh, a former member of the Islamic bloc, explained that Hamas looked at society from the military angle, to prepare it for the long battle with Israel, and in raising the religious consciousness and Islamic values among the people particularly the young.[203] Ahmed Youssef, the former political adviser of Ismail Haniyeh, said: "when Hamas launched its anti-occupation project, it had to find an ideological formula for its *Jihad* project, that inflames the public sentiment, and inspires its field commanders to mobilize for the continuation of confrontations, and to raise the awareness of the coming resistant generations of the challenges they face in their struggle against the occupation. For this, the charter was simply a response to the reality of the occupation. This was the view of one of the most important elders of the movement: Mr. Abdel Fattah Dukhan, but it was ratified internally under the extraordinary circumstances of the *Intifada* in 1988, as a required document for mobilization against the occupation. However, its religious and political terms were not scrutinized from the point of view of the international law."[204] In fact, the wording of the Charter reflected the character of the person who drafted it (Abdel Fattah Dukhan), who is a Muslim cleric rather than a politician. It also reflected the general nature of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Islamic approaches as well as the military components.[205]

It is worthy to note, that the Charter resulted from individual effort concentrating on thought and faith rather than on politics, and did not come from an institution. Yahiya Musa Abadesse, Hamas' member in the Palestinian legislative council, emphasized that: "The charter is by no means a law, but it is a literary work that came out under the title of Hamas Charter, which resembles a thought process rather than a political line, and further, it did not reflect the working of any institutional entity in the movement, nor it came out of a Hamas conference or its *Shura* council". [206]

Anyhow, the Charter is characterized by its broad and immeasurable goals, dominated by moral exhortation lacking in clear political vision. It is full of general historical narratives, such as the battle against falsehood. The ninth and

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[201] In later lines, especially when we come to analyze Hamas' New Political Document of May 2017, we will shed light on the terminological differences between the original charter (1988) and the Political document in 2017, such as the use of the words of Jihad, Armed struggle and Resistance.

[202] (Hamas Charter, Op. cit. 1988)

[203] Khuwayra, Samer, A former leader of the Islamic Bloc at An-Najah National University, 2017, Jan 07. (Author, Interviewer)

[204] Yousef, Ahmed, *A Year on Hamas' Political document: Transformations of Vision and Position between Two documents*, Palestinian News Agency, May 03, 2018 retrieved: shorturl.at/eiqL7

[205] (Khuwayra. Author Interview. 2017, Jan 07. Op.cit)

[206] Al-'Abadesa, Yahya M., Hamas' member in the Palestinian Legislative Council, in Ezbidi, Basem, Hamas and the Governance: Joining the regime or rebelling against it? Ramallah: Palestinian Center for policy and survey research, 2010, P. 20

tenth articles explained the motives and objectives of Hamas: "As for the objectives: They are the fighting against the false, defeating it and vanquishing it so that justice could prevail, homelands be retrieved and from its mosques would the voice of the mu'azen [Caller for Prayer] emerge declaring the establishment of the state of Islam, so that people and things would return each to their right places and Allah is our helper".[207] "As the Islamic Resistance Movement paves its way, it will back the oppressed and support the wronged with all its might. It will spare no effort to bring about justice and defeat injustice, in word and deed, in this place and everywhere it can reach and have influence therein".[208] It is safe to conclude that at the inception of Hamas, there was no ability to have a clear-cut political vision. Instead, it concentrated in building a popular resistance movement and to prepare itself militarily. Therefore, as Hamas is the project of the MB to enter into the stage of *jihad*, the use of an religious rhetoric, full of religious quotations, was necessary to raise the religious passion of would be supporters amongst Palestinians, Arabs and other Muslims. It also highlighted the failures of other intellectual formulas (Leftist and Nationalist) to achieve liberation. In term of broader goals, Hamas wanted to inject Islamic overtones into Palestinian goals in contrast to the new directions adopted by the PLO to accept the two-state solution, and other positions of the PLO. Hamas saw the burden of liberation not only on the Palestinians, but also on other Muslims as well, and thus it addressed its statements to all Muslims in general.

However, the articles in of the Charter have served the objectives and strategy of Hamas especially during its nascent period, which reflected its desire to participate in developments in the Palestinian arena. The Charter presents the political and moral principles that guide the political positions of Hamas. The most important is the emphasis on the Islamic identity of Palestine and its people, the religious dimension in the conflict with Israel as a way to garner Arab and Muslim support, and the sense that *Jihad* is capable to deliver liberation and Palestinian national rights in contrast to leftist and nationalist approaches.The Charter has [209] allowed Hamas and its leaders, especially in the founding period, sufficient ideological and political grounds to oppose and resist any peace agreements, and to distinguish itself from other political factions. The broad nature of the Charter has granted Hamas not only the ability to accommodate the various interpretations, but also to change or modify its positions or maneuvering without appearing to be in conflict with the articles of the Charter.[210]

1.2.3 Conflict of Civilization

These two identities, backed by the contributions of Muslim Brotherhood thinkers, have contributed to Hamas' understanding and analysis of the conflict with Israel. This understanding is broadly in its ultimate objectives, strategies and means to achieve them. The Charter of Hamas introduce the conflict as a religious

[207] (Hamas' Charter, 1988, Article Nine)
[208] Ibid. Article Ten
[209] (Ezbidi, *Hamas and the Governance*. 2010. Op. cit. p. 19)
[210] Ibid. p. 20

one, connected to the civilizational conflict between the East and the West. It has various dimensions e.g. political, economic, social, military and religious. Hamas sees Western-backed Zionism as part of the assault on Islam, hence, the struggle is more than for a piece of land, and therefore, it views the conflict as crucial.[211] The Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas later, rejected rooting the origin of the conflict only to a national or class struggle against Zionism, but rather a matter of faith, unity, religion and worship, and Palestine is the issue of Islam, the Islamic *Ummah*, and the issue for every Muslim who believes in Allah and the Hereafter".[212]

The religious view of Hamas on the conflict is related to Hamas' general understanding of the Zionist project. Hamas believes that Zionism is based on Jewish ideological heritage that sees Palestine through an ancient religious and historical dimension and not merely as a geographical piece of land. To the Jews, Palestine is the Promised Land for the chosen people, and the land of the traditional Israelites, a land on which they aim to realize the Jewish dream to establish a state. Hamas also believes that the Zionist project is a comprehensive and complementary project to the ambitions of the colonial powers to control the resources and the wealth of Muslim countries, to hamper any revivalist movement by ensuring that the countries remain fragmented and to reshape their culture, and affirming their domination in the economic, political, military and even intellectual domains.resence in Palestine as a threat to ot consider the Jewish pHamas does n[213] Palestine alone, but rather, in its letter to the Assembly of the Islamic *Fiqh* Academy, Hamas emphasized that "The Jewish presence on the Islamic land of Palestine does not threaten Palestine alone, nor the Palestinian people alone; but it threatens the entire Arab and Islamic nation; its religion, faith and civilization, and it will not stop, but will continue in its tireless efforts to penetrate the Islamic Nation, and undermine the pillars of its existence to build its civilization on the ruins of the Islamic civilization".[214]

Conclusions

This part discusses the contexts and the circumstances that contributed to the appearance of Hamas on the Palestinian scene, and the contexts that shaped its ideology and political orientation. It traces the roots of its intellectual origins, and how and to what extent its identity as an Islamic resistance movement influenced its position on the armed struggle as the main strategy to confront the Israeli occupation. Its ideology shows besides focusing on liberation, it also has a social, political and intellectual agenda based on Islam. This makes the attempt to have a single definition for Hamas inaccurate. Other definitions also apply to it. Hamas seeks to liberate Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, but it

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[211] (Hamas' Charter, 1988, the introduction)
[212] Al-Hindi, Khaled: *The understanding of the movement (Hamas) of the nature and philosophy of the conflict with the Zionist project*. In Al-Hamad & Barghoti (eds). A Study in the Political Thought. 1999. Op. cit. p. 117/118
[213] (Hamas' Charter, 1988, Article Fifteenth)
[214] Hamas' Letter to the Islamic Fiqh Academy in Kuwait, 10 Dec1988, in Al-Hindi, 1999. Op. cit. p. 119

considers itself, an organization with policies, visions and perceptions whose ultimate objective is to establish an Islamic state and society. [215]

It is safe to conclude that Hamas perceives the conflict with Israel as an existential matter, beyond the struggle for liberation and for territory. It sees the conflict as a long historical, cultural and civilizational clash between the Muslim East, and the colonial West. Zionism is part of this conflict and seen as a ploy of the West to impose its hegemony over the East. To Hamas, victory constitutes eliminating the conflict and foiling Zionism. Hamas' future vision seeks the establishment of an Islamic state, and its establishment in historic Palestine means getting rid of the source of the conflict, namely, Israel. Establishing an Islamic state in parts of the liberated territory does not mean abandoning the ultimate objective. It views the conflict as a long and protracted struggle and victory may not come at once, thus, Hamas can justify taking interim steps referred to its Charter. Hamas build its strategy by dividing its final goal into several goals and in various stages, whilst remaining flexible to move from one stage to another depending on the circumstances facing the movement. It was able to widen the time horizon of the conflict, treating the interim stages as temporary and not final. In tune with this strategy, Hamas perceives that the long run for achieving the victory requires an Islamic renaissance, and mobilizing the Palestinian people to carry the banner of *Jihad* against the Zionist presence in Palestine.

Three main conclusions can be drawn on Hamas' position on the three concepts discussed in this dissertation: The Palestinian State, the armed struggle and the relationship with Israel. First, the geographical considerations of the state of Palestine in Hamas' thought refers to liberating Palestine within its historical geographical borders stretching from the Jordan River eastward to the Mediterranean Sea westward. Second: As for the armed struggle, Hamas considers the presence of the occupation as a legitimate justification for its armed struggle. It views military action as the main strategic mean to deal with the conflict, and third, Hamas rejected all forms of compromise based on the renunciation of Palestinian national rights, which essentially meant refusing to recognize Israel and not accepting a state within the 1967 borders. The movement considered that the agreements reached between the Palestinian and Israeli sides failed to meet the minimum aspirations of the Palestinian people and this included recognition of Israel's right to exist in most of the Palestinian territories. Therefore, it viewed the Palestinian Authority as a misleading formula that resulted out of these initiatives.

The following two parts will check Hamas' principles and attitude after being involved in the political process and the experience of governance in Gaza since 2007, in attempt to investigate if Hamas stands true to its ideological principles in regards to the Borders of the Palestinian state, the armed resistance and the Peace Process with Israel.

[215] A memorandum on Hamas, in (Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought*, 2000. Op.cit. p: 308)

Part TWO

The Questions of Power, Identity and Goals

This Part investigates the reasons and political calculations behind Hamas decision to take part in the political process, and discusses the question of identity and goals of Hamas after practicing the governance. Chapter one analyses the factors that affected Hamas' decision to prioritizing the political action over the military action. The second Chapter discuses the factors that increased the pressure on Hamas and created the operational environment under which it has experienced governance and made the movement to rethink its positions.

2.1 Chapter One

The Struggle for Power

In this chapter, we try to tackle the changes that have taken place in the scope of Hamas' political calculations, which have led the movement toward prioritizing the political action over the military action. We claim that the political transformation march of Hamas and the development of its political will were affected by the interaction of three dynamics, that all converged contributed toward influencing Hamas behavior and options: The first is the struggle for power and legitimacy against Fatah, the second is the second Intifada in 2000 and the developments of the political opportunities for Hamas. And the third is the seek of Hamas to search for new role to play to avoid exclusion.

2.1.1 The Armed Struggle: A Quest for Legitimacy?

Since the emergence of Hamas, the movement strives to win the battle of public legitimacy against the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) attempts. Hamas and PLO both strived to receive support for their contradictory visions and directions toward the Palestinian struggle. Khalid Hroub found that several factors, including symbolism, institutionalized the Palestinian legitimacy in and around PLO and the leadership of Yasser Arafat.[216] For a long period, PLO enjoyed, to some extent, local, regional, and international recognition as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinians, which allowed it to dominate the public and Palestinian decision-making. In this direction, the proclamation of Palestine's independence in 1988 at the 19th Palestinian National Congress in Algiers was an event by which PLO succeeded to strengthen its role as the representative of Palestinians.[217] Shortly after that, around 55 nations recognized the Palestinians' call for independence. This made PLO as a quasi-government organization, and no longer perceived as merely a guerrilla faction representing the Palestinian cause.[218]

As the ascent of Hamas was a challenge to PLO's domination, the leading status of PLO posed a great challenge to Islamists in general and Hamas in particular, in the context of power.[219] This challenge prompted Hamas to actively act in obtaining legitimacy so as to survive as a figure in the Palestinian arena and to establish itself as a competitor to PLO. Hamas did not recognize the PLO as a leadership to the first Intifada, rather it sought to break its control and to assert itself, through its own actions and schedules, as a parallel Leadership. Hamas worked actively to mobilize popular presence in the public demonstrations by

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[216] Hroub, Khaled, Hamas: *Conflating National Liberation and Socio-Political Change*. In K. Hroub (Ed.), Political Islam: Context versus Ideology. London: Saqi: in association with London Middle East Institute, SOAS. 2010, pp: 175-176

[217] Nüsse, Andrea, Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003. p: 68

[218] Schanzer, Jonathan: Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008. P:28

[219] Ibid. p. 25

imitating the PLO's leafleting tactics. The Hamas leaflets and grassroots protest activities were an attempt to imbuing the Intifada with an Islamic character.[220] Hamas had its own decision-making apparatus that operated independently and concertedly to foster the movement involvements in the Intifada. Whilst the political wing dealt with decisions concerning interactions with the Palestinian community, the youth wing of Hamas and the communications wing were responsible for coordinating the intifada's demonstrations and rock-throwing, and disseminating leaflets and other information about Hamas to the broader Palestinian public. The internal security wing was responsible to punished so-called collaborators who endangered Hamas activists or those who refused to join in the Hamas-sponsored strikes.[221]

However, in the context of its political and ideological rivalry with Fatah and the PLO, Hamas, as being an Islamist movement, it had a pressing need to legitimize an Islamic narrative of resistance, and giving the Intifada an Islamic nature.[222] Hamas portrayed that the first intifada broke out as an outcome to the mobilization of the public in the mosques, including the preaching Fridays' sermons and the distribution of religious and political leaflets, and thus called it at the very begging as the "Intifada of the mosques".[223] After the declaration of independence, which implicitly meant the recognition of the state of Israel by the PLO, Hamas questioned PLO's claim as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. This had become necessary for Hamas to sketch itself as an alternative political force and replacing PLO/Fatah's political power. While Arafat set out to demonstrate legitimacy, after the declaration of independence, Hamas explicitly questioned the willingness of PLO to continue fighting.[224] Hamas' dynamic was to portray the Declaration of Principles as renunciation of the Palestinians' Rights, and emphasizing the failure of the secular and nationalist ideology that the PLO adopts to realize these rights, thus it sought, with other Islamist groups such as the Islamic Jihad, to persuade the Palestinian Public that Islam is the solution.[225]

Hamas required the ability to articulate its goals to the public. It primarily relied on Islam to garner religious legitimacy unlike the other Palestinian factions (except the Islamic Jihad Movement). Hamas sought popularity through strengthening its presence within the Palestinian society, investing the MB's legacy to continue targeting the outreach sectors in the community, leading social, political, and institutional changes through educational, religious, and charitable institutions. Cultural and institutional dynamics can then reinforce its strategy to build an intellectual construction that complies with its ideology to allow it to play a leading religious role to influence and represent the public. By the diffusion of religious values, Hamas obtained the source of influence to entrust more political power. The clerics such as Imams of mosques, religion teachers in the schools and

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[220] Ibid
[221] Ibid
[222] Ezbidi, Basem, *Democracy as a Minor Necessity in Hamas' Narrative*. In A. Knudsen (Ed.), Popular Protest in the New Middle East: Islamism and post-Islamist Politics Edition. London: I. B. TAURIS Editors, 2014. P: 190
[223] (Khanfar, *Author interview*. 2019)
[224] (Nüsse. *Muslim Palestine*. 2003, Op. cit. p. 74)
[225] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 27)

universities, who most of them were affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood and supporting the Islamic religious discourse, contributed influentially toward extending Hamas within the different sectors of the community.[226] As previously mentioned, this particularly happened due to the control of Hamas on a large number of mosques and cultural institutions as well as the active role of the Islamic Student Bloc. The religious legitimacy for Hamas became a mechanism through which it aimed to bring the choice of the population accordingly with its choice.[227] Thus, the importance of religious legitimacy for Hamas lies in its attempt to gain Political power based on Islamic values as the main slogan they used was "Islam is the Solution".[228]

According to Ahmad Al-Betawi, former leader of the Islamic Student Bloc, the role of the religious clerics had important consequences on the religious legitimacy of the movement. Their interaction within the society through mosques and charitable institutions developed the political power of Hamas in the society. This was clearly reflected in the local elections that Hamas directly or indirectly participated in, which later helped the movement to achieve a majority in the 2006 elections. According to Ahmad Al-Betawi, most of Hamas nominees were religious personalities who had great influence and sound reputation in the community. Furthermore, the clerics reinforced the number of religious members in the community through their strong presence in the Mosques, charitable societies, relief organizations and various clubs, as well as increasing the religious education especially the once that targets girls and boys in the schools and the universities, besides leading the collective Friday' prayers and leading many social activities in the community.[229] For Hamas, "everyone who is religious is Hamas, and anyone who teaches Islamic values furthers Hamas' goals".[230] This was a mechanism that helped Hamas to transmit its values; while in turn augmented the credibility of the movement in front of its rivals.[231] However, religious legitimacy became a supportive element to Hamas in explaining its direction to its followers, or even to justify any change, and to bestow a religion dimension on its project with religious arguments.[232] For example, the ideological rhetoric spelled clearly to justify Hamas' direction, whether against Israel to justify its violent attacks particularly against the civilians, or in its mobilization against the political track of

[226] Al-Betawi, Ahmed, Former leader of the Islamic Bloc at An-Najah University. (Author, Interviewer) 2017, Oct 5.
[227] Ibid.
[228] (Khanfar, Author, Interviewer. Op. cit. 2019)
[229] (Al-Betawi, 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)
[230] Field interview conducted by Roy, Sara, *Hamas and the Transformation(s) of Political Islam in Palestine*, Carnegie endowment, 2003, P: 15, retrieved from: shorturl.at/yOPTX
[231] (Al-Betawi, 5th of October 2017. Op.cit) See also: (Bisin & Others, *Religious legitimacy and the joint evolution of culture and institutions*, New York: NY University, Department of Economics, 2018)
[232] Dunning, Tristan: *Hamas, Jihad and Popular Legitimacy*. In Hamas, Jihad and Popular Legitimacy: Reinterpreting Resistance in Palestine, (2016, February). London: Routledge, P: 189

the PLO and Fatah, or to justify its rejection to the participation in the elections of the newly emerged political system in 1996.[233]

Indeed, the charity and social works besides the educational activities were appropriate tools for Hamas to build bridges with the Palestinian community, nevertheless the first *Intifada* in 1987 gave Hamas the ideal conditions to interact actively with the Palestinian public and political affairs. The *Intifada* was a channel to advocate its credibility and religious-political principles and to prove its adherence to its ideology, particularly the question of Jihad.[234] The escalated confrontations with Israel advanced Hamas' efforts to fit itself within the traditional source of legitimacy in Palestine. Hamas' move from social services to be part of the Intifada activities on the national level, was also a recognition by Hamas leadership that without being part of the Intifada actions, their existing system would be insufficient to compete or challenge politically with Arafat and Fatah.[235] At the beginning of the *Intifada*, Hamas focused on popular demonstrations, strikes and stones throwing. However, it did not take the movement too long to significantly develop its methods of resistance when, in 1989, began to carry out new acts of violence including kidnapping, stabbing Israeli soldiers, and causing the death of 16 Israelis in a bus crash on July 8.[236]

Along with the importance of the *Intifada* in light of Hamas' legitimacy endeavor and the ideological commitment, the *Intifada* was rather seen to gain the support of the people in light of the political concurrence with the PLO. The efforts of Hamas' leaders to lead the *Intifada* augmented the fears of PLO to lose its control of *Intifada* and the public particularly after the active role of Hamas in the daily action of the Intifada. At this point, the struggle between Hamas and Fatah/PLO begun. The nascent of Hamas openly challenged PLO as the sole legitimate representative, who saw Hamas as a fierce competitor. Arafat and PLO's leadership took over the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), which was announced at 8th Jan 1988,[237] to lead the *Intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza, to assert Fatah/PLO as the leading faction in the Palestinian struggle against Hamas' attempts to take credit of the *Intifada*.[238] Hamas, however, decided not to join the UNLU, challenging PLO's status as the exclusive political force and sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.[239] Hamas' attempts were focused on achieving a great expansion in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to be the only recognized alternative to the Fatah-dominated UNLU in the *Intifada*.[240] The

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[233] Hamas' Communiqué (101) http://egovacademy.ps/sites/default/files/5_8_1993.pdf , see also Communiqué (103) http://hamas.ps/ar/post/247 Press release commenting on holding PA's elections 15 June 1996. http://hamas.ps/ar/post/724

[234] (Dunning, *Hamas, Jihad and Popular Legitimacy*. 2016, Op.cit. p.14)

[235] Post. Jerrold M. *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, In B. Schneider, J. Post, & M. Kindt (Eds.), *The World's Most Threatening Terrorist Networks and Criminal Gangs* (1 ed.). United States: Palgrave Macmillan. 2009. p. 147

[236] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 32)

[237] First communiqué of the UNLU, 8. JAN 1988

[238] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 23)

[239] Mishal, Shaul; Sela, Avraham, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence. New York: Colombia University Press, 2000. P: 1

[240] Chehab, Zaki, Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement. London: Nation Books, 2007, p. 33

Intifada was, therefore, Hamas' exclusive political environment to break the control of PLO and to fight for the legitimacy to represent the Palestinians.

Becoming a political alternative to PLO was a concern for Hamas. Therefore, we can touch upon the importance of the continuation of the *Intifada* for Hamas' expansion, which became an important element for Hamas to become, in one hand, the strongest Islamic resistance movement, and on the other hand, a fully-fledged political rival to the nationalist movements.

The more Hamas actively worked on the ground in an attempt to challenge the hegemony of the PLO in the Palestinian territory and to demonstrate a wider presence in leading the Intifada- by independently imposing its own schedule of commercial strikes, mobilizing demonstrations and confrontation activities against the Israeli occupation and distributing of leaflets and communiqués- the more PLO and Yasser Arafat felt the need for wider influence and legitimacy, notably international legitimacy.[241] The PLO's practical change of direction occurred after its participation in the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, as part of the Jordanian delegation, and signing the Oslo Agreement in 1993, opened the door widely for PLO to receive further international legitimacy, when dozens of countries recognized PLO and Arafat as a partner on the international scene.[242] Indeed, Hamas was not the only factor to drive Arafat toward the new approaches to quest international and political acceptance; however, several international and local events hastened PLO's moves. The collapse of the Soviet Union that turned the world order into a unipolar order controlled by the United States (the main backer of Israel), and the defeat of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, were significant events as both the Soviet Union and Iraq were the two main allies of PLO.[243] Locally, PLO faced the dilemma of losing power for the favor of the new local generation leadership, whether Islamists or non-Islamists. The internal leadership became impatient with the series of PLO's defeats, believing that they know the local situation better than those abroad, and their basic task was to continue moving the *Intifada* forward. Meanwhile, Arafat and the external leadership of the PLO felt the need to maintain their dominance and power of influence in the Palestinian territories.[244]

Alongside the endeavors of Arafat for international legitimacy, Hamas sought for regional backing as well. According to Ziad Abu Amr, Saudi Arabia and some other Gulf countries backed Hamas with financial assistance just before the 1990 Gulf Crisis. However, during the Gulf Crisis, although Hamas opposition to the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, but the movement vehemently opposed any foreign military interference in the Gulf region. Such position had an effect on Hamas' ties with the Gulf countries and the Islamic organizations within those countries. But at the same time brought support for its relations with Iran. Iran increasingly viewed Hamas as an agent that would help it to develop into a regional power. This made Hamas receive logistical and financial support that

[241] (Khanfar, Auther Interview, 2019. Op.cit)
[242] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. 38)
[243] Ibid.
[244] (Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam*. 1989. Op.cit. pp. 19-22)

aided the movement to become stronger. However, some of the ties with Gulf States, particularly with Saudi Arabia, were restored for the purpose of punishing the PLO because of its support to Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991.[245]

The establishment of the PA paved the way to the establishment of a new Palestinian political system, which accordingly repositioned the PLO leaders from outboard to inboard. These dramatic moves strengthened PLO's position and legitimacy and made it win the inner-Palestinian competition for representation at the cost of other Palestinian factions and leadership, particularly Hamas.[246] The signing of the Oslo Agreement profoundly changed the Palestinian relationship with Israel, promising self-determination for Palestinians. However, the Oslo Agreement exacerbated the division between the Palestinian factions over the method to achieve liberation and over Oslo to provide legitimacy.[247] After the establishment of the PA, the political landscape in Palestine fundamentally changed. The criteria upon which to obtain legitimacy became more linked to the Oslo Agreement. This opened the door for establishing a new phase of legitimacy based on the popular will after organizing the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1996. Since then, the Palestinian polity was brought into the constitutional legitimacy, expressed via the democratic electoral process. The PLO tended through running the elections to achieve a national consensus on its ideology and political approach so as to legitimize its direction and further the support of the Peace Process with Israel.[248] Hamas was determined not to grant legitimacy to the PA. It believed that the Oslo Agreement solely served Israel's agenda; therefore, the participation in the 1996 elections would legitimize the Oslo Peace Agreement and implicitly recognize Israel.[249] Nevertheless, Arafat strove to surround himself with a group of loyalists, and those who challenged him and his legitimacy often endured threats and arrests, thus political opponents were seen as enemies.[250] Most of the hired employees were from the Fatah movement and were precisely loyal to Arafat, including the legislators who ran the 1996 elections. Although with this development, the constitutional legitimacy did not revoke the revolutionary legitimacy as an important source, the latter no longer became the exclusive identifier of the legitimacy in Palestine. Instead, an integration between the electoral legitimacy with the legitimacy of resistance had taken place.[251]

After Oslo, Hamas was in front of different objective conditions that constructed different challenges to its existence and ideology. First, besides its main duty, or focus, to resist the Israeli occupation, Hamas found itself in front of a new establishment that, for large extent, bounded with agreements that aimed at dismantling movements such as Hamas and gave intention to the security of Israel. Thus, this made Hamas not only to confront Israel, but also to confront a Palestinian-established system that was a threat to its existence and Ideology.

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[245] (Abu Amr, *Hamas: Historical and Political*, 1993. Op.cit. pp:16-17)
[246] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 38)
[247] Natil, Ibrahim, *Hamas: Between Militarism and Governance*. Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security, (2011, July). 1(2). P: 152
[248] Ibid.
[249] Press release on the results of the 1996 elections, 24 January 1996, http://hamas.ps/ar/post/710
[250] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 40)
[251] (Hroub, Hamas: *Conflating National Liberation*, 2010. Op. cit. pp: 175-176)

According to the Oslo Agreement (1993), the Cairo Agreement (1994), and the Hebron Protocol (1997), the obligations of the Palestinian security apparatuses were to maintain internal Palestinian security and to fight "terror" and violence.[252] Accordingly, out of establishing strong security forces, Oslo aimed at enforcing the power of the PA in the West Bank and Gaza that would meet the needs for establishing a calm and stable relationship with Israel.[253] Building the security apparatus caused the PA to claim the legitimacy of monopolizing the use of violence. Moreover, this re-conceptualized the tasks of the Palestinian arms from the use of resistance, to be clearly mandated, to maintain the internal security, and further protect the relationship with Israel from the Palestinian militant groups. The existence of non-state military actors, such as the Hamas' military wing, directly challenged the PA's exclusive legitimate monopoly on the use of force, and threatened the fulfillment of the PA's obligations to the Peace Process.[254]

Nevertheless, the claim of both the one-weapon legality and constitutional legitimacy allowed the PA to legalize its measures against the military wings and Hamas, which included detentions, weapon confiscations, and financial restrictions, and close Hamas' institutions.[255] This, in particular, was seen as a new chapter in the battle between the PLO-Fatah and Hamas in contesting for legitimacy. It established a conflict of legitimacy sources, since the PA and PLO-Fatah sought to limit the legitimacy around themselves, including the using violence that consequently meant bounding the legality of possession weapons only around the weapons of the PA's security apparatus. This therefore illegalized the other weapons (the opponent military factions), leading to Hamas enforcing its military capacity and military actions. Consistent with this, both parties resorted to a different source to achieve legitimacy, and both sought to delegitimize the other. Hamas rejected Oslo and its results, including the notion to be a definer of the legitimacy, while the Palestinian Authority resorted to means of limiting the legitimacy of Hamas or, at least, reducing its military presence.[256] However, the perception of Hamas to its legitimacy was inextricably linked to the revolutionary and religious legitimacies, as they both embodied its identity, otherwise, Hamas would lack its *raison d'être*. In fact, the involvement in resistant actions historically formed an essential requirement for all Palestinian factions to garner the revolutionary legitimacy. According to Khalid Hroub, "the legitimate leader (or organization) is the one who holds the banner of resistance and revolution, advancing and bringing the goals of liberation closer. Thus, the identifier of legitimacy is the measure of its resistance against the occupier."[257] This added to Hamas a more dynamic dimension in its work to provide a parallel model to the existing Palestinian factions that practice military action, but with different ideological thoughts.

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[252] See (Cairo agreement 1994, Declaration of Principles Oslo I, 1993 and the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron 1997)
[253] (Natil, Hamas: *Between Militarism and Governance*. 2011, Op. cit. p. 152)
[254] (Mishal, & Avraham, *The Palestinian Hamas*. 2000, Op.cit. p. 36)
[255] (Natil, Hamas: *Between Militarism and Governance*. 2011, Op. cit. p. 152)
[256] (Post, *Hamas*. 2009, p. 147)
[257] (Hroub, Hamas: *Conflating National Liberation*, 2010. Op. cit. pp: 175-176)

For Hamas, the question of joining the PA was not only to legitimize the political system, but also the fact that part of the functions of the PA is to illegalize -legitimize the military action (the important source of Hamas' legitimacy), which later put the movement in internal confrontation with the PA's security apparatus and stirred the existence and presence of Hamas and its function.[258] Hamas and PLO/Fatah struggle for power was not merely to represent the Palestinian cause or to lead the public. However, it was interrelated to serious political, national, methodological, and ideological rifts between them. The Oslo Agreement widened the existing ideological gap and enhanced the long historical battle between two rivals and two contradictory programs that have different considerations, calculations, and goals and both found it difficult to coexist or share the power. Both programs contradicted each other, secular and Islamic, and both claimed the historical revolutionary legitimacy. PLO asserted its historical eligibility to lead the Palestinians, while Hamas claimed the same. PLO, Fatah in particular, considered themselves to be the first Palestinian movement to start the armed resistance against the Israeli occupation since 1955 where Hamas was not exist yet. With more than 33 years before the establishment of Hamas, Fatah and other PLO' factions, claimed that they sacrificed many of their members and leaders in the march for liberation. This is in addition to the long history of representing the Palestinian people on many different International platforms. They argue that Hamas, and the Islamism in general, came in a very late stage. Whilst Hamas also claim the historical eligibility, portraying itself as an extending to the long involvement of the MB in the Palestinians cause.[259] On several occasions, Hamas resisted the attempts of Yasser Arafat to contain the movement, as a minority, within the body of PLO and its own nationalist fold, seeking instead to establish itself as a political alternative fold. In April 1990, in a letter addressed to Sheikh Abdul Hamid al-Sa'eh, the President of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), which is the PLO' parliament, Hamas declined the invitation to join the council, which, according to Ibrahim Ghusheh, Hamas' ex-spokesman, offered the movement with 18 seats, equals 4%, of the members of the Council.[260] However, Hamas stipulated its participation with obtaining 40-50% of the total members as a number equivalent to its weight on the ground, in addition to "amending the political program of the PLO in line with the belief of the Palestinian Muslim people."[261]

This could be illustrated, according to Adnan Asfour, by the fears of Hamas to lose its character and become dissolved within the direction of the secular PLO. Hamas also feared to lose its authenticity and uniqueness as a normative opposition to PLO as well as risking its political future and causing a friction within the movement.[262] In addition to this, Hamas' rejection to the participation in the 1996 Palestinian Legislative Council elections was a calculated decision aimed

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[258] Yousef, Ahmed, A senior adviser to Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniya. (Author, Interviewer) March 11 2019,.

[259] (Khanfar, Author, Interviewer, 2019)

[260] Ghusheh, Ibrahim, *Al-Mi'dhanah al-Hamra': Sirah Dhatiyah* (The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghusheh). Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations. 2008, pp. 165-166

[261] Hamas: Memorandum to the President and Members of the Preparatory Committee Tasked with Reforming the Palestinian National Council, 6th of April 1990

[262] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)

at avoiding conferring credibility on the Oslo Agreement.[263] With Oslo, the debate over the source of legitimacy became impliedly linked with the acceptance of the principles of the Israeli–Palestinian Accords, the recognition of PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinians that recognized Israel and abandoned the liberation struggle.

For Hamas, the question of obtaining a constitutional legitimacy was controversial. How a movement, such as Hamas, would give legitimacy to an entity that resulted from accords that fundamentally contradicted with its ideology and perhaps threatened its raison d'être. Hamas as, a resistance movement, perceived that its essential role was to confront the occupation through the armed struggle. Joining an entity that contradicted with its ideology was a sort of legitimizing the un-legitimized. Hamas perceived the election in 1996 as mechanism to legitimize the PLO's political approach, which could make it safe to say that Hamas was keen not to risk its ideology in return for taking part in the elections.

However, the support of the Palestinians to the Peace Process brought the Palestinians against the desire of Hamas and shifted the Palestinians' reality from an environment that corresponded to its *raison d'être* to an environment that threatened it. Hamas saw a lack of support to its methods of liberation since ending the *Intifada* and providing chance to the peace process to realize a sovereign Palestinian state resonated well with the Palestinians.[264] This was reflected on the popularity of Fatah and PLO, the hard opponents of Hamas, which increased notably after the Israeli redeployment from the number of the Palestinian cities that enabled PLO to establish the PA. Between the periods of 1994 to 1997, 36.1% to 49.5% of the Palestinian population supported Fatah against 16.6% to 17.3% who supported Hamas. The strong support to Fatah reflected similarly to the support of the Peace Process. 73% to 79% supported the continuation of the Peace Process, while 21% to 33% supported the armed attacks against Israel. Moreover, those who supported the path of the negotiations believed that suicide attacks impeded the progress of the Peace Process.[265]

Contrary to seeking for a real political participation, Hamas was more concerned with remaining abide to its ideology and losing its grassroots rather than presenting a clear political program.[266] Although Hamas had long sought to present itself as an alternative to the PLO, the movement had never presented a political program with clear political approaches.[267] Ibrahim Hamdan, one of the Hamas leaders, attributed this to the absence of Hamas' political desire to present an alternative political program other than the resistance, and produce new policies that conflict with its ideology, or challenge its identity as an Islamic resistance

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[263] (Knudsen, *Crescent and Sword*. 2004, p. 8)
[264] Bani-Odah, Samer: Former Hamas' prisoner. (2017, Oct 13). (Author, Interviewer)
[265] The Palestinian center for Policy and survey research (CPRS): Public Opinion Poll #: (5, 15, 16, 22, 24, 25, 26) (Jan 1994, Feb 1995, Mar 1995, Mar 1996, Sep 1996, Dec 1996, 26, Mar 1997)
[266] Truffer, Patrick, *The Softening of Hamas*. Small Wars Journal. 2012, April 02 https://bit.ly/2FQi9eR
[267] Youssef, Ahmad, A senior adviser to Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniya. Author Interviewer, March 11th. 2019.

movement.[268] Hamas was unwilling to sacrifice its political future and popularity in return, to enter a body that is assumed to fail. In addition, Hamas wanted Fatah's approach to reach the maximum experience and to fall. Ahmad Youssef returns this to the belief of Hamas against the efficacy of the political approach and Hamas' denials to switch its methods. Hamas did not view the political work as worthy of leading toward a real achievement. Thus, Hamas opted to focus on investing in the resistance work with its historical slogan ("resistance is the sole strategy for the liberation of Palestine").[269] Moreover, the tense nature of the relationship between Hamas and the PA caused gaps between them in relation to their considerations of the sources of legitimacy and political programs, since both of them had different strategic ideological considerations and conflicts of agendas.[270] Hamas was lacking an alternative political arena for contesting Arafat and his Fatah movement. Therefore, undermining the Peace Process through political violence against Israel became a particularly attractive option.[271]

Hamas drew two main paths in the struggle of power against Fatah/PLO. First, on the Palestinian political level, it attempted to form a strong opposition in coalition with other Palestinian factions, which witnessed the birth of the Ten Factions' coalition. In such an advancement, Hamas sought to create an alternative political approach against PLO, and further isolate Fatah and confine the Peace approach around them.[272] The second path was to achieve internal coherence and self-development. Militarily, Hamas developed the quality of its operations after the formation of its official military wing *Izz al-Din Al-Qassam* Brigades in 1992, Which, in the coming stages, would be responsible of Hamas' increasing military force *and* developing its actions from relying on individual violent acts, such as stabbing, to become capable of orchestrating and carrying out large-scale attacks starting from 1994. [273] In the following decade, Hamas' military capabilities further evolved to employ more conventional and unconventional standoff tactics in its actions.[274]

The bombing attacks were one of Hamas' strategies to strike one of the most important pillars of Oslo, which was the security element, particularly Israel's security. Hamas viewed the Oslo Agreement as a security agreement in a political formula and aimed to get rid of the elements of military action in the Palestinian arena, and that it was an agreement directed against it.[275] Hamas could not ignore the pursuits of Yasser Arafat to constrain it either with repression or with minor participation in the PA structure. Arafat sought a wider legitimacy and

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[268] Hamdan, Ibrahim, *Hamas: The Difficult Matching between Organization and Governance*. Al-Ayyam Newspaper. 2007
[269] (Youssef, Author Interview. 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[270] Ibid
[271] Pettersen, Vegard, Hamas and a Future Palestinian State: A Pragmatic Approach? University of Oslo, 2009, P: 41
[272] Nairat. Raed, *Hamas and the Peace Process*, in Saleh. Mohsen. The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas): Studies of Thoughts & Experience. Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2017, p. 224
[273] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 37)
[274] Berti, Benedetta: The Evolving Role of Hamas: Re-Casting Labels? German Journal for Political, Economic and Culture of the Middle East, (2015, Jul 27). P: 42
[275] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)

support to his approach by minimizing the power of the opposition.[276] Thus, the armed action for Hamas was not merely used to resist the occupation, but also to weaken the rival's political power, and establish a credible threat against its legitimacy. Hamas continued to introduce itself as the true resistance movement by provoking Israel and stepping up attacks on soldiers and civilians. Hamas marked high records in military actions since initiating its campaign of suicide bombing to undermine the Oslo process and ensure that the Palestinian Authority would not be able to deliver peace.[277] Hamas committed around 19 bombing attacks against Israelis during the period between 1994 until 1999.[278]

The fears of losing its *raison d'être* and affecting its internal cohesion appeared to be the priority for Hamas over the contest for seats in the PLC. The constitutional legitimacy, although important, was not critical, since the movement adopted different tools to achieve power such as running local elections. The critical concern was to preserve the movement from internal fragmentation and the loss of the credibility among its members. The intention of Hamas gave priority to the internal cohesion of the movement against joining a political system dominated by its rivals. This indeed reflected the identity of Hamas and its adherence to its prevailing intellectual trend.

According to Acosta, militant organizations share two common aims: first, a sustainable environment to survive; and second, achieving their outcome goals.[279] Ending the *Intifada* unsurprisingly meant endangering Hamas' survival and source of power, since the movement was largely based on the struggle against Israel to become an important power. Moreover, ending the *Intifada* would mean compromising Hamas' ideology and constituting a breach of its promise of not giving up one single inch of Palestine. It can be concluded that Hamas' political behavior at this stage gave priority to the ideological and organizational stability, at the expense of presenting a political program that interacted with the circumstances brought by the changes that emerged after the establishment of the PA. The establishment of the PA and its efforts to stop the Intifada affected the operational environment that resulted in the nascence of Hamas and incubated its resistance action. However, Hamas made the efforts to reinforce its religious identity to resist the ideological challenge in terms of its ability to stand true to its principles. Nevertheless, this illustrates the interdependent relationship between the importance of continuing the Intifada and the resistant actions, and the justifications that touched Hamas' existence and Ideology.

To sum up, the above discussion could help us to understand the considerations that impeded Hamas to develop its political will. These considerations related to Hamas' strategic ideological goals and the conflict of its program with the program and trends of the PA, and the lack of the Hamas' political opportunities that may enable the movement to achieve a real political power. The Oslo Declaration created a relatively autonomous Palestine, effectively

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[276] (Truffer, *The Softening of Hamas*, 2012. Op. cit)
[277] (Post, *Hamas*. 2009, p. 147)
[278] Aljazeera Media Network: List of Palestinian attacks, 5/11/2000, https://cutt.ly/mjC9iHF
[279] (Acosta, *From Bombs to Ballots*. 2014, p. 675)

ending the first Intifada, the proper working environment for Hamas. This resulted in several problems for Hamas. It had to choose between continuing to fight Israel in the name of their ultimate objective, or working within the settlement agreement in order to provide relative peace that many of their supporters desired. Oslo had undermined the political opportunities of Hamas and restricted its options to achieve power and legitimacy to the adherence to two basic lines – social action and the escalation of military action. Besides its conviction against the participation in the political process, Hamas also anticipated that a participatory would leave it with too few seats in the PLC with no real influence, and thus the movement was not ready to sacrifice this position. Adnan Asfour said the reason for the absence of the crystallization of Hamas' political vision and the restriction of its work on social and military works, to the fear of Hamas that the political work might lure the movement into a square that it did not want, particularly the Peace Process, and to be dissolved within PLO's ideology and approach.[280]

It could be safe to say that the intention of Hamas at this stage was based on undermining the non-resistance Oslo formula to miss the opportunity for the PA to achieve the Oslo Accords, rather than present an alternative political program. Hamas relied on building its legitimacy on opposing the regime and influencing the general environment by escalating military confrontations with Israel. This was pressuring the PA after being accused by the Israelis of being unable to fulfill its security obligations. Indeed, the concentration of the movement on the resistance and the social work moved Hamas away from caring for the Palestinians' internal situation and left the Palestinian Authority without forming a strong opposition to Fatah.

However, there was also other reason for Hamas' objection to Oslo. This was related to the future of Islamism in Palestine. The unilateral step of PLO to enter the negotiations occurred without consulting the Islamists or the Leftists, on matters crucial for all Palestinians. This created a feeling of marginalization that resulted in additional opposition. Regardless of the ideological boundaries, the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement increased Hamas' awareness on the limits of political opportunity that may be offered to the movement.

2.1.1.1 The second Intifada: New opportunity for power and legitimacy

The eruption of the second Intifada, after the failure of the Palestinian-Israeli talks in Camp David II in July 2000, offered Hamas a great opportunity to consolidate its public standing and to reflect upon its own political manifesto.[281] Hamas approach towards the use of bloody means against Israel significantly increased and became the mean stream methods in voicing Hamas position as Palestinians became frustrated with Fatah, angry at Israel, and willing to accept more hostile tactics.[282] Hamas actively involved its militants during the period of the Intifada and recorded the highest number

[280] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[281] (Natil, *Hamas: Between Militarism and Governance*. 2011, Op. cit. p. 154)
[282] (Post, *Hamas*. 2009, p. 147)

of attacks. A study conducted for the Journal of Economic Perspectives indicated that Hamas carried out around 39.9% of 148 Palestinians attacks including suicide bombing and armed operations, while 25.7 % by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ); 26.4 % by the Fatah; 5.4 % by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); and 2.7 % by other organizations.[283] Although Fatah had had a remarkable record of attacks, however, the *Intifada* was an event that exacerbated its crises and the crises of its under led bodies (PLO and PA) causing a serious undermine to their popularity.[284] However, The *Intifada* was not merely important to Hamas in its struggle for power, but was also important in the conflict of trends and ideology with the PLO and Fatah. As previously mentioned, Hamas struggled to defend its ideology and existence in front of the threats posed by the Oslo Accords. The outbreak of the second *Intifada*, made Hamas to perceive it as a 'public referendum' on its ideological approach and to claim it as a validation of its assessment of the failure of the PLO/Fatah approach, and further on the latter's capacity to lead the Palestinian struggle.[285] This happened in synchronization with more Palestinians losing hope for peace after the failure of the negotiation process, in which Fatah and the PLO spent most of their political capital, to realize the Palestinian aspirations.[286]

Hamas' increased violence was repeating an old strategy, resisting the occupation and undermining its rival to achieve political gains. The period of the second *Intifada* (September 2000 through August 2005) remarked high records of attack and casualties. The poor performance of the Fatah-led PA besides the inability to respond to internal challenges (corruption, insecurity, lack of a state of law, nepotism, clientelism, poverty, unemployment), granted Hamas more opportunity to increase its popularity. As an example of corruption, Azmi Al-Shu'aibi, ex-member of PLC, revels cases of corruption committed by high-ranking officials, such as ministers, deputy ministers and general directors, who used their positions to obtain illegal benefits for themselves or others to enhance their positions or influence in power and society.[287] It was widely believed that Ahmed Qureia, a former PA prime minister, had deposited $3 million in PA funds into his own account, besides other allegations that his family-owned cement factory- was supplying concrete for the construction of the Wall, as well as for new homes in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. As one of the fundamental problem was that the PA finances were opaque, micromanaged by Arafat, and not subject to meaningful oversight by any public body. For example, large parts of the budget—such as the president's office and the security services—lacked details, making any kind of oversight impossible as other large portions of the PA budget were not on the official

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[283] Benmelech, Efraim & Berrebi, Claude, *Human Capital and the Productivity of Suicide Bombers*, Journal of Economic Perspectives, 21*(3)*, (223–238) Summer 2007. P: 227

[284] Ibid.

[285] Az-Zahar, Mahmoud. Hamas Political Leader. in. (Løvlie. Frode, From Maximalist Absolutism towards Pragmatic Opportunism: explaining Hamas' electoral participation. Bergen: The University of Bergen, Department of Comparative Politics. (2008, May). p. 48

[286] Hovdenak, Are, *Hamas in transition: the failure of sanctions. Democratization*, Oslo: PRIO: International Peace Research Institute, (2009) .16(1). P: 62

[287] Al-Shu'aibi, Azmi, *Corruption and Good Governance in the Arab Countries: the Occupied Palestinian: a Case Study*, (Seminar), Beirut: the Center for Arab Unity Studies & The Swedish Institute in Alexandria, 20-23 September, 2004.

books.[288] According to figures presented by World Bank -about the PA's effectiveness, ability to control corruption, and establishing institution of a viable rule of law-, revealed a significant plummet in the general capacity of PA to fight corruption. In 2002 the PA was ranked in the bottom 16 % of countries worldwide in controlling corruption, among the bottom of 12 % in government effectiveness, and in the bottom 50 % in the effectiveness of the rule of law.[289]

However, the Fatah administration was unable to prevent the economic crisis in the Palestinian territories. During the Second Intifada, Israeli forces invaded the Palestinian cities, closed off Palestinian roads and tightened movement restrictions in an attempt to thwart further attacks causing undeniably devastation of the Palestinian economy. In 1999, a year before the outbreak of the Intifada, Palestinian unemployment was at 12%, while fluctuated between 14.3 % in 2000 to 31.6 % in 2002. In 2004, almost 1/3 of Palestinians were out of work. From 1999 to 2006, GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita plunged by nearly 30 %, and by 2006, 43% of Palestinians were impoverished.[290] The percentage of Palestinians who attributed such deterioration to the corruption in the Fatah-led PA's institutions significantly increased from approximately 50 % in 1996 to 85 % in 2004.[291] According to studies by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), 74% of Palestinians in 2001 thought that the Fatah-led PA was corrupt, this number had augmented to 81% in 2003, and to 86% by December 2005. These economic conditions help to explain why the popularity of Fatah declined during the second Intifada.[292]

The PLO and Fatah's crises further deepened after the Israeli's response to the violent confrontation by the destruction of the Fatah-led PA's apparatuses, especially security, and the besieging of Yasser Arafat. The crises of Fatah was also embodied in their vision of direction with the *Intifada*. The divisions and disparities between the various current leaders of Fatah on how to deal with the *Intifada* and the goals that should be achieved demonstrated the chaos among its leadership. The leadership crises intensified after the loss of Fatah's historical charismatic leader with the departure of Yasser Arafat in 2004. This added another factor to the previous factors to worsen its credibility among the public since the movement suffered a recognized internal chaos over its leadership. Hamas saw as a favorable opportunity to enter a new stage, which was to enter the political system from a position of strength, from a position of weakness in order to influence it from within.[293]

The combined effects of the administrative mismanagement, political repression, and widespread corruption, and the fading hope to achieve a sovereign state, designed the general image of Fatah's approach among the Palestinians. The end to where the

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[288] Brown, Nathan J., *The Palestinian Reform Agenda*, US Institute for Peace, 2002, p: 25 shorturl.at/diDFL

[289] Simon, Steven N. & others, Building a Successful Palestinian State, the Rand Palestinian State Study Team, The RAND Corporation, 2005, p:21, shorturl.at/kACZ2

[290] Curtis, Justin, Why Hamas: The Socioeconomic and Political Foundations of the Islamists' Popularity. Exposé Magazine. (2016). Retrieved from shorturl.at/ivHY3

[291] (Simon & others, *Building a Successful*. 2005, Op.cit. p:21)

[292] (Curtis, *Why Hamas*. 2016. Op.cit)

[293] Ezbidi, Basem, Hamas and governance: entering the regime or rebelling against it? Ramallah: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, (2010). P:48

Palestinian struggle reached under the PLO/ Fatah administration made the argument of Hamas more credible to the public.The crisis of Fatah, institutionally and politically, [294] prompted Hamas to challenge Fatah, which presumed the right to lead the nation.[295] Hamas argued that PLO neither achieved the Palestinian aspiration nor the PA was able to design an authority based on good governance, power sharing, and promoting the economic situation.[296] This gave Hamas a major support and enabled the movement to become a significant political military force and to threaten the power of the PA. Contrary to the weakness of Fatah's leadership, the political and popular opportunities tended in favor of Hamas. Hamas appeared more coherent and harmonious in its internal structure and opposing political program that served the movement to become politically the most powerful, organized Palestinian movement, despite its exposure to targeting its first rank leaders, such as the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, Ismail Abu Shanab Jamal Mansour, and Jamal Saleem.[297]

Moreover, the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 gave Hamas another boost to gain credibility and popularity among the Palestinians at the time the Fatah, PLO and the PA's legitimacy became seriously undermined. Hamas' leaders repeatedly preached the efficiency of the armed struggle to achieve what Fatah and the PLO failed to achieve by negotiations.[298] About 11% of Palestinians attributed the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza to Fatah's diplomacy, whereas 40% credited to Hamas.[299] This served Hamas to emphasize on its ideological vision, and re-enhance its argument over the armed resistance as the proper mean to liberate Palestine.[300] Through the *Intifada*, the issue of legitimacy had gained momentum, as Hamas seemed to voice the opinion of many Palestinians who shared the movement's opinion. This gave more credibility to Hamas' argument and its tough position regarding the entire Oslo formula. From the perspective of Palestinians, Fatah's negotiations with Israel had failed to secure an independent Palestinian state or to stop the increasing building of the Israeli settlements.[301]

Two shifts constituted great opportunities for Hamas. The first was the shift in Hamas' operational environment after the continued stumbling of the political process with Israel, and then the escalation of the violent confrontation with Israel. The second shift was the decline in the popularity of Fatah and PLO and the decline in regional and international support for the PA. Hamas saw these two shifts as a sign of soundness of its political position against Fatah's program. This made the movement to view its political program as the most appropriate for the next stage. All these developments made the Palestinian public to view the PA as an incompetent political body and unable to face the internal and external

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[294] (Vegard. *Hamas and a Future Palestinian State*. 2009, Op. cit. p. 59)
[295] Crooke, Alastair, From Rebel Movement to Political Party: The Case of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Conflicts Forum, March 13,2007, shorturl.at/dkBUV
[296] (Pettersen, *Hamas and a Future Palestinian*. 2009, Op.cit. p. 59)
[297] (Ezbidi, *Hamas and governance*. 2010. Op.cit. p. 48)
[298] Hamad, Ghazi. Hamas' former government spokesman. In (Hovdenak. *Hamas in transition*. 2009. Op.cit. p. 67)
[299] (CPRS): Public Opinion Poll, 7-9 September 2005, http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/238.
[300] (Post, *Hamas*. 2009, p. 147)
[301] (Curtis, *Why Hamas*. 2016. Op.cit)

challenges that followed the intifada. As for Hamas, this state of weakness came as an opportunity to cast for legitimacy through entering the PA and applying its political program.

Anyhow, in the time Fatah saw a fragmentation (in the wake of Arafat's death in 2004) and public's disillusionment with its leadership to the PA (many Palestinians did not trust the PA's leadership because of poor governance, the corruption of some leaders and its failure to bring any positive results for the Palestinians through the peace process), Hamas saw an opportunity to put itself forward as a credible alternative for the Palestinian people. This increasingly encouraged Hamas to run in the municipal elections in 2004 and 2005. Hamas recognized that the declining socioeconomic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza had shifted the priorities of the Palestinian. As Hamas spokesman Ghazi Hamad pondered, "How can we promise Jerusalem and the right of return when we can't deliver our people a loaf of bread?"[302] A survey conducted in April 2004 of Palestinian views on economic and social conditions showed that 38% of Palestinians consider food to be their top priority. Another 21% ranked work as their top priority, while 20% ranked financial support, and 8 % ranked the education services, and the same percentage ranked the health services. Moreover, the results of Poll No. 19, issued by the Development Studies Program (2004), showed that improvement of the economic situation and provision of internal security are among the most important priorities.[303]

Hamas' realization to the changing of the priorities of the Palestinians was reflected, in later stage, on its electoral platform to run the PLC's elections. Hamas intendedly called its bloc *'al-Tagheer wa al-islah'* (Change and reform) as a message for the public that Hamas is attentive to care of their life matters.[304] However, a significant portion of its electoral platform underscored commitment to give the much attention to social welfare, economic and fiscal policies, labor issues, agriculture policy, youth issues, women, children and family issues, health and environment policy and social policy.[305] In the vein of fighting corruption, Hamas stressed on transparency and accountability in dealing with public funds, stressing that taxpayers' money would go to economic development projects. [306]

However, Hamas' strategy focused on exploiting these new opportunities. It, for this end, employed two methods of action. The first focused on increasing the value and status of its social and welfare services.[307] Hamas sought to present itself as an alternative to the PA's institutions by providing essential social relief and financial support for large numbers of people who were struggling to sustain themselves. It gave great attention to the families of martyrs, prisoners, and the poor who were directly affected by the dysfunction of the PA's institutions.[308] The second focused on strengthening the credibility of the movement, solidifying its political program through

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[302] Hamad, Ghazi: Quoted in (Curtis, *Why Hamas*. 2016. Op.cit)
[303] Center for Development Studies, Opinion Poll #19, 5 October, 2004, shorturl.at/aqGM3
[304] (Asfour, Author Interview, 2019. Op.cit)
[305] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)
[306] Ibid.
[307] (Ezbidi, 2010, *Hamas and governance*. Op.cit. p. 48)
[308] (Al-Betawi, Author Interview, 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)

active participation in the second *Intifada*.[309] Hamas could soon pursue these two-tier strategies to challenge PLO's legitimacy with great success, leading to a further increase of popularity and highlighting the armed struggle as the main source of legitimacy.[310] Nevertheless, this caused the legitimacy to be concentrated widely on armed struggle since the legal situation of the elected Palestinian political system had exceeded its legal duration.

The available political space was wider for Hamas than it had before. The development in the Palestinian political realm served Hamas strategic calculation in the quest for Power and self-preservation. This increased the potentiality for Hamas to translate its military achievement to win the battle of political and constitutional legitimacy against Fatah. Adnan Asfour explained Hamas' political calculation in the struggle for power. The opportunities offered Hamas the chance to rearrange the place of the actors in the Palestinian society, and to change the rules of power after the failure of the Fatah program and its vision. Thus, Hamas was concerned to achieve a majority and weakened its opponents popularly. The failure of the Peace Process and the growing strength of Hamas made the movement's image more popular amongst the Palestinians, who saw the movement as a viable alternative. This provided an opportunity for Hamas after the departure of Yasser Arafat, who historically posed an obstacle to the movement to win the power race and competition.[311]

2.1.1.2 The quest for international acceptancy

The second *Intifada* formed a turning point in the position of the main actors in the Palestinian political scene and gave Hamas' military approach a wider space than it ever had to achieve power and further legitimacy. However, this approach came to a point to be heavy on Hamas. The subsequent of September 11 attacks in 2001, and the U.S. war on "terror" had multiple effects on the movement's calculations. The U.S.-led war on "terror" against the Islamic militant groups made the military approach of Hamas on stack. This policy allowed Israel and the United States to create an international impression that Hamas was a movement that practiced "terrorism".[312] Hamas' armed approach, particularly the terminological connotations of the use of Jihad, was perceived philosophically as the approach of al-Qa'ida and was often mentioned in the same sentence as al-Qa'ida. The set of measures that were taken against al-Qa'ida in terms of its affiliates and financial resources were applied on Hamas.[313] Hamas was placed on the list of terrorist movements in the United States and many other West countries.[314] In addition, it was besieged and many restrictions were imposed, followed up and scrutinized on everything related to it regionally and internationally. The United States imposed international control on money transfers

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[309] (Benmelech & Berrebi, *Human Capital*. 2007, Op. cit. p:227)
[310] Barghouti, Iyad, Expert in Political Islam. In (Løvlie. Frode, From *Maximalist Absolutism*. 2008. Interviewr. Op.cit. p. 80)
[311] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[312] Andresky, Nikolai L.: Hamas a Constructivist Lens, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2008, P: 31
[313] (Dunning, *Hamas, Jihad and Popular Legitimacy*. 2016, Op.cit. p.3)
[314] Ibid.

around the world, especially to and from the Middle East, and this led to shrinking sources of support for the movement, especially those coming from abroad. By linking Hamas to al-Qa'ida, two dilemmas had formed a serious challenge and threat for Hamas as an aftermath to the September 11 attacks. The U.S. war on "terror" made the regional supporters of Hamas much more hesitant to support a group identified by the United States as a "terrorist" organization. Further, its military attacks were directly compared to al-Qa'ida attacks, which generally caused a challenge of its acceptance on the regional and international levels. Those dilemmas influenced Hamas' work after the financial restriction that hit the movement's work within the Palestinian community.[315]

Nevertheless, Hamas' rival was not in a better situation. The Fatah-led PA experienced a shaky situation with the international community. The U.S. in particular viewed Yasser Arafat as an obstacle to approach peace. Yasser Arafat was accused to push toward the outbreak of the *Intifada* in order to improve his position in the negotiations with Israel and achieve political gains after the failure of Camp David II. George W. Bush's administration led to a conviction that the current Palestinian leadership became part of the problem, not a part of the solution, and Yasser Arafat was a persona non grata. The stereotype about Hamas was similarly applied on Yasser Arafat. The Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon repeatedly attempted to link Arafat with the U.S.-led "war on terror", declaring that the behavior and ideology of Arafat had similar ends and harms as the ideology of Bin Laden. Arafat encountered political isolation as well as financial and diplomatic rupture.[316] This raised the demands of the international community to the PA to conduct a series of reforms as part of them aimed at replacing Yasser Arafat and reforming the security apparatus after being involved in violence against Israel. The violence spiraled out of control and the PA was unable to provide security for the Palestinians and to defend Israel from Palestinian attacks.

The image of Hamas and its classification as a "terrorist" movement in many countries' lists was a considerable factor to search for international acceptancy through the electoral process. The demand of the international community to the PA to conduct a series of reforms and to hold legislative and presidential elections became an opportunity to Hamas to present itself as an alternative to the corrupted Fatah. Hamas found it a proper moment to respond to these demands in an attempt to change their definition to the movement, and to appear with a different image to the international community. The constitutional legitimacy, hence, became a channel for Hamas to alleviate part of the international pressure on the movement. Consequently, legitimation assumed a multi-dimensional character, in that for Hamas, the contest existed not just in the domestic arena, but also simultaneously in the national, regional, and international arenas.

The various mechanisms undertook by Hamas in the struggle for power and legitimacy against Fatah and PLO revealed the underlying causes for Hamas' transition toward moderating its position to join the PA. However, this struggle, besides its intention to avoid the threat that affected the movement after the intensive use of violence played a crucial role in seeking external political acceptancy, and re-thinking its political calculations and strategies. In accordance with Martin Kear, in the march for

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[315] (Nikolai L. *Hamas a Constructivist Lens.* 2008, Op.cit. p. 31)
[316] (Dunning, *Hamas, Jihad and Popular Legitimacy*. 2016, Op.cit. p.4)

power and existence, the state and non-state actors sought legitimation from various external centers of power.[317] Unsurprisingly, through the constitutional legitimacy and entering the PA, Hamas focused on acquiring political and diplomatic recognition and legitimacy as an elected political actor. In addition, to be accepted as a political organization that is received and respected by governments, thus the participation in the political process comes also as an attempt to mitigate its image as a "terrorist" organization.[318] This was taken as a mechanism to enter politics by reflecting a growing desire within Hamas for political power, based on the pragmatic considerations of its opportunities within that sphere of Palestinian life. Furthermore, it would allow the movement to avoid external pressure and change its image after being constantly compared to al-Qa'ida. Hamas believed that contesting the elections and entering the Palestinian political system, as the only legitimate framework, would help the movement to overcome the dilemma of its international acceptability.[319] Hamas intended to present itself differently, whether than Fatah, who was criticized by the international donors and many Palestinians because of corruption, or than the destructive approach of al-Qa'ida, by adhering to the democratic rule and becoming a legitimized political actor. [320]

Although Hamas sought international acceptance, the opportunity for Hamas was to exploit the international demands for reforms to create the proper conditions to implement its political program. Hamas had one main objective behind its existence, which was to be the ruling party where it could implement its own political and ideological agenda. Hamas was not an exception; it needed to gain power in order to pursue and protect its own ideological and political agenda. Hamas' political calculations attracted attention to win the battle of power against Fatah, after the latter's ideological and organizational crises. However, Hamas thought that being part of the political establishment might open a new platform to the movement in order to raise its political discourse to the international level, where it would be able to convey its message with the international political players. Hamas counted on entering the Palestinian political system, and obtaining the necessary legitimacy to achieve international acceptability, to ensure better conditions for its financial resources. Anyhow, it could be safe to conclude that Hamas' wish to improve its standing in the international society might have an incentive factor supporting its democratic participation and the switching of methods to achieve legitimacy.

In conclusion, the political opportunity of Hamas augmented after the decline of Fatah as a dominant party. The changed environment produced new opportunities and conditions that would push Hamas toward a change in its behaviors to access power. It was evident that the surrounding development in the Palestinian political scene had formed a proper political opportunity to maximize its influence and relevancy. Thus, Hamas engaged in the political system's

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[317] Kear, Martin, Chequered Moderation: Tracing Hamas's Moderation Journey 2006-2014,(October 14, 2014). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2496143

[318] (Hroub, *Hamas A Beginner's Guide*, 2006, Op.cit. p. 95)

[319] Shobaki, Belal, Professor of Political Science at the University of Hebron- an expert in Hamas. (Author Interviewer). 2019, July 7.

[320] Berti, Benedetta, Armed political organizations: From conflict to integration, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p: 6

institution. Hamas attempted to gain formal legitimacy for its political outlook in resistance. However, this time through participation rather than a boycott of the system. In 1996, Hamas depended on the failure of Fatah and Oslo to prove the credibility of its approach. Participating in the elections against a strong rival that was widely supported on internal, regional, and international levels, and being ideologically prepared for its approach, would limit the power of Hamas within the political system, and undermine its power to influence and implement its program. The new political opportunity led Hamas to alter its behavior to engage itself in the electoral politics in exchange for violent means. The political participation was seen by Hamas in another sense as a tool for wider legitimacy, especially on the international level. Its leaders took into consideration that a broad democratic support from the population might lead to more international legitimacy.

2.1.2 The threat of the violence approach

In the previous lines, we referred to two major obstacles that impeded Hamas to bring the engagement within the Newborn Political System to a serious decision within the movement. The questions of self-preservations and the role of the armed action in Hamas' identity besides it ideological convictions made it difficult for the movement to decide on participating in the political process. These obstacles manifested in the threats the PA posed to Hamas' *raison d'être* and existence ideologically and organizationally. The second was the inability of Hamas to develop a political program that considers the variable changes after Oslo to compete with Fatah.

However, the options to survive during the Oslo period, and the second *Intifada*, became a threat to Hamas' political future and posed a threat of exclusions and fragmentation. The changes in the political opportunities of Hamas made the question of traditional mechanisms (the continuation of the armed action and boycotting the PA) to become a serious threat to Hamas' contest for power. Thus, Hamas needed to rethink its methods for ensuring survival and avoiding fragmentations. As a result of the Israeli strikes, the organizational aspect of Hamas encountered a serious dilemma of the movement's capacity to be steadfast in the face of the Israeli policy to target its military and political leadership, and the movement's capacity to produce other leaders and generations capable of preserving the movement. What made this dilemma as a great concern is the loss of Hamas to its most influential leaders and first and second rank political and military leaders, whom, some of them, were members of the Political Bureau and its military wing. On the leadership level, Hamas had been exhausted by several assassinations, arrests, and deportation of its leaders, which raised fears inside the movement to fill in a leadership dilemma that might weaken the movement in front of its rivals.[321] This brought Hamas into a depletion of the movement's human capabilities.[322] For example, Hamas lost its charismatic leader, Ahmed Yassin, and Abdel-Aziz Al-Rantissi, One of Hamas Founders and Salah Shehadeh, the leader

[321] (Dudouet, *From War to Politics*. 2009. Op.cit, p. 27)
[322] Nairat, Raed, Professor of political science, expert in Hamas. (Author, Interviewer). (2019, January 17).

of the military wing of Hamas, as well as the loss of Ibrahim al-Makadmeh, Hamas' senior leader, who was considered one of its political thinkers.[323] Hence, the loss of leaders challenged Hamas in two approaches: first, the ability of Hamas to continue practicing the armed action and replacing its military leaders with others capable of preserving the capacity of the movement. Second, by targeting Hamas' first and second rank leaders, Hamas feared to enter a state of vacuum in the top of the organization's leadership that might affect its ability to continue working on different levels. In addition to this, the international blockade imposed on Hamas affected its external financial sources since the political support and popularity of the movement relied heavily on the serveries offered by its societal institutions scattered in the West Bank and Gaza.[324]

According to Samer Bani Odeh, the leadership dilemma subsequently necessitated to a period of transition, or a recovery period, to enable the movement to rebuild its military and political capacity. Hamas worked to ensure that the movement would not totally collapse.[325] However, during the second Intifada, the organizational influence of Hamas had expanded due to the direct roles it played in leading the second Intifada, in addition to the extent of the direct damage to the military leadership of the Hamas military wing after being targeted by Israel. The military leadership was harmed, pushing Hamas toward deemphasizing the military action and giving room to electoral participation to prevent its organizational structure from collapsing. Khalid Mesh'al added that in light of the surrounding internal and external environments that caused the decline in the much needed available resources and threatened the whole components of the movement, Hamas required a comprehensive evaluation over the aim of its struggle and the significance of using violence. Entering the PA and being part of the system, in one hand, expressed Hamas' intention to change or affect the functional role of the PA in a sense that might enable the movement to protect its members from being subjected to arrests by the PA.[326] This came in a time when the PA was reforming the security apparatus and reinforcing its capacity according to the Roadmap. The Roadmap, a Performance-based Roadmap to a permanent two-states solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demanded the PA, "[...] to end the violence [...] and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis…, [and] rebuild[ing] the PA's security apparatus to confront all those engaged in [violence] and dismantlement of [military] capabilities and infrastructure".[327] This impliedly touched Hamas' military wing, activists, and social network. On the other hand, offering a truce in 2005, and signing the Cairo Declaration with the Palestinian factions in 2005, have reflected Hamas' intention to concentrate on politics and obtain peace with Israel that might avoid its military and political leaders from assassination.

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[323] (Bani-Odah, Author Interview. 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)

[324] Ali Jarbawi, *Hamas and the policy of adaptation*, AMIN: Arabic Media Internet Network, 27 Sep 2005, www.amin.org/Print.php?t=opinion&id=3933

[325] (Bani-Odah, Author Interview. 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)

[326] (Al-Betawi, Author Interview. 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)

[327] The Roadmap is an internationally devised peace plan, drawn up by the Quartet Committee (the US, the UN, the EU, and Russia - with Israeli and Palestinian consultation). 7 May 2003, https://bit.ly/2OJzmvn

Both approaches remarkably indicate a turning point in Hamas' strategic thinking and its efforts to avoid the movement from the consequences of the Roadmap's implementation, and to look for other approaches to achieve its goals.[328] Ziad Abu Amr commented on this: "Hamas has reached a point where it wants to get a position where it can [to] define and determine Palestinian policy"... [Further], they do not want to be permanently stigmatized as a ["terrorist" movement]".[329]

However, the reassessment of Hamas to the significance of the armed action was relatively linked with the efforts of Israel to crack it down. However, the emphasis on the national cause and its intention to play a different role within the PA became Hamas' attempt to present a "low profile" of violence. This again could give an example on Hamas' rationality concerning the organizational threats.[330] Hussein Abu Al-Naml believed that Hamas faced a threat of annihilation, and it was the responsibility of its leaders to confront this stage and maintain the organizational and leadership body of the movement. The Truce in 2005 was then a part of Hamas' accommodation with these goals to avoid disintegration. In the same context, its participation in the 2006 legislative elections was one of its priorities to fortify the movement's security through first legitimacy in the PLC, and a second through being part of the system and affecting its roles.[331]

Anyhow, within a non-homogenous movement such as Hamas, the decision to change the approaches or prioritizing political action over military action would be an internal challenge to these movements.[332] The tension between the different trends had been there since it first appeared, and this could be returned to the different perspectives and divisions that exist within the movement, whether politically, militarily, or geographically and ideologically that influence the direction of the movement. In certain periods, Hamas could ease this tension by allowing the different drives to complement each other. However, at other times, the tension forced Hamas to give priority to one or the other conditional upon the issue at hand. The tension had been more or less visible depending on the political conditions.

The discussion over taking part in the PLC's elections of 1996 could be a good example of this, when the religious and military drive made the direction of the movement adhere to the armed struggle.[333] According to Imad Al-Falouji, inside Hamas, there were two main currents holding two contradictory views on the participation in the 1996 elections.[334] The first took a hard line, opposing participation, under the pretext that the most important of them came within the

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[328] The Guardian: *Hamas hints at ceasefire as the Palestinians vote*, Sun 9 Jan 2005
[329] Abu Amr, Ziad, a Gaza PLC member, cited in The Guardian: *Hamas hints*. Op. cit.
[330] Walther, Marc A. *Hamas between violence and pragmatism*. California: NAVAL Postgraduate School, 2009, pp. 59-63
[331] Abu Al-Naml, Hussein: *Hamas from the opposition to power or from ideology to politics*. In M. Saleh (Ed.), A critical reading to the experience of Hamas and its government. Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, (2007), pp. 29-30
[332] (Dudouet, *From War to Politics*. 2009. Op.cit, p. 27)
[333] (Hroub, *Hamas: Conflating National Liberation*, 2010. Op. cit. p: 178)
[334] Al-Falouji, Imad: The Path of Thorns: Hamas, the Intifada, The PA. Amman: Dar Al-Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution. 2002, p. 414

Oslo Agreement, and that they would not be fair and exclude the Palestinian diaspora, rather than the powers of the council would be limited. The most prominent proponent of this approach was the Hamas leadership abroad. Their justifications were linked to the fact that Oslo was originally designed to undermine the resistance and give up Palestinian national rights, and the PA's political action ceiling was linked to its obligations toward the agreements signed with Israel, which would undermine Hamas' political action. Besides, this would limit the political action within the Palestinian self-rule lands while excluding the diaspora. As for the second trend, their tendency was in favor of participation, as the election would be an opportunity to enter Hamas within the official institutions of the PA through popular elections and not through the Oslo Agreement.[335] Their justification was based on the fact that Hamas was not new to contest in the elections since it had previously contested in the local elections (the chambers of commerce, municipalities, and professional associations). The public might take the boycotting as an escape from the societal arena and this leaves them with only one option. As in case of participation, in their opinion, it would give Hamas the opportunity to legal and constitutional legitimacy and presence, which the Islamists lacked in many neighboring countries and seek to obtain it. Thus, Hamas will be given the opportunity to monitor and fight corruption.[336]

However, in different occasions, Hamas thought of adopting new policies that aimed at overcoming the exclusion from political action and attempting of not harming its identity as a resistance movement while engaging itself in political affairs. The first attempt of Hamas was to enter political work through establishing a new party called the Islamic National Salvation Party (*Hizb Al-khalas Alwatanii Al'iislamy*), founded in 1995 by Ismail Abu Shanab, one of Hamas' leaders. The main notion of this party was to be a political body that deals with the political reality far from the direct use of the name of Hamas. However, the domination of the military trend over the policy-making of the movement hindered the development of this party. Hamas did not seriously deal with the political action process because its view of the political process as a whole was a "hoax" and thus, there was no need to build a political party.[337]

It is clear that both trends supported their stands with rational justifications with a political dimension, and were subjected to the movement's interest and what it can gain or lose. This is supported by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who pointed that: "This matter [elections] is a political matter that is originally based on legal provisions that give the Muslim freedom to enter or not according to what the movement recognizes in the interest of Islam and Muslims".[338] In other words, Hamas invoked its decision to enter the PA to the compatibility of the available opportunity with the movement's interest and the base of profit and loss, away from the ideological interpretations. Ideologically, Hamas found what supported its decision regarding the fact that Oslo was contrary to its ideology as it carried a waiver of an Islamic land and recognition of Israel's existence.

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[335] Ibid. p. 414.
[336] (Ezbidi, 2010, *Hamas and governance*. Op.cit. p. 37)
[337] (Al-Falouji, *The Path of Thorns*. 2002, Op.cit. p. 403)
[338] Yassin, Ahmad, Cited in (Ezbidi, 2010, *Hamas and governance*. Op.cit. p. 37)

However, the tension was again visible when Hamas was about to decide participation in the PLC elections and making a transition in 2006. Two types of leaders presented two different approaches to Hamas' politics, which consequently represented this tension, 'hardliners and moderates'.[339] The 'hardliner' perceived that Hamas should be committed to the outlines of its charter, and should adhere to the essential role and the basis on which it was established. For those who adopt this argument, such as Nizar Rayan, one of Hamas' senior military leaders, and Fathi Hammad, one of Hamas senior political leaders and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, giving up Hamas' identity as a resistance movement would endanger its cohesion and sustainability since Hamas was committed to the military line to face the occupation.[340] Meanwhile, the 'moderates', such as Ghazi Hamad, Hamas' ex-spokesman, Ahmed Yousef, the political advisor of Hamas' prime minister and Ismail Haniya, a senior political leader of Hamas, a former Prime Ministers, tended to give priority to the future of the movement in terms of its ability to maintain its cohesion and survival. The exploiting of opportunities, available by the new realities, and avoiding risking the whole organization and its function, were their argument to turn toward the political approach.[341] What furthers this tension, according to Nehad Khanfar, was that the grassroots of Hamas were not expecting that this moment might come. They were not ready of this rapid step toward transformation yet, since they were very reluctant to accept the fact that their resistance movement was turning to a political one. They feared that they would be in Fatah's position and they might lose many of their ideological and social supporters. In addition, Hamas was not ready, from a logistical point view, to be a ruling party. They have never been in a position to create policies and to think as being part of an establishment.[342]

Nonetheless, Veronique Dudouet found that the decision-making process and intra-party debates on strategy shifts to initiate political transitions were strongly influenced by external events taking place in the societal, national, and regional environment in which the NLMs operated.[343] In the case of Hamas, the cohesion and harmony between its bodies, besides the process of decision-making based on democratic decentralized structure, enabled the movement to adapt a new mechanism to respond more accordingly to the objective elements.[344] These were the utmost importance factors to overcome such tension and to reach a consensus within the movement. Despite the current different trends within Hamas, the internal dynamic of Hamas considered the cost-benefit analysis that took into account the assessment of the opportunities to maintain, secure, or improve Hamas' position. According to Khaled Mashal, in the course of taking decision, Hamas considered the major strategies, threats, and opportunities that confronted the movement to make the necessary shifts to meet emerging circumstances based on cost-benefit calculations. This process helped Hamas to accommodate its

[339] (Walther. *Hamas between violence and pragmatism*. 2009, Op. cit. pp. 36-38)
[340] (Rudolph, *The Islamic Resistance* .2008, p. 83)
[341] (Dudouet, From War to Politics. 2009. Op.cit, p. 27)
[342] (Khanfar, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[343] (Dudouet, From War to Politics. 2009. Op.cit, p. 27)
[344] (Walther, *Hamas between violence and pragmatism*. 2009, Op. cit. pp. 36-38)

decision to define the future trend of the movement.[345] According to Ahmad Al-Betawi and Samer Khwairh, Hamas' strength lied behind the existence of a 'collective awareness' among its members and among its political and military bodies over the long and short strategic goals. [346]The domination of a collation between the armed wing and the political wing made Hamas give priority to the importance of preserving the movement to maintain power and legitimacy and ensure organizational survival.[347] Despite the absence of the first line leaders and the charismatic personality after the assassination of Ahmad Yassin, the internal dynamic of Hamas was a factor that pathed the way to approach the overlapping political method over the armed struggle as a tool.[348]

Notwithstanding the strong institutionalized structure of Hamas that aided the movement to reduce the tension between its trends and to achieve consensus, Hamas needed rationalized justifications to address this shift to its members to prevent them from resulting in fragmentation, especially that Hamas' traditional justification to boycott entering the PA had ideological folds. In fact, Hamas faced an ongoing dilemma since Oslo, which was the process of preparing the bases and the supporters for great shifts. According to Adnan Asfour, this needed time to overcome the problems of the transition process internally and at the grassroots level. During Oslo's era, the movement was not prepared to move directly from military action to political action and engagement in government, and find the appropriate justifications for Hamas' public for this transition. However, the threats that beset Hamas, besides the opportunities to present itself as an alternative to the PLO, facilitated the movement's internal compatibility.[349] In addition, many voices inside Hamas, whether at the leadership or grassroots level, had begun to demand the movement to review its positions toward entering the PA. These internal demands were justified, according to Ahmad Youssef, by much of the loss that affected Hamas' position to disengage itself from a body that directly affected the lives of Palestinians and left the floor to the PLO/Fatah to monopolize the authority.[350]

Nevertheless, ideologically, the Palestinian Cairo Declaration in 2005[351] gave the movement the proper justifications for its members and facilitated the overcoming of ideological boundaries and internal tension. The Declaration freed Hamas from a major ideological obstacle that might put its legitimacy, or ideological capital at stake. Hamas argued that joining the electoral race was no longer an implicit approval of the Oslo Accords.[352] The transgression of Oslo freed the movement from altering its position toward the peace process, or the

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[345] Ibid.
[346] (Khuwayra. 2017, Jan 07. Op.cit) and (Al-Betawi, 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)
[347] (Berti, *Armed political organizations*. 2013. Op.cit. p. 3)
[348] (Dudouet, From War to Politics. 2009. Op.cit, p. 27)
[349] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[350] (Youssef, Author interview. 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[351] The Cairo Declaration was signed on 19 March 2005 by twelve Palestinian factions, including Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).
[352] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 43)

recognition of the State of Israel, thus compromising on its ideological stance.[353] Hamas found a better justification to avoid the ideological obstacles by claiming that the outbreak of the second *Intifada* suspended the Oslo Accords and it set new realities. Hamas argued that the Accords and their legacy had by *de facto* been undermined by the second *Intifada*.[354] This was crucial in Hamas' explanation of its shift to participate in the 2006 elections to its members.

Furthermore, the Declaration gave considerable attention to the reforming of the internal Palestinian situation rather than discussing the Peace Process. In addition, the Declaration did not directly involve Hamas with political affairs that touched its main positions, especially toward the relation with Israel. Nevertheless, to get the support of its base and the credibility of its audience and the public for this transition, Hamas needed to acclimatize its general goals with the goals of the transition. Ensuring the survival of the movement and exploiting the new opportunity to achieve power were important elements to assure that this transition was not a surrendering of its ideological premises for the sake of the political participation. Thus, the new direction did not represent an abdication of collective ends. The re-interpretation of the term 'resistance' including different illustrations, such as the political resistance, became an important justification to address this transition to its community. Hamas intended to present the parliamentary participation as a new form of resistance besides the armed resistance. Thus, giving intention to the internal Palestinian restructuring and reformation was part of the wide term of resistance.[355] This was articulated in the platform of Hamas' "Change and Reform" bloc, saying that: "[The Bloc] believes that [the] participation in the legislative elections comes in light of the reality of the Palestinian cause, and within the framework of the comprehensive program for the liberation of Palestine, the return of the Palestinian people to their homeland and the establishment of their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. This participation is to be a supportive to the resistant program of the Palestinian people which they chose as strategic option to end the occupation."[356]

However, the intention of Hamas, at least at this stage, was to play the opposition role that was concerned with to influence the political development from inside the political system, and changing the functions of the PA and those related to the daily life of the Palestinians rather than playing a direct political role and being in a position that required direct relations with the peace process and negotiations that directly touched Hamas' position, which the movement was not ready to discuss at this stage.

As an internal dynamic, Hamas ran the elections with the "Change and Reform" Bloc as a new body that held a political and social program and represented its political integration and development of the movement. Perhaps, with giving another name to Hamas' political bloc, it wanted to draw two different images of the movement to reduce the tension of the different trends within its leadership and

[353] (Løvlie. *From Maximalist Absolutism*. May 2008. Op. cit. p. 52)
[354] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 43)
[355] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[356] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)

grassroots. First was Hamas as a resistance movement that represented and adhered to the armed resistance line, and second was the new political body that represented the political line of the movement. This could reflect the tension of the different trends within Hamas, thus the combination of the armed resistance and the political line was Hamas' proper tool to avoid fragmentation. [357]

Nevertheless, it could be safe to conclude that the strive of the movement to survive in light of the threat of the whole components of the movement made it easier for Hamas to avoid a sharp split between its internal trends, and thus to reach consensus. It could also be safe to say that part of the primary incentives that might shape the potential of militant organizations to transition to political parties was the dissatisfaction of these organizations with the limits of violence, and sensing the imperatives of the re-organizational structuring after the great loss on the leadership level, thus they sought for new opportunities to reach ideal outcomes.

After 2005, Hamas experienced the threat of continuing the armed action on its organizational survival. The debate within the movement became crucial over the significant use of the armed struggle to achieve its goals in light of the current circumstances and the reflection of this approach on the survival of the movement. As being subjected to great threats because of the leadership dilemma and the limits of the armed action to offer a new opportunity, the transition toward political action became more effective to pursue outcome goals. This would not happen without a coherent structure and intra-party dynamic to smoothly change between methods. With a movement, such as Hamas widely adhering to the armed struggle, reducing the internal tension between the different trends was of great concern to Hamas to avoid fragmentations. The internal dynamic of Hamas, the organizational structure, and the decision-making structures based on benefit and loss were important elements to reach consensus. This came in addition to what Hamas' leaders preferred to call 'collective awareness' of the opportunity and threats within the leadership and grassroots of the movement. The great threat and political opportunities offered by the continuation of the armed action had facilitated the decision to transition and further channel the militants to pursue goals through alternative means. In spite of this, the fears within Hamas' different trends were in concern of the identity of the movement as a resistance movement. This might pose a great challenge to the militant organization once they decided to transform.

The outcome goals achievement and survivability were incentive reasons to advance Hamas toward rethinking its military acts. The opportunity to achieve power and implementing its program was acclimated with the threat of survivability of the movement. Thus, not only exploiting opportunity and achieving its goals out of transition was decisive to Hamas' transition, but also the great threat that it faced and the repercussion of the armed action in reducing the opportunity to achieve its goals were to be important elements. Thereto, Hamas' transition proceeded from a rational calculation of the possibilities and limitations

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[357] Zuhur, Sherifa, *Hamas and Israel: conflicting strategies of group-based politics*. USA: Strategic Studies Institute. 2008, P: 30.

inherent in the armed struggle, and the importance of assuring the organizational survival of the movement. Moreover, Hamas aimed to search for a new role with new methods to play in the Palestinian arena that might enable the movement to strengthen its power.

2.1.3 Searching for new roles to avoid exclusion

We discussed earlier the several changes that took place in the Palestinian scene and the direct implications on Hamas' calculations and tendencies to rethink the use of armed action. The implications of the power struggle against Fatah is explained in light of the developments that offered Hamas new opportunities to achieve power and legitimacy, as well as the struggle of Hamas to preserve its existence and internal coherency. Both factors were important and rather decisive in influencing Hamas to change its direction. Either way, in the following paragraphs, a third factor is explored by explaining the relationship between the quest of Hamas to avoid exclusion and give priority to political action over military action.

The repercussions of the Second *Intifada* and the deterioration in the lives of Palestinians caused an overwhelming sense of frustration among the Palestinians over the security of their personal and family lives as well as serious concerns about their future. In addition to that, the failure of Fatah to present a good governance example in leading the PA as well as the inability of the PA to control the internal situation and achieve the Palestinian aspiration, augmented the levels of dissatisfaction among Palestinians with the current internal political, economic and security conditions.[358] These developments were, partly if not mainly, decisive factors that made the urgent priorities of the Palestinian public to rebuild the Palestinian institutions and reforming the performance of the PA. In fact, for long, reforming the Palestinian Authority has been a critical concern for a wide sector of the Palestinian public. These demands appeared shortly after the inception of the PA, but the majority of the voices appeared after the second *Intifada* and the collapse of the Palestinian institutions. The Israeli invasion of the Palestinian cities, which started in 2002, revealed the weaknesses of the internal Palestinian construction and institutions. The deterioration influenced the overall Palestinian body and structures, economic, administrative service, and security levels; all of these were weak in responding to the Palestinian needs. The negative assessment of the PA's performance led to an overwhelming demand for reform. Since 2002, conducting fundamental political reforms, fighting corruption, and correcting the dysfunction of the PA's performance have become the priorities of more than 91% of Palestinians; it is of greater importance than confronting the occupation.[359] Part of the reforming demands included the need to establish a democratic system of government to ensure that the power would not reside in one hand, break the monopoly of Fatah over the PA, provide space for the rule of law,

[358] (Hamed, Qusai A., *The United States of America*. 2009, p. 134)
[359] (CPRS): Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No (13) 2004.

the separation of powers, accountability and transparency, as well as to solve the dilemma of the distribution of responsibilities and prevailing chaos.[360]

In effect, the positions of the main actors in the Palestinian scene dramatically changed as a result. As Fatah received descending support from the Palestinians, Hamas could improve its public image and advance its position in the domestic power struggle. The social and welfare services, as well as the military records, were crucial instruments used to improve Hamas' popularity.[361] However, this did not decisively indicate increased public support from the Palestinians for Hamas' military approach, as the coming figures confirm.

Gradually, armed action received minor support from the Palestinians, but voices appeared to question the efficiency of using violence in light of its consequences. This gave more significance to the internal demands calling to reevaluate the approach of the Palestinian factions, and the need for an overall assessment of the internal Palestinian situation including the use of violence. Thus, the two contradicting trends distinguished the Palestinian public opinion and made the choices of Hamas problematical. The first was the increase in the popularity of Hamas against the popularity of Fatah, and the increase of the demands of Hamas to pay greater attention to the general Palestinians demands of reforms. The second was the decrease of support for Hamas' military approach against the support of the Fatah/PLO approach. According to polls conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey, the support for Fatah dropped from 40% in December 2004 to 36% in March 2005 while the support of Hamas increased from 18% in December 2004 to 25% in March 2005.[362] In contrary to the augmented support to Hamas, the support for Hamas military action dropped from 77% in September 2004 to 29% in March 2005.[363] In contrast, 84% of the respondents supported a calm relationship with Israel and the return to negotiations.[364] These figures revealed the contradiction in the orientation of the Palestinian public. The Palestinian scene was neither supportive of Fatah's domination over the PA and the corrupted regime that it leads, nor supportive of the military approach of Hamas in light of the harms that affected Palestinians after militarizing the second Intifada. The thoughts of the Palestinian public on the internal issues and factors that affect their daily lives, such as the need to resolve the situation with Israel, can better explain these orientations. The mass base of support for Hamas became no longer tolerated with the economic costs of its military operations. Then, attacks became too high and eroded the socioeconomic environment.

This situation prompted Hamas to reluctantly heed the opinion of the Palestinian public. Although Palestinians support the idea of "resistance," Hamas' deeds are sometimes blamed for subsequent Israeli reaction.[365] As a ramification of the continued military environment, the Palestinian society has suffered a so-called

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[360] Ibid.
[361](Løvlie, *From Maximalist Absolutism*. May 2008 Op.cit. p. 39)
[362] (CPRS) (Public Opinion Poll No (14&15), December 2004 and March 2005)
[363] Ibid. Poll No (13&15), (September 2004 and March 2005)
[364] Ibid. Poll No (14&15), (December 2004 and March 2005)
[365] Long, Baudouin, *The Hamas Agenda: How Has It Changed?* Medil East Policy, 17(4), (Winter 2010) Middle East Policy council, p: 136.

"war fatigue"; there was public demand for a break. The second intifada has left the Palestinian society with economic, security and social crises. Since Hamas claimed to be the voice of the people, it did not want to lose moral ground in its struggle by continuing to fuel the military confrontation with Israel that had impacted the civilians badly. In several occasions, Hamas was blamed for the subsequent Israeli reaction.[366] This necessitates reviewing military action and reassessing the significance of its use in light of the developments and challenges that affected the position of Hamas. Hamas appeared to respond to the popular opinion as a way out to not lose its role in society and limiting it to the charity work, which was facing challenges as a result of the various policies towards restricting the financial resources of Hamas.[367] Add to this that since the construction of the Wall Hamas became unable to act the armed struggle as intensive as during the first three years of the second Intifada. According to Israeli data, the construction of the Wall has significantly decreased the number of attacks inside Israel. During the 34 months from the beginning of Intifada in September 2000 until the beginning of the construction of the Wall by the end of July 2003, the Palestinian groups carried out 73 attacks. Whilst by the beginning of August 2003 until the end of June 2004, only three attacks were successful occurred and most of them were during in the first half of 2003. This to say that since construction of the wall, the number of attacks has declined by more than 90%.[368]

The position of the Palestinian popular towards the continuation of armed action and the Legislative Council elections in 2006 had placed Hamas with contradictory options. How would Hamas, which considers itself part of the social, political, national liberation fabric of the Palestinian community, refuse to take part in elections that directly concern the lives of Palestinians? Adhering to military action direction without responding to the internal Palestinian demands would affect Hamas' position, causing it to lose the public support it has achieved. While ignoring the demands of the Palestinians to decrease the use of violence against Israel would show the irresponsibility of Hamas towards the Palestinians as well as the consequences of the continuation of violence. However, the internal Palestinian tendency raised then the question of Hamas' responsibility toward the public, and its role to respond to the Palestinians demands. The changes in the priorities of Palestinians posed a risk to the armed action taken by Hamas. The price of not accepting these risks, however, is accepting the even greater risk of losing its support since Hamas represents a significant constituency. For Hamas, the dilemma of halting the armed action without searching for new methods would leave the movement without a role to play. Since Hamas relayed heavily on armed action to build its power and achieve public support (the armed action was the main method that represented its identity and actions), the turning in the Palestinian priorities left Hamas with no major role to play within this approach and consequently within the Palestinian scene.

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[366] Ibid.

[367] Mashal, Khaled, *Milestones in Thought and Experience*, In Saleh (ed). The Islamic Resistance Movement, 2017, Op. cit. p. 458

[368] Bard, Mitchell. *West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon Security Barriers: Background & Overview.* Jewish Virtual Library. 2020. Retrieved from shorturl.at/hDFV9

Hamas relayed heavily on violence to gain its power within the Palestinian community and its main role was established as the armed resistance. However, the Palestinians changed their priorities, from the quest for liberation to the quest for reforming the internal Palestinian lives. The shift in the concerns of Palestinians, from the quest for liberation to the quest for fighting the corruption, raised Hamas' fears of limiting its role to social work after the decline in supporting the military action, in which it puts its capital and was one of the main reasons for the doubling its popularity in the Palestinian streets. In front of this, Hamas was required to play an essential and influential role in moving the Palestinians from the state of slackness that afflicted aspects of their lives. As indicated by the polls conducted in 2004 and 2005, Hamas received an increase in public confidence, especially with regards to issues such as fighting corruption and carrying out political reforms. 84.1% of the respondents trusted the ability of Hamas to achieve public reforms and fight corruption, compared to 52.9% for Fatah.[369] The general Palestinian trend supported the cessation of military action, and played a role in influencing the Palestinian internal opinion. Therefore, military action was no longer an internal demand during this period. Hamas had to assimilate with this reality by searching for another source that strengthens its legitimacy and power rather than relying on military action.

During the Oslo period, the evasion from engaging with political life and adopting a clear-cut political program contributed to the failure of Hamas' leadership to achieve any meaningful political change and further contributed to Hamas' decline, as did the absence of any alternative political channels of expression. Hamas' internal malaise was growing. The popular alienation from politics in favor of cultural and religious practices disillusioned the younger cadres of Hamas. In 2006, Hamas was required by its cadre to play a role from within the PA, not only from outside. Moreover, with the end of the Intifada, the resistance component of the Palestinian struggle—so critical to Hamas' political thinking and action—was undermined. Not to mention the PA's measures to weaken the influence of Hamas in the Palestinian society. This had direct repercussions on Hamas' theory of action, which were largely dependent on armed action to achieve power and public support. With the removal of the resistance component from Palestinian political imperatives, what role, that might be acceptable to most Palestinians, was left for Hamas? The resulting problem faced by Hamas was fundamentally one of survival and avoiding exclusions.[370] Hamas' move was fraught with risks. Staying outside the Palestinian political system in 1996 enabled the movement to play the role of opposition from outside the system. Hamas had no responsibility and was then able to criticize the institution, score political points, and pursue their policies from outside the formal framework, instead of providing an unofficial alternative for the unhappy Palestinians.[371] Participating in the Palestinian political system puts Hamas at risk of losing its political gains in light of the new responsibilities to provide an alternative to the dissatisfied public and thus becoming responsible for bearing the defects of the political system, similar to Fatah.

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[369] (CPRS: Public Opinion Poll No (13&18), September 2004 and December 2005)
[370] (Roy. *Hamas and the Transformation(s)*, 2003, Op. cit. P: 13).
[371] Barghouti, Iyad, in (Løvlie, *From Maximalist Absolutism*. May 2008 Op.cit. p. 51).

However, in 2006, standing aside without participation in the political system was in contrary to the events of 1996 that risked the presence of Hamas. This raised the issue on Hamas compiling its decisions accordingly with the public opinion. The sentiments within Hamas toward the PA and Oslo Accords seemed to be the inevitable status quo. Without participation, they would have no role to play in the future Palestinian political system, but rather risk political isolation. Hamas would consequently lose support, and consequently their popular support would decrease if they boycotted the elections.[372] Hamas supporters reasoned that participation in the political system was the only viable alternative.[373] However, in 1996, Hamas lacked the necessary support to gain legislative power, and therefore lacked the opportunity to exert any real influence and legislative power. Contrary to 2006, the situation had changed significantly for its favor to become a relevant political player.[374] Compared to the situation in 1996, during which the powers of the PA largely were concentrated around the charismatic rule of Yasser Arafat, the situation in 2006 was far more favorable for Hamas after the ratification of the Basic Law and the introduction of a parliamentary system that gave more power to the PLC. According to Muhammad Ghazal, a senior leader in Hamas, the debate within Hamas about playing political roles in the system focused on the necessity of influencing the path of the Palestinian political system from within. By reforming its deficiencies, efficient results can be achieved by playing key roles from within. This thinking may have come about after the growing criticism on Hamas' decision to boycott the Palestinian elections in 1996, which left the floor for Fatah without influential accountability. Therefore, the public demands increased for Hamas to create a new balance that ends the monopolization of Fatah.[375]

Three courses of action may explain Hamas' political behaviour. The first is Hamas changing its attitude towards recognizing the PA as a status quo and then taking the necessary policies to move from opposing the political system from the outside to participating in it. Indeed, the second *Intifada* and later the Palestinian factions' agreement in Cairo in 2005 gave Hamas the proper justifications for the theoretical overtaking of Oslo agreement as well as their claim that its entry into the political system came as a result of internal Palestinian demand. The second course action was concerned with Hamas' priorities with regards to the changes in the Palestinian opinion, especially the continuation of military action. The general stance towards military action required Hamas to re-evaluate its viability in light of its impact on the internal Palestinian situation. In order to face the growing demands for changes in the streets of Palestine, it had to make the necessary decisions to preserve its gains from military action and invest the available political opportunities. As for the third course, it is Hamas' intention to convert its public credibility it enjoyed as a result of its military records and the decline of support for the Fatah into seats in the PLC to play advanced roles in influencing

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[372] Internal Hamas Document reproduced in Mishal and Sela 2006, 130
[373] (Løvlie, *From Maximalist Absolutism*. May 2008 Op.cit. p. 51)
[374] Barghouti, in (Løvlie, *From Maximalist Absolutism*. May 2008 Op.cit. p. 51).
[375] (Ghazal, Mohammed, Comments during the Palestinian Cairo Declaration Seminar: towards the Establishment of a New Political System, Amman: Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Spring 2005, pp. 20-21)

the path of the PA. Hamas feared that this support would begin to diminish in favour of other Palestinian currents, especially after the announcement of the truce and Israeli redeployment from the Gaza Strip.[376] According to Ghazi Hamad, a former Hamas government spokesman, the local elections showed that 'people were looking for an alternative due to the corruption and mismanagement among Fatah people. Hamas understood that people wanted them as the alternative'. [377] This massive popularity was also felt as a sort of political obligation that Hamas could hardly shirk, as he said, 'It was the people that pressured Hamas to participate, because they wanted Hamas to be represented and they wanted the elections to reflect the true will of the people.'[378]

The transition from armed resistance to conventional politics require the adoption of a new political culture, formulating a new program, installing party organizational structures, recruiting party cadres, and building their capacity to govern. The main points on which the Hamas electoral platform was based expressed the movement's priorities and the role it sought to play. A review of the program shows that its items were based on a comprehensive reform of the internal Palestinian situation including political, educational, judicial, legislative and financial aspects, as well as combating corruption. It is true that Hamas has linked the reform process to the comprehensive process of liberation from occupation, and this is in line with its reinterpretation of the issue of resistance.[379] Hamas needed a balanced electoral political program that simultaneously preserved its identity as a resistance movement while still offering a practical vision to reform the Palestinian situation. The program gave priority to fighting corruption and conducting several political, economic and judicial reforms, and placed emphasis on youth and women issues as well as the issues of environment and health care. Hamas was keen to present a program that would guarantee wider public support and could become a supporting element to its view of change. Through its electoral program, the movement attempted to present a new image of Hamas that looked forward to leading the Palestinian political system instead of opposing it. In terms of content, the Hamas electoral campaign brought it closer to the electoral campaign of most other political parties.

This pragmatism of Hamas took into consideration the expansion of the movement's popularity, services and its obligations towards broad popular segments within Palestinian society, as well as the expansion of its relations, whether on the Palestinian, Arab or international arena. These elements empowered Hamas to formulate a convincing political speech that consecrated the gains of the movement, and lead to a widening of its popularity to preserve the continuity of the movement as well as maintain its popularity. In other words, the popularity of Hamas and its relationship with its political, social and international milieu formed complex elements that prompted the movement to reproduce itself and reexamine its interests in a realistic manner according to new standards. The

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[376] (Palestinian opinion poll on living conditions, immigration, the Palestinian government, security situation and reform, 2004) (Nairat. Author interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[377] Hamad, In (Hovdenak. *Hamas in transition*. 2009. Op.cit. p. 67)
[378] Ibid.
[379] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)

priority of the Hamas electoral program corresponded with the priorities of the society and the urgent demands to reform the internal Palestinian situation, which meant playing new roles that were different than what Hamas used to do in previous periods.[380]

Analyzing the "Change and Reform" program expressed Hamas' interest in prioritizing life aspects rather than expressing a political program. In other words, Hamas was more interested in improving people's living conditions, security, stability, and the rule of the law, rather than paying attention to a political vision related to the question of liberation. Hamas was not keen to touch the great issues concerning the liberation or the peace process. As it intended to preserve its 'mental image' as a resistance movement, Hamas therefore attempted to present a reform program without affecting its identity.[381] To do so, Hamas stressed on its major general slogans such as "Islam is the solution", "Resistance is the path for liberation", "The Historic Palestine is a definitive right of the Palestinian people" and "The right of return".[382] Indeed, Hamas was keen to utilize this to appease its internal trends to preserve its cohesion. While Hamas had already participated in municipal and association elections with individuals or groups, it now needed a tool for participation that would allow the presentation of a political agenda. In order to enter into political participation, Hamas needed to develop an instrument to do so with a complete political agenda, while at the same time preserving its identity as a resistance movement. Participation in elections required Hamas to address the needs and daily life concerns of the Palestinians. Hamas founded the Change and Reform Party with a complete political, economic and social agenda. It clearly addressed these concerns and rather distanced the bloc from deeply addressing political issues. It is concerned with issues of daily life and governance under current conditions rather than with the ideology of the charter. The Hamas leadership accepted a dichotomy between its charter and the opportunities of the situation. Thereby, the decision to participate in politics did not lead to a split in the movement.[383] Hamas colored its participation in the elections of 2006 with the sense of responsibility toward reforming the Palestinian reality in a way that alleviates the suffering of people, enhances their steadfastness and protects them from corruption as well as security chaos. However, Hamas also needed to frame its participation in the legislative elections with the general goal of the movement as part of its comprehensive program for the liberation of Palestine. Hamas was keen to frame its political participation with a feeling of "resistant", and justified it with its intention to protect the resistance program.[384]

Generally, Hamas adopted a selection mechanism for its candidates that reassured the electorates of its seriousness to work against corruption and present a better model that is different from Fatah's. Hamas nominated candidates who enjoyed public acceptability and confidence, particularly in issues related to

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[380] Ibid.

[381] For further details about the results of the polls, see the polls conducted by the Development Studies Program at Birzeit University in 2004-2005, and by the Palestinian Center for Political and Survey Research between May-December 2005.

[382] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)

[383] (Walther, *Hamas between violence and pragmatism*, 2009, Op. cit. p. 67)

[384] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)

integrity, honesty and public work. Popularity was an important criterion, not necessarily the diversity of competencies and specializations. In the West Bank, for example, 65.7% of the candidates were Imams of mosques, or teachers of education and Islamic law; others were not certified. Indeed, Hamas built on them to attract voters and achieve the largest possible number of votes.[385] In addition to this, Hamas also nominated a number of highly qualified nominees in legal, political, economic, financial fields, but their percentages did not exceed 25.5 % of the total nominees.[386]

Even though the practice of the armed struggle gave Hamas an ideal climate to bolster its public support during the second Intifada, this option shrunk the workspace of Hamas. During the period following the signing of the Oslo Accords, the military action expressed its convictions and raison d'être. Hamas needed the military action to demonstrate its commitment to its ideology. Going with the mainstream trend in the Palestinian society, which favored the path of peace against the military action, conflicted with Hamas' convictions and political calculations. The fluctuating of popular support, which Hamas broadly lacked in 1996, was not an incentive to push Hamas toward developing its will to join the political action. Hamas was more adhered to its ideological concerns that felt in danger. In addition to this, the political opportunities that Hamas could achieve were few to trade-off its military action for little influence on policy and decision-making in return, due the large support to Fatah's program and the lack support to its program. Therefore, this left the movement with minor and marginalized roles to play in light of the great popularity and control of the PLO and Fatah movement, especially Yasser Arafat, thus risking erosion.

In 2005, a real threat was posed to Hamas' role in the Palestinian realm. The decreased public support to the armed action made no option for Hamas but to stop. How would Hamas balance between the rise of its popularity in one hand and the decline in the support for its military approach on the other hand? Therefore, Hamas felt it necessary to search for another approach to exploit the widespread political disillusionment among Palestinians against Fatah. It can be claimed that the diminishing of the opportunities available for Hamas through the military action was one of the important factors to incent Hamas to trade-off the military action in return of involving itself in wider political action within the PA. Furthermore, the deficiency of the PA's performance to respond to the Palestinians needs remarkably put the credibility of Hamas on the stake to present its alternatives to the Palestinian streets. Therefore, Hamas inclined to pragmatically respond to the concerns of the Palestinian streets by presenting its Change and Reform program with focus on direct concerns rather than the great ideological goals. By following Hamas' behavior toward the public demands, it could be safe to conclude that the popular support of Hamas was an important inductive variable to explain the changing of Hamas' behavior. It was possible to demonstrate the role that the public opinion has on encouraging Hamas toward trading-off its armed action. Hamas was keen to demonstrate its responsibility to the Palestinian public to rescue them from the deteriorated living conditions. Hamas felt the

[385] (Ishtiaq & Shobaki. *Hamas in Power*. 2015, pp. 391-392)
[386] Ibid. pp. 392-393

chance to wrest control of the PA from Fatah. The internal dilemmas of Fatah encouraged a shift in loyalties and provided an opportunity for Hamas to reduce its use of violence and consider electoral politics as a viable reason likewise. Opting for a political strategy was thus a mean toward remaining influential in the Palestinian scene. The focus on the internal Palestinian issues gave Hamas continuity to further its role within the Palestinian political system in light of the changes in the Palestinian domestic circumstances. Thus, the causal nexus between Hamas' desire to play a new role to avoid exclusion, and the reflection of the continuation of the armed action against Hamas' popularity and role, could be logical factor to demonstrate political action rather than the armed action.

Conclusion

The above discussion makes it safe to conclude that there is a causal relation between the opportunities to win the battle of power against Fatah and the tendency of Hamas towards (partial) transition, and prioritizing political action over military action. The existence of the occupation is an incentive factor that explains the reasons behind the Hamas' resort to violence. However, the use of violence is also related to benefits that it could offer to Hamas to overcome the conditions that endangered its raison d'être, and threaten its internal cohesion. During the Oslo period, Hamas feared to undergo the same conditions that the Muslim Brotherhood lived through in the late 70s that caused the exit of the young generation and then to experience fragmentation and split. To Hamas, the PA was a nascent experience, born in ambiguous political situations. The Peace Process that resulted in its emergence, conflicted with Hamas' ideology and identity. This led the movement to be very skeptical about the political opportunities that the newborn political body might offer them. In addition to that, the tasks of the PA aimed to eliminate the resistance movements and illegalize their acquisition or use of weapons. Accepting the limited political opportunity, that joining the PA could offer to Hamas, would risk its authenticity and uniqueness, endangering its internal cohesion, and would leave the movement with a marginalized role to play, particularly when we consider the hegemony of PLO/Fatah over the PA.

These conditions, besides the unwillingness of Hamas to risk its identity, future and grassroots in return of playing a marginal role within the new-born political system, and to pay the political price for such a step, all made the military action the proper approach of the movement to quest for more power, rather than the political action. Therefore, the calculations of Hamas gave priority to the adherence and consistency to its Islamic vision. This became necessary for Hamas to strengthen the internal cohesion to appear credible among its followers, on the account of questing for constitutional legitimacy or developing its political will. Hamas constantly balanced its need to show its military strength to its enemy with a desire to maintain a strong internal legitimacy. These calculations explain Hamas' position to go against the mainstream of the public who favorited the peace approach over the military approach. For Hamas, the competition for power was not only to gain a large number of sets in the PLC, but also a battle of ideologies and approaches. Therefore, when explaining the reasons behind the resort of Hamas to violence as a source to achieve legitimacy and power in a time the

predominant part of the Palestinians supported the continuation of the Peace Process, against the support of the armed strategy, the lack of opportunity to win the battel of power, the struggle for self-preservation and existence, come to the forefront.

In conclusion, the use of violence in the quest for legitimacy and power was Hamas' favorable option and interrelated with Hamas' political opportunities and internal considerations. The decision to join the PA and to present a political program was subjected to the profit, loss, interest, and harm's logic as well as to Hamas' internal calculations. The goals of Hamas in this period were to struggle for its national and military legitimacy through military action, and resisting the Oslo formula, believing that it could distinguish itself from other Palestinian movements, especially Fatah. The armed action during that period served the movement's goals, gave it political credibility, and made it stand out as a distinct peer in its opposition to the settlement project. Hamas' extreme position could be illustrated by the need of the movement, especially in the early period of Oslo, to distinguish its political line from Fatah and the PA as a way to achieve internal cohesion. This stage required Hamas to be internally strong to face the threats of the PA and the Israeli measures against its existence, since Hamas was confronting a Western-backed political system, hostile to Hamas and its ideology. On the other hand, entering into the political system would risk the self-preservation of the movement. In 1996, Hamas found itself in front of a political system dominated by Fatah and Yasser Arafat. In contrast to Hamas, Fatah's ideologically toned with the Peace Approach, deeply familiarized with its corridors, had no major obstacle on the identity level, and was overwhelmingly supported by the Palestinians for the Peace Approach. However, Hamas had an identity dilemma that changed its direction to meet its *raison d'être* and the principles of its emergence. This augmented the fear of Hamas to be dissolved within PLO and its political trajectory, and encouraged the political calculations of the movement. Hamas' political calculations considered the efficacy of both directions (armed struggle vs political action). The above factors were also related to another important factor, which was Hamas' belief of the efficiency of the political track to achieve its final goals.

When the continuation of the armed action had minor opportunities to offer to Hamas, and threatened its role and chances for achieving power, the political transition became a better option to live longer, and searching for better conditions to achieve its goals. One can apply this logic on Hamas to explain and understand its political behavior and calculations. The dilemma of Hamas was manifested in how the movement would respond to the new realities that offered the movement the opportunities to win the battle of power against the corrupted and fragmented Fatah, and improving its legal and political position, while the continuation of the military action became no longer prioritized by a significant part of the Palestinian, after the deterioration that affected their lives in the wake of the ramification of militarizing the second Intifada. This consequently threatened the primary source of legitimacy of Hamas. Excluding this option means restricting an essential part of its role in the Palestinian arena, and subjecting the movement to exclusion. Losing an important part of its military and political leaderships that endangered the capacity of the movement to preserve its organizational and

military capabilities, made Hamas to face a dilemma of its sustainability while adopting the same method of work. The interplay of the organizational pressure to expand and to maintain its influence and existence lead Hamas to set up its political wing to compete in the election. This outcome is impossible without understanding the internal power dynamics within Hamas that considered the inherent benefits and loses, as well as the opportunities and threats. This is also a useful factor that helped Hamas to develop its political will and commitment to political participation. The changing of priorities was then a way out for Hamas from its dilemmas. Otherwise, without playing a real role to extricate the Palestinian situation from the life conditions it reached, would subject the movement to loss the confidence of the public.

2.2. Chapter Two

Hamas in governance: the question of identity and goals

In this chapter, we argue that an unexpected move towards power has made Hamas experience a gap between the liberation movement and the ruling party. The fundamental shift in the role of Hamas created a dilemma for the identity and self-definition of the movement. In line with this and with its desire to remain in power, the ability of Hamas to retain its ideological identity and goals without being affected seemed to be of great concern to the movement. This chapter will examine four main factors that we assume have increased the pressure on Hamas and created the operational environment under which it has experienced governance and made the movement to rethink its position. First, the dilemma of power-sharing within the Palestinian political system. Second, the challenge of presenting a clear political program. Third, the challenge of extremism and the Arab Spring and the changing allies of Hamas. Indeed, it is difficult to define all factors, neither to limit them to one, nor to give significance to one over the other. Other challenges that may appear to be important factors, such as the Israeli challenge to Hamas rule in Gaza. We, therefore, seek to answer the main question as to how these factors prompted Hamas to release its New Political Document in 2017?

2.2.1. Hamas and the dilemma of Power Sharing

The first pressing factor was the question of power-sharing with Fatah, and how the rivalry between the two would be reflected in their ability to co-exist within the Palestinian Political system. Introducing Hamas to the 2006 legislative elections, for the first time, has enabled Hamas to compete electorally with Fatah and to gain real access to the PA structure after winning 78 seats over 132 PLC seats, leaving Fatah behind with 45 seats.[387] This shift practically revealed the dilemma of Hamas' ability to cope with a political system that is functionally structured to grant Fatah unilateral power to control its authorities and institutions. This dilemma has become more pronounced with the failure of the Palestinian political system to establish a concrete institutional structure that provides a pattern of co-existence between its multiple political forces and allows these institutions to act as regulators for all Palestinian organizations and political factions to ensure a peaceful exchange of power at a time these factions can maintain their particularities within the political framework.[388] This structural dysfunction reflects the legacy of the structural and leadership dilemma and political culture in the Palestinian arena that the PLO and the Fatah movement

[387] Gunning, Jeroen, Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence, London: C. Hurst. 2009. P: 146
[388] Ibid.

played a part in consolidating. For a long time, the Palestinian Political scene has been kept away from changing its political leadership and allowing generations to succeed. For example, the elections to the Palestinian National Council did not take place for more than a quarter of a century, as did the PLC and the presidential elections, which enhanced the gap between generations and impeded the transfer of power between multiple elites and factions. In other words, the Palestinian political system suffers from a comprehensive, complex, and protracted structural dilemma, ranging from the weak institutional structure, the dominance of individual leadership, and the absence of the electoral legitimacy of its representatives.

The nature of the relationship between Fatah and Hamas, particularly after Oslo, was part of the development of this dilemma. This relationship is based on an exclusionary rather than a participatory relationship. With the arrival of Hamas to power, the conflict with Fatah brought the dispute over legitimacy, authority, and political power within the PA institutions and both attempted to minimize the other's authority and attempted to control the PA.[389] The Palestinian political structure is not yet completed toward creating a real state building. The relationship with Israel and foreign powers, based on the PLO's negotiated agreements and commitments, was a complicated initial step for Hamas. The problem started with the discrepancy between the Hamas program and the political structure upon which PA was formed, as well as the challenges that Hamas faced to thwart its first encounter of governance. The Hamas rule has uncovered shortcomings in the Palestinian political structure in in terms of being able to adapt with two different agendas and two conflicted political programs. This conflict was evident when Hamas was about to form its first government in 2006. Two manifestations reflected the dilemma of power-sharing between Fatah and Hamas: the first was the disagreement over the political program and approaches and the second is the conflict over the control of the PA's civil and military institutions. As for the first, the profound differences in the ideological premises and the means to achieve Palestinian rights were a serious obstacle to the agreement on a political program between Hamas and Fatah, as well as the rest of the Palestinian factions. As a consequence, this became a significant challenge to a kind of co-existence within the PA, thus Fatah and the rest of the Palestinian factions declined to engage in a Hamas-led government, arguing that Hamas' position on many political issues remained obscure, especially its stance towards the PLO.[390] This view was expressed by Azzam al-Ahmad, who stated the Fatah would not join the government until Hamas recognizes both the PLO program under which the Oslo Agreement was signed and the subsequent agreements upon which the elections were held.[391] While Fatah limited the PA's commitment to the negotiation strategy to accomplish Palestinian national goals, Hamas claimed majority support for its approach and persisted to advocate for armed resistance.[392] Fatah disagreed with Hamas on several foreign policy issues, including Hamas' ambivalence towards

[389] (Mariam. *Conflict of Authorities*. 2008, Op.cit. pp. 23-24)
[390] Pina, Aaron D., *Palestinian Elections.* CRS Report for Congress. February 9 2006, p. 13
[391] (Al-Ayyam newspaper, 21 February 2006)
[392] Swart, Mia, *Palestinian Reconciliation and the Potential of Transitional Justice*. Analysis Paper (N 25), Brookings: Doha Center, March 2019, p. 7.

accepting pre-existing agreements between Israel and the PLO, and more generally to fulfill the international demands of the so-called Quartet. This deep gap between them was reflected in their political culture towards perceiving and dealing with each other. Hence, when the two factions met within the structures of the Palestinian political system, this conflict was reinforced between their two exclusionary programs.[393] They both claimed the right and the power of their political approaches. Indeed, this presents a broader dilemma of the Palestinian political system itself, which is the lack of a consensual accord over a single national vision, as well as the lack of a political contract to combine the Palestinians factions, and to constitute a binding framework for all Palestinian movements and factions.[394]

As for the second, the struggle for authority strengthened the division between Hamas and Fatah. Mahmoud Abbas, head of the PA and Fatah, sought to preserve supremacy over the PA and PLO's institutions.[395] While Hamas was trying to break Fatah's control over the civil and security apparatus, the result of the elections gave Hamas the right to seek further power and authority within the political system. This developed two opposing centers of power—the presidency, led by Mahmud Abbas and Fatah, and the Hamas-led government—that immediately complicated the sharing of power in the Palestinian political arena. This division was reflected geographically, with the presidency based in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, causing a lack of effective political and economic integration between the West Bank and Gaza.[396] The existence of such political division and conflicted political agendas reduced the opportunity of co-existence between the presidential and the governmental institutions, and both appeared to be competing rather than working accordingly.

Hamas' dilemma of assuming power over the PA's institutions and the Palestinian political system was impeded functionally by a faction that regards the PA as one of its accomplishments and political capital. In fact, in the wake of Hamas' victory in the elections of 2006 Fatah was reluctant to renounce its power or accept the end of its dominance over the PA and the monopoly of the security apparatus. Several of its cadres took uncompromising positions and reaffirmed the supremacy of their party. A part of Fatah's members remains nevertheless viscerally distrustful of Hamas, whom they accuse of using a dual language and hiding its arrogance behind religious and nationalist discourse. This conviction that the Islamist movement cannot be a loyal partner can be found in other national contexts and participates in the debate around Islamists' soluble character in democracy.[397] The day after the Hamas' victory, Mohamed Dahlan, a former head of Preventive Security, head of the National Security Council, declared during a demonstration of strength in Gaza City that "Fatah is the first movement, the only movement and it remains the first and only despite all those who conspire against

[393] (Youssef, Author Interview. 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[394] Al-Masri, Hani, *How to get out of the division impasse*, (Seminar), Nablus: Seeds for Culture and Development, 8 Septemper, 2018.
[395] (Pina, *Palestinian Elections*. February 9 2006, Op. cit. p. 13)
[396] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 13)
[397] Bucaille, Lætitia, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable à la nation en déroute: A quoi servent les dirigeants palestiniens?* CERI, n° 224, Oct 2016, p. 7

it (...) [insisting] (...) [that] Fatah will not participate in a government led by Hamas." [398] Dahlan's declaration, not only refuse to allow his movement to play the second role, but even seems to deny any political legitimacy to Hamas. Dahlan' rhetoric sounded as a declaration of warning against Hamas and those in his movement who would accept the participation in a unity government led by Hamas.[399] Thus, Fatah refused to give up its authority in favor of its political opponent. Fatah's leadership was unlikely to accept Hamas' persistent demand for structural reform of the PLO, or to give Hamas real power in the PA' institutions which would make it easier for Hamas to prevail in both bodies.[400]

Anyhow, the two parties' course of action made the dilemma of power-sharing more complicated. In the quest for reaffirming Fatah's power, Mahmoud Abbas, issued decrees by which transferred a portion of the PA's functions to the Fatah-led Presidential Foundation and rooting the PLO as the primary Palestinian representative. The attempt of undermining the power of the newly elected PLC and the Palestinian government, manifested also in cancelling the provisions that transferred some security entitlements to the government and entrusted Mohamed Dahlan with the responsibility of the National Security Council. These measures mark the refusal of Fatah to renounce the monopoly of the security services.[401] By March 2006, Fatah had begun its boycott of the parliament, strengthening the divisions between the two sides. The elected representatives of the Hamas, in their turn, have repealed several recent laws that have strengthened the power of the presidency, the security services in particular.[402]

The Fatah's blocking strategy resulted in depriving Hamas to govern, and to find good reasons to develop its armed forces in the Gaza Strip to challenge Fatah's power over the security apparatus. Of course, the control of the security services was a central issue: a government cannot impose itself without controlling the public force. The 70,000 armed men mostly affiliated with Fatah and their leaders cannot imagine coming under the command of a Hamas' Interior Minister.[403] In its attempt to replace the existing security system in Gaza, Hamas formed the 'Executive Force' *Alqowah Al-tanfethiya*'. Unlike the rest of the Palestinian security services, whose composition was made up of members of the Fatah movement, the executive force was composed of around 5,600 members, notably former members of Hamas' armed wing: Ezzeddine al-Qassam Brigades.[404] The Hamas interior minister, Sayed Sayyam, complained that forces loyal to Fatah and the PA did not follow his directives. This step was seen as an attempt by Hamas to find a security apparatus parallel to the Fatah-controlled security

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[398] Dahlan, Mohammed, In (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 6)
[399] (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 6)
[400] Abu Rahma, Imad, *the Division and the Palestinian Identity Crisis*, January 26, 2017, http://hadfnews.ps/post/24965
[401] (Pina, *Palestinian Elections*. February 9 2006, Op. cit. p. 14)
[402] Abu-Khalaf, Intisar & others (eds), *Towards Palestinian National Reconciliation*, Ramallah and Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAFF), 2011, pp. 46-56
[403] (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 10)
[404] Ibid.

apparatus and thus an attempt to find a formula for confronting the PA's functional security concept.[405]

Fatah's refusal to transfer control of the PA's security forces to the Hamas-led interior ministry (as required by the PA's basic law) has been attributed to Fatah's lack of confidence in Hamas' motion, which was particularly aimed at bringing them under the control of its cabinet. Hamas, in turn, perceived the political system as a strange body, ideologically and functionally, and the movement would not accept the PA's weapons monopoly in the Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and therefore had to restructure its function to gain more authority and make it controllable.[406] Besides, the rise in international military assistance to the PA forces further strengthened Hamas' perception that its government was effectively under attack. This refers implicitly to the internal conflict over the authorities of the two parties, and one attempt to minimize the power of the other party within the PA's apparatuses.[407]

The rise in power of the Hamas strike force became part of a context of increasing violence with Fatah. A few months after the elections, beginning in May 2006, in the wake of Fatah's refusal to participate in a national unity government, incidents increased between the two movements. At the same time, the suspension of international aid, which prevented the payment of salaries to members of the administration, particularly the police, fueled the discontent and sources of conflict.[408] Continued rivalry overpowers, authorities and control of PA institutions escalated, and a major outbreak of violence happened in June 2007, when the two groups were engaged in a military showdown in Gaza.[409] Members of Fatah and Hamas became targets for each other through intimidation, kidnapping, and assassination. These assaults have triggered an ongoing process of retaliation. The Political conflict between Fatah and Hamas became no longer regulated; militia logic has imposed itself as a mode of operation, and involved the armed militants of the Ezzeddine al-Qassam brigades and the al-Aqsa Martyrs brigades, that finally led to Hamas tightening its control over the Gaza Strip and the security services operating under Fatah.[410]

In fact, the Fatah- Hamas' clash is not new, it happened several times during the first Intifada when both of the movements sought to emphasize their dominance to lead the uprising. However the tension between the two movements has got momentum since the establishment of the PA and its security apparatus. The PA' security apparatus were composed, mainly and largely, of Fatah' cadre and militants who would later lead the efforts to control and repress the Islamist opposition, trying to frustrate their plans to attack Israel. In fact, the establishment of Palestinian Authority allowed the Israelis to offload part of the burden of security by entrusting the Palestinians with the management of the Islamist threat. As early as the autumn of 1994, following the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by

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[405] (Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 99)
[406] (Abu-Khalaf, & others, *Towards Palestinian National Reconciliation*, 2011, Op.cit. pp. 46-56)
[407] (Swart, *Palestinian Reconciliation*. 2019. Op. cit. p. 10)
[408] (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 10)
[409] (Ezbidi, *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p. 178)
[410] (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 10)

the armed wing of Hamas, the Israeli authorities accepted that the Palestinian armed forces should develop and that a service should be led by Fatah cadres and men of the filed.[411] The context of security subcontracting has put relations between Fatah and Hamas to the test. Between 1994 and 2000, the Preventive Security, Intelligence and Military Intelligence services attempted to deter or punish Hamas' cadres and militants, sometimes imprisoning them or negotiating with the armed wing members to stop their violent actions. The experience of the Palestinian prison has given rise to determined resentments among Islamist activists, especially since many of them were subject to severe torture.[412] As an example, from February 25 to April 13 1996, the PA' security services led a wide campaign of detention targeted 900 activists of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including seniors political and military leaders such as Mahmoud al-Zahar, Ahmed Bahr, Ghazi Hamad and Ibrahim al-Maqadma, who was severely tortured. By serving in the security forces, Fatah militants thus contributed to Israel's security. Many of Fatah' police officers considered that the real objective of Hamas was not to fight Israel but to conquer power. Nasr Youssef, Gaza Police Chief at the time, declared that his forces "are determined to destroy the civil structures of Hamas as well as its military wing".[413] Hamas felt betrayed by the security obligation of PA and accused the security services of working in Israel's pay to uproot the Islamic movement, and denouncing their methods and comparing them to those of Israel.[414]

The Political division between Hamas and Fatah culminated in the worsening of the de facto separation between Gaza and the West Bank and the establishment of lasting institutional cooperation.[415] After a full-fledged split that evolved into a division, the Palestinian political arena witnessed the existence of two authorities in two territorial fortresses, with Hamas ruling over Gaza and Fatah over the West Bank, and both attempted to strengthen their sovereignty over their territories, thus creating a political division between the institutions and departments, services, military, and the judiciary.[416] The division between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank has driven each group to establish a monopoly of influence over their respective territories of jurisdiction, establishing a "duplication of authority" within every civil and security institution, as the two rival governments, with different structures, agendas, and priorities, have consolidated their hold on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.[417] The creation and recruitment of two independent security services are the most obvious example of this struggle for influence and prominence in the national arena. The Legislative Council has since moved away. There are two regional regimes in Ramallah and Gaza, all without electoral legitimization.[418]

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[411] Ibid. p: 8
[412] (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 8)
[413] Al-Hassan, Suhaib, Between 1996 and 2009 a scene to be repeated, Palestine Network for Dialogue, June 17th, 2009. shorturl.at/wESW4
[414] (Bucaille, *Palestine: de l'Etat introuvable*. 2016, Op.cit. p. 9)
[415] (Mariam. *Conflict of Authorities*. 2008, Op.cit. pp. 23-24)
[416] Ibid.
[417] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 13)
[418] Johannsen, Margret (Coordinator), The Reconciliation of Hamas and Fatah, Policy Brief, Frankfurt: Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East, NO. 3, Dec 2011. P. 1.

Indeed, a lack of confidence between the two parties has contributed to accelerating the regional and political division between them, and to complicate the relationship between them. Fatah believed that Hamas' behavior endangered its position in the PA, aimed at clearly controlling the Palestinian political system and the PLO's institutions. Fatah was reluctant to relinquish the power it held and share the authority with Hamas.[419] Abbas had repeatedly expressed concern that Hamas already plans to overtake the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. He claimed that Hamas would try to overthrow him with the help of outside parties, including Iran, Syria, and even Qatar.[420] Hamas, in turn, believed that Fatah (with the help of several external actors who would have preferred to see Hamas fail, such as the International Quartet and Israel) was aiming to exert more pressure on Hamas to abort its first experience in governance, to stir up internal pressures, and to hold power over the security apparatus and the PA's institutions.[421] However, what effectively contributed to the reinforcement of this lack of confidence is the failure of political system institutions to develop legal and political means that would be able to resolve factional conflicts within the PA's institutions. This conflict has been fueled by the structural problem of the Palestinian political system.[422] The absence of a basic law or a constitutional document clarifying the duty of each, the presidential institution, and the government, has led to a persistent legal ambiguity as to the specific powers and responsibilities of the presidential and government institutions. This complicated the establishment of authority between the Palestinian government and the political system concerning constitutional rules and roles. This, of course, made both of them face major challenges in determining the relationship between the cabinet and the presidency and the relationship between central and local government, and in solidifying their hold on power.[423]

Anyhow, the deepest divisions between Hamas and Fatah lie as much on political and authority issues as on ideological ones. The Hamas leadership argued that the outcome of the PLC's election demonstrated that public aspiration for new leadership and a new program based on comprehensive reform and resilience.

The prospects of finding a common ground for power-sharing between Fatah and Hamas seemed pretty slim, despite attempts to settle the discord over the political program in Cairo (2005 and 2011), Mecca (2007), Doha (2012), and Al-Shatea (2014), but the disagreement between the two sides over their respective legitimacy, visions, and the dispute over different perceptions of representation and interests, as well as factors related to their alliances, were significant reasons for not agreeing on key issues raised by the various agreements, such as the national unity government, security, the PLO's accords with Israel, and rather were reasons to consolidate this rift.[424] Each side perceives itself as more legitimate than the other, and they exchanged accusations of being an impediment to the

[419] (Berti. The Evolving Role of Hamas. 2015. Op.cit. p: 13)
[420] (Abu Rahma. *The Division*. January 26, 2017. Op. cit)
[421] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 13)
[422] (Al-Masri, *How to get out of the division*, 8 Sept, 2018. Op.cit.)
[423] Youssef, Ayman, *Reforming the Palestinian political system between external pressure and internal demands*, paper presented to the Gaza Development Conference After the Israeli withdrawal, Gaza: the Islamic University, 2006, 902.
[424] (Al-Masri, *How to get out of the division*, 8 Sept, 2018. Op.cit.)

materialization of its political program and its overall strategy for achieving and securing Palestinian national rights. Hamas insisted on its 'right' to govern (based on the election results), and resistance and security' control have been a matter of existential issues for Hamas. Fatah persisted in Abbas' 'right' to control security, money, and the negotiations with Israel (based on a narrow interpretation of his constitutional 'right').[425]

These two diverse perceptions have effectively contributed to obstruct the power-sharing within the PA and have prevented both sides from agreeing on core issues raised by the various initiatives, such as elections, the national unity government, security, the PLO, and the accords signed with Israel.[426]Although it appears that the obstacles to the conciliation between Hamas and Fatah related to the conflict between their two contradictory programs and two different ideological and political approaches, each seeking exclusion rather than power-sharing, but implicitly, it is difficult to ignore the fact that gaining power and authority is an effort. According to Hani Al-Masri, a member of the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation committee, it was easier for Hamas to agree on a political program consistent with the PA's philosophy than to surrender the PA's institutions to Fatah. Hamas sought to gain victory in the majority of the seats in the Legislative Council. According to him, most of the dialogue sessions between Fatah and Hamas were limited to discussions on quotas, rather than discussing the construction of a national project and a national political program that would unite the components of the Palestinian political field. Hamas was concerned about how the movement would break out its political isolation and financial blockade. This highlights the points that Hamas focused on in its demands, which relate to the weight that Hamas could gain from the PA and the PLO's administrative and political positions, taking into account the results of the 2006 elections.[427]

What raised the ceiling of the challenge to Hamas, and its profound dilemma is that the Palestinian political system was not qualified to absorb two different and contradictory programs. Furthermore, the functional determinants of the Palestinian political system were greater than the ability of the political system to adapt to Hamas' political ideology and approaches. As a result, the structure of the Palestinian political system could neither contain nor adapt to the ramifications of Hamas' victory nor absorb it, nor did Hamas attempt to acclimate to the structure and ideology of the political system. It became increasingly difficult for their two contradictory political programs to co-exist, which forced the Hamas-led government to function alone.[428] As Fatah controls the system politically and administratively, therefore, Hamas faced a faction that did not accept the idea of power-sharing that could reduce its political and administrative dominance over it, or to turn it into a minor player, and give the supreme authority to Hamas. Thus, the environment of domination and exclusion within the Palestinian political system has been strengthened. The Mecca agreements of March 2007 was one of the attempts to bridge the gap, although it outlined the conditions for the formation

[425] (Ezbidi, *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p. 185)
[426] Ibid.
[427] (Al-Masri, *How to get out of the division*, 8 Sept, 2018. Op.cit.)
[428] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p. 178)

of a national unity government and a political platform, but proved insufficient to bring about co-existence between Fatah and Hamas. Hamas was left with little or no influence. It was located between ministries that were largely controlled by Fatah, which monopolized and controlled money, security, and negotiations with Israel.[429]

Governing Gaza has been challenging for Hamas, given that the movement has become responsible for managing all aspects of life for more than 1.6 million inhabitants in the Gaza strip, part of whom have become more dependent on Hamas and its government. Eighty percent of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip rely on international aid to survive, because of poverty and unemployment. Israel has imposed a blockade on this territory since Hamas' victory in the legislative elections in 2006, reinforced in 2007 when the movement took control.[430]

However, besides the consequences of the internal rift with Fatah, Hamas was struggling with two additional problems: first, an international boycott and political isolation that had resulted in restricting the financial resources to govern after the international community withheld international aid. Second, renewed rounds of military confrontations with Israel in 2009 - 2008, 2012, and 2014, following the collapse of the cease-fire that had taken place since March 2005. Hamas has been subjected to an Israeli attempt to undermine its power in Gaza both operationally and politically. It imposed a tightened economic blockade on the Gaza Strip, restricting the entry of goods and essential materials into the Gaza Strip. Gaza citizens have to cope with the excruciating living conditions of unemployment and poverty inflicted by the imposed siege and the frequent Israeli attacks on their infrastructure and population, which were not restricted to the two wars on Gaza in 2008–09 and November 2012.[431] The high price of being exposed to such pressures has deteriorated the economic situation and caused harsh living conditions. This, nevertheless, affected Hamas' popularity and further pressure on the movement to overcome growing public dissatisfaction.[432]

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Gaza blockade severely affected the life of the Gazans. Gazans became unable to provide for their families, and the quality of infrastructure and vital services deteriorated. This made over 75% Gazans relayed on aid, 54% suffered food insecure -this rate increased to 60 % in 2014-, and 38% of Gazans live in poverty, while over 90% of the water from the Gaza aquifer is undrinkable. On the level of accessibility, access to land and sea remains highly restricted. As well as were the access to agricultural land and fishing waters. 35% of Gaza's farmland and 85% of its fishing waters are totally or partially inaccessible due to Israeli military measures. The report also noted that 26% of the Gazan workforce, including 38% of youths, is unemployed while the average wage declined by over 20% since 2007. Thousands of people, many of them children, risk their lives smuggling goods through the tunnels under the border with Egypt. The thriving

[429] Ibid. p. 179
[430] Coustilliére, Jean-François, *Périls imminents en Méditerranée*. éditions de l'Aube. 2019, p. 36.
[431] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p. 185)
[432] (Brown & Alsoos, *Hamas: Constrained or Nimble?* 2018. Op. cit)

tunnel industry is a direct result of ongoing restrictions on the import of construction materials, the lack of employment opportunities, and the huge reconstruction needs in Gaza. However, the Gazans remain isolated. Imports and exports remain tightly restricted and limited to agricultural produce to Europe, and Gazan businesses cannot access their traditional markets in Israel and the West Bank. The entry into the West Bank, either via the Israeli Erez crossing or via Jordan, is prohibited. The volume of people allowed through the Egyptian Rafah Crossing remains limited, with hundreds denied passage each week.[433]

However, the focus of Hamas was to assert its legislative powers, on the one hand, to try to revive the PLC in Gaza and to fight Fatah's attempt to freeze its functions. Therefore, the movement sought to hold regular PLC's sessions that included Hamas-elected members in Gaza, while consulting Hamas-elected representatives in the West Bank (who could vote by phone).[434] Hamas, out of this move, aimed at ensuring the legitimacy of the parliament, even though Fatah boycotted it and attempted to undermine it. This reshuffled PLC began to pass new laws, and to publish the approved laws in Hamas version of the official gazette *al-Waqa'i' al-Filastiniyya* (Palestinian Events), and was subsequently implemented in the Strip.[435] As a part of securing effective control, Hamas took steps to control the political and PA institutions in Gaza, rushed to form a fully parallel government to the one in Ramallah, and completely controlled all the new appointments. It reshuffled the cabinet as its executive apparatus, replacing the six Hamas ministers based in the West Bank with Hamas members based in Gaza, while the five Hamas ministers who had been part of the unity government remained in office, and the remaining portfolios belonging to non-Hamas ministers in the unity government were distributed among the ministers of the new Hamas cabinet.[436] As public employees in the public sector, including police officers, were told not to report for duty, this vacuum offered Hamas with a major opportunity to recruit its personnel and to place loyal individuals in key positions of power.[437] The same was also true at the local government level, where elected Hamas-dominated municipal councils were extended in 2009, while Hamas loyalists replaced Fatah-controlled municipalities when their electoral term expired.[438] This has made Hamas more entrenched in Gaza.

On the other hand, ensuring the functioning of the judiciary and law enforcement were initially important challenges for Hamas to become the only legal and political authority governing Gaza. It sought to establish its rule and control over the Strip and to try to control family conflicts and began tackling the judiciary after it had frozen after the takeover.[439] Anyhow, Hamas increased control of the security sector by replacing the Fateh-composed security apparatus with others relying on its Executive Force, largely staffed by some 6,000 Hamas members, which was later dissolved and

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[433] OCHA: (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), Humanitarian situation Report on the Gaza Strip, OPT, October 2011, shorturl.at/lpyC0
[434] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. pp. 14-15)
[435] Ibid pp. 14-15
[436] Ibid
[437] Ibid p. 20
[438] Ibid p.17
[439] Ibid. p. 19

integrated into the reformed official apparatuses.[440] The reorganization comprised of the Civil Police, together with the Palestinian National Security Forces, which were responsible for border security; the Internal Security Apparatus, which was responsible for internal and external intelligence; the Security and Protection Apparatus, which replaced the presidential guards in protected official and international buildings.[441] Through this reorganization, Hamas sought to establish an official separation between the security sector, tasked with security and law enforcement, and Hamas militants of the Qassam Brigades, who mostly dealt through opposition. Besides the reorganization of the security apparatus, Hamas also took advantage of its role in the government to boost the Qassam Brigades, which grew in size and increased its arsenal; thanks to its control of underground smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. Although Hamas attempted to draw lines between the tasks of the security apparatus and the tasks of the Qassam Brigades, these lines were blurred as Hamas could always use its Qassam Brigades to support the Gazan security services. The insistence on creating an official separation between the tasks of the institutional security forces and the tasks of Qassam Brigades was highly significant and further strengthened.[442]

Anyhow, the re-instituting of a powerful hold on the official institutions in Gaza was important for Hamas to be seen as a legitimate authority rather than a "rebel group". Governance and symbolic politics were both important for building an image of its legitimate and effective sovereignty. Indeed, by reasserting the functionality of the legal and security sector, Hamas sought to reintroduce a degree of “normalcy” to the lives of Gazans, while at the same time investing in both substantial and symbolic politics, which emphasized its interest in being seen as an effective authority.

Nevertheless, two statements by Khaled Meshaal may explain the significance of the Hamas New Document concerning the rift with Fatah. In the first, he stated, "Hamas was wrong when it thought that the time of Fatah had passed, and the time of Hamas had come, and Fatah had erred when it wanted to exclude us". As for the second, he stated, "Hamas was wrong when it deemed it easy to rule the Gaza Strip alone after the events of the Palestinian division with the Fatah movement, however, then discovered that it is difficult".[443] Indeed, the two statements raise the question: Why did Hamas finally reach this conclusion? Meshaal Statements give a good indication of the ramification of the heavy responsibility of the individual rulers of Gaza on Hamas, and the heavy price of the division with Fatah on Hamas. Khaled Hroub believes that the goal of ending the siege of Hamas was a pressing factor for attention to be paid to Palestinian reconciliation and that Hamas had to make concessions to the Palestinian president that could lead to the abandonment of full control of Gaza. Hamas was not willing to make this concession unless the pressure on it had not accumulated to the point of forcing it.[444] In this direction, Nathan Brown replaces the issuance of the Hamas’ new political document, in the attention of Hamas to bridge the

[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid. p: 17
[442] Ibid.
[443] Meshaal made these statements during a dialogue session in Doha on Sept 2016, and were repeated in May 1st 2017 during the announcement of Hamas New Political Document in Doha.
[444] (Hroub, *A Newer Hamas?* 2017. Op.cit. p:108)

programmatic rift with the PA, and to present an ostensibly "soft" formula to show that its hard-core ideology does not stand in the way of internal Palestinian reconciliation and present willingness to promote reconciliation on a common political basis.[445] Ahmad Youssef explains the significance of the document as a comprehensive review of Hamas' policies towards Palestinian reconciliation with Fatah and an attempt by Hamas to find a common basis for political action.[446]

It can be safe to say that the new political document was intended to assist Hamas in its efforts to overcome its isolation and resolve its difficulties in the internal Palestinian arena. In the face of the ramification of taking over the Gaza strip, Hamas faced a deep gap with the number of important and influential sectors in the Palestinian arena, particularly as being part of the continuous division with Fatah; Hamas was part of a severe ramification of the internal Palestinian situation and a sharpening of the geographical division. The ramifications of the division into the internal situation of Hamas led Hamas to re-read the political scene with the Fatah movement, meaning that the overall crisis that occurred on this scene was due to the attempts by both sides to monopolize the government and exclude the other. Hamas' re-evaluation of the dilemma of power-sharing in the Palestinian political system was based on the need to find a compromise formula consistent with the philosophy of the Palestinian political system, to the extent that it avoids internal rift. Thus, to overcome the internal pressures it faces, Hamas needed to rethink the future of its relationship with the political system as a whole, especially since the control of the Gaza Strip and the division of the Palestinian political system brought the movement into successive crises that caused it to lose some of its internal popularity.

2.2.2 The ambiguity of the Hamas' political program

The second pressing factor is the question of presenting a clear political program that outlines the political and intellectual features of Hamas and defines its future governance behavior. The involvement in governance challenged Hamas' ability to construct a political platform consistent with fact and the conditions around it, and addresses the big questions relating to its position against the authority of Fatah and the PLO, and the obligations of the Peace Accords with Israel.[447] Two challenges that led to the question of identity with Hamas as a consequence of the transition in control after the 2006 elections. The first is the change from the position of the opposition movement to the governing political group. The second is the challenge of Hamas ability to sustain its identity and principles.[448] Hamas was introduced practically to two tracks: a pragmatic way of responding to its victory and thus responding to the demands of the Palestinian community for change; and a call within Hamas to exploit the political opportunity to control the Palestinian political system and break Fatah's dominance over it.

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[445] (Brown & Alsoos, *Hamas: Constrained or Nimble?* 2018. Op. cit)
[446] (Youssef. Author Interview. March 11th 2019. Op.cit)
[447] (Nairat. Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[448] (Nikolai L. *Hamas a Constructivist Lens*. 2008, Op.cit. p. 13)

This track required Hamas to comply with the requirements of governance, to manage the PA's institutions, and to manage relations with the population, and to undertake political and administrative reform to the PA' institutions. The second track related to the identity of Hamas as an Islamic resistance movement that claims its leadership of a resistant approach in Palestine. Indeed, the continuity of the military operations, as well as the management of relations with its allies such as Syria and Iran have become great challenges. The two tracks required Hamas to be strong enough to resist the pressures, such as the Quartet's stipulations to open the doors of communication with Hamas, or the pressures that seek to use Hamas as a pressure card or to attract it as an ally who adopts specific political positions.[449]

Hamas' choice to adopt both governance and resistance, at the same time, enhanced the ambiguity of Hamas' political behavior. Hassan Asfour finds that the ambiguity lies in Hamas' inability to determine its true nature. The shock of the election has rabidly brought about the challenges of governance without being prepared for them at the logistical, intellectual and programmatic levels. Consequently, the question of identity has become complicated for Hamas, so will it act as a ruling political movement with different obligations, or will it be a non-ruling political movement that adhered to the resistance? As a result of this confusion, Hamas has never clarified how to sustain both; armed resistance and co-existence with the PA.[450] Around the same moment that Hamas felt it could embrace both military and political methods, the PA was unwilling to accept the existence of an untamed resistance party in the areas under its 'control'. It was worried that the engagement of Hamas in the bodies of the PLO and the PA while it rejects to accepts renouncing the violence and the previous agreements with Israel, would undermine its bargaining stance and contribute to more Israeli stubbornness because Israel was able to use these organizations as a reason to remove itself from the 'peace process' obligations.[451]

Adnan Asfour believes that the dramatic change in power has confused Hamas' calculations. Hamas was essentially keen to appear strong in its first electoral experience.[452] The configuration of its slate of candidates reacted to this objective by considering placing senior leaders such as (Isma'il Haniyya, Mahmud al-Zahar Ahmad Baher (Gaza), Hamed Al-Beitawi (Nablus) and Shaykh Hasan Yusuf (Ramallah) along with notable members from its charitable and religious-educational institutions, wives of prisoners and martyrs, and professionals who had ties to Hamas, even if they were not full-fledged activists.[453] However, Hamas' assessment of its growth and weight in the Palestinian population showed signs that it could have an influential opposition in the PLC. Hamas wanted a resounding victory without full control that would make it possible for the movement to achieve a perfect situation to be a force with enough power to undermine Fatah's

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[449] (Nairat. Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[450] Asfour. Hassan, Hamas: The Crisis of defining its Identity, AMAD website, 12 May 2014, retrieved from: shorturl.at/chK39
[451] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. pp. 170-171)
[452] (Asfour, Author interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[453] Klein, Menachem, Hamas in Power, The Middle East Journal, 61*(3)*. (Summer, 2007), p. 448.

authority in the political process with Israel and to have influence over the future Palestinian government.[454] Hamas wished that this situation would allow the movement to build ties with the West and even re-opening Arab channels through the regime's legitimacy, without being compelled to adopt new political obligations.[455]

As the changes forced Hamas to rule alone, the movement found itself in government without being able to bear the responsibilities of governance, or to present a political platform that considers a real change in Hamas' behavior and positions.[456] According to Samer Bani Odeh, Hamas' political calculations have sought a gradual involvement in reaching the government and a gradual formation of its political program that considers building a cohesive experience while in opposition. This thought made Hamas not to hurry to look for the problem of identity because it built its perception of political participation around playing both—resistance and opposition—with the same roles that it played while out of the PA and gradually developed its experience to reach power.[457] This is could be demonstrated in the Hamas electoral program presented by the Reform and Change Bloc.

In Hamas' electoral campaign, the movement determined its future role in the PLC on hindering any progress on the political level with Israel that contradicts Palestinian national rights, as well as attaining a strategic change in the political obligations of the Palestinian system, both in the PLO and the PA.[458] However, the electoral program did not come close to answer strategic questions, e.g. the conflict with Israel, its military approach and the achievement of national liberation goals. Rather, Hamas addressed questions related to the needs of the people.[459] Hamas wanted the Reform and Change bloc to be a body that bears responsibility for dealing with internal issues within the framework of the PA, specifically tasks related to political participation and governance without having a major role in the political process with Israel. Such issues will be dissolved within the framework of the movement. Thus, the electoral program outlined its general principles, such as the reinforcement of its slogans of resistance, the rejection of agreements signed by the PLO, and the simulation of internal Palestinian demands for reform.[460] Hamas did not want to present a political program based on a new political project that, one the one hand, expresses its political culture and, on the other, is compatible with the surrounding political reality. Focusing on playing the role of the opposition within the PLC was less costly and complicated for Hamas than the cost of bearing the responsibility of governance.[461]

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[454] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[455] Mirault, Alexandre, Hamas: the Challenge of Political Integration, (Master thesis), BRNO: Masaryk University, 2010, P. 50, retrieved from: shorturl.at/pKOX7
[456] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[457] (Bani-Odah, Author Interview. 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)
[458] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[459] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)
[460] Ibid.
[461] (Bani-Odah, Author Interview. 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)

The conflict of perception within Hamas may be indicative of its uncertainty about its future behavior in the political system. Within Hamas, there were two perceptions about the electoral participation. One advocated limited participation, as an opposition within the PLC represented in the oversight branch of government, not the executive branch, while they viewed the armed struggle as the major tool and sought to minimize the price of politicization. This stance was upheld by some of Hamas officials outside the Occupied Territories- Khalid Mish'al (head of the Political Bureau) and 'Imad al-'Alami (the Representative of Hamas in Iran) in particular. The other perception wanted Hamas to integrate completely into the Palestinian governing system as well as into the PLO. Among those who advocated this perception, Mousa Abu Marzuq (Hamas' deputy of political bureau who is located outside the Palestinians territories), and seniors such as Hasan Yussuf (West Bank) and Isma'il Haniyya (Gaza). Some seniors, such as Mahmoud al-Zahar, vacillated between these two perceptions.[462]

Nevertheless, joining the PA without a clear political program underlies the immaturity of Hamas' philosophy and theory of governance. The apprehension of Hamas to risk its political and popular capital if it pursued a real change in its identity made the movement to behave in line with its political culture and general political vision. Hamas underwent through two main stages: first, it attempted to align itself to some extent with the political line of the Palestinian political system and to find a formula through which the movement could perform the tasks of governance. The Cairo agreement, the Mecca agreement, and the prisoners' document provided Hamas with a basis of compatibility with the political system, and responded to its commitment to the political and administrative reform of the PA and the PLO. The second stage, however, the attempts by Hamas to develop its governance approaches and theories collided with the pressures of internal and international actors, including Israel, which tried to make the movement fail in its first government experience, in addition to the complexities and responsibilities of the government and the complexity of the Palestinian situation.[463] This has led Hamas to remain consistent and resistant to successive pressures, which have made Hamas increasingly obstinate not to demonstrate flexibility to make a real change in its positions and political behavior.[464]Adopting both resistance and governance explains its actual and practical behavior. This led Hamas not to give up being a ruling movement and to retain its grip on the government as a legitimately elected government, nor to give up being a resistance movement as adherence to its original identity.

While the division between Hamas and Fatah has made it impossible for Hamas to implement its 'reform and change' platform, as articulated in 2006, the combination of 'governance' and 'resistance' has also been deeply affected. Adopting these two tracks at once added to the ambiguity of the Hamas political program and made a very complex equation in terms of tensions between the needs of Hamas as a 'government' and the needs of Hamas as a 'resistance' movement.[465]

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[462] (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p:447)
[463] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[464] (Nairat. Author interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[465] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas.* 2015. Op.cit. p: 44)

Whereas, on one hand, Hamas' priorities, as a political 'ruler' in Gaza, focus on domestic governance, the search for secure resources, and the maintenance of stability, a less risk-averse approach concerning Israel was needed to achieve a degree of pacification and co-existence with the occupation.[466] On the other hand, as resisting the occupation to achieve liberation calls for escalation, Hamas needed to support and sustain its armed struggle against Israel as a 'resistance' movement. This indicates two potential sources of identity conflict.[467] Letting military actions to take place in an unbridled manner was considered as an unpleasant choice for the Hamas government because it would be losing its status as an influential ruler, and facing an Israeli retaliation that could potentially challenge Hamas' hold on Gaza.[468] Moreover, a tolerance policy concerning the Israeli attacks on Gaza will perpetuate the idea, which is promoted by its opponents, that Hamas gives up its fight against Israel.[469]

In addition, the expectations of Hamas as a 'government' differ from the expectations of Hamas as a resistance movement. At the very least, Hamas, as a government, was expected by the Palestinian people to present an efficient and effective model than that of Fateh, without giving up resistance. Neither of these two components (governance and resistance) can be achieved without affecting the function of the other, which makes the combination of both impossible. Meanwhile, the geographical and political division and full responsibility of administrating Gaza, in addition to the great pressures exerted by the main actors, Fatah internally, the Quartet, Israel, and Egypt externally, have shown that this combination is irreconcilable for Hamas.[470]

Hamas was unable to articulate a coherent formula of governance aimed at directing the political system and was unable to establishing government ties based on a consistent and precise political agenda. The most significant fault line for establishing a significant political platform that defines the goals and positions of Hamas lies between those within Hamas for whom the Palestinian national cause comes first and those for whom Islamist ideology takes precedence. And between those who tend to go further along the political and governing path and those who tend to retain the military identity of Hamas as a primary duty of the movement to liberate Palestine. The question of balancing all these lines has complicated the development of a political platform. Indeed, finding a formula upon which Hamas can agree on all trends is impossible unless the movement has experienced a major threat to its existence and political presence.

2.2.3 The challenge of extremism

As a third pressing factor, two elements formed the driving force for Hamas to present its new political platform, the first of which relates to the need to distinguish its political and ideological lines from other Islamic groups, especially

[466] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p. 180)
[467] (Nikolai L. *Hamas a Constructivist Lens.* 2008, Op.cit. p. 13)
[468] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. 180)
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid.

the *Salafi-jihadi* and *Da'esh* (ISIS). The second is to close the gap between thought and behavior between the generations of the movement.

2.2.3.1 The first element: The Challenge of the Salafi-jihadists

As for the first element, it seems that one of the possible considerations underlying the timing and purpose of Hamas' new political document appears to be the growth of the *Salafi-jihadi and Da'esh in* Gaza. Such growth threatens Hamas' dominance in the religious sphere, and disturb its efforts to present itself as a representative of Islamic society because these parties tend to be "opposition from with",[471] which means an opposition from the same religious domain in which Hamas operates, and on which its literature and slogans and mobilization rely. The Salafists' discourse finds a fertile environment in the same venues used by Hamas, i.e. mosques, universities, charitable institutions, and others, whereas both share the same working environment and use similar discourse vocabularies, which makes the dynamics of their opposition benefit from the fact that the discourse of a large section of Hamas' cadres and Sheiks is not fundamentally different from that of the Salafists.[472]

Similarly, these groups have challenged Hamas to be a resistance movement. The Salafi-jihadist has highly criticized Hamas of being "too moderate" with Israel and for giving up armed struggle to remain in power.[473] This criticism was enforced by the attempt by Hamas to achieve a long truce with Israel rather than move towards an open confrontation with it. This provided a space for the Salafi mobilization to attract Hamas elements, under the pretext that Hamas deviated from the true path of the Islamic principles to the search for secular temporal gains instead of fighting the enemies of the *Ummah*. Such accusations constitute a real pressure on Hamas both: to demonstrate its commitment to resistance and, at the very least, not to appear compromising in the armed struggle against Israel and the liberation of Palestine. And the potential threat to Hamas' internal cohesion and popularity, given that Salafi groups appeal to Hamas' members to join or sympathize with them succeeded to attract a number of Hamas members, especially the military wing, as explained in the following lines.[474] Nonetheless, the use of the same means of Hamas to reach segments of society, such as the Mosques, religious institutes and charity organizations, facilitated the access of these groups to the community and to within Hamas therefore make the internal cohesion of Hamas vulnerable.[475]

The tension between Hamas and the Salafis arose when Hamas took part in the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, and often led to significant differences and violent protests between them. This participation was one of the main

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[471] Khrais, Rami, *The elephant is in the room: Hamas and the Salafi jihadist in Gaza*. As-Safir Al-Arabi. (2017, Aug 24). https://assafirarabi.com/ar/author/author-352/
[472] Ibid.
[473] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 80)
[474] Khreis, *The elephant is in the room*. Aug 24 2017, Op.cit.
[475] Ibid.

complaints made by the Salafi-jihadist against Hamas and was seen as an offense to the Islamic Covenant, and a tantamount to recognize Israel and the Oslo Accords. As an ideological challenge, the Salafi-jihadist questioned the Islamic identity of Hamas and its commitment to establishing the Islamic state.[476] These groups believed that Hamas has gradually lost its Islamic character after engaging in the secular Palestinian political system.[477] Its affiliation with the secular Fatah to achieve local aims has been seen as a violation of the loyalty to the Muslims and a co-operation with "infidel" organizations rather than an affiliation with the Islamic community.[478] Add to this, they suspect Hamas of allowing Shi'ism to expand through the Gaza Strip to obtain help from Iran.[479] According to Sheikh Abou Mohamed Al-Maqdisi, one of the Salafi-jihadist group's leaders in Gaza, Hamas has violated the Islamic principles when it became part of the PLC, whose law is not Islamic, considering democracy as a form of "heresy".[480] This criticism underlies the perceptions of Salafi-jihadism, which considers itself part of the wider religious system that includes the Islamic world, and maintains its hostility to the contemporary governances as "infidel" regimes.[481] Indeed, these accusations questioned Hamas' argument to be the most genuinely Islamic community among the numerous Palestinian organizations and are further rejecting the legitimacy of Hamas as an Islamic resistance movement.

However, this conflict is not uncommon and it has strong theoretical origins. While Hamas belongs intellectually to the Muslim Brotherhood, it embraces pragmatism in governance and diplomacy following the demands of ruling the blocked Gaza Strip, its ambitions to boost ties with the West, and to relief the pressure imposed by human rights organizations and domestic communities.[482] The Salafi-jihadist groups embrace quite revolutionary concepts of how life must be handled in Gaza, and of the conflict with Israel. They call for the instant application of Sharia laws on the people of the Gaza Strip, and their aim is not only to restore the Islamic political system but also rather transcending to establish a global caliphate.[483] Even though Hamas aims to portray itself as a national liberation movement against an occupying power, Salafists express a transnational jihadist ideology, seeking to align the Palestinian nationalist cause with the wider foreign jihadist network, and embracing a language of direct conflict with Israel.[484] In other terms, they share more the goals of the international

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[476] Berti, Benedetta, *Hamas' Internal Challenge: The Political and Ideological Impact of Violent Salafist Groups in Gaza*, Strategic Assessment. 14(2). July 2011, p. 79-80
[477] Ibid. P:74
[478] Schweitzer, Yoram, *Salafi Jihadism in Gaza as Opposition to Hamas Rule*. In A. Kurz, U. Dekel, & B. Berti (Eds.), The Crisis of the Gaza Strip: A Way Out. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies. P. 63.
[479] Salem, Ahmed, *Gaza Jihadists undermine Egypt-Hamas cooperation*. Atlantic Council. (2017, Sep 22). Retrieved from https://rb.gy/3pshm4
[480] Seurat, Leïla, *Le Hamas et les Djihadistes à Gaza: Contrôle impossible, trêve improbable, Politique étrangère*, Institut français des relations internationales, Automne 2016, p. 98
[481] Salah, Aqel, *Hamas and the Salafists in Gaza (2007-2017): An alliance or a confrontation?* Rai Al Youm, (28th Nov. 2017). shorturl.at/bosS9
[482] (Salem, *Gaza Jihadists*. 2017. Op. cit)
[483] Wermenbol, Grace, *Disrupting a delicate status quo: The Hamas crackdown on Salafi-jihadists*, Middle East Institute. October 22, 2019, shorturl.at/ptD39
[484] (Berti, *Hamas' Internal Challenge*. 2011. Op.cit. P:75)

jihadist movement than to the national Palestinian resistance.[485] Their philosophy was associated with the ideology of al-Qaeda, as they saw it, as a realistic paradigm to replicate in Palestine to create a transnational religious dimension to Palestinian resistance similar to the language used by al-Qaeda than armed Palestinian groups such as Hamas.[486]

The years 2005-2010 were generally a favorable time for the growth and strength of the Salafi jihadist stream in the Gaza Strip, building on Israel's unilateral withdrawal in 2005, and due to the ongoing power struggle between Fatah and Hamas.[487] According to Salah Aqel, the environment after Hamas' take over the Gaza strip gave rise to these trends, questioning the balance of power and transforming several Hamas members to Salafism, capitalizing on their disgruntlement with Hamas' perceived accommodation with Israel and their gradual approach to Islamization.[488] In 2014, the emergence of *Da'esh* (ISIS) gave new hope to Salafi jihadist activists in Gaza.[489] Numerous members of *Ansar Bait al-Maqdis* pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS' leader, and eventually created the Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade, also known as Islamic State in Gaza, which absorbed most of its former Gaza-based members among other Islamists, some originating from the Army of Islam group and others defecting from Hamas.[490]

After Hamas took over Gaza in 2007, albeit the essential critics of the Salafi jihadist to Hamas, their leaders initially expected that Hamas, as an Islamic Resistant Movement, would declare the Islamic State and escalating the attacks on Israel.[491] Yet, when Hamas disappointed their ambitions and carried out what they saw as "political and religious compromises", Hamas became the legitimate target of several violent conflicts in an attempt to challenge Hamas' exclusive role and hegemony over Gaza. Such as attacking Christian and Western institutions, including the abduction of BBC correspondent Allen Johnston in 2006, the bombing of the YMCA library in February 2008, and committing several attacks against Hamas' police apparatus or policemen. The direct threat that Salafism poses to Hamas' rule led the conflict between them to take on a violent form and both adopted a hostile strategy against each other.[492] Notably in 2009, when Hamas security raided the Ibn Taymiyah mosque in Deir al-Balah and killed 24 Salafi activists from the organization *Jund Ansar Allah*, including their leader Abdel Latif Moussa, who was seen by Hamas as dangerous due to his declaration on the establishment of an "Islamic Emirate" in Gaza. This statement is directly questioning the Hamas government and bringing into doubt its authority over areas

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[485] (Salem, *Gaza Jihadists*. 2017. Op. cit)
[486] Ibid.
[487] (Wermenbol. *Disrupting a delicate status quo*. 2019. Op.cit)
[488] (Salah, *Hamas and the Salafists in Gaza*, 2017. Op.cit)
[489] Al-Tamimi, Aymenn J., *New Salafi Jihadi Group in Gaza: The Sheikh Omar Hadid Brigade*, (2015, Jun 2), Retrieved from https://rb.gy/pz0mqa
[490] Beaumont, Peter, *Palestinian Salafists pose dangerous new problem for Hamas*. The Guardian. 2015, June 10, Retrieved from https://rb.gy/vud8oz 2015)
[491] (Wermenbol. *Disrupting a delicate status quo*. 2019. Op.cit)
[492] Abu Amer, Adnan, *The Islamic State: between Hamas and Salafi jihadism*, (2018, Feb 22), Retrieved from: https://adnanabuamer.com/post/122

of Gaza. These attacks are representative of Hamas' present response to aggressive Salafist cells in Gaza and also shows the growing difficulties of security protection within Hamas dominance.[493]

However, Hamas has had a complex relationship with the Salafi-jihadist groups operating in Gaza for a long time. On several occasions, Hamas has cooperated with the Salafi-jihadi groups, including those based in the Sinai Peninsula, to promote cross-border weapons smuggling.[494] In times of military confrontation with Israel, such as the wars of 2008, 2012 and 2014, both identify common interests, Hamas blindly watched Salafi's involvement in the attack on Israeli settlements. Yet, the round of conflict between them returns when the Salafi-jihadist challenges Hamas' attempts to maintain an indirect truce with Israel. In the absence of direct conflict, Hamas is cracking down on Salafi jihadist groups and arresting their leaders and activists if they violate the temporary ceasefire. In any case, the Salafi jihadist openly and directly supported the strategy of *jihad* against Israel and has been able to show their ability to escalate the level of hostilities against Israel by firing rockets at settlements without the prior approval of Hamas government or leadership.[495] Indeed, this capability was a form of challenging Hamas' belonging to the resistance and questioning its loyalty to *Jihad* for the Sake of Allah, thus risking harm to the reputation and popularity of Hamas. If Hamas does not join the confrontation and respond to Israel's attacks, it will be seen as weak by the population of Gaza, while being at the forefront of attacking Israel, would strengthen the Salafi jihadist claim to be the only representative of the resistance in the fight against Israel.[496]

At the political level, the emergence of Palestinian Salafi elements in Sinai casts a shadow over the relationship between Hamas and Egypt and attempts to bring them closer. For long, the Egyptian security services, along with the media, have consistently held Hamas responsible for providing shelter, training, and arming to Salafi elements attacking the Egyptian army forces in Sinai. Although Hamas faced these allegations in denial and with a constant emphasis on its eagerness for Egyptian national security, the Egyptians linked the provision of humanitarian facilities to the besieged Gaza with increased security cooperation by Hamas in the file of jihadi Salafis. This has put more pressure on Hamas to take more practical measures to fight the extension of the Salafi-jihadist. The predicament of Hamas lies in the fact that its pursuit of rapprochement and security cooperation with Egypt may make the discourse of Salafism more attractive and credible among Hamas' grassroots, who perceive a sort of hostility towards the Egyptians regime after the military takeover the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood.[497] This politically embarrassed Hamas at a time when it was seeking to strengthen its ties with Egypt and to show its dedication to protecting

[493] (Wermenbol. *Disrupting a delicate status quo*. 2019. Op.cit)
[494] Ibid.
[495] Abu Eltarabesh, Hamza, *Le conflit s'intensifie entre le Hamas et les salafistes de Gaza*, Chronique Palestine, 18 octobre 2017, shorturl.at/hrBSV
[496] (Seurat, *Le Hamas et les Djihadistes à Gaza*. Automne 2016. Op.cit. pp: 98-99)
[497] (Khreis, *The elephant is in the room*. Aug 24 2017, Op. cit)

boundaries, targeting pro-ISIS jihadists in Gaza, and attempting to keep them from infiltrating Sinai.[498]

Although the tensions between Hamas and the jihadist Salafism appeared to be part of a local conflict following the violation of the Salafi elements by Hamas through indirect agreements with Israel, or targeting Hamas Security and foreign institutions, and adopting expiatory rhetoric, the fact that Hamas was targeting the expansion of Salafi ideology in the Gaza Strip revealed how this conflict began to threat Hamas' grip on Gaza, and its impact on the stability of the relationship with Egypt and Israel.

What makes the challenges posed by the jihadists significant for Hamas is that a cluster of the main jihadist cells in the Gaza Strip were affiliated to Hamas and defected from its military body, where they had hold important positions. According to Leïla Seurat, 60% of the Salafi-jihadists are former members of the armed wing of Hamas, which is potentially threatening the internal cohesion and popularity of Hamas as well as its security and military hegemony in Gaza.[499] The Salafi jihadist has been able to capture the allegiance of many members of Hamas, especially those who were dissatisfied with Hamas' military and political approaches, and the stop armed actions.[500] The Salafi mobilization against Hamas focused on demonstrating the gap between its ideals and the counter practices on the ground.[501] Moreover, the denial by Hamas of the application of Sharia law and its compliance with the "positive laws" dissatisfied Hamas supporters, believing that their movement was not doing enough to the establishment of an Islamic government and imposing the sharia law within Gaza.[502] This has left a deep rift among some of its supporters who have been undergoing a religious mobilization in past years, drawing their perceptions of the dreams of establishing the promised Islamic state.[503]

The defection of Khalid Banat, code-named: Abu Abdullah Al-Souri, and Mahmoud Taleb, may set a good example of the threat of the Salafi-jihadist to the internal cohesion of Hamas military wing. Abu Abdullah Al-Souri, a former military trainer in Al-Qassam brigades, left Hamas to join the group of *Jund Ansar Allah* (Soldiers in Support of God) and was able to establish a network of Al-Qassam brigades that would enable him to easily recruit some of his fighters and integrate them into the jihadist group. The network's chief commander of the Al-Qassam brigades, Mahmoud Taleb, established a group known as *Jaljalat* that is allegiant to the doctrine of Bin Laden and is made up of around 700 of Hamas alumni. [504] Both Jaljalat and *Jund Ansar Allah*, well-known Palestinian violent Salafist organizations, involved in several operations in 2009 against Israel and Hamas' security departments, and were known for their role in the August 2009 clashes between the Hamas government and the Gaza-based Salafists. Their

[498] Ibid.
[499] (Seurat, *Le Hamas et les Djihadistes à Gaza*. Automne 2016. Op.cit. p. 98)
[500] Ibid. p. 99
[501] (Khreis, *The elephant is in the room*. Aug 24 2017, Op. cit)
[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid.
[504] (Seurat, *Le Hamas et les Djihadistes à Gaza*. Automne 2016. Op.cit. p. 99)

criticism was usually focused at Hamas' association with Iran or Iran-backed factions, cooperation with Israel or Fatah, and the maintenance of ceasefires with Israel.[505] The loss of such prominent leaders shocked Hamas and spread the fear that extremist ideology was widespread in its ranks.

Hamas' efforts to mitigate the growth of such ideological groups in the Gaza Strip have taken various means, whether through institutionalizing programs to qualify preachers, to ensure that religious sermons are consistent with what Hamas sees as an Islamic middle discourse, or to demonstrate its power over religious institutions in Gaza, to reinforce its grasp over Islamic assets, which include mosques, charities, and other Islamic groups and associations, thereby finding ways to reduce the influence of the Salafist in the mosques.[506] Other efforts have been made to communicate with influential Salafi sheiks in Gaza and abroad to encourage enthusiastic Salafi youth to engage in moderate behavior and reach understandings with them through local and external Salafi mediation or discourage part of their ideas by holding counseling sessions with detainees supervised by sheiks.[507] Hamas has also sought, through security measures, to arrest numbers of Salafi followers, one of whom is the most prominent leader Abi al-Muhtasib al-Maqdisi, who is in the United States' list of wanted terrorist on charges of terrorism in 2015, which the Hamas security services have been chasing for several years. The security campaign and the measures taken against the detainees, including the presentation of a number of them to the military courts on charges of "opposing the regime"[508], reflected the level of the new tension between the two parties, and the growing awareness among Hamas of the serious threat to the security of Hamas by the Salafi regime in Gaza, and its potential impact on the Hamas organizational body itself, especially as the main component of the Salafi-jihadist descends mainly from the defective elements of the movement.

The increase in the number of Salafi-jihadists in the Gaza Strip, with no arenas in which they can carry out their military activities outside the borders of the Gaza Strip due to the conditions of the tightened siege, pose a central dilemma for Hamas and can be reflected in the possibility of increasing attacks against Hamas or Israel, fueled by worse living conditions and frustration in the Gaza Strip. This increases the pressure on Hamas' authority over the security, and thus exposes its authority to collapse or weakness.

2.2.3.2 The second element: Sustaining the internal unity

As for the second element, the significance of releasing the new political document lies in Hamas' efforts to bridge the gap between its generations and the thinking and behavior of the movement. The above discussion gives us a good indication of the impact of the contradiction between the ideological discourse and the political behavior of Hamas in producing this gap and thus harming Hamas'

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[505] Irgens, Marcus, *A narrow dominion? Gaza's Salafi-Jihadis in the fallout of the Arab Spring*, (Master thesis), Oslo: University of Oslo, Spring 2018, p: 50
[506] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 79)
[507] (Abu Amer, *The Islamic State*, 2018. Op. cit)
[508] Ibid

internal coherence.[509] Hamas' delay in bringing about a process of reviewing its political stances and considering the changes that have taken place since the movement emerged has reflected the gap between the different generations within Hamas. Some of Hamas have been satisfied with the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, the writings of Sayyid Qutb and Hassan al-Banna, especially the first generation of the movement, which was filled with sacred religious discourse, and who believe that Hamas is a part of wide Islamic goals. And other generations that grew up with Hamas in different variable contexts and witnessed changes in Hamas' roles and political pragmatic practices. However, another generation was saturated with the concepts of jihad and Salafism and the belief in jihad against enemies and the establishment of the Islamic State and was frustrated by the failure of Hamas' new policies and attitudes to express its aspirations.[510]

This contributed to produce generations with different perceptions to Hamas' role and goals. In another words, the gap manifested between those who advocate the adherence of Hamas to the Palestinian national goals and those who believe in the board Islamic goals expressed in its Charter, and also between those who give priority to military action and those who see the need to integrate political action. This highlighted the ambiguity of the goals, and the lack of a clear identity.[511]

With Hamas practicing power and dealing with the various daily challenges and pressures that required the movement to pursue different policies to avoid the collapse of its power, this reinforced the contradiction between thought and practical behavior, political positions, and ideological premises, and created a gap between the religious discourse directed at supporters, and political discourse directed to the public, which contributed to deepening the gap between generations.[512]

Two citations could explain the significance of the new Hamas document in its efforts to bridge the gap between its generations. In the first, Adnan Asfour said: "The revising process that Hamas conducted, which led to producing the New Political document, reflects the maturity of the movement, its re-generativity and its attempt to update its thinking. The movement realized that in thirty years, since its inception, generations have emerged that differ from the founding generation of the movement and that the process of intellectual review, albeit it came overdue, it is an attempt by the movement to re-present itself in a new garment, and in a new political tone without affecting the essence of its ideology".[513] As for the second quote, Khaled Meshaal said: "Every conscious and mature movement needs to redefine itself after a time. Each stage carries new conditions, and these conditions require the movement to redefine itself to people since we are talking about a 30-year-old movement, and the new generation doesn't know it [...] the philosophy of the document confirms that Hamas is a dynamic and well-developed movement, intellectually and politically, and that it is considered as a manifestation of the

[509] (Khuwayra. Author Interview. 2017, Jan 07. Op.cit)
[510] (Al-Betawi. Author Interview 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)
[511] Ibid.
[512] (Al-Shobaki. Author Interview. 2019 July 7th. Op.cit)
[513] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)

movement's renewed thoughts, and that it affirms the movement's openness to the world, without abandoning its constants."[514]

However, the document can be placed in the context of Hamas' organizational changes to show how Hamas' leadership was thinking about the dilemma between thought and behavior. The document came at a time when the movement witnessed changes at the leadership level with the departure of Khaled Meshaal, who is considered the godfather of the document, which has been a significant role of his political career for twenty years.[515] This coincided with the rise of some of the military leaders to the top of the Political Bureau of Hamas following the internal movement elections that took place in February 2017. These two developments necessitated a solid and strong consensus on all Hamas' proclaimed roles to strengthen and integrate preconceptions and stances inside the movement to sustain and declare a centralized section of policies and practices, and to commit new leadership to them, irrespective of almost any hard-line inclination against some of them.[516] Hamas intends to find a new internal balance between its political branch and its military branch. The adoption of this reference document will undoubtedly facilitate the political transition underway within the Palestinian Islamist movement. However, the lack of a diplomatic horizon and the deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip could ultimately threaten Hamas' hold on the narrow strip of land.[517]

Anyhow, some positions mentioned in the New Document were expressed on various occasions by Hamas' figures. However, Hamas was accused of not being serious or taking tactical steps aimed at maneuvering, spelled under immediate pressure. The New Document comes to dispel any doubts still looming about the positions adopted by the leaders of Hamas in the various branches of Hamas (Gaza Strip, the West Bank, or outside Palestine) and thus tries to unify Hamas' political perceptions and rhetoric through an official Document regarding the most pressing issues, which have been often a source of dispute or controversy within Hamas.

Sustaining the institutional solidarity, bridging the gap between behavior and ideology, and to further draw a dividing line between the Ideology and purposes of the radical Islamic movements and Hamas as a pragmatic political movement, all appeared to be part of the document objectives. According to Mashaal, "the document is a result of four years of continuous efforts by Hamas' leadership, both at home and abroad, to agree on a vision and a political program that reflects the development of Hamas throughout its history, especially during the movement's experience in governance".[518] However, according to him, the document addresses the Hamas' grassroots, as well as the Palestinian partners and the international community, and represents a consensus within Hamas and has

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[514] Mashaal, Khaled, During the ceremony to release «Hamas General Principles», May 1, 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex_bPOUkCow
[515] (Hroub, *A Newer Hamas?* 2017. Op.cit. p:108)
[516] Ibid.
[517] Khalfa, David, *Ce qu'il faut comprendre de la nouvelle charte du Hamas*, Le Journal de Dimanche, le 3 mai 2017, shorturl.at/bmLQ1
[518] (Mashaal. During the ceremony to release «Hamas General Principles», May 1, 2017. Op.cit)

adopted the approval of all the different frameworks and institutions of the movement".[519] The preamble to the Document may also clearly reflect this: "This document is the product of deep deliberations that led us to a strong consensus. As a movement, we agree about both the theory and the practice of the vision that is outlined in the pages that follow. It is a vision that stands on solid grounds and well-established principles. This document unveils the goals, milestones, and how national unity can be enforced. It also establishes our common understanding of the Palestinian cause, the working principles which we use to further it, and the limits of flexibility used to interpret it".[520]

About the importance of this document for the Hamas on the internal and external levels, Fawzi Barhoum, the official spokesperson for Hamas, spells that "This document means a lot to [Hamas'] new generation who is looking for flexibility, development and keeping pace with the changes. It opens new horizons [for the movement] to deal with society and defining the nature of the struggle against the enemy, and reformatting the methods of dealing with the other and openness to the world".[521]

In short, the challenge posed by violent Salafi groups operating in the Gaza Strip is an important incentive factor for Hamas to reshape its ideological lines and stances. Although the military strength of these groups and their operational capacity are limited compared to Hamas to threaten its survival, they remain a real challenge to the religious, political and security domination of Hamas and its monopoly of force. Thus slowing the growth of these groups has become a matter of urgency for Hamas since they have played a role in destabilizing its relationship with Egypt and its endeavors for a calm relationship with Israel, moreover, shaking Hamas image in front of its audience, and questioning its ability to manage the daily affairs of its rule in Gaza.

Given the ability of these groups to harm Hamas' cohesion from within, the danger to Hamas increases concerning the fact that these groups are largely made up of Hamas operatives who are disillusioned with what they consider Hamas' overly 'pragmatic' attitude, the military wing is the main human supporting resource in the formation of these groups, who have been able to gain sympathy and support from Hamas military members, which makes Hamas internal stability at stake. Hamas' control of these groups was made more difficult by the fact that they are confronted with an extending intellectual movement rather than a well-organized movement with a hierarchy and clear titles. To draw a clearer line between Hamas' thought and those of these groups is not merely to avoid repeatedly accusing Hamas of adopting the same violent trend of Salafists, but also to set clear standards for choosing and recruiting its future members, and therefore Hamas is searching for those who believe in Hamas' new political positions and attitudes.

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[519] Ibid.

[520] Hamas Islamic Resistance Movement: A Document of General Principles, Hamas Official Website, released on May 1st, 2017, https://rb.gy/devqz0

[521] Barhoum, Fawzi, quoted in Al-Jabri, Khair El-Din, *Reading in the "Hamas Document" and beyond*, Noonpost Website, 05/02/2017, https://www.noonpost.com/content/17813

2.2.4 The Arab spring: The dilemma to secure regional allies

Before examining the Arab Spring as the forth pressing actor that urged Hamas to produce its new political principles document, it is important to identify the several impasses in which Hamas was situated at the outset of the Arab spring. Politically and diplomatically, Hamas suffered from the tightening political and diplomatic isolation, under the international boycott to its government; Hamas also experienced a cash-strapped after restricting its financial resources. The Quartet stipulated that the movement had to accept the Israeli-Palestinian accords and to renounce the use of violence as preconditions to recognize its government. With the refusal to recognize Israel, to abandon the resistance track, or to commit to the Oslo Accords, Hamas had to face an Israeli, Arab and international siege.[522] Following the seizure of Power over in 2007, Egypt and Israel, imposed a tighten embargo on the small coastal strip, as well a tightening closures on the crossing borders with Gaza restricting the movement of the population and trade exchange. As a result, the internal economic situation got worse. Hamas was unable to meet the living demands of most the Gazans, and further; the movement was caught in the dilemma of resistance and the exercise of power. An increased rate of unemployment and lack of living resources were the main reasons for the deterioration of the economic situation in Gaza.[523] At the local level, since the summer of 2007, several attempts have been made to settle the division between Hamas and Fatah, but none have been successful. Neither of them acknowledge each other's legitimate right to govern. Hamas, therefore, considers its continued hold on Gaza to be the main priority. During the long negotiation rounds to achieve reconciliation, both sides adopted a policy of waiting for the weakness of the other side and aspiring the change of the surrounding circumstances to strengthen their negotiating positions. They have both resorted to force to consolidate their influence in their territories and have taken several security measures towards each other's supporters, including detaining, oppression, stalking, and attacking institutions. The relationship between Hamas and Israel was not less tense, the movement warily managing a shaky truce with a far more powerful adversary after the movement entered into successive military clashes that fatigued the movement at the military and political leadership levels, after losing a number of its political and military leaders, such as Said Siyyam and Hamas military's senior leader Ahmed al-Jabari. Anyhow, to a certain degree, Egypt under the rule of Hosni Mubarak had been hostile to Hamas' domination of Gaza since 2007.[524] Egypt's closure of the Rafah crossing aggravated the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza, where Egypt used to be part of the 'axis of moderates'[525], sharing a common interest with Israel and the United States against

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[522] Miller, Elhanan, *Hamas and the Arab Spring*, The Forum for Regional Thinking, 11. Feb. 2019 Retrieved from shorturl.at/ruDEX

[523] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Light at the End of their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings*. Middle East Report. (2012, August), p. 31. Retrieved from shorturl.at/BMWY8

[524] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p: 181)

[525] Hsiu-Ping, Bao, Hamas' political transformation and engagement (2003-2013). University of Exeter. (2016). p. 202

Iran, Syria, Hamas, and Hezbollah. However, following the division between Hamas and Fatah in 2007, the Egyptian authority deemed Hamas' governance in Gaza as a potential threat to its national interest.[526] The Egyptians intensified the closure of the Rafah crossing and argued that the opening of the Rafah crossing borders is subjected to the return of the Presidential Guard forces under the supervision of the European Union according to Rafah accord signed between Israel and the PA with the US mediation in November 2005.[527]

2.2.4.1 The Egyptian Revolution: a lost gamble

It appeared to Hamas that the Arab revolts had modified all such impasses. The downfall of Fatah's powerful partner, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and the emergence of Hamas' oldest friend and mother movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, has provided hope to Hamas to shift the policies of the former Egyptian government, which put pressure and isolation on the movement, in return for helping Fatah, and viewed Hamas' rule in Gaza as de-facto that was impoverished to legitimacy.[528] These developments were seen as progress that would attain many of Hamas' key objectives; opening of the Gaza-Sinai border at Rafah, governing Gaza, breaking its political isolation, weakening Fatah's hold on the West Bank and developing regional ties in response to Israel.[529] Initially, Hamas interpreted the revolts in the Arab countries as a transition that would create ideal circumstances to improve Hamas' role in the local and regional spheres, and to be viewed globally as a responsible and respected player. Hamas regarded these changes as an opening that could provide the movement with new strategic spaces similar to its philosophy and more inclusive of its resistance line.[530] As for its relation with Fatah, Hamas believed that the links with the Islamists would reinforce its role in the reconciliation with Fatah, and reorganize Palestinian policies in a way that would effectively boost its political standing in competition with Fatah in national politics and in establishing national priorities.[531] Whilst the emergence of Islamist parties in countries with a common aversion to Israel and its allies, was seen as an opportunity to offer Hamas a new mainstream and more inclusive political structure that would strengthening its political position and counter the Israeli occupation.[532] This hoped that the new Arab partners would oppose the normalization with Israel, re-check the peace treaty, ease or raise the blockade placed by Israel. Moreover, the emergence of new political leaders in Egypt, who are distancing away from Israel and closer to Hamas, politically and traditionally, will provide Hamas with a diplomatic and political balance of influence in its confrontation with Israel that would reward the movement with a

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[526] Ibid.
[527] Gisha - Legal Center for Freedom of Movement: *Who holds the keys to the Rafah crossing?* March 2009, p. 18
[528] (International Crisis Group (ICG), *Light at the End*. 2012. Op.cit. p: 1)
[529] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. p: 188)
[530] Ibid.
[531] Ibid.
[532] (International Crisis Group (ICG), *Light at the End*. 2012. Op.cit. p: i)

new mediator pushing new strategies that places more pressure on Israel rather than on Hamas.[533]

After his victory, Mohammed Morsi relied on his favorable ties with Hamas to appear as a central mediator in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Despite the political and ideological ties between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, however the rapprochement between them was focused on mutual benefits of both of the two sides. Morsi counted on the "domestication" of Hamas as a significant card to gain the help of the United States.[534] A rapprochement with Hamas will encourage Morsi to pose himself as a rational and reasonable face to the Arab world and also to the United States, by bringing Hamas further in line with the modes of action of the Muslim Brotherhood that's not on the list of terrorist organizations.[535] Besides, easing the tension between Hamas and Israel will eliminate a possible irritant to US-Egypt ties, strengthen the overall regional atmosphere, and pave the environment for fresh peace negotiations. This approach was endorsed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, who were aimed at reaping the benefits of the changes in the region to "demilitarize" Hamas or at least move it into greater participation in diplomatic solutions rather than a military solution.[536] Nevertheless, Egypt holds realistic objectives with Israel in establishing a more comprehensive deal between Hamas and Israel over Gaza that would allow Egypt to exert efforts to stabilize the condition in Sinai.[537] Forasmuch, Hamas counted on Morsi to serve its essential interests to improve its position in various respects and facilitating its regional and international integration in hope to get out of its foreign diplomatic and political isolation and to acquire financial support after the reduction of the Iranian support to Hamas since the summer of 2012 as a consequence of the differences between Gaza and Tehran over the Syrian crisis.[538] Nevertheless, it was more likely to Hamas to achieve a calm situation with Israel to help the movement to reinforce itself in the Gaza Strip. This could include entering a more formal ceasefire agreement with Israel over Gaza. Hamas could benefit from reciprocal Israeli guarantees over a Gaza ceasefire to improve the Strip's economic status.[539]

However, such gains have not materialized. The deadlocks of Hamas deepened when it became clear that the Muslim Brotherhood in both Egypt and Tunisia was too weak to form a regional incubator for the movement and to pursue a new approach towards Palestinians rather than the past approaches.[540] The new Arab regimes remained concerned about their internal concerns. In Egypt, the

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[533] Mertes, M., & Knocha, J., *Hamas and the "Arab Spring*. Ramallah: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. (July 2012). p. 3 Retrieved from http://shorturl.at/fhuB6

[534] Seurat, Leïla: *Le Hamas et Mohamed Morsi: Un Rapprochement trop risqué?*, Confluences Méditerranée 2013. 3(86), p: 132

[535] Ibid.

[536] Seurat, Leïla: Le Hamas et le monde (2006-2015): La politique étrangère du Mouvement Islamiste Palestinien. Paris: CNRS Éditions. (2015). pp. 95-96

[537] (International Crisis Group (ICG), Light at the End. 2012. Op.cit. p: ii)

[538] (Seurat. *Le Hamas et Mohamed Morsi*. 2013, Op. cit. p. 137)

[539] (International Crisis Group (ICG), Light at the End. 2012. Op.cit. p: ii)

[540] Dot-Pouillard, Nicolas, *Le Hamas fait un pas en direction de la communauté international propos*, recueillis par Clément Daniez, L'Express, 02/05/2017 shorturl.at/iwL17

Muslim Brotherhood has encountered enormous challenges including the failure to reach a solid understanding with other 'mainly secular' political forces over the constitution and other policy issues. They also remained weak and susceptible to western, particularly, American influence, much like the Mubarak regime previously. The lack of real change in Egypt's relations with Gaza, under the MB's rule, raised questions about the Islamists' ability to formulate a new direction and policies for a real departure regarding the question of Palestine.[541] For example, although Egypt opened the border at Rafah, the crossing was frequently closed, Gaza's citizens were not able to move freely and goods were still in short supply, even the necessities of life. The Israeli war on Gaza in 2012 revealed the modest nature of change brought about by the new regimes, particularly in Egypt. Indeed, the rise of the Brotherhood would not truly benefit Hamas. President Morsi reaffirmed that Egypt would abide by the peace treaty with Israel and maintained its relationship with the US. Although Morsi mediated the confrontation between Israel and Hamas during the Israeli 8-day war on Gaza, there was no indication that Egypt's foreign policy had been changed dramatically in favor of Hamas. During Morsi's term, the Egyptian authorities demolished parts of the tunnels and restricted the movement of people and goods through the Rafah crossing.[542] Such policies angered Hamas and prompted its leaders to express their discontent with post-Mubarak Egypt. In his weekly address in March 2012, Ismail Haniya expressed frustration at the lack of change in the Arab approach towards Palestinians, including the lifting of the ongoing siege of Gaza and the failure to adopt a grand strategy towards Israel. He said: "Is it reasonable that Gaza remains without electricity a year after the revolution in Egypt? Is it reasonable that Gaza remains under blockade a year after the dismissal of the tyrant (Mubarak) regime?".[543]

Anyways, Hamas' chance that the MB would turn Egypt into a strategic backer and ally to the movement was dashed when the General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi deposed the Morsi government in July 2013. This situation was quickly a major challenge for the movement. With Sisi's hold on power, the Egyptian regime has shifted from a system that constitutes an ideologically compatible environment to Hamas to another severely hostile to it as well as to the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies. The new Egyptian regime seemed tough on Hamas and increased pressure on it as a result of its accusation that it had perpetrated violence inside Egypt and continued to support the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas was blamed of being a co-conspirator with the Egyptian Brotherhood and accused of the turmoil in Egyptian society, including the attacks on Churches and the Egyptian soldiers in Sinai, and the sending of al-Qassam fighters to Egypt and forcibly opening the prison of *Wadi Al-Natrun* in which Mohammed Morsi and others members the MB were detained.[544] The rise of the anti-Muslim Brotherhood sentiment in Egyptian public opinion has continued to discredit the Palestinian Islamic Resistance

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[541] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit. pp. 202-203)
[542] Ibid.
[543] (Ezbidi. *Democracy as a Minor Necessity*. 2014, Op cit. 189)
[544] Aiko, Nishikida, *Hamas and the Gaza war of 2014: developments since the Arab spring in Palestine*. Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, V. 732, Dec 2018, p:7

Movement.[545] Moreover, Hamas has been a victim of an internal struggle on the Egyptian political scene, and its association with Morsi and the MB has become the preferred pretext for many Egyptian media to discredit Hamas, which posed a significant risk for the movement.[546] As a part of the anti-Hamas campaign, the Egyptian regime launched an offensive media campaign against Hamas often was largely associated with the campaign against Morsi notably the accusation of Hamas of being involved in *Ma'raket Al-Jamal* (camel battle) on February 2, 2011, during which many demonstrators were killed on Tahrir Square.[547]

Anyhow, Hamas' ability to preserve its powers has had extra challenges since the ousting of the Mohammed Morsi government in Egypt and the gradual establishment of a new political authority squarely hostile to Hamas. Whereas Hamas has largely counted on the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to extricate it from the successive predicaments since its victory in 2006 in the light of their historical, political and ideological ties, the downfall of Morsi has mostly caused problems for Hamas, as it lost an important regional backer. Add to this, after the relatively cooperative Morsi' government, Egypt successively returned to the pre-uprising politics that had a devastating impact on the Gaza Strip and deepened the financial crisis and political isolation of Hamas.[548] The Egyptian regime established a security buffer zone between Egypt and Gaza and continued to enforce economical and mobility restrictions, and strictly destructed underground smuggling tunnels between Sinai and Gaza, one of the main sources supplying food supplies to the Gaza Strip, and Hamas with weapons, and tightened the closure of border crossings and increased the restrictions on the inflows and outflows of goods and people.[549] The policies of the new Egyptian authorities limited Hamas' ability to perform its governance functions and to fulfill its demands, including paying workers' salaries of the workers on its payroll. These policies, combined with the Israeli and international ongoing restrictions, have enhanced the increasing economic and financial pressure on Gaza.[550]

2.2.4.2 Syria and Iran: another loss

If the rise of the Islamists in Egypt and the deteriorated relationship with Mubarak's regime in Egypt justify the movement's position on the Egyptian revolution, the situation is contrary to the Syrian case. Syria was represented as a strategic backer for the movement and its only ally for so long, whilst Hamas' relationship with most of the Arab countries experienced a sharp rupture in policies and orientations and has been regionally isolated, the Syrian government has offered political and substantial financial and military support, with few or no preconditions, and had hosted Hamas' external leadership since 2001. The Syrian-Hamas relationship resulted from its strategic considerations vis-à-vis both Israel and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, which had a problematic relationship with

[545] (Seurat. *Le Hamas et Mohamed Morsi*. 2013, Op. cit. p. 139)
[546] Ibid. p. 133
[547] Ibid. p. 139
[548] (Aiko. Hamas and the Gaza war. 2018. Op.cit. p. 16)
[549] (Seurat. *Le Hamas et Mohamed Morsi*. 2013, Op. cit. p. 139)
[550] (Berti. *The Evolving Role of Hamas*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 44)

Assad's regime after the early 1980s.[551] Moreover, both the resistance against Israel and the refusal of any normalization expressed by Arab countries towards Israel have become a common ground for Hamas-Syria's relationship. Based on mutual benefits, Hamas took advantage of the Syrian regime to open its headquarters in Damascus, which achieved relative political stability in addition to military support. This rapprochement was an opportunity for the Syrian regime to gain a regional role and to renew its influence on the Palestinian scene.[552] This relationship allowed Syria and its partners to exploit the Palestinian cause to gain public support, and further, through its support for Hamas, claimed leadership of the Arab's "Axis of Resistance or the refusal front"[553] (*Mehwar al-Mouqawamah OR Jabhet almoumana'ah*) against Israel, and presented itself to the Arabs as the only Arab country to defend the Palestinian cause and support the resistance against Israel. The growth of Hamas and its influence on the Palestinian scene would strengthen Syria's position in the region and allow Syria to have a say in intra-Palestinian politics and thereby indirectly influence developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the "Axis of Resistance", -which is a coalition led by Iran and Syria, based on a framework of shared identity in confrontation with Israel, strong opposition to pro-Western Arab regimes, that includes state and non-state actors, such as Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others, has been crucial to developing Hamas' military capacity and sustaining its regime in Gaza. Both regimes, Iran and Syria, offered Hamas with funding, rhetorical support, and diplomacy, joint military cooperation, economic assistance and solidarity.[554]

Yet, from late 2010, the Syrian revolt has given rise to one of the most pressing and costly concerns that have challenged Hamas' leaders to choose between two irreconcilable positions: to support either the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood or the Assad regime. In general, the Arab Spring has put Hamas in a position to choose between one of its two main concepts of ideology: the first relates to its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and thus joining the camp that includes the Muslim Brotherhood in alliance with Turkey and Qatar, and the second relates to being an armed Palestinian resistance movement, thus joining the other camp that includes Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah. One of the consequences of

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[551] Napolitano, Valentina: *Hamas and the Syrian Uprising: A Difficult Choice*. Middle East Policy, 20(3), 73-85. (2013, Fall), p: 74

[552] Ibid.

[553] The "Resistance axis" and the "refusal or rejectionist axis", are two similar and overlapped terms, with a slight difference between them. Both contain common elements, such as Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Palestinian factions in Syria, but when using the term "refusal or rejectionist axis" it is more to refer to the Syrian-led coalition and usually used in its rhetoric to the Arab World, when using the "Axis of resistance" led by Iran, usually refer to Iran coalition against America, Israel and the Sunni countries (UAE, Saudi Arabia) and is more servative to Iran's seeks for influence and the Sunni-Shi'i sectarian conflict. Actually, Hamas, within theses axises, concentrated on its conflict with Israel, benefits from the Iranian and Syrian financial, military and political backing. Although the "Axis of Resistance" gathered those in hostility to America and Israel, but we found no prove that Hamas participated in transboundary attacks against the American sites in the Middle East. For further information about the composition of the "Axis of Resistance" see: Pollack, Kenneth M.: The Evolution of the Revolution: The Changing Nature of the Iran's "Axes of Resistance", March 2020.

[554] (Pollack, March 2020. *The Evolution of the Revolution*. Op.cit. p. 2)

the regional polarization, which forced Hamas to join one of the two camps, was the partial neutralization of one of these two concepts, and thus the commitment to the positions and practices of the camp to which it belongs, including the stances on the conflict with Israel or in other regional conflicts.[555] Besides, Hamas, in one hand, had to weigh the cost of breaking relations with a regime still clinging to power; and the risks entailed losing an important ally who had been a major actor in supporting Hamas' armed resistance approach. If they were to lose Syria, Hamas' relation with Iran would be at the same risk whilst Iran is acting to the survival of its political and military influence in the Middle East. Alienating Iran, in a sense, could mean losing its largest financial, military, and training backer.[556] But, on the other hand, Hamas considered the development in the regional sphere and the gradual rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sunni Arabs more generally as strategic developments that would enhance its position in the new arrangements in the region and exerting the movement from its great impasses. Also, Hamas linking its destiny to the Syrian regime, as Hezbollah had done, would have undermined its popularity, prevented any kind of relationship with a future post-Bashar regime, and made it impossible to attract political support from the Arab countries that had taken a stance against the Syrian regime.[557]

To sustain an alliance or reduce losses, Hamas was initially cautious to take sides directly with the people or the regime in public and attempted to distance itself from the Syrian conflict without taking a clear stance at the beginning. Hamas' leaders officially claimed that the bloodbath needed to be stopped, but they did not explicitly condemn the Syrian regime. One of the considerations that made Hamas not loudly declare its support for the protesters and their demands is that the movement was indebted to the Assad regime for being a long-term ally and support of the Palestinian cause. But Hamas also wanted to avoid being blamed or boycotted later. The PLO paid dearly for Yasser Arafat's support of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which resulted in the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait after the expulsion of Iraqi troops.[558] Thus, the movement had to consider its obligations towards hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Syria, who could pay with their homes and lives for the decisions made by some of their political leaders. [559]

However, the policy of neutrality that Hamas embraced seemed defunct.[560] Hamas gradually changed its ambiguous language in February 2012, when political leaders in exile, Khaled Mishaal, and Musa Abu Marzuk, decided to leave Syria, both physically and ideologically. They had declared unequivocal support for the Syrian revolts and the Muslim Brotherhood, which marked the beginning of a new era of regional alliances. Khalid Mishaal asserted that they appreciated the Syrian regime's support in the past, but that did not mean that Hamas was loyal to this regime. He added that "what was happening in Syria was a big crime against the

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[555] Abdullah, Bilal, *The future of the Resistance Movements in the regional roles: Hamas' transformations after the Arab revolutions*, Masr Alarabia ،March 05, 2015, shorturl.at/kqyN2
[556] Ibid.
[557] (Napolitano, *Hamas and the Syrian Uprising*. 2013. Op. cit. P: 77)
[558] Ibid. p. 75
[559] (Abdullah, *The future of the Resistance Movements*, March 05, 2015, Op. cite)
[560] Ibid.

people and country and Hamas was with people in Syria who aspired for freedom, dignity, reform, and democracy".[561] Other leaders, Ismail Haniyeh addressed a speech in the Al-Azhar mosque in Cairo, praising 'the heroic Syrian people'.[562]

What explains Hamas' shifting position?

Hamas' decision to take a stand against the Syrian regime must be understood in a specific regional context. The hold of Islamist in power in Egypt and Tunisia has confirmed to Hamas the political success of Islamist movements in the region. With this success, it seemed to Hamas that the same scenario could be repeated in Syria with Turkish and Qatari sponsorship.[563] The regional reorientation of Hamas and its engagement in the strategic shifts reflect its attempts to invest the opportunities to increase its power, leverage, and alliance-building within the region, and to strengthen its position by exploiting a changing ideological environment. Hamas believed that the emerging geopolitical reshaping of the Middle East was an opportunity for the movement to break its regional and international isolation and to be recognized as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The impetus for such change derives from the effects of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, primarily in Egypt, as well as connected with wider regional repercussions about such factors as the regional ambitions of Gulf powers such as Qatar.[564] Khaled Meshal stated that: "[The revolutions] are major events succeeding them change the map of Hamas' political relations, and have added to and impacted on them."[565] The shifting regional configurations led Hamas to return to its origins as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and adopt a stance in line with the Brotherhood that supported the Syrian revolution. In addtion to this, a key member of the Syrian opposition is the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, a sister organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, Hamas assisting Assad would have meant acting against the parent organization—the Muslim Brotherhood.[566]

Moreover, considering that Hamas was the only Palestinian faction in Syria to take a stand in favor of the revolution, its chances of being favored by future authorities are better than those of other Palestinian actors.[567] Likewise, no democratically elected government in a post-Assad Syria will revise its stance with Israel and the Palestinian issue as long as Israel continues to occupy the Golan Heights. All actors in Syria's politically divided opposition, whether in their home or exile, agree on this point.[568] Another considerable factor is related to Syria's ability to return as a strong actor in the region and to form a strong supporter to Hamas again. In fact, in such destructive cases as in Syria, the post-revolutionary

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[561] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 201)
[562] Haniyeh, Ismail Cited in ibid.
[563] Milton-Edwards, Beverley, *Hamas and the Arab Spring: Strategic Shifts?* Middle East Policy, 20(3). (Fall 2013) https://mepc.org/hamas-and-arab-spring-strategic-shifts
[564] Ibid.
[565] Meshal, Khaled Cited in (Milton-Edwards. *Hamas and the Arab Spring*. Fall 2013, Op.cit)
[566] (Napolitano, *Hamas and the Syrian Uprising*. 2013. Op. cit. P: 76)
[567] Ibid. p. 77
[568] Mohns, Erik, and Bank, André, *Syrian Revolt Fallout: End of the Resistance Axis?* Middle East Policy Council, 2015. March 4th, https://mepc.org/syrian-revolt-fallout-end-resistance-axis

period gives priority to rebuilding the country and relegating regional policy to a secondary concern.[569]

Although the ramifications of the revolts were beneficial to Hamas and strengthened the movement's bonds with countries allied to the United States, such as Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey. However, Hamas' decision to take a side against the Syrian regime has exacerbated tensions with traditional allies such as Iran and Hezbollah.[570] The movement's refusal to support the Syrian government effectively weakened their ties and caused either a halt or a significant reduction in Iranian financial donations to the movement, and hence the situation of Hamas was defined by financial scarcity and affected its military strength.[571] It had been estimated that Iran had contributed at least 280 million US dollars annually to Hamas in Gaza in recent years; much of this through arms.[572] As part of this tension, Iran suspended 23 million U.S dollars aid to Hamas as a warning.[573] The loss of such a largest ally was a significant setback for the movement since the Iranian support represented the most prominent factor in the growing capabilities of Hamas inside and outside Palestine, and was essential for upholding Hamas' material capacity to rule the Gaza Strip.[574] Hamas deputy political bureau head, Musa Abu Marzouk, alluded to this rupture and the reduction of Iran's support for Hamas by saying that: "The Iranians are not happy with our position on Syria, and when they are not happy they don't deal with you in the same old way".[575] Hamas leader Salah Bardawil, also said, "Hamas was not dependent on Iranian funding, which he said had steadily decreased over the past three years".[576] However, Hamas leaders have downplayed the consequences of losing Iranian support. In interviews with the International Crisis Group, senior leaders of Hamas gave statements that indicates Hamas' alternative options to replace its alliance with Iran and could be evidence of Hamas' changing policies and its aspiration to the benefit of quitting the coalition with the Syrian and Iranian regimes and joining the new coalition in the region. One said: "When one door closes, another one opens, Iran closed, Egypt opened; pressure increased in Syria and was released in Jordan".[577] Other senior Hamas leaders pointed to a silver lining in the deterioration of relations with Iran, calling it "proof of our independence".[578] A third Hamas' leaders said that: "[The] Iranian pressure could be in Hamas' interest. The new situation makes it clear that we are not a simple follower or proxy of Iran […] this has strengthened Hamas' position in many countries, especially in the Gulf countries, in the Sunni world".[579]

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[569] (Napolitano, *Hamas and the Syrian Uprising*. 2013. Op. cit. P: 82)
[570] (Mohns & Bank. Syrian Revolt Fallout. 2015. March 4th. Op.cit)
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ezbidi, Basem, *Arab Spring: Weather Forecast for Palestine*. Middle East Policy, 20(3), 2013. P. 101
[573] Tait, Robert, *Hamas loses Iran funds for backing Syria rebels*, Gulfnews, 1st June 2013. shorturl.at/egzI7
[574] (Mohns & Bank. *Syrian Revolt Fallout*. 2015. March 4th. Op.cit)
[575] Interviews with Hamas senior leaders, Cited in: (ICG, Light at the End. 2012. Op.cit. p: 10)
[576] The Washington Post: *Hamas ties to Syria and Iran in flux as region shifts*. 7 March 2012
[577] Interviews with Hamas senior leaders, Cited in: (ICG, Light at the End. 2012. Op.cit. p: 10)
[578] Ibid. pp10-11.
[579] Ibid.

The exit of Hamas from the "Axes of resistance" is another important manifestation of the Syrian revolution. Hamas has been the only actor in this axis who has broken ranks as a result of the Syrian uprising.[580] Hamas' involvement in the "axis of resistance" and the "refusal front" had a significant symbolism since Hamas was the biggest and strongest Palestinian faction involved in the Axis, which allowed Iran and Syria to effectively touch the relationship with Israel.[581] The interrelations between the members of the Axis have been challenged by the situation in Syria. Both, Hamas and Hezbollah, the two important elements in the Axis as well as in any military confrontation with Israel, have taken different sides and actions in Syria, Hezbollah has been actively fought alongside Assad's forces to help maintain his control, Hamas has been training and supporting some of the Sunni rebels who are fighting against them.[582] Although this implied a significant change in Hamas-Iran and Hezbollah's relation occurred, but this did not indicate that Hamas had fundamentally broken its relationship with them. As Mishaal clarified, "although Hamas had a different view of the Syria crisis from Iran and Hezbollah, it still maintained relations with them based on the principle of resistance against the Zionist occupier".[583] Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has vowed that his organization will continue to support Hamas despite the rift in Syria.[584] However, such deterioration can potentially cast doubt on future cooperation, or, at the very least, the support and preference of those actors to Hamas will not be the same as before.

Hassan Ahmadian, an Iranian author, gives three reasons why the relationship between Hamas and Iran has deteriorated. The first concerns the escalation of the sectarian tone within the alliance of Syrian-Iranian to confront the Syrian crisis. In other words, the revolution in Syria was viewed as targeting the Shiites and Alawites (a section of Shia). Here, Hamas found itself caught in a sectarian tug of war and felt that the "axis of the resistance" changed in concept and goals from confronting Israel to strengthening the Sunni-Shiite conflict in the region. The second is the exit of Hamas from the Iranian-Syrian's "axis of resistance" and choosing to join a hostile anti-Iran coalition. This choice implied a change in Hamas' alignment to the "axis of the resistance" and reflected its desire to replace it with another under the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, although is not as similar in hostilities and violence against Israel as the Iranian-Syrian one. This, according to Ahmadian, had been a fundamental reason for deepening the gap between Iran-Syria and Hamas. As for the third reason, is the deviation of Hamas from the resistance approach. Since the movement's leaders openly spoke of their acceptance of a long-term truce with Israel, which means to enter into a truce that extends for a decade or two, it has become clear that Hamas, with such a truce, would have turned the resistance into a slogan with no action. This trend

[580] (Pollack, March 2020. *The Evolution of the Revolution*. Op.cit. p. 6)
[581] Ibid. p. 12
[582] Oseran, Shai, *Hezbollah-Hamas Cooperation: Motivations, Manifestations and Future Outlook*, ICT: International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, October 2013, P: 19
[583] The Palestine Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal talks to "the Monitor", (5 May 2013)
[584] (Oseran. *Hezbollah-Hamas Cooperation*. 2013. Op.cit. p: 19)

began before the Arab Spring and intensified, especially after Morsi's arrival to power in Egypt.[585]

The shift in the regional power structure resulting from the Arab uprisings could be another significant reason that led Hamas relations with Iran and Syria to reach such a rupture.[586] In fact, with the rise of Islamist, Hamas felt that its alignment with the rising powers was in favor of fulfilling its long-standing aspiration that Palestine would become the center of the Islamic *Ummah*.[587] Hamas has appropriated the narrative that the Arab Spring is an essential act to liberating Palestine. For Hamas, the fall of the dictatorship, which had long been hostile to the Islamists, symbolized a major strategic change in the region in helping the Palestinians to oppose the Zionist project and liberate Palestine.[588] Ostensibly, Hamas received the changes with high aspirations, and its leaders felt that the new atmosphere in the Arab region would lead to a supportive geostrategic environment for Hamas and would become its main backer.[589] Khaled Meshal encapsulated this position in a speech in 2013: "The Arab Spring was a major strategic development in the path to liberating Palestine and confronting the Zionist project."[590] He stressed that the Palestinian issue is not merely a conflict between Palestinians and Israelis but is also a conflict between *Ummah* and the Zionist project that targets the whole *Ummah*. The danger is therefore not limited to Palestine alone.[591] Musa Abu Marzuq expressed this aspiration by saying that "Arab Spring is the choice of the people in favor of Palestine and the people of the *Ummah*. It is the renaissance of the *Ummah* at all levels." [592] Ismail Haniyeh stated that 'The revolution in Egypt is a glimmer of hope. It is a historical turning point that Egypt restored its role [in this region]). Very soon, the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem is getting closer. And the revolution reflected the reality of the *Ummah*…It has a positive impact on Palestinians." [593] These aspirations are also felt in the words of Hamas leader, Ismail Radwan, who comments on the events in the Arab world: "We are happy with this. We are part of the *Ikhwan* [Muslim Brotherhood], we are well-connected".[594] Nevertheless, Hamas also perceived the Arab Spring as a victory against Israel, Fatah, and the PLO. Hamas leaders in Gaza considered that the Arab Spring had gradually changed the regional structure in favor of Gaza and weakened the PA in the West Bank. For Hamas, the Arab Spring had negative consequences on Israel as well as on PLO and the Palestinian secular counterparts. Hamas sought to incorporate these consequences into its narrative of its increased power, and popularity against the power of Israel and the PLO. Mahmoud al-Zahar

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[585] Ahmadian, Hassan, *Hamas' options in the relationship with Iran*. Al-Jazeera Website. (2015, July 20). Retrieved from shorturl.at/dk129
[586] (Mohns & Bank. *Syrian Revolt Fallout*. 2015. March 4th. Op.cit)
[587] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 194)
[588] (Milton-Edwards. *Hamas and the Arab Spring*. Fall 2013, Op.cit)
[589] (Mohns & Bank. *Syrian Revolt Fallout*. 2015. March 4th. Op.cit)
[590] Meshal, Khalid, *Political thought and strategies of Hamas in light of the Arab uprisings*, Afro-Middle East Centre, (1 April 2013). Retrived from: shorturl.at/bhALU
[591] Ibid.
[592] Abu Marzuq, Musa Cited in: (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 193)
[593] The Palestine Information Center, 'Haniyeh: Hamas carried out experiments in a very complex and dangerous situation and Egypt's Revolution brings hope,' (5 July 2011).
[594] Radwan, Ismail, Cited in (Milton-Edwards. *Hamas and the Arab Spring*. Fall 2013, Op.cit)

commented, "Israel's policy against us failed [...] this time the geopolitical structure and the Islamic resurgence completely changed... [and] we were victorious".[595] Hamas also contends that President Abbas, in losing an important ally in Mubarak, is further weakened vis-à-vis Hamas.[596]

However, Hamas noticed that the balance of power is shifting in the Middle East for the favor of Muslim brotherhood and the Sunni, at the time when Iran was more cornered by the international community (minus Russia and China) than ever because of its nuclear program, and with a Syrian regime facing an existential threat that increased its strategic vulnerability.[597] With these shifts, the "resistance axis" thus faced profound challenges to its regional influence. The preoccupation of Syria and Iran with such domestic issues has significantly diminished their regional political leverage that made Hamas conclude that the Palestinian cause, as well as its power in Gaza, will be a minor priority for these regimes if we consider the high finical cost to back such struggle for Power in the region.[598] Hamas' decision was soon made easier by the Western sanctions against Iran for its nuclear program, which devoured Iran's foreign exchange reserves and undermined the regime's ability to bankroll its proxies.[599] And thus Hamas did not desire to venture its political capital in return to reserve its alignment with two regimes who were struggling to maintain their power in the region and have been isolated it internationally.[600]

It is hard to argue that Hamas' decisions and behavior have been driven solely by ideological convictions and motivations. It is important to consider the movement's rational considerations in terms of its material and political interest. Hamas' alliance with Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran has always been a tactical convenience, not an ideological conviction.[601] With the fact that its mother organization is getting in power gradually in the region, it was expected that Hamas would benefit from the set of opportunities that it could offer to the movement, and thus, Hamas switching of allies according to theses given new circumstances seems reasonable.

By breaking with the Iranian and Syrian allies, Hamas was faced with finding an alternative to fill the void left by the two countries. Urgently, Hamas was in need to secure headquarters to host its political leaders abroad. This would render Hamas' leadership vulnerable to the political pressures of the host country and would make Hamas' leaders unstable.[602] Moreover, Hamas needed to find a reliable financial resource to continue to rule Gaza and compensate for the loss after restraining its relationship with Iran and Syria. The break with Syria and Iran

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[595] (Milton-Edwards. *Hamas and the Arab Spring*. Fall 2013, Op.cit)
[596] Ibid.
[597] (Mohns & Bank. *Syrian Revolt Fallout*. 2015. March 4th. Op.cit)
[598] Ibid.
[599] Saab, Bilal, *A New Hamas in the Making*? The National Interests, December 20, 2011 shorturl.at/qFJZ1
[600] (Napolitano, *Hamas and the Syrian Uprising*. 2013. Op. cit. P: 82)
[601] Løvlie, Frode & Knudsen, Are, *Hamas and the Arab Spring*, Middle East Policy, 20(3). Fall 2013, https://bit.ly/3dKlxJC
[602] (International Crisis Group (ICG), *Light at the End*. 2012. Op.cit. p: 6)

seemed to allow Hamas to restore its relationship with regimes that had long been hostile to it and objected to its policies. In this case, the UAE and Jordan have set a good example. The UAE used to support Hamas' strongest opponent, Muhammad Dahlan, with money and weapons, while Jordan broke off ties with Hamas' political leaders and expelled them from Jordan in 1999. Hamas initiated different regional efforts to secure political support for its position towards the Syrian regime and from late 2011 to early 2012, Khaled Mishaal and Ismail Haniyeh paid two official visits to UAE and Jordan. Although not that many changes felt in the willingness of these regimes to back Hamas, the two visits could be regarded as a symbolic rapprochement and attempt to change their state of hostility against the movement. With the Jordanian, the visit was more a mean for the Jordanian king to pacify his internal opposition than a real opening towards the Palestinian movement.[603]

The rise of the power of Islamist movements suggested a new regional bloc led by Qatar and Turkey with their significant ties with Israel and America. Hamas assumed that this bloc, with the newly elected Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, would compensate for its breaking with its traditional allies: Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, and would make the movement an important player in the new regional power equation and farther, would make the movement politically stronger in its confrontation vis-à-vis the Israeli policies.[604] Qatar and Turkey, who already had a good relationship with Hamas, provided further financial aid after the revolution in Syria. In October 2012, the Qatari Emir, Sheikh Hamad, visited Gaza for the first time. He pledged to donate $400 million for the reconstruction and investment in Gaza.[605] But, how generous, Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt-Morsi would be with Hamas, is not enough to make them reliable alternatives as it's in the case of the Iranian and Syrian regimes. The three countries have strong ties, to one degree or another, with the United States and Israel. Despite their considerable financial support to Hamas, and attempted to alleviate the blockade of Gaza, but none of these countries, neither any other Arab country, seemed willing to offer Hamas unconditional support and to welcome to back Hamas military approach and providing the movement with military facilities, or even to form a strategic incubator that allows Hamas to build its military capacities as both Iran and Syria have offered them. Turkey continues to maintain diplomatic ties with Israel and is cautious. Qatar, a moderate party that enjoys close ties with the United States, assists with the condition that it not be used for arms. Both Qatar and Turkey acknowledge their limitations and recognize that any assistance to Hamas must be restricted to the political and humanitarian realms. Hamas is well aware that both countries are unwilling to draw the world's wrath and scarify their good ties with the US, Israel, and the west in return to back Hamas militarily.

These changes suggested that joining the Qatari-Turkish bloc would have an impact on Hamas' military approach. The failure of Hamas to replace the features of the Iranian and Syrian allies, could, strategically, mean that Hamas'

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[603] Hamed, Qusay: *Meshaal dirigera-t-il Ramallah depuis Amman?* ISM: International Solidarity Movement, 4 Mars 2012.
[604] (Mohns & Bank. *Syrian Revolt Fallout*. 2015. March 4th. Op.cit)
[605] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 197)

military approach would not receive official support, whilst the further involvement in the political role would minimize the role of the military approach in Hamas' policies and leave Hamas' military wing with the marginalized role and no strategic backer. Iran and Hezbollah were major sources of advanced weapons and technologies, with the significant support, Hamas became more skilled and armed then it had ever been previously and gained proficiency in explosives and more advanced guerilla warfare tactics.[606] Placing Hamas' partnership with these actors at a lower end of the cooperation would be particularly costly at a moment of great monetary strain for the movement and could leave Hamas without a reliable arms procurer.[607]

Nevertheless, Hamas breaks up with the Axis of Iran and Syria does not necessarily mean that Hamas has made a dramatic change in its approaches and has abandoned the approach of the resistance, but the profit and loss calculations have tempted the movement to invest more in political channels by joining the Qatari and Turkish camps in the hope that this will strengthen its position at various levels. Of course, Hamas is aware of its military capabilities, and the acquisition of new military methods would have a major impact without Iran and Hezbollah.

To sum up, the Arab Spring was a watershed that changed Hamas' priorities and affected its coalitions in the region. However, the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, losing Syria, and the deterioration in the relation with Iran and Hezbollah, were all key events that influenced Hamas' position within the regional and local scenes. The outcomes of the Arab Spring did not establish a new regional climate to fulfill Hamas' aspirations to form a strong supportive regional incubator to its ideology or forming new strategic alliances that would endorse Hamas' position against Israel or affect the Palestinian internal balance of power. Ironically, the Islamic *Ummah* that Hamas believed would help the Palestinian cause was more divisive than it was before the revolts. In contrast, having abandoned its former supporters without a new partner willing to offer political, financial, and military support left Hamas in utter solitude in the area with no strategic backer, and with an uncertain future. Egypt, even under Morsi's rule, continued to defend the peace treaty with Israel, and endorsed the same measures toward Gaza and the crossing borders. The new sponsors such as Turkey and Qatar emerged to focus primarily on avoiding a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, and the collapse of Hamas' rule, but they were unwilling to compensate for the damage that touched Hamas after breaking with its traditional alliance within the "Resistance Axis" or supporting its military approach.

In the wake of the Arab spring, Hamas was in between a severe financial crisis and a regional crisis that threatened its political future in Palestine. The movement essentially sought to a better space to maneuver within the Palestinian political system, rather than being excluded from it. Hamas' handing over authority in Gaza (from an administrative point of view) to the Ramallah government headed by Rami Al-Hamdallah in June 2014, can be understood as a crucial manifestation

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[606] (Oseran. *Hezbollah-Hamas Cooperation*. 2013. Op.cit. p: 20)

[607] Gleis, Joshua L. & Berti, Benedetta, Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. 164.

of the movement's regional impasse, and refers to Hamas attempting to overcome its predicament. Hamas was compelled to join the unity government with Fatah as a way to escape the prolonged international sanctions, and to gain authority. This impasse can be better expressed by Hamas' political bureau deputy chief, Musa Abu Marzouq commenting on the object of Hamas' New Political Document: "We are experiencing a difficult, extraordinary situation in the region, and an international assault upon the Palestinian issue. Our surroundings have given up on the major issue that concerns our people. This compels us to resist attempts to erase the "issue". [….] The movement released the document in order to emphasize the national responsibility [of Hamas], as a national liberation movement inspired by Islam, and to present a political vision that will serve as the basis for national cooperation. There can be no future for the national project if there is Palestinian division."[608]

Conclusion

To conclude, there is a causal relationship between the four presented pressing elements and Hamas revising its political stances. Since Hamas achieved the majority vote in the elections of 2006, and seized power in the Gaza Strip in 2007, the movement has been presented to a set of gaps that constitute real dilemmas. Two stages that may better describe the ramification of practicing the governance on Hamas. In the first (2006-2014), the adoption of both resistance and governance introduced the movement to the dilemma of undefined identity. Hamas, while in governance, had unclear priorities and vision, as well as unclear objectives and an ambiguous political program. Two main perceptions within Hamas represented this dilemma, while one perception shows Hamas as a governance that practices a new role and occupies new positions within the Palestinian polity, thus the movement ought to adapt its behavior accordingly and exploit the new opportunities and reasons not to lead the PA and PLO. The other perception viewed Hamas as a movement that originally adhered to resistance as its top obligations, thus the governance should be employed in the service of the resistance, and Hamas should adhere to its original identity as a resistance movement. In other words, Hamas lived an internal struggle to determine its identity and goals, accommodating between its general objectives (liberation) and the tasks of government and obligations. Therefore, Hamas has clashed with a gap between its broad general objectives and its new reality. Unsurprisingly, Hamas did not afford a tangible philosophy of governing, neither clarified the mechanism to adhere to either line or how to reconciling between them without causing a real conflict that may exclude one over the other. Hamas felt strange toward the ideology and the determinants of the PA that obviously conflicted with its orientations. This made it difficult for the movement to coexist with the components of the political system, and thus opted to reframing the philosophy of the system and adapt it with its ideology, rather than adapting itself to it within the limits permitted by its political realism to achieve power-sharing and one united

[608] Abu Marzouq, Musa, interview with Palestinian daily Al-Quds in May 2017, shorturl.at/gyPY9

political program. Both of Fatah and Hamas attempted to weaken and exclude each other, and questioned their claimed legitimacy.

The outcome of the Arab Spring presented Hamas to the second stage (post 2014). The ramifications of the events in the Arab World delivered un-coveted results to Hamas, and failed to offer the movement with the supportive ideological environment it aspired. This surrounding context weakened Hamas' position in the regional politics after losing two important allies, Iran and Syria. This contributed to strengthening its isolation, restricting its political and diplomatic options on the domestic and regional levels, and affected its capability to sustain its rule. However, the Arab Spring compelled Hamas to seek for new approaches and pragmatic solutions to change its situation and sustained its popular support. According to Raed Nairat, the most prominent change that occurred to Hamas in this stage is the shift toward giving priority to sustain its position as a ruling party. It thus felt the need to re-evaluate its tracks in an effort for self-preserving and bridging the gaps with the political system, as well as between its thoughts and practices, and to soften the international community's views on the movement.[609] However, coming up with a pragmatic political program that takes into account the changing roles of the movement within the Palestinian political arena, and is compatibility with other Palestinian parties, was one of Hamas conclusions to deal with the dilemmas caused by the four presented elements, as well as an attempt to bridge the gap between Hamas' broad ideological thoughts and its political practices. In Hamas' New Document of policies and principles, the movement attempted to redefine itself and its goals in a manner that would contribute to resolve the conflict of identities and end its political isolation. The next part will answer the questions: How did Hamas reintroduce itself in the New Document and what changed happened to Hamas' stances toward the border of the Palestinian State, the armed resistance and the Peace Process?

[609] (Nairat. Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)

Part THREE

The Constants and Variable in Hamas' Ideology

This Part corresponds to the main objective of the dissertation. It is divided into four chapters, which involves making comparative analysis of the content of Hamas' two official documents (the Charter of 1998 and the New Political Document of 2017). While chapter one investigates Hamas' efforts to redefine its identity and goals, the other three chapters examines Hamas evolving positions toward the Two States solution, the armed resistance and the Peace Process with Israel.

3.1 Chapter One

Hamas: Redefining the Identity and Goals

The dilemma of establishing clear identity and goals became a more urgent matter for Hamas ever since it obtained power and played a new role in Palestinian policy after 2006. It faced a shaky working environment and circumstances. The Charter was oftentimes a source of judging Hamas and criticizing its affiliation and overall objectives. Some of these critics questioned the belonging of Hamas to the National Palestinian Struggle, and accused the movement of belonging to trans-boundary projects, besides drawing an anti-Semitic image of Hamas. We mentioned earlier in the introduction that there is a difference between the Charter of 1988 and the Political Document of 2017 in terms of timing, conditions, and goals of their issuance. Both represented different objectives and subjective circumstances, as well as stages in which Hamas lived. The Charter was issued during the beginning of the establishment of Hamas as a political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was then imbued with idealism, utopianism, and religious discourse; and was needed to reflect Hamas differently from the remainder of the Palestinian factions, and to attract its supporters. Additionally, the Charter also expressed Hamas in the opposition, particularly opposing the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) approach and ideologies. Hamas' Document of General Principles and Policies, which is referred to as "The New Document", came after the movement played various roles in Palestinian politics, and went through the experience of Government. This chapter highlights how Hamas reproduced its image, identity and goals in the new Political Document of 2017, considering the evolution of Hamas' role since 2006.

The New Political Document covers limited issues against the broad series of issues the 1988 charter had covered. This Chapter focuses on three significant manifestations that refer to Hamas' attempts to overcome its dilemma of undefined identity and goals. The first is the disengagement with the Muslim Brotherhood; the second is the "Palestinizing" of Hamas' goals; and the third is 'politicalizing' the conflict with Israel.

Prior to the discussion, the following explanation, on one hand, sheds light on the reason Hamas revoked its Charter, but decided not to amend it, and on the other hand, highlights the significance of calling the new literature a "Document" and not a "Charter".

Several instances constituted obvious revocations to the Charter. By signing Cairo accords with Fatah and the Palestinian factions in 2005, and the Palestinian prisoners' National Conciliation Document later in 2007, Hamas explicitly revoked the provisions of its Charter by accepting the two-state solution. This revocation has also been manifested in the statements of Hamas' leaders. Khaled Mashaal, in an interview with CNN, stated that "Hamas has nothing but a path of two: either there is an international will, from America, Europe, and the international

community, to push Israel towards the path of peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with the right of return, which is a matter of accord among Palestinians; or if Israel continues to refuses to do so, we will continue to choose to resist it."[610] Mashaal's statement, besides violating the provisions of the Charter that considers giving up any part of Palestine, is a violation to the Islamic law, and no one has the right or authority to give up the trusted Islamic Land of Palestine to enemies.[611] He revoked the Charter with accepting the peace process as an option to resolve the conflict and achieve national Palestinian rights. In any case, this was not a new statement by which some Hamas leaders contradicted the provisions of their Charter in 1994. According to Adnan Asfour, Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, was the first to announce that his movement accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state in 1967, in return for a long truce, or "*Hudna*", with Israel.[612]The above examples demonstrate the gap between Hamas' behaviors and the Charter, and the extent to which Hamas' behavior has changed over time, and effectively neutralized its Charter. However, the question that arises is: Why did not Hamas amend its Charter instead of violating it? Ahmad Yousef refers to several occasions when Hamas bought amending its Charter and adopted its current positions to internal discussions, notably in 1992 and 2005. However, according to him, the movement repeatedly decided against it, primarily because the movement was not in a rush to decide on revising it, fearing comparison with the PLO, and making concessions to Israel.[613] An alternative to modifying the Charter came in the form of the Change and Reform bloc (*Al-Tagheer wa Al-Isslah*), which later ran for political office in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006.[614]

In effect, the internal cohesion was more regarded as a challenge for Hamas. The fears of Hamas' elite by the backlash of their supporters and the risk of driving members away and joining other Islamic movements could ostensibly justify Hamas' delay in amending its Charter. The dilemma of Hamas to convince its ideologically educated grassroots was among the reasons for it not to attempt to review its Charter. The religious upbringing, Islamic discourse, and religious justifications to recruit supporters, all produced supporters who perceived the inherent nature of the conflict with Israel with an Islamic point of view, and built their interpretation based on that upbringing. Any renunciation of the traditional attitudes of the movement that contradicts jurisprudential determinants and alters their religiously-justified positions may cast doubt on the credibility of its elite.[615]

This does not diminish the significance of the conflict of power between the various trends within Hamas, especially for those who were convinced that the role of Hamas should be adhered to by being an armed resistance driven by religious determinants. This has made Hamas' leaders pay closer attention to balancing

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[610] Cited in (Shobaki, Bilal, *Hamas:Three Tough Hurdles in 2015,* Al-Shabaka. (2015, Feb 26).
[611] (Hamas Charter, 1988. Article Eleven)
[612] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[613] Yousef, Ahmed, *A Year on Hamas' Political Paper: Transformations of Vision and Position between Two documents*, Palestinian News Agency, Palestine, May 03, https://khbrpress.ps
[614] Abu Sway, Mustafa, *Hamas' Conceptualization of Other: Its Stances Towards Judaism, Jew, Zionism, Zionists and Israel*", in (Saleh (ed), *Hamas: studies of Thoughts,* 2017, Op.cit. P. 121)
[615] (Shobaki, *Hamas:Three Tough Hurdles*. 2015. Op. cit)

these trends. Hamas' attempts to strike such balance, could be explained by its insistence on the terminology of the clauses of the accords with Fatah and the Palestinian factions. For example, in 2006, when it was about to sign the Palestinian prisoners' National Conciliation Document, it insisted on using the term 'concentration' instead of 'confining' resistance in the territories of 1967, and the term 'respecting' the PLO agreements with Israel instead of 'accepting' them. The words 'concentrate' "tarkeez" and 'respect' "ihteram" allow for acceptable interpretations at the grassroots level of Hamas; they satisfy the different directions within it. The reasons given above are reinforced by the lack of a charismatic figure in Hamas during the time, who can make a drastic decision such as amend the Charter without subjecting the movement to sharp splits.[616]

3.1.1 Why Wathiqat Al-Siyasat (Policies Document) and not Methaq (Charter)?

In Arabic, similar to English, there exists a semantic difference between *Wathiqa* (Document) and *Methaq* (Charter). *Methaq* (Charter) represents a constitution, convention, or ethical and honorific pledge. Collins, Oxford and *Al-Ghani's* dictionaries coincide that a Charter is "a formal document that describes the fundamental principles and constitution of an organization or group of people; that specifies their purposes, rights, aims, and principles." It is also a formal document granting or demanding certain rights or liberties from the sovereign power of a state.[617] For example, the United Nations' Charter of Human Rights and the European Social Charter of Workers' Rights are considered covenants that states make upon themselves to respect in practice. Conversely, a 'Document' means an obligation to certain provisions, possible to be defined with a certain timeframe and can be revised upon conditions, changes, circumstances and interests. For example, a marriage contract is a document that may end with the desire of one of the parties. *Wathiqat Al-siyasat* (The policy document) can be understood as a formal document that addresses major issues, principles, beliefs, value and ethics; and specifies the rules, guidelines, regulations, frameworks of practice, obligations and commitments of a group, Government, party, company, etc.[618]

In the context of Hamas, called the new literature a 'Document' has a significance. Ahmad Al-Betawi and Adnan Asfour explain that Hamas has never declared that the New Document is an alternative, amendment, or replacement of the Charter. Hamas' Charter of 1988 is a long-term eternal covenant and promise that accounts for the movement's moral and honorary commitment toward Palestine. However, *Wathiqat Almabade' Wa Alsiyasat al-'Amah* (A Document of General Principles and Policies) of 2017 is focused on clarifying the basic principles and rules of the political line of the movement regarding Palestinian issues and its view on the issues that arose after the issuance of the Charter. *Al-Wathiqa* considers the changes that occurred to objective and subjective

[616] Ibid.
[617] Collins dictionary, https://shorturl.me/U5tgz8L8, & Al-Maany Dictionary, shorturl.at/wY056
[618] Heart of English, *Policy Document Definitions*, shorturl.at/fgzGP

circumstances of the movement. *Al-Wathiqa* is possible to be changed over time, depending on the emerging political conditions and interests of the movement.[619] Therefore, the Political Document is more to mean the political obligations of Hamas, while the Charter is set to mean moral principles.

3.1.2 Disengagement with the Muslim Brotherhood

The Charter of 1988 could potentially justify the critics of those who accused Hamas of belonging to trans-boundary projects. Hamas extensively defined itself as a 'wing' of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), sharing objectives guided by religious guidance and the teachings of Islam, and is influenced by the ideas of Sayed Qutb and Hassan Al-Banna. This interrelated relation with the MB contributed to shape Hamas' political thoughts and understanding to its being and to the instructions by which it educates its supporters and followers. The Charter reflects the Islamic and military identity of Hamas, and shows the dominance of the Islamic dimension over the national dimension in defining its overall goals. This comprises the goals of Hamas that are connected to trans-boundary goals to free the oppressed through a pan-Islamic jihad, and to establish an Islamic state. Hamas in its political behavior has gradually enforced priority to the national dimension over the Islamic one. However, its political ideology contributed to the production of generations of followers who were raised on the thought and belonging to the MB. The New Document made an effort to adjust Hamas' character closer to the national character, and to change its image from being a religious Islamic movement with a national liberation dimension, to a national liberation movement with an Islamic reference. This includes the Islamic identity as a part of the national identity, not as an alternate. Hamas was keen to emphasize its affiliation with the Palestinian National identity and present itself as "one of the key components of the Palestinian National Movement."[620]

As a remarkable sign of shifting from belonging to trans-national orientations to national orientations, Hamas no longer defines itself as a movement that derives from the MB, neither mentions its historic organizational and intellectual origins that unite its goals with those of the Muslim Brotherhood, thus withdrawing Article 2, which presented the movement as "The Armed Wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine."[621] No more quotes from Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the MB, are found in the new text, contrary to the numerous quotes that distinguished the Charter. In its official definition, Hamas purposely attempted to assert its independence as a "Palestinian nationalist Islamist", and thus developed a new definition of the movement as "a Palestinian Islamic National Liberation and Resistance Movement", whose goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project, behind its Islamic identity.[622] This can be viewed as an attempt to establish a new phase that takes into account its Palestinian peculiarity and emphasizes its

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[619] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit), (Al-Betawi, 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)
[620] Hamas New Political Document (2017)
[621] Carlier, Rémi, *Le Hamas prend ses distances avec les Frères musulmans*, 2 Mai 2017. France24, shorturl.at/mvCPZ
[622] Hamas' New Political Document (2017)

being as a member of the Palestinian National Movement, thus releasing itself from the heavy burden of the wide unrealistic goals.

By doing so, Hamas attempted to avoid the ramification of the fall of the MB in the region after the Arab Spring, particularly during the emergence of a regional trend hostile to the MB, led by Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Egypt, and to a certain degree Jordan and Bahrain.[623] Moreover, through the New Document, Hamas presents an image of itself as a movement that has no connection with "terrorist" groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Sinai. Hamas' desire to disengage from the MB is related to regional concerns linked to the escalation of hostile tendencies against the MB in the wake of the Arab Spring, as well as to attempts to break its isolation. Over the past few years, a feeling has grown among Hamas that the association in the name of the MB has become a heavy burden on its shoulders, even though that link is no more than a historical fact stipulated in the 1988 Charter. It seems that Hamas recently realized that its historical connection with the MB harms the movement's position more than it benefits it.[624] Adnan Asfour mentioned that disengagement from the MB and approaching national goals at the expense of global goals have been decided by several factors, the most important of which is that Hamas has reached intellectual maturity that qualifies it to present itself as a Palestinian Movement that has its own experience in political and Governmental work. Through its accumulative experience, Hamas was able to construct its own leadership model that allows it to decide its political choices, relations, and political decisions. According to Asfour, the counter-revolutions following the 'Arab Spring' constituted an existential threat to Hamas, whether at the leadership or organization level, after being widely accused by the Egyptians' Media of being involved in inciting rebels in Egypt and Syria. This prompted the branches of the MB such as that in Jordan to urge Hamas to issue what defines its identity and "Palestinizing" the movement to distance itself from being associated with the MB. However, Asfour does not deny that the methods used and intellectual and educational foundations are compatible with the MB's school, particularly the intellectual principles, but his organization emphasizes its particularity and goals.[625] In light of the current anti-Brotherhood atmosphere, it seems to Hamas that disassociation with the MB and showing total independence from the trans-border organizations was a wise policy that enabled it to emphasize the countries that were obsessed with the MB.[626]

In summary, the question of disassociation from the MB was Hamas' attempt to distance itself from the MB, and to present a more flexible and moderate political and diplomatic framework that would encourage the existing players to review their relation with the movement, particularly the Arab countries that adopted a hostile policy towards Hamas. This aimed to precisely target Egypt, since their relation witnessed a state of rupture after the overthrow of the MB's regime.

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[623] Ibid.
[624] (Hroub, *A Newer Hamas?* 2017. Op.cit. p:107)
[625] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[626] (Hroub, *A Newer Hamas?* 2017. Op.cit. p:107)

3.1.3 ''Palestinization'' of Hamas' Goals

The process of "Palestinianization", or nationalization of Hamas' goals, is not a recent one. Nicolas Dot-Pouillard finds that Hamas was more adhered to the Palestinian public's interests, and gradually promoted the national dimension at the expense of the religious dimension, focusing on national affairs such as running for election, rather than on international goals.[627] This was noticeable in the New Document by emphasizing the national context in defining the "Palestinian geography" at the expense of the "religious" context, and by Hamas' activities and goals being limited to the Palestinian scope.[628] Hamas has transmitted, through a gradual process of nationalization, from the general goals that precede the religious dimension over the national dimension, to the more specific goals that give priority to the national dimension over the religious dimension, reproducing its identity based on national goals.[629] This approach is also reflected in Hamas' re-conceptualization of its objectives. The preamble of the New Document remains focused exclusively on Palestine, in contrast to the preamble of the Charter, which refers to a global confrontation between "the forces of right and wrong", and positioning the conflict within the framework of an eternal war between Muslims and non-Muslims.[630] Hamas ignored the general goals which devoted a wide space in its Charter. An example is fighting against the false, defeating it so that justice could prevail, homelands be retrieved and from its mosques would the voice of the Mu'azen emerge declaring the establishment of the state of Islam.[631] It aimed to present national goals in place of Islamic goals, focusing on liberating Palestine and confronting the Zionist project as its "*raison d'être*". Transmitting the general goals that precede the religious dimension over the national dimension, to the specific goals that give priority to the national dimension, reflects Hamas' re-conceptualization of its objectives.[632]

The New Document adopted the national narrative in defining Palestine over the Islamic Narrative that was widely communicated in Hamas' literature. Contrary to the Charter, which focused on presenting Palestine as "an Islamic *Waqf* consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgment Day,"[633] the New Document promotes the national dimension and defines Palestine as "the land of the Arab Palestinian people."[634] This comes against the religious understanding of Hamas to the concept of 'Nationalism'. The Charter of Hamas defines 'Nationalism' as part of the religious creed and belief.[635] In fact, this understanding has always corresponded to the understanding of the Islamic movements that shared similar intellectual principles particularly those who belongs intellectually to Muslim Brotherhood. Any Islamic land is a homeland for Muslims, and belongs

[627] (Dot-Pouillard, *Le Hamas fait un pas*. 02/05/2017)
[628] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[629] Ibid.
[630] Ibid.
[631] (Hamas Charter, 1988) Article 16
[632] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017) Preamble
[633] (Hamas Charter, 1988) Article Eleven
[634] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017) Preamble
[635] (Hamas Charter, 1988) Article Twelve

to Muslims, regardless of their nationality and geographic divisions, and must be defended when the enemy occupies any part of it.[636] The Islamic creed denies geographic borders and considers the Islamic land as one unified land, and the people are the components of the whole *Ummah*. Although Hamas belonged to the ambiguous trend that promoted the thoughts of the Islamic *Ummah*, Hamas in the new Document goes against this belief and promotes the Palestinian identity, irrespective of religion, culture, or political affiliation, and considers it "authentic and timeless, and is passed from generation to generation." [637] It defined the Palestinians as "one people, made up of all Palestinians, inside and outside of Palestine. From it they originate, to it they adhere and belong, and about it they reach out and communicate."[638]

The New Document borrows from the (revised) Charter of the PLO of 1968 a specific definition of "the people of Palestine". It states the following: "Palestinians are the Arab citizens who were residing in Palestine until 1947, whether those who were removed from it or those who remained in it; and all whoever was born to a Palestinian Arab father after this date, inside or outside Palestine, is Palestinian ... The Palestinian personality is authentic, necessary, does not disappear, and is transmitted from parents to children."[639] This indicates the continuity of the "Palestinization" within the perspectives and policies of the movement at the expense of Islamization. In its definition of the Palestinian land, Hamas introduces a definition that departs from the previous religious definitions it previously adopted. The new definition states, "Palestine is the land of the Arab Palestinian people, from which it sprouts, upon which it is established, and for it belongs, and in it extends and communicates."[640] This verbal wording differs to a large extent from its counterpart in the 1988 Charter, which describes Palestine as "an Islamic endowment" belonging to the entire Islamic nation.[641] But with the aim of preserving a measure of "Islamic" discourse, the New Document refers to the Islamic dimension, albeit diluted from a political point of view, and affirms in general terms that "Palestine is the soul of the *Ummah*, its central cause, the spirit of humanity, and its living conscience."[642] The Document gives precedence to the Palestinian identity in relation to the Islamic identity or other affiliations. It repeatedly refers to Palestine as the land of the Palestinian Arabs who were residing in Palestine before 1947, and those descended from Palestinian fathers; instead of referring to it as an Islamic land that belongs to the Islamic *Ummah*. Despite emphasizing national goals at the expense of the Islamic character, however, there is no claim in the document to suggest that Hamas has abandoned its Islamic religious origin and character, despite the apparent dilution of the religious language that distinguished the 1988 charter. [643] In the New Document, Hamas did not ignore the Islamic status of Palestine as an "'Arab Islamic land that

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[636] Ibid.
[637] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017 Preamble)
[638] Ibid.
[639] Ibid. See: PLO: The (Revised) Palestinian National Charter, 1968, https://bit.ly/379dinR
[640] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[641] (Hamas Charter, 1988)
[642] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[643] (Hroub, *A Newer Hamas?* 2017. Op.cit. p:108)

it is a blessed sacred land and has a special place in the heart of every Arab and Muslim." [644]

In a quantitative analysis on a select number of Hamas' announcements released between 2006 and 2012, Neven Bondokji, a former Brookings Expert, finds that Hamas' attempts to commit itself to Palestinian national goals, not a universal Islamic ideology, have been manifested in its official discourse by changing its rhetoric. This can be noted precisely by replacing addressing the public with the word *Ummah,* which refers to the Muslim community that transcends national or ethnic affiliation, and alternatively using word "*sha'b* (People), which refers to the community based on national affiliation. In a comparison between the announcements released between 2006 and 2012, in 2006, the word *sha'b* was used 282 times, whilst the words *Ummah* and "our *Ummah*" were used 40 times in the same sample. In contrast, in 2012, the totals were 77 for *sha'b* and "our *sha'b*", and only 5 times for *Ummah* and *our Ummah*.[645] The prominent trend here is that Hamas has changed its terminology to explicitly using the words *sha'b* and "our *sha'b*" and significantly more from 2006 to 2012.

It is difficult to ignore the prominent relationship among Hamas' shift towards "nationalism" and the retreat of the Muslim Brotherhood's branches in Arab countries from adopting global slogans, such as the Islamic unity and establishing the Islamic State. The preoccupation of these branches with internal national affairs and the struggle for power in their countries has diminished their interest of their broad slogans. The Islamic movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, has adopted hesitant approaches to national borders. This varied from the complete rejection of national borders and non-recognition of them, to the hesitant acceptance, and then to reach a de facto recognition of them, while preserving slogans and utopian goals that present wide and ambiguous Islamic transnational perceptions. Hamas has had similar internal affairs that urged the movement to search for national concerns, which precipitated the "nationalization" of Hamas. The internal Palestinian consensus among the different Palestinian political and military powers, returns resisting the Zionist project to national references, related to a struggle against an external occupation, not to religious references. This became, to a wide extent, the common ground for any future power-sharing with these powers, particularly Fatah. Hamas was not disconnected from this consensus, but without ignoring its Islamic identity and attempting to find a balance that affiliates the movement to the national identity, while distinguishing itself with preserving its Islamic identity.

3.1.4 Politicization of the conflict with Israel

There is another significant change that can obviously be seen through Hamas' New Document, which shows a change in their strategy to deal with the conflict with Israel. In the New Document, Hamas emphasized two major streams

[644] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[645] Bondokji, Neven, *The Nationalist versus the Religious: Implications for Peace with Hamas*, The Brookings Institution, March 18, 2014 https://brook.gs/377DDCs

in redefining the perceptions of the conflict with Israel. The first is framing the conflict within the framework of the international law that classifies the conflict as a struggle over an occupied land against foreign occupation; resisting the occupation is a legitimized action. In the New Document, Hamas claims, "the founding of 'Israel' is entirely illegal and violates the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. From a legal and humanitarian perspective, the liberation of Palestine is a legitimate activity; it is an act of self-defense, and it is the expression of the natural right of all peoples to self-determination." [646] In this regard, Hamas affirmed "The Palestinian issue has major humanitarian and international dimensions. Supporting and backing this cause is a humanitarian and civilizational task that is required by the prerequisites of truth, justice, and common humanitarian values… From a legal and humanitarian perspective, the liberation of Palestine is a legitimate activity; it is an act of self-defense, and it is the expression of the natural right of all peoples to self-determination." [647]

The second stream which interrelates with the first denies the origin of the conflict as a religious one. Hamas is associated with an anti-Semitic organization and agenda, which considers Jews as their enemy. This perception, in addition to Hamas' records of military attacks, have has contributed to the depiction of Hamas as an intolerant "terrorist" organization among International countries, especially Western countries. The charter of Hamas did not differentiate between Israelis, Jews, and Zionists, but asserted the roots of the problem in Palestine into the religious conflict between Muslims and Jews. It states: "[The] battle [of Hamas] with the Jews is long and dangerous, requiring all dedicated efforts. It is a phase which must be followed by succeeding phases, a battalion which must be supported by battalion after battalion of the divided Arab and Islamic world until the enemy is overcome, and the victory of Allah descends."[648] This preconception against the Jews does not solely stem from interpreting religious texts. This is also observed in the writings of Sayyid Qutb, who played an influential role in affecting Hamas' thinking through the employment of scriptures.[649]

The explicit allusions to the fight against "the Jews" are no longer included in the New Document of 2017.[650] Instead, there were efforts to differentiate between Jews as the people of the Book, Judaism as a heavenly religion, and the Zionists and Zionism as a colonial project. Hence, Hamas' description of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict came in a language that refrains from using any explicit religious vocabulary. This was affirmed in the Document by declaring, "[Hamas'] conflict is with the Zionist project, not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish, but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine. However, it is the

[646] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017) (#39)
[647] Ibid.
[648] (Hamas' Charter, 1988. Preamble)
[649] Qutb, Sayyed. (1970). Our Struggle with the Jews. Ronald Nettler, Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986) pp, 72, 75-79.
[650] (Carlier. *Le Hamas prend ses distances*, 2 Mai. 2017. Op. cit).

Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity".[651]

Hamas' leaders have long recognized that the movement's founding charter, drawn up by one man in 1988, was an obstacle to political awareness both inside and outside Palestine, and was often denounced as anti-Semitic. This long ceased to reflect the thinking of Hamas' leadership. Only some of them dispute that the worst aspect of the original charter was its anti-Jewish language. Azzam Tamimi writes that Hamas leaders already felt they needed to eliminate these concepts and seek a more universal language, especially since these statements served as useful weapons in Israel's arsenal of anti-Palestinian propaganda. Tamimi also claims that, under the influence of thinkers such as Abdelwahab Elmessiri, the problem of Palestine is seen by many Islamists, including the leaders and members of Hamas, as a colonial project which could best be explained in political, social or economic terms, rather than in terms of religion. [652]

In different statements of Hamas leaders, they repeatedly emphasized that Hamas does temper its religious stance, see the current struggle against the occupation as political and restricted to the Zionist, and Hamas do not have any animosity towards the Jews for just being Jews.[653] Meshaal made a similar statement during his visit to the Gaza Strip in 2012. He said: "We do not fight the Jews because they are Jews. We fight the Zionist occupiers and aggressors. We will fight anyone who attempts to occupy our lands or attack us."[654] The Guardian newspaper in 2006 quoted Khalid Meshaal as well saying in his message to the Israelis: "We do not fight you because you belong to a certain faith or culture. Jews have lived in the Muslim world for 13 centuries in peace and harmony; they are in our religion "The People of the Book" who have a covenant from God and His Messenger Muhammad to be respected and protected. Our conflict with you is not religious but political. We have no problem with Jews who have not attacked us - our problem is with those who came to our land, imposed themselves on us by force, destroyed our society and banished our people". [655]

The New Document reflects this thinking: "The Palestinian cause in its essence is the cause of an occupied land and a displaced people." This discourse brings Hamas closer to the historic position of the Palestinian national movement. As the president of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat said in his 1974 speech to the United Nations: "We distinguish between Judaism

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[651] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017. #16)
[652] Tamimi, Azzam, Cited in: Abunimah, Ali, Palestine: *What's behind Hamas' new charter?* Green Left Weekly, May 6, 2017. shorturl.at/fhnJ3
[653] Abu Sway, Mustafa, *Hamas' Conceptualization of Other: Its Stances Towards Judaism, Jew, Zionism, Zionists and Israel,* in (Saleh. (Ed). Hamas: Studies of Thoughts and Experience, 2017, Op. cit. P. 121
[654] Meshaal, Khaled: Cited in: Abunimah, Ali, *UK's Observer adds "kill Jews" to Hamas leader Khaled Meshal's Gaza speech*. The Electroinc intidfada, 9 Dec 2012. shorturl.at/hqvLN
[655] Mish'al, Khalid, *We will not sell our people or principles for foreign aid*, The Guardian, 31 Jan 2006, https://bit.ly/33Tmg4M

and Zionism. While we maintain our opposition to the colonialist Zionist movement, we respect the Jewish faith".[656]

The New Document considered differentiating between Israel and Jews, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, and adopted more pragmatic terminology that presents political inclination instead of the religious references.[657] The section 'The Zionist Project' outlines that religion has no part to play in Hamas' conflict with Israel, but its struggle is only against the Zionist project. Through this move, Hamas sought to portray a more rational and tolerant image of the movement than the anti-Semitic image received by the West. This can be seen as part of Hamas' attempt to introduce itself to the West as a moderated political party far from the extremism and anti-Semitic movements.[658]

Conclusion

The New Political Document of Hamas marks a departure from several of its earlier controversial positions, indicating that the Islamic movement is willing to take a more realistic perspective of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The emphasis on the Palestinian cause from a national dimension rather than a religious one is unparalleled in the previous literature of the movement, in terms of clarity and focus. The analyzing of the content of the New Document and the statements of Hamas' leaders proves that there is sharp discrepancy between theory and practice. Hamas' New Document differs from the Charter in setting pragmatic goals that address means and ends, stages, and the needs of the hour, rather than theological and ideological goals. This distinguishes between tactics, strategies and policies that the Charter lacks. The New Document is set to enable Hamas' leaders to move away from the Charter's principles to respond to the needs of the present. Hamas recognizes that there is an absence between the organization's starting positions and both the national consensus and the structure of the Palestinian society. Over the past few years, Hamas was criticized by rival Palestinian groups over its original charter. Hamas' leaders were unwilling to impose their starting position and enter into confrontation with their society. Instead, they adjusted themselves to that society and influenced it. Therefore, we reveal that the language used in both differs due to the different goals of the two literary texts. The charter came with a language saturated with utopian and religious rhetoric. Conversely, the Document came in a calm, realistic and balanced language that focused on the values and principles of justice.

The New Document is also an attempt to rearrange Hamas' key positions, and to improve its ability to exercise its political options. Hamas attempted to present itself in a Palestinian national and Islamic framework, emphasizing its image as a national liberation movement that has no connection to terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, and is independent of the MB. The renunciation of the

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[656] Yasser Arafat address to the UN General Assembly, 29th Session, Official Records, 13 Nov 1974, shorturl.at/fzDHT
[657] (Hamas' New Political Document, 2017)
[658] Ibid.

association with the MB targeted not only regional and international parties, avoiding the ramification of the fall of the MB during the Arab Spring, but also prompted Hamas to seek political independence and aimed to confirm its involvement in internal Palestinian politics to leave no argument for those who accused the movement of caring for Islamic and non-Palestinian issues. Therefore, lowering the religious tone and adopting a nationalist political discourse allows for internal Palestinian dialogue and power-sharing. These ramifications have increased Hamas' conviction to the necessity to present itself independently, and not as an extension of the MB, to avoid the risk of dealing with it by Arab countries who see it as a terrorist organization. Hamas preferred to disconnect its organizational roots and ideological reference, and become a Palestinian movement whose primary goal was the liberation of Palestine. This is what is referred to in its definition of itself as the "Palestinian Islamic Liberation Resistance Movement". It has dropped all indications of its relationship with the MB.

Although the New Document does not supplant the existing Charter, and this was obvious in naming the two documents and Hamas' leaders' statements, the Document's key proposals marked a departure, from the religious perception of the Charter toward the conflict with Israel, to an entirely perception that describes the conflict as a struggle against a "foreign occupation". The New Document states that Hamas' fight is not with the Jewish people, but with the Zionists who have attempted to occupy Palestine.[659]

The disagreement between Hamas' leadership over the Charter cantered on redrafting the content rather changing it entirely, reintroducing a new image of the movement that was adapted to the new reality, without prejudice to its essence. None of Hamas' members who were interviewed for the favour of this dissertation denied the status and the significance of the Charter as a founding document that constitutes the general beliefs of the movement towards Palestine, but they agreed that Hamas went through several variables and circumstances that forced it to represent itself in a new formula that may potentially enable it to obtain more political gain, but at the same time maintain its original principles.

[659] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)

3.2 Chapter Two

Why the Two-State Solution is not the end of the Conflict for Hamas?

This chapter corresponds to one of the primary objectives of this work. It examines Hamas' constants and variables toward the border of the Palestinian state through its two official documents, the Charter of 1988, and the New Political Document of 2017. It aims to conclude whether the two-state solution is an ultimate end to the conflict with Israel, in Hamas' understanding.

3.2.1 The Two-State Solution

The 1967 border is the pre-war border that separates Israel from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It existed before the five days war of 1967 between Israel and the neighboring countries of Syria, Jordan and Egypt, and is known as the 'Green line' or 'armistice border'. However, during the war of 1967, Israel seized the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem (commonly known as the Palestinian occupied territories), proclaiming Jerusalem, as a whole, as its capital. The sovereignty of Palestine by Israel has not been internationally recognized since its unilateral annexation Jerusalem, during the war, and this directly violates the Fourth Geneva Convention.[660] Although the Green Line or the armistice lines outlined the boundaries laid out in the 1949 Armistice agreement after the Arab-Israel War in 1948, it was not established as an international border after Israel seized the regions in 1967. However, the PLO in 1974 expressed its claim toward the Green Line as a border of the future Palestinian state. The resolutions of the Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 include two states, Israel and Palestine, within recognized, secure borders, based on the border pre-1967, and conforming to the UN resolution 194 that resolves the question of refugees. These resolutions received international consensus as the sole realizable solution. In November 1988, the PLO announced the independence of the Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, taking these resolutions as references. Although this announcement was symbolic, it gave a significant indication of the shift in the approaches of the Palestinians, particularly the PLO. In 2002, this claim was supported by the Arab League in the Arab Peace Initiative, who viewed these boundaries for a future state of Palestine.[661]

For decades, numerous efforts have been enforced to put forth discussions by various parties in an attempt to establish peace between Israel and Palestine, and resolve the ongoing conflict, starting from the Madrid Conference in 1991, followed by the Oslo Accords of 1993. The perception regarding the results of the

[660] Korman, Sharon, The right of conquest: the acquisition of territory by force in international law and practice. Clarendon Press. 1996. pp. 135-137
[661] Arab Peace Initiative (2002), retrieved from: shorturl.at/ghKT2

peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis was limited to the territories in 1967, and the center of the Palestinian negotiations was the return of those territories. However, from Hamas' perspective, the conflict with Israel, as previously mentioned, is a religious conflict for the return of the Palestinian historical lands, as an Islamic Trust, that were occupied in 1948, and to return the refugees to their homeland. The Israel-PLO accord of 1993 was against Hamas' principles, since it was not aligned with its goals. The situation became difficult for Hamas with the end of the first intifada and its outcome, causing the governments of the Arab states and the PLO to negotiate for a resolution in Madrid, and later in Oslo, which led to an existential crisis for Hamas.

3.2.2 Hamas' Opposition to the Two-State Solution

The two-state solution was rejected by Hamas. The movement refused to acknowledge the results of these treaties, and the existence of Israel. They held convictions that the peace initiatives with Israel are 'a waste of time', and only the path of *Jihad* is the proper path to liberate the historic Palestine.[662] The Hamas Charter of 1988 held objections toward the conferences and the attempts at making peace, especially the propagation of the two-state solution, stating that these efforts do not do justice to the oppressed Palestinians. As per the Islamic Resistance Movement, such conferences instill the rule of unbelievers in a land that belongs to Muslims, thus, they refuse to give up any land that belongs to Muslims.[663] Hamas' reaction to partial solutions, as well as to the symbolic announcement of independence on the 1967 lands by the Palestinian National Council, was rejection. The results do not bind to needs of Hamas and the Palestinian people, and such conferences are aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause, legitimizing the "enemy", and recognizing the right of the Jews to exist on the Holy Land.[664] The Hamas Charter of 1988 anchored ideological justifications to reject the two-state solution. Giving up any piece of the holy land of Palestine would be equated to giving up their religion.[665] On this basis, the Charter considers historical Palestine as a land that belongs to Muslims. The Jewish occupation is an "usurpation" that must be removed, and the entire liberation of the historic Palestinian, as one unit, is Hamas' superior principle.[666]

This opposition was expressed in the form of violence against Israel. Hamas, as a reaction, called for the escalation of military activities against the "Zionist enemy", across the Arab-Palestinian borders.[667] The military activity of Hamas increased with the Madrid peace conference held in 1991, and witnessed once again a rise when the PLO and Israel were about to implement the clauses of the mutual peace accord. The second Intifada in 2000 saw a new circle of violence between the Palestinians and the Israelis after the failure of the negotiations in Camp David II to bring a resolution for the Palestinian Cause and failed to end the

[662] Hamas Communiqué (30 Oct 1991)
[663] (Hamas Charter, 1988)
[664] Hamas Communiqué (24 Oct 1991)
[665] Hamas' Charter (1988)
[666] Ibid. Article Thirteen
[667] Hamas Communiqué (24 Oct 1991)

transitional period set by Oslo accords that was supposed to witness the creation of the Palestinian State. The general cause for the outbreak of the second intifada was the growing discontent of Palestinians with the outcomes of the peace negotiations that did not deliver a Palestinian State as mentioned during the Oslo peace process. This was exploited by Hamas to affirm the credibility of its military approach, and the failure of the PLO's peaceful approaches.[668]

3.2.3 The Development of Hamas Position toward Accepting a State on the 1967 Land

Contrary to the historical position of Hamas toward accepting a state of the 1967 lands, in January 2004, two months prior to the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas proposed to end armed resistance against Israel if it would give up the usurped West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem to the Palestinians, as they was their homeland. Indeed, this did not mean to fully renounce violence. A senior official from Hamas, Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi later offered a truce of 10 years. In return, Israel should completely withdraw from the territories that were in their control in the six-day war of 1967, and establish the Palestine state.[669] Yassin and Rantisi mentioned that the armed struggle would end only when the occupation by Israel ends, emphasizing that nothing else, apart from the end of the occupation would end their armed struggle.[670] On being questioned about the possibility of accepting a two-state solution on Israel's recognition of the Palestinian State, Yassin addressed the unjust nature of the proposed solution, which only confers 22% of the land for the Palestinians, which is unacknowledged by Israel as a right of the Palestinians to their homeland. The remaining 78% of the land would be retained by the Israelis. Rantisi commented on Hamas' acceptance of phased liberation, as they had concluded that the liberation of all the land belonging to them was difficult to achieve.[671]

These statements were viewed by observers such as Ali Jarbawi as an explicit contradiction of Hamas' principles in terms of its strategies to deal with the Palestinian issue and the conflict with Israel. Furthermore, they were seen as a shift in the concept of the Palestinian state for Hamas, in terms of its acceptance of a state on the borders of 1967, which implicitly declared the waiver of the 1948 Land. This was recorded as an attempt by Hamas to adapt its policies with the emerging realities of the political life in the Middle East.[672] On the contrary, Muhammad Nazal, a leader in Hamas, refused to consider Hamas' acceptance of a state on the 1967 borders as a tacit concession on the rest of historic Palestine, or an abandonment of Hamas' positions towards the conflict with Israel. Nazzal

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[668] Pressman, Jeremy, *The second intifada: Background and causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*. Journal of Conflict Studies, 23(2). Fall 2003. Pp. 118-119

[669] Gaess, R., & Yāsīn, A, Interviews from Gaza: What Hamas Wants. Middle East Policy, 9(4), Dec 2002. 102-115.

[670] Ibid. pp:102-115

[671] Huggler, Justin, *Israel rejects 'insincere' Hamas offer of 10-year truce*. Independent. 27 Jan. 2004 shorturl.at/owJV9

[672] (Al-Jarbawi, *Hamas and the policy*. 2005, Op.cit)

explains that the current stage requires Hamas to read reality anew, and to deal with it pragmatically. He mentions: "[...] on the historical level; we consider all Palestinian lands to be the property of the Palestinians, but now we are talking about reality. Reality is different [...]".[673]

As a significant indication, Hamas recorded another sign of shift in 2005. After the death of Arafat in late 2004, and losing the momentum of the Intifada, the conflict arose between Palestinian factions, prominently between Hamas and Fatah. To avoid further disagreements and violent interactions within Palestinian factions, the Cairo Declaration in 2005 was a formula to bring twelve Palestinian organizations and factions, including Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, to agree on principal issues such as the elections, reforming the PLO and the political program. The Cairo Accord facilitated the shift of Hamas' position, and offered the movement the proper justifications for such a transition in its political behavior, as Hamas needed such an accord for easier integration into the political system, and for ending the hegemony of the PLO by Fatah. The recognition by Hamas of the Cairo formula meant that Hamas was moving away from its traditional notion that Palestine is an Islamic *Waqf* "from the river to the sea", and even a long-term armistice (*hudna*) that would accept the "1967 territories" as a Palestinian proto-state until the forces of Islam were strong enough to recover Palestine "as a whole."[674]

However, the acceptance of the two-state policy was carefully presented in Hamas' electoral Program in 2006. The program mentioned it as a 'phase', which implies that it aims for further expansion of Palestine, but settles for the boundaries of 1967 for the time being, appeasing both those in favor of the two-state solution, and those against it. A notable degree of flexibility can be observed in Hamas' ideology pertaining to the two-state solution in the Draft Program of 2006 during the elections. A decision in favor of the two-state solution was also backed by the Prisoners' Document, also known as the National Conciliation Document, which was written by five Palestinians prisoners held in Israel on May 2006. The five prisoners each belonged to separate factions of Palestine, including Hamas, Fatah, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The document called for an independent Palestinian State, while establishing Eastern Jerusalem as its capital, and upholding the rights of the refugees to return to historic Palestine, based on the Charter of the UN and International law.[675]

While the 1988 Charter represents an orthodox, inflexible Hamas, the 2017 Document of Hamas depicts it as a modern-day organization, providing the updated perceptions of Hamas. The founding Charter of Hamas focuses on the establishment of an Islamic state, Article 6 of the Charter describes Hamas as a movement that "strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of

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[673] Nazal, Muhamad, A press statement, Assafir Newspaper, 20 July 2005.
[674] Usher, Graham, *The New Hamas: Between Resistance and Participation*, Middle East Research and Information Project, 21 August 2005, https://merip.org/2005/08/the-new-hamas/
[675] National Conciliation Document of the Prisoners: (Document by Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails), 26/05/2006, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-200070/

Palestine".[676] The Charter also includes anti-Semitic elements, suggesting the destruction of Israel. The ideology of this Charter played an influential role in Hamas' condemnation of the two-state solution.[677] In the initial years, Hamas was adamant about regaining the territories prior to 1948, viewing them as their historical right and religious claim, and opposed the two-state solution as it did not fulfill their goals and expectations. However, with a shift in its approach and preferences, from religious extremism to political rationalism, Hamas could distinguish between the realistic goals that were possible to achieve in the present, from those that were unrealistic in the present scenario but their achievement would be aimed at in future generations. Despite Hamas seemed to agree on the borders of 1967 and to cooperate with the international community to effectuate Israel's complete withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem, however Hamas also seemed fixated on returning the territory before the 1948 war. As stated in the New Policy Document of 2017, Hamas accepts a Palestinian state along the borders of 1967 on the following conditions: it would not compromise the rejection of the Zionist entity, it would not relinquish any part of the historic Palestine, the return of the refugees will continue to be pursued, and the Palestinian state will be established with Jerusalem as its capital.[678]

However, the focus of Hamas' New Document on Palestine as its operational scene was carefully connected to Hamas' redefining of its goals and identity. Although Hamas refers to its Islamic ideology, the movement seemed to align its objectives with the national Palestinian objectives regarding establishing a Palestinian state on the 1967 lands. This could show renouncing of the general goals of its Charter to establish an Islamic state. In the New Document, Hamas did not discuss establishing an exclusively Islamic state, but focused on the establishment of a Palestinian state where the Palestinians can return to their homeland. This is in contrast to the long-term, ambitious goal of the establishment of an Islamic community worldwide, as implied in the Charter.[679]

Despite the partial and implicit nature of the acceptance of the two-state solution, it represents a shift in the ideology of Hamas, as opposed to its intention stated in the Charter to regain "every inch" of the land within the historic Palestine.[680] In contrast with the Charter of 1988, the terminology used substantiated Hamas' flexibility and acceptance of the two-state solution. The New Document does not include phrases indicating the 'sweeping' of Israel to establish a future Palestine, it focuses on the rights of the refugees and the territories occupied in 1967.[681]

After Hamas' victory in 2006, the movement began to shift its approach from a majorly violent resistance movement, to that of a more pragmatic movement that incorporates more political acts in its approach, and avoided resorting to violent means and armed forces. This does not remark a full

[676] (Hamas' Charter, 1988)
[677] (Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, 2006, Op.cit. P: 38)
[678] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[679] Ibid.
[680] (Hamas' Charter, 1988)
[681] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)

disconnection to the military approach as Khaled Meshal explained in 2009. He stated that the use of violence was not to facilitate the destruction of Israel as mentioned in the Charter, but Hamas resorts to military force since no other method seems to work. He substantiates this claim with the results of two decades of peaceful negotiations, including the Madrid Peace conference and the Oslo Accord, which have failed to establish a Palestinian state or restore Palestinian rights.[682]

Despite Shaykh Yassin's firm adherence to the goal outlined in the Charter of 1988, and stating that despite the ceasefire, Hamas would still call for the liberation of their homeland, including the territories "usurped" by Israel in 1948 and the rights of Palestinian refugees, he offered a ceasefire several times, once speaking of a 10-15 year long ceasefire if Israel renounced the territories occupied in 1967.[683] With the involvement in politics, conscious revision of positions can be observed in the development of the views of the Hamas leadership. Hamas was to think of an alternative means political strategy. They developed a rational and pragmatic understanding of the situation, and became aware of Israel's military supremacy and that defeating Israel was not within Hamas' military capacity. [684]

3.2.4 The New Political Document: A Real Shift?

The New Document of Hamas, published three decades after the initial Charter, implied updates made in the approaches and ideology of Hamas, although it does retain some of the elements in the original Charter. Among the major changes evident is the acceptance of the establishment of the Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, and its omission of the explicit statement to carry out Israel's destruction. The New Document consents to a conditional agreement for the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. In Section 20 of the document, the conditions stated are: in exchange of the establishment of the state, the rights of the Palestinians to return to their homeland will not be renounced, there will be no recognition of Israel or the Zionist entity, and the goal to achieve a complete liberation of Palestine (based on the borders of 1948) would be maintained despite the establishment of the Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. Hamas' consideration of the establishment of the Palestinian state within the boundaries of 1967 is understood as an efforts to find a mutual political ground with the Palestinian political system. The reasons of these changes are attributed to Hamas' interest to depict outwardly 'soft' formulas to demonstrate that internal Palestinian reconciliation is not hindered by the hardcore ideologies of Hamas. The new policy also expresses willingness on the behalf of Hamas to promote possible reconcilements agreed upon, on a common political basis.

What can be noted from Hamas' position toward establishing a state on the 1967 lands is that Hamas has two different interpretations toward the concept of the 'Palestinian Nation' and the concept of the 'Palestinian State'. As a constant for

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[682] (Gunning. *Hamas in Politics*. 2009, op.cit. p. 196-197)
[683] (Klein. *Hamas in Power. Summer 2007*. Op.cit. pp: 442-459)
[684] (Zuhur. *Hamas and Israel*. 2008. Op.cit)

Hamas, the movement perceives the Mandatory Palestine as the historic Motherland of the Palestinians, thus denies the right of other authorities over that land, and emphasizes the right of the Palestinians to return to their original home. In the New Document, Hamas made efforts to affirm this perception. It stated "Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and from *Ras Al-Naqurah* in the north to *Umm Al-Rashrash* in the south, is an integral territorial unit. It is the land and the home of the Palestinian people. The expulsion and banishment of the Palestinian people from their land and the establishment of the Zionist entity therein do not annul the right of the Palestinian people to their entire land and do not entrench any rights therein for the usurping Zionist entity."[685] For various reasons, Hamas found it necessary to adopt more pragmatic approaches that could, on one hand, facilitate its integration within the Palestinian policy, and on the other, release the movement from the external pressure and to be received with respective acceptance by the international community as an elected Palestinian movement. Hamas understands the concept of the "Palestinian State" as a formula of national consensus that does not give up the right of the Palestinians in the Mandatory Palestine. Mahmoud Al-Zahar, one of Hamas' seniors, justifies Hamas' variable to accept a state on 1967 land as an effort to align with Fatah's position, as ground for political integration. Al-Zahar denies the changes in Hamas' position towards the core principle of the Charter. He emphasized that the new position is not a substitute for the founding Charter.[686] He states that "when people say that Hamas has accepted the 1967 borders, like others, it is an offense to us. […] We have reaffirmed the unchanging constant principles that we do not recognize Israel; we do not recognize the land occupied in 1948 as belonging to Israel and we do not recognize that the people who came here (Jews) own this land". He perceives that "the pledge Hamas made before God was to liberate all of Palestine, […] the Charter is the core of Hamas' position and the mechanism of this position is the Document. […] Therefore, there is no contradiction between what we said in the document and the pledge we have made to God in our (original) Charter".[687]

3.2.5 Two State Solution: Is it the end of the Conflict for Hamas?

It is difficult to have an accurate answer. Although the efforts were made by Hamas to redefine its identity and goals in accordance with the National Palestinian objectives, and accepted the two states as a final solution to the conflict with Israel, Hamas leaves the door open to different interpretations in terms of its positions. It is impossible to ignore the fact that the Charter was not cited in Hamas' New political text, which assessed the "destruction of Israel" as a long run aim. However, it is also impossible to ignore the constitutive status of the Charter

[685] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[686] Al-Zahar, Mahmoud, *Hamas: 1948 and 1967 are Temporary Borders*, Senior Hamas member makes clear that his group considers all of Israel to be Palestinian territory, Arutz Sheva, Oct 16, 2015, https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/201972
[687] Al-Zahar, Mahmoud, *Leading Hamas official says no softened stance toward Israel*, Press report, Reuters, May 10, 2017, shorturl.at/qrCUW

as Hamas' founding document that was not revoked, nor was clearly pronounced to be substitute by the New Document, despite the recognition of Hamas to the lacuna between its starting position and both the national consensus and the structure of the Palestinian society. This inconsistency could be illustrated by understanding what Political Obligations are for Hamas and what ideological principles are. It could be safe to argue that both the Charter and the New Document constitute two levels of discourse that correspond to tactics and stages. The Charter states matters of principle, while the Political Document addresses practice. Adnan Asfour sets apart between Hamas' tactics and strategic goals. Hamas distinguishes between goals that are possible in the long run, and those that, in the current circumstances, are unrealistic. He emphasized that Hamas holds to its goals regarding Palestine, but pushes them off into the long run. Hamas makes a difference between the founding Charter as a long-life moral principle and covenant to which Hamas is pledged toward Palestine and upon which it educates its followers, and the New Document as to refer to the political obligations of Hamas to respond to the variable circumstances and the need of Hamas to achieve its interests.[688] The New Document thus corresponds to the political obligations of Hamas, and the need of its leaders to move away from the Charter's principles in order to respond to the needs of the scenario at the time.

The group of pragmatic goals, rather than theological and ideological ones, that address means and ends and stages, while not retracting the founding Charter, explain the need of Hamas to achieve balance between its need to be effective here and now, and its need to remain faithful to its overarching ideological and strategic goals. This derives not only from the desire by Hamas to engage in an active role in the domestic policy and build its foreign policy, but it is also a means of easing the burden of change. Khaled Meshaal stresses "the New Document serves as Hamas' political "benchmark". However, the Charter should not be considered null and void. Our principle is: no change of the Document. Hamas does not forget its past. Nevertheless, the charter illustrates the period of the 1980s and the Document illustrates our policy in 2017. Each era has its own text. This development should not be understood as a departure from the original principles, but rather as a derivation (*ichtiqaq*) of thoughts and tools to best serve the cause in its current stage". [689]

The acceptance of the Palestinian state on the borders of 1967, hence, comes as a political obligation. Hamas created a framework of time in which political activity and tactical flexibility are the rule of the day. It views the liberation of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 as a stage in the liberation of Palestine as a one unified entity. Hamas, in both the Charter and the New Document, believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, no matter how long the occupation lasts. It rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, "from the river to the sea". Here comes the perception of Hamas to accept establishing a Palestinian state on part of the historical land as a mechanism to manage the conflict with Israel, rather than as a

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[688] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)

[689] Mishaal, Khaled, cited in Seurat, Leïla, *Révolution dans la révolution au Hamas*, OrientXXI, 1 Mai 2017, shorturl.at/opxU5

formula that would end it. Furthermore, it is an integration within the Palestinian politics to ease internal and external isolation, thus accepting it to be a formula of national consensus. As an explanation to this, Ahmad Youssef, former adviser to the Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh, refuses to see the New Document as Hamas' new Charter. He confirms that "Hamas has no single doubt about the right of the Palestinian people in the historical land of Palestine and its borders from the river to the sea, but Hamas seeks internal consistency with Fatah, to find a comprehensive national project that would respond to the challenges facing the Palestinian struggle, and this means Hamas sets forth a phased tactic over the strategic goal". [690]

However, another significant indication that could disagree with the claim that accepting a state on the borders of 1967 would set an end to the conflict for Hamas could be demonstrated by the question of recognizing Israel. Hamas' view of Israel was initially associated with its destruction.[691] The destruction of Israel was an imperative for the liberation of Palestine as per the Charter. This was explicitly defined as an aim for the Islamic movement and justified of being a divine message.[692] The Charter states, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."[693] In contrary to the Charter, the New Document adopts a more politically pragmatic approach, with subdued religious references that excluded the 'destruction of Israel'. As observed during the election campaigns in 2006, Hamas eliminated religious and ideological references and actively avoids mentioning the goals that were firmly outlined in the Charter, such as the establishment of an Islamic state and the destruction of Israel.[694]

Although the New Document attempts to soften Hamas' language toward Israel, Hamas maintains a certain ambiguity that permits different interpretations. As such, Hamas still calls for "the liberation of all of historical Palestine".[695] The opacities included in the Document can be viewed as a deliberate incorporation by Hamas, which facilitates the organization to manipulate its stance and statements as per convenience. Hamas' leaders often demonstrated this ambiguity in regards to the destruction of Israel. Abdel Aziz Al-Rantissi stated that the foremost objective of the movement was the liberation of Palestinians, considering the destruction of Israel as illogical. Hamas adopts a logical perspective, acknowledges its incapacity to do so, and recognizes Israel's military superiority.[696] In another statement, he pronounced that "the demise of the Zionist entity is the only fair and possible solution".[697] Nevertheless, Ahmed Yassin has firmly rejected the recognition of the right of Israel to exist affirming that Hamas chose the road of liberating Palestine, and it will end either with martyrdom, or

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[690] (Youssef, Author Interview. 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[691] (Hamas' Charter, 1988)
[692] Ibid.
[693] Ibid.
[694] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)
[695] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[696] (Gaess, Interviews from Gaza. 2002, Op.cit. pp:102-115)
[697] Al-Rantisi, Abdul Aziz, *The demise of the Zionist entity is the only fair and possible solution*, (n.d) retrieved from https://bit.ly/3tF7yeK

with victory.[698] He stated, on 18 October 1997, that "Israel, as the Jewish state, must disappear from the map",[699] alluding to the Charter's mention of Israel's destruction. Similar statement was repeated on 29th May 1999 during an interview, for the episode of "Century Witness" podcasted on Aljazeera channel, in which he pronounced his forecast of the disappearance of Israel in 2027, defending his argument with his interpretation of some Quranic verses.[700]

Nevertheless, two statements support the claim that Hamas is to suggest a truce with Israel rather than settlement to the conflict. Both Meshaal and Asfour mention the readiness of Hamas to halt or freeze the armed resistance against Israel in return to establish a Palestinian state on the 1967 land, but none of them offered to recognize the right of Israel to exist. In an interview with CNN, Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas' Political Bureau (1996-2017), pledged that if the Palestinians were granted a state on the 1967 borders and the other claimed rights, Hamas would pledge not to exercise violent resistance. As another remarkable sign, Adnan Asfour explains the future of Hamas' armed wing if a Palestinian State on 1967 was achieved. He said: "If Hamas signs an agreement with Israel [or was part of signing] that articulates to establish a Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967, then this agreement will be respected as an agreement between two peoples and two states. When the Palestinian state is established on these borders, Hamas must hand over its weapons to the Palestinian army, and it should not keep weapons. If one weapon remains after the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, it becomes criminal, and any military action against Israel outside the framework of the Palestinian state authority will then be criminalized".[701]

In fact, when considering Hamas' statements toward the question of recognizing Israel, a contradiction seems to be obvious. On different occasions, particularly when Hamas addressed the Western Media, its leaders resort often to soften their position. In an interview with Reuters, Mishaal admits that the State of Israel is a "fait accompli", but recognizing Israel should be decided by a sovereign Palestinian state, which the PA lacks so far, hence his movement will not consider official recognition to Israel until after the establishment of a Palestinian state.[702] But such a position is ambiguous. On one hand, Mishaal leaves the door open for future flexibility, but on the other, he echoes Hamas' previous refusal to acknowledge the existence of Israel. That is to mean that the future Palestinian state, as a sovereign body with legal authority, is the one to recognize Israel, and not Hamas as a movement.[703] However, Mishaal's statement was inconsistent with Ismael Haniyeh's statement who rejected the recognition of Israel on August 2020, stating that Palestinians never have and never will recognize Israel.[704] This uncertainty within Hamas regarding the recognition of Israel is explained by Samer

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[698] Yassin, Ahmed, interview with Aljazeera channel, for "Century Witness" episode, 29th May, 1999, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKrCdH1aIY0
[699] Poole, E. & others, Muslims and the News Media. Bloomsbury Academic. 2006, P. 112
[700] Yassin, interview with Aljazeera channel, 29th May, 1999, op.cit).
[701] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[702] Reuters Press Report: Hamas leader says Israel's existence is a reality, (reported by: Maguire, Sean & Oweis, Khaled), January 10, 2007. shorturl.at/gAKUW
[703] Ibid.
[704] Haniyeh statatment to Al-Manar Website, 20 August 2020, https://almanar.com.lb/7118256

Bani-Odeh, one of Hamas' former prisoner leaders, who highlights the existing internal trends within the structure of Hamas as a cause of such uncertainty. The issue of recognizing Israel is a controversial issue between the various currents within Hamas that is hard to achieve consensus upon. This is particularly due to the varied viewpoints. While some are more flexible in their approach, others are inclined towards a traditional ideology towards Israel which does not allow for a unanimous decision to exhibit flexibility and develop new stances and positions.[705]

Despite Hamas' various statements that are inconsistence toward the question of recognizing Israel, Ahmed Youssef clarified the 'recognition' of Israel by addressing the distinction between a 'de facto' recognition and a 'de jure' recognition.[706] The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines 'de facto' as something that is not formally recognized, regardless of its existence as an entity that exercises power as if its constitution is legal.[707] In contrast, a 'de jure' recognition is based on explicit laws and actions of a state.[708] According to Youssef, Israel's de jure recognition would be a legal recognition of Israel's existence, and a legitimization of Israel. While Hamas was open to a de facto recognition of Israel, it involved the acceptance of Israel's existence, not a legitimate recognition of the occupation. Youssef clarified this confusion by asserting that Hamas rejects a de jure recognition of Israel, thus maintaining that although Hamas recognizes the existence of Israel, the recognition is not substantiated by law.[709] It is important to clarify the difference between recognizing the existence of Israel and the right of Israel to exist from an ideological perception. Hamas' admitting that Israel exists is consist with their political narrative that realizes Israel as a reality and de-facto State that exists and is recognized by the countries of the world. However, recognizing the right of Israel to exist constitutes a sharp conflict with Hamas' religious beliefs. Such recognition means that Hamas acknowledge that Israel has historical, religious and demographic rights in the "Historic Palestine", and that the Jews have their roots in a land that is believed be an Islamic Waqf. Such recognition as well means that Hamas denies the right of the Palestinian refugees in their homes in 1948.[710]

Hamas officials have made frequent use of the term "end the occupation", a term that is part of the Middle Eastern and international political lexicon. For the PLO and the international actors, the term signifies the two-state solution and the occupation refers to the territories Israel acquired in the war of 1967. In Hamas' discourse, there is a question as to whether it refers to end the occupation of the 1967 territories or also to the territories that became the state of Israel in 1948, as the Charter maintains. In other words, the dialectic is around whether the "occupier" will remain in Hamas' considerations as a fundamental characteristic of Israel, although agreeing on the two-state solution and establishing a Palestinians state, which means in Hamas' consideration that ending the occupation requires

[705] (Bani-Odah, Auther Interview, 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)
[706] (Youssef, Auther Interview, 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[707] The Merriam Webster Dictionary: (definition of De-facto) shorturl.at/oxIR3
[708] Ibid. (definition of de jure) shorturl.at/beDEY
[709] (Youssef, Auther Interview, 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[710] Al-Awar, Ali, What is the difference between recognition of Israel, the existence of Israel, and the right of Israel to exist? Donia Al-Awattan, 2020-09-10, shorturl.at/nFMO1

also, in future stages, liberating the rest of Historic Palestine.[711] In Hamas' understanding, as it is presented in the New Document, the two-state solution does not admit giving up the rest of the land to Israel, but is perceived as illegal occupation. Therefore, the liberation remains incomplete without liberating the entire land. Israel, hence, is to remain for Hamas as an occupying power, and its recognition is temporal and subject to future variables.[712]

However, Hamas' stance on the right of Israel to exist did not hold a drastic change. Hamas distinguishes between recognizing Israel as a de-facto occupation and the right of Israel to exist. Hamas believes that admitting Israel the right to exist is an explicate contradiction to its principles, thus giving up its National and Islamic perception to the belonging of the lands to the Palestinians. But Hamas emerged to be more tolerant of Israel's existence as its 'de-facto' recognition. This can be viewed as a progress towards the two-state solution, but not as a progression toward the ending of the conflict. Hamas maintains its original stance by rejecting the legitimacy of Israel.[713] Hamas in the New Document defines Israel in terms of its legitimacy, not in regards to ideological consideration. It considers the establishment of Israel as illegal, further stating that the existence of Israel is a transgression of the basic, non-negotiable rights of the Palestinians. It also views the establishment of Israel as a violation to the existence of Palestinians, their land and beliefs, as well as a direct violation to human rights. Although the New Document majorly makes a political and legal reference when explaining the conflict with Israel, it also touches upon the religious aspect and addresses the establishment of Israel as a violation to the Ummah and the Islamic community.[714]

Despite the confusing status and undefined contours of Hamas' position toward Israel, two observations can be made. First, its position is negotiable and subject to dialogue. Hamas is making the possible justification to align its position closely with PLO, but with caution to be concluded as admitting the right of Israel to exist. Second, it is uncertain that its position suggest an ideological change since Hamas insists on denying the right of Israel to exist. Israel for Hamas is only an existing "fact" that can no longer be ignored.

Conclusion

It is safe to conclude that Hamas, at the political and ideological level, experiences a dichotomy between theory and practice. At the political level, Hamas seems more flexible toward political solutions by which to accept a state on the 1967 borders. Nevertheless, at the ideological level, it is inflexible to recognize this solution as an ultimate solution to the conflict with Israel. This ambivalence allows Hamas to maintain its Islamic identity. Although the New Document made a shift from the Charter, the prospect of a unified Palestine is not completely abandoned, and thus brings no change in the perception of Hamas regarding the

[711] (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. pp: 457-458)
[712] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[713] Al Jazeera, *Hamas accepts Palestinian state with 1967 borders*. (2017, May 2) shorturl.at/dyT48
[714] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)

border of Palestine. Both the Charter and the New Document have one perception and recognize only one "historic Palestine", from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordanian river, or that of 1948. The Charter views the conflict as a religious one, while the New Document views it as a conflict with the occupation and redefines Palestine with using national language rather than religious definition. Conducting a genuine transformation to Hamas' religious principles is believed to be complicated, since Hamas' perceptions are not merely political, but also religious, despite the efforts extended to redefine the conflict to be more political than religious. Hamas can maneuver to accept political options that can be compatible with the minimum level of its intellectual and ideological grounds, without giving up its core principles. Hamas' convictions of the conflict with Israel are seen as an existential battle. The two-state solution is not the ultimate solution.

Regarding the recognition of Israel, Hamas' stance has been inconsistent. On different occasions, Hamas hesitantly mentions the two-state solution. It rather concentrates on mentioning the acceptance of a Palestinian State on the 1967 borders. This hesitation is due to Hamas' reservation to be seen as recognizing Israel. Hamas has always viewed Israel as an illegitimate state that usurped Palestine, but the acceptance of the two-state solution stirs up the question of accepting Israel as a legitimate state. Accepting the two-state solution implies recognizing the Israeli state, but the dispute is over recognizing the right of Israel to exist. Hamas is believed to reject to recognize the right of Israel to exist, given its perception toward Israel as an occupying state and the land of 1948 as an occupied territory, which justifies Hamas raison d'être as a resistant movement and the use of armed action. If the contrary occurred, this would destroy Hamas' religious narrative, and would make Hamas renounce its founding principles and beliefs toward Palestine. However, the stance of recognizing Israel as a de-facto is a negotiable position, further demonstrates Hamas' ambivalence. Despite the New Document implicitly suggests the acceptance of Hamas on the recognition of Israel, but the Document is made to enable the moderates to say they accepted a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, and the hardliners can still say they are not recognizing Israel.

Through the observation of Hamas' varying stances on Israel's recognition, it could be safe to conclude that Hamas has an inconsistent and confusing position, and changes according to the current scenario. This status may highlight the negotiable nature of Hamas' position towards Israel. Despite Hamas' rejection of a de jure recognition of Israel, being open to a de facto recognition of Israel indicates a shift in Hamas' stance. Although it does not legitimize Israel's recognition, it accepts the existence of Israel.

The acceptance of a state on the 1967 borders can be understood also in the contexts of Hamas' claim of alignment to national interest. Nevertheless, it is important to differentiate between what Hamas can accept as the choice of the Palestinian people, and what Hamas believes as their right. Hamas attempts to link its acceptance to the Palestinian State in 1967 as a harmonization with the internal Palestinian will, if any future accords with Israel achieved majority in referendum. However, Hamas exerts effort to distinguish between accepting the two states solution as an approach to find a common political ground for power-sharing and

unifying Palestinian efforts to confront the occupation, and its long -run ideological principles that portray the historic Palestine as homeland for the Palestinians.

3.3 Chapter Three

Checking Hamas military approach

This chapter investigates Hamas' military approach to test the argument that giving up the armed struggle is not possible, but advancing political and non-violent approaches is also an available option. According to Berti, violent movements may favor political participation and integration over military options, but that does not necessarily mean that the movement will renounce violence indefinitely. Armed groups can join the political system, and even act as a mainstream political actor, without necessarily having to forfeit their violent struggle or undergo any major strategic transformation.[715] In the case of Hamas, the key to explaining this argument is to understand Hamas' resistance doctrine and the nuanced role that the armed struggle plays within its strategy. We examine how Hamas thinks of its identity as a resistance movement, and why it emphasizes or deemphasizes the use of the armed resistance.

3.3.1 Hamas' resistance doctrine

Armed resistance is the most central principle of Hamas' identity, and it is the most commonly identified strategy that is associated with Hamas. The word *Muqawama*, an Arabic synonym of "resistance", is defined as an act to oppose something. More precisely, Khaled Mashal defines the Muqawama Doctrine as "the doctrine of constant combat," or "persistent warfare."[716] Hamas defines itself as a "resistance movement", and this means that it enhances this identity as a constant doctrine that justifies its *raison d'être*, as well its course of action.[717] Hamas' insistence on resistance is empowered and inspired by Islamic references. In order to elucidate Hamas' resistance conviction, we must consider Hamas' classification as a movement that belongs to the right path of God. Hamas' leaders often interpret the Quranic texts in a specific context to expand their resistance project and in turn gain legitimacy.[718] The theological arguments provide a theoretical umbrella under which its military actions of "resistance" can be conducted. Hamas believes that "The day that enemies usurp part of the Muslem land, *Jihad* becomes the individual duty of every Muslim. In face of the Jews' usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of *Jihad* be raised."[719] Therefore, abandoning the resistance project highly relies on achieving the ultimate goal for which it was initially launched. Interim solutions are insufficient. According to Hamas' resistance strategy, the ultimate goal is liberation. The resistance project is thus interrelated with the existence of the occupation itself.

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[715] (Berti, *Armed political organizations*. 2013. Op.cit. p. 3)
[716] Yaari, Ehud, *The Muqawama Doctrine*, The Washington Institute, Nov 13, 2006, shorturl.at/fijI0
[717] Ibid.
[718] Hamas' Charter (1988)
[719] Ibid. Artical Thirteen

This narrative considers Israel as an usurper that built its country on Palestinian territory, at the expense of Palestinian rights. Therefore, resistance would never cease until the end of this occupation, and it has emerged solely because of the Israeli occupation.[720] Hamas was not convinced that the restoration of rights could be achieved by negotiation. To overcome the occupation, resistance seemed to be the right path to fulfill this goal. Hamas legitimated the use of weapons as a natural right in the defense of Palestinians, and aimed to destabilize Israeli security, exhaust Israel in a long-term conflict, and finally, render Israel incapable of sustaining the occupation.[721] The formation of Hamas as an 'Islamic Resistance Movement' was declared to affirm its position against any other approaches to regain the rights of the Palestinians. Therefore, the armed resistance was Hamas' early tactic to respond to the repercussion of the Oslo Peace Process.[722]

The on-going conflict with Israel is a channel through which Hamas can preserve its identity intact, with little compromise. The words "Islamic" and "resistance" are not merely metaphorical, but accurately portray its identity. Since its foundation, Hamas paid efforts to affirm these two components by organizing the Palestinian society, in accordance with its ideology and beliefs. Violence does not only help Hamas solidify the dominant aspects of its identity, but also provides a potential for political gains as well. The escalation of violence against Israel also provides the potential for political gains in the Palestinian political landscape. The escalation against Israel is a way for Hamas to appear to be the main protectorate of the interests of the Palestinians. This can also help to disrupt support for Fatah, given the pressure of the political Palestinian landscape at the time.[723]

However, Hamas' resistance doctrine has not always implied a military action, but rather a regime that engages alongside the military activity, non-violent political means and societal reform, which is an unconventional method of resisting the occupation, and it is not necessary to wait for a balance of forces.[724] Initially, Hamas conceived the guerrilla resistance as primarily an insurgency tactic to respond to the growing challenges of the Israeli military occupation. The military wing of Hamas during 1987 to 1992 did not use suicide bombers, and pursued a course of widespread passive resistance and street confrontations with the Israeli military. This program of confrontation and building the organization was followed throughout the first Intifada. The use of more organized armed resistance began during the second Intifada.[725] Although resistance has various forms, and *Jihad* is not confined to the carrying of arms, Hamas extensively prioritized military action over other forms, believing that the other forms were supportive, and not alternative.[726] Hamas' conduct, policies and actions emanate from its conviction that wherever a military occupation exists, a military resistance should be expected as well. Hamas' resistance does not only include the

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[720] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 89)
[721] Ibid. p. 90
[722] Ibid. p. 69
[723] Sussman, Michael, *Hamas' political wartime gains*, The Jerusalem Post, Nov 19, 2012 shorturl.at/owyH6
[724] (Yaari, *the Muqawama Doctrine*. 2006. Op.cit)
[725] (Crooke. *From Rebel Movement*. March 13,2007. Op. cit)
[726] (Hroub, *Hamas A Beginner's Guide*, 2006, Op.cit. pp. 43-44)

implication of military action, but also consists of non-violent elements. Since its emergence, Hamas used various forms of resistance, ranging from popular uprisings, mobilization the public and military attacks against the Israeli army and settlers, but the armed resistance of Hamas reached a peak in 1994 and 1999, when it executed bombings in Israeli cities.[727] These forms have been in use either in combination or separately, but whichever form was used, it has corresponded to the specific prevailing political environment.[728]

Hamas' resistance doctrine does not focus on victory over Israel. If military victory can be defined as the destruction of the enemy or its military capabilities, Hamas is cautious to promote this concept of victory. Hamas constructs its concept of victory on a more flexible view that considers gradual accumulative success that it could achieve. Military victory simply could mean neutralizing Israel's military superiority and achieving its operational goals. Hamas claims victory whenever it withstands a level of damage in their organizational structure and military infrastructure, but allows them to continue the armed conflict. This definition of victory is important for maintaining the movement's legitimacy and uniting its social bases, because it lowers military expectations from destroying the enemy, to mere survival. For example, Hamas portrayed its Steadfastness in the four wars with Israel (2008, 2009, 2012, and 2014) as victories that it promoted to its bases. In all four cases, Hamas hailed itself as victorious because it had made it impossible for Israel to achieve its objectives to completely destroy the movement, and maintained some of its military capabilities so it could continue the armed struggle. Indeed, it even enhanced its military capabilities with longer-range state-of-the-art rockets. These victories have another interpretation for Hamas.[729]

Hamas' resistance refers to a specific concept that was first used by their political leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi in late 2002, and was often brought out during the second Intifada. Later, the concept was gradually developed and embodied in the electoral program in 2006. Rantisi did not specify what the resistance project was, but stressed it as a counterstrategy to the negotiation approach adopted by the PLO, and against compromising 78% of the Palestinian Land.[730] Against the vow of the Charter to destruct Israel via *Jihad*, the resistance project did not vow in a similar way. Rather, Hamas' leaders discussed the necessity of resistance as the only strategy by which to restore the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the diaspora who were expelled from Palestine in 1948.[731]

How does Hamas' resistance doctrine function?

The function of Hamas' resistance doctrine is constructed upon two main pillars. The first is the sustainability, and the second is adaptability. In terms of the first pillar, Hamas realized that the liberation of Palestine could not be achieved

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[727] Ibid. p. 44.
[728] Ibid.
[729] López, Beatriz G., *The Muqawama (Resistance): the Case of Hamas*, Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, October 23, 2015, p: 19
[730] Rantisi, Abdel Aziz, *Protection of the resistance project*, IkhwanWiki, (28 July 2002). http://tinyurl.com/pn8ocwu>
[731] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 89)

quickly.[732] The basic concept to ensure the continuity of its military strategy is to maintain support of the population and the evolvement of its military actions. Hamas, according Beatriz López, fits with the characteristics of the insurgence movements, if we consider that Hamas is a popular movement that aims to overturn an occupying power using political activities and armed actions.[733] As envisaged in the conventional insurgency models, especially in the Maoist model, the strategy of Hamas' armed struggle considers the "protracted war".[734] This term is used to refer to the strategy of a long-term armed revolutionary struggle. The Maoist model, developed by the Chinese communist revolutionary leader Mao Zedong (1893–1976), is also called the "People's war" or the "protracted people's war".[735] The insurgency adopts specific fighting procedures as a logical strategy to preserve the ideology on which they are based, and they all have basic structural elements in common, such as like-minded social bases and the consolidation of a territory they aim to liberate.[736] Given that the concept of *Muqawama* is associated with permanent resistance, then peace is not an option. The struggle must continue until victory is accomplished, and it will only be interrupted in the event of a *Hudna* for a limited period.[737]

As for the second pillar, The Muqawama doctrine considers that adaptability and pragmatism are important elements for the survival of the movement. López emphasizes that the survival of the movement is achieved through its ability to readapt to changes in the conflict ecosystem. This ability must be demonstrated in both the political spectrum, as well as the social and military ones.[738] In the political landscape, for example, pragmatism and adaptability led Hamas' leaders to participate in local elections in 2005, and in the Palestinian National Authority parliamentary elections a year later. The emphasis that Muqawama places on pragmatism is the tool that Hamas used to legitimize its participation in the elections with its social bases. It presented itself as an adjustment mechanism that would enable the movement to control and redirect the PA on the path of resistance against Israel.[739]

Also stemming from adaptability, Hamas often modified decisions due to public disapproval, or to avoid intensive threats. Hamas' doctrine of Muqawama recognizes that all-out war until liberating Palestine is impossible, and the survival of the movement and the protracted struggle need to suspend its military activity for recovery and regaining public support.[740] As an example of this adaption, Hamas' primary tactic of fighting between 1994 and 2005 was "martyr operations"

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[732] Khalid Mishaal, during an online seminar, Ramallah: Masarat Center, 7th Nov 2020.
[733] (López. *The Muqawama*. 2015. Op.cit. p: 1)
[734] Woodmansee, John W. JR, *Mao's Protracted War: Theory Vs. Practice*, Parameters, 3(1). 1973. P: 31-32, https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a511037.pdf
[735] Mao's conclusion that the Chinese struggle against the Japanese could not be a quick victory, but that China would win in a protracted struggle stemmed directly from his assessment of the "contrasting features" of the two protagonists.
[736] (Woodmansee. *Mao's Protracted War*. 1973. Op.cit. p: 31-32)
[737] (Khalid Mishaal, online seminar, 7th Nov 2020. Op. cit)
[738] (López. *The Muqawama*. 2015. Op.cit. pp: 3-4)
[739] Ibid. p. 11
[740] Ibid. p. 12

or suicide bombings".[741] However, for different reasons, including the recession of the popular support to the bombing attacks, the loss of Hamas of its first and second rank leaders, and the counter actions taken by Israel, Hamas was forced to readapt itself to look for new tactics. Hudna was thus Hamas' tactical approach to recover its strength and to rearm itself. This allows it to adapt itself to developing its capacity, given that this is difficult to achieve during periods of conflict. This occurred between the four major armed conflicts during December 2008 to January 2009, November 2012, July 2014, and August 2014. Such an adaption resulted in the development of high trajectory weapons such as rockets and mortars being used during the Second Intifada, which become more widespread since 2007. This also resulted in the construction of an extensive network of underground tunnels that were used for military purposes.[742] Another interesting manifestation of the pragmatism advocated by the Muqawama doctrine is the reconciliation of the armed struggle with Hamas' role as a de facto government in the Gaza Strip. Following the takeover of the Gaza strip in June 2007, Hamas had to assume its role as a government and focused its efforts on the administrative management of a blockaded Gaza, especially on the reform of the security sector. Hamas sought to win major support and legitimacy from the Gazan population during that period.[743]

3.3.2 Switching methods, not replacing the strategy

Hamas has not changed its main conception of resistance much since its establishment in 1987. However, it believes that in the long duration of violent conflict against Israel, the movement adopted a profound strategic principle that resides in the dynamics of the resistance. The switching of methods, as an essential element of this dynamic, aims at ameliorating Hamas' position on the ground, and to achieve tactical successes.[744] Hamas' resistance strategy does not always place the military aspect as first priority. It is managed flexibly in accordance with opportunities and threats and depending on the situation and its order of priority. When the situation is unfavorable to Hamas, especially at critical junctures, its military resistance is less emphasized. Hamas temporarily deemphasized the use of the suicide attacks, either to show pragmatism, or to avoid any massive reaction by Israel. On other occasions, Hamas resumed these attacks after the assassination of its leaders by Israel. Similar halt-resume scenarios occurred during the second Intifada (2000–2005) for a short period, the 2003 short Hudna is a good example of such.[745]

Nevertheless, the switching of methods has been manifestoed often in harmony with the best possible practical outcomes for the organization. Hamas' actions showed evidence of cost-benefit analysis. The military course of action was considered to balance between securing a dominant public position and

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[741] Ibid. pp.15-16
[742] (López. *The Muqawama*. 2015. Op.cit. pp: 15-16)
[743] Ibid. p. 19
[744] Rosen, Armin, *Here's What Hamas Might Be Getting Out Of This Latest Escalation In Gaza*, Business Insider, Jul 8, 2014, shorturl.at/ryDLM
[745] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 91)

advancing particular Palestinian national interests, and at the same time, maintaining an adherence to resistance dogma.

The rise and fall of the use of the suicide attacks can better explain this. In finding itself receiving high condemnation for the suicide bombings both regionally and internationally, Hamas discovered that the exact same attention was also received locally. A number of external factors such as the war on 'terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq led by the United States determined Hamas' decision to halt military operations. Hamas found that the regional and international environment changed, and was against its resistance strategy. Khalid Mishaal confessed that the occupation of Iraq by the United States enforced tremendous pressure on the Palestinians and Arabs.[746]

In addition, public opinion often played a crucial role in shifting Hamas' decision-making. During times when the local situation was unfavorable to Hamas, its military resistance was less emphasized. The growing support for a ceasefire and revived negotiations, as well as Israel's decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, were important factors to make it difficult for Hamas to justify its violence.[747] The population was experiencing "Intifada fatigue", and a dip in morale in response to warfare. A survey conducted prior to the announcement of the ceasefire in June 2003, indicated 73% of Palestinians supported a ceasefire with Israel, under the condition that Israel would stop attacking the Palestinians. Hamas was sensitive to this change of public opinion, and considered the option of a Hudna.[748] Hamas believed the continuity of the armed struggle was impossible under the surrounding conditions, especially since this option was not always favorable among the Palestinians.

The prospect of Hudna offered Hamas a tactical tool to meet its short-term goals, and the central strategy of maintaining an armed struggle against Israel.[749] Hamas has unilaterally, or in agreement with other parties, employed the *Tahdi'ya*, a temporary suspension of attacks for a short period of time, as a consequence of reacting to Palestinian public opinion. These periods of calm have been implemented during times when Hamas was under heavy scrutiny from Israel or the PA. In 2005, the *Tahdi'ya* agreement that took place in Cairo was seen as a breakthrough. For the first time, Hamas would participate in institutions from the Oslo Process.[750] The Cairo declaration largely favored Hamas rather than Fatah, since Hamas did not need to compromise its principles. On scrutinizing the contents of this declaration, 'the right of resistance' was guaranteed. This declaration did not contradict Hamas resistance work. By offering the Hudna, Hamas was keen to distinguish this concept from the practice of the PLO and the Palestinian Authorities, which has always been described by Hamas as capitulation. The Hudna is a rather flexible traditional Islamic war practice to

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[746] JMCC, Public Poll No.48: On Palestinian attitudes towards the Palestinian situation in general, (April 2003). shorturl.at/uBLP8
[747] (Crooke. *From Rebel Movement*. March 13,2007. Op.cit)
[748] (JMCC, Public Poll No.48. Op.cit).
[749] (Crooke. *From Rebel Movement*. March 13,2007. Op.cit)
[750] Worthington, Peter, *The Necessity of Including Hamas in any Future Peace Process and the Viability of doing so: An Argument for Reassessment and Engagement*, University of British Columbia, 2007, P:93

achieve different goals. Hamas insisted on the Hudna as a twofold mechanism: as tactical management of the conflict with Israel, and to avoid appearing to be offering compromise in its position regarding the resolution of the conflict with Israel.[751]

Hamas became aware that using suicide attacks had become its influential method in the conflict with Israel, as well as with its rivalry with the Palestinian Authorities and the Fatah movement. Relinquishing this card would only be considered if there was a real possibility of a worthy return. It can be argued that the plan of disengagement affected Hamas' order of priority, and changed its tactics from its focus on a military dimension, to political engagement. Hamas claimed part of the credit, if not all, when Israeli unilaterally decided to withdraw from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Hamas validated its strategy of resistance. Various declarations by Hamas' representatives stated that the withdrawal was the result of the continuous resistance and long-term pressure on the Israeli troops and settlers in the Gaza Strip, which left Israel with no option but to withdraw. Hamas believes that carrying out cycles of confrontation against the occupation makes the cost of the Israeli presence there unsustainable; that multiplying Israeli costs in terms of human loss, draining of resources, mounting internal tension and deteriorating worldwide image, will eventually bear fruit. It argued that had there been no resistance with costly consequences to Israel, any withdrawal would have only been undertaken in return for excessive Palestinian concessions.[752]

The massive pressure from the PA and the United States was also an obstacle to the resistance. During Oslo period, Hamas was aware that the emphasizing on the armed resistance was an impossible task, since the existing political and economic structure was in favor of the peace process, in addition to the pressure of Israel and the United States on the PA to disarm the movement.[753] Whilst, in 2005 Hamas was aware of its limitations, and realized that the continuation of the violent actions is impossible in light of the changes that happened to the Palestinian political scene after the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004. Hamas feared that relying only on the continuation of the armed resistance could marginalize it, and place its continued existence at risk, a cost-benefit analyses required Hamas a degree of flexibility and pragmatism to backseat armed resistance to political consideration.[754]

From December 2004 to January 2006, Hamas made a strong attempt to integrate Palestinian politics by raising the concept of reform and contesting for gaining political power influence.[755] Hamas carefully assessed its opportunities, not only for armed combat, but also for political participation. After the disengagement plan by Sharon, Hamas reduced its military operations and considered the possibility of political integration to the PA. Given this situation, Hamas gradually changed its resistance discourse from one centered on armed resistance against the Israeli occupation, to one that saw the need for Palestinian

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[751] (Hroub, *Hamas A Beginner's Guide*, 2006, Op.cit. p: 55)
[752] Ibid. p. 46.
[753] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 94)
[754] (Worthington. *The Necessity of Including Hamas*. 2007. Op.cit. pp: 47-48)
[755] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 112)

political reform and integration. Hamas' leaders clarified that the strategy of resistance for the liberation of Palestine had not changed, but the tactics could be varied for the protection of the interests of Hamas and the Palestinians.[756] Hamas believes that the integration of Palestinian politics is beneficial to its resistance project. The pragmatic strategy to suspend armed resistance emerges from this context. The need for Hamas to stay relevant, and the quest for local Palestinian support, inspires Hamas to become involved in more considerations that are pragmatic. Hamas' leader Mahmoud al-Zahar clarifies this pragmatism by saying: "We must calculate the benefits and costs of continued armed operations. If we can fulfill our goals without violence, we will do so".[757]

However, the ceasefire may be regarded as a tactic within the resistance project. Resistance has always been the central issue, ever since the inception of Hamas in 1987. During the second Intifada, Hamas strengthened its military actions when Israel launched military operations in several Palestinian cities. Nevertheless, after the change in the external situation, such as the result of the Iraq war, the initiative of the Road Map and the negotiation between the PA and Israel led to the predicament of its military tactics. Thus, Hamas accommodated the ceasefire into its resistance project. Hamas did not recognize that it was under pressure to accept the ceasefire. On the contrary, Hamas stated that the ceasefire arose out of consideration for protecting the resistance and the unity of all available Palestinian factions. Isma'el Abu Shanab, a key figure in Hamas' leadership and a man who was engaged in the ceasefire talks in 2003, stated that "There is no change in Hamas' strategy that is based on resistance but the resistance takes different tactics and methods, and the methods of the resistance are varied".[758] The motivation for accepting the ceasefire was that Hamas demonstrated to the world that it had an agenda for halting violence, but it believed that due to the Israeli position, the ceasefire would not last long, and the 'ceasefire will also make it possible to tear the mask off the Road Map, to prove that it is a security arrangement, and not a peace plan'.[759] Hamas gradually modified its discourse discernibly, from an uncompromising military resistance, to one that is concerned about domestic affairs.

Regardless of switching methods, Hamas seeks to affirm its adherence to the armed struggle as an absolute method to liberate Palestine. However, when it comes to understand Hamas' switching of methods, especially from violent to non-violent ones, or to conduct a truce with Israel, it is vital that it promotes this as never to be giving up the armed struggle, and ensures this is understood as a tactical approach.[760] This is done deliberately for flexibility to test other options rather than military ones, without experiencing adverse political consequences from their supporters. A change in the tempo of any military action does not imply concession of defeat, but rather implies shifts in the current of the conflict.[761]

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[756] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 92)
[757] Al-Zahar, Mahmoud, Cited in: Mishal, *The Pragmatic Dimension of the Palestinian Hamas: A Network Perspective*, Armed Forces & Society, 29(4), Summer 2003, p: 577
[758] Abu Shanab, Ismail, Member of Hamas political Bureau,' Al-Jazeera (23 July 2002).
[759] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 105)
[760] (López. *The Muqawama*. 2015. Op.cit. p. 19)
[761] (Crooke. *From Rebel Movement*. March 13,2007. Op. cit)

However, Hamas' use of violence against Israel is not only based on ideology and religious doctrine. It is also based on an interpretation of the contextual surroundings and on Hamas' relations to its own constituency, namely, to its Palestinian secular opponents, to Israel, and to the outside world. This was most evident during their participation in the 2006 parliamentary elections. The victorious outcome for Hamas moved the Islamist movement from a movement in opposition, to a political movement in power. It would also be held accountable for the well-being of the Palestinians. Hamas, thus needed to tread more lightly in terms of its military stance against Israel, a fact witnessed by the period of calm initiated in the autumn of 2004, re-endorsed in the Cairo Agreement of March 2005, lasting until June 9 2006, when Israeli artillery shells killed seven Palestinians at a beach in the northern Gaza Strip.[762]

Taking governing responsibilities and seizing power over the Gaza strip in 2007 were remarkable events that changed Hamas' order of priority. These events often demonstrated Hamas' tactics of emphasizing and deemphasizing the armed resistance. In Gaza, Hamas' top priority was to establish a security order and consolidate its rule and power. Hamas was occupied with stabilizing Gaza's economic situation, tightening its hold over the Strip, and attempting to loosen the Israeli siege. To achieve this, the movement invested in controlling all institutional aspects of life in Gaza, focusing especially on gaining the monopoly on the use of force, and on keeping potential internal challengers at bay.[763] However, Hamas' challenges were greater to treat. In addition to holding responsibility to provide real solutions to the economic crisis in the Strip, the movement had to manage the relations with Israel, since stabilizing the economic situation is dependent on these relations. Hamas was aware that the military escalation with Israel was less effective to overcome the challenges in Gaza, and that flexible political approaches were required to advance its objectives. Hamas' attempt to strike a balance between governance and resistance was hence questionable.[764] Under the conditions of controlling the internal pressure resulting from the distress of the population, and the challenges posed by the provocative activity of the resistance organizations operating within the Gaza Strip, Hamas was intolerant with military escalation. It was keen to avoid causing escalation and being dragged into a conflict with Israel, and undermine its dominance on Gaza. This also challenged Hamas' resistance project from within, whether by members of Hamas' Military wing or the *Salafi jihadist* members who questioned Hamas' adherence to the ultimate goal of liberating Palestine and fighting Israel. Hamas often thwarted the attempts of *Jihadist* Salafism and other Palestinian military factions to attack Israel, seeking to stabilize the situation. Ghazi Hamad, a former political advisor to Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, criticized the unclear combination of both (government and a resistance), stating, "Hamas did not provide 'a clear strategic vision' since their slogan, 'resistance is its strategy' was empty. People in Gaza had mixed feelings about the Hamas-led government. Most people did not want

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[762] (Worthington. *The Necessity of Including Hamas*. 2007. Op.cit. P: 92)

[763] Berti, Benedetta & Kurz, Anat, *Hamas and Governance in Gaza*, In Kurz, Anat, & others, (eds), The Crisis of the Gaza Strip: A Way Out, Tel Aviv: (INSS) Institute for National Security Studies, 2018, P: 31

[764] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 157)

Hamas to recognize Israel, while they worried that the international sanctions made their life unbearable".[765] However, Hamas, after the militarily takeover in Gaza, employed the resistance concept differently. The movement institutionalized resistance in the political structures. Its armed wing, Ezzeddine al-Qassam Brigades, became responsible for guaranteeing the external stability of Hamas' political order against both Israel and Fatah, as well as preserving internal stability in the face of violent Salafi groups.[766]

From another view, Hamas made strenuous efforts to build up varied military capabilities, including rockets that can reach Israel's economic centres, and improve its ability to manufacture arms and establish trained Special Forces.[767] Hamas was keen to show the capability to pose a threat to Israel and to harm its security, not only on the on-border settlements, but also in the depth of Israeli cities. Hamas adapted itself with new tactics such as increasing reliance on rockets and missiles.[768] This strategy aimed to achieve a balance of deterrence and power. The aim of emphasizing and de-emphasizing the armed resistance must be seen in the context of Hamas' tactical strategy and set of priorities.[769] According to Glenn Robinson, during the subsequent wars on Gaza in 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2014, Hamas had internal political motivation for each round of violence against Israel. Besides gaining some domestic political credibility and improving its public popularity, after losing much of the support by being seen as not standing up to Israel,[770] the ability of Hamas to survive and to stay in power, to preserve its leadership intact, and even to garner broad international support, are all viewed as successes by Hamas.[771]

As an example of this, Glenn explains Hamas' objectives out of emphasizing resistance in the context of significant political gains, albeit short-lived. In 2014, the series of events, such as years of isolation, regional changes brought on by the Arab Spring, losing important external support for from Egypt, Syria, and Iran, and the continues Israeli embargo of the Gaza Strip, were all events that intensified Hamas crises in Gaza, and worked against its interests. Under these challenges, the inability of Hamas to rule Gaza alone reversed its overall weak position within Palestinian society.[772] However, although Hamas did not plan to engage in Military action with Israel, neither shooting was planned by its leadership. However, failing to respond to Israel's provocations would view Hamas as weak and unable to defend its organizational and larger national interests. Hamas' leadership sought to take advantage of the opportunity to

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[765] (Hsiu-Ping, *Hamas' political*. 2016, Op. cit, p. 157)
[766] (Youssef, Author interview, 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[767] Laish, Gur, *Why Israel and Hamas Fail to Achieve a Strategic Change*, Infinity Journal, *6(4)*, summer 2019, pages 23-26.
[768] (Rosen. *Here's What Hamas Might Be*. 2014 Jul 8. Op.cit)
[769] Milton-Edwards, B., *The 'Warriors Break': Hamas and the Limits of Ceasefire Beyond Tactical Pause*. International Peacekeeping, 24(2), 2017. Feb 20. p:18
[770] Rosen. *Here's What Hamas Might Be*. 2014 Jul 8. Op.cit)
[771] Robinso, Gleen, *Gaza 2014: Hamas' Strategic Calculus*. (A. Echevarria II, Ed.) Journal of the US Army War College, 44. (Winter 2014-2015), p:99
[772] Ibid. pp. 91-92.

strengthen its position, and even more to break out of their political isolation.[773] In the war of 2014 with Israel, it was important for Hamas to show strong military response, which could once again position it as the only serious fighting force confronting Israel.[774] Hamas, according to Khalid Meshaal, viewed this tactic as a remarkable achievement and considered it as a tactic in conflict management against Israel and one phase of others, in the framework of the resistance. [775] The war, and in particular cease-fire negotiations, allowed Hamas to make demands on the international stage. Any of its demands, such as opening the crossing borders, decreasing some of the siege measures, which are met in those negotiations may be marketed to the public as a means of bolstering Hamas' domestic support.

Hamas' military action strategy does enough to balance to benefit politically, but not to have it spiral out of control. Hamas differentiates between tactical and strategic resistance. This distinction enables them to manage the tensions inherent in its dual roles in Gaza. In general, the more stability of Hamas' governance in Gaza, the more room for it to pursue its resistance strategy. This strategy provides Hamas with several means to make political headway, while to a large degree remaining within the framework of its current ideology and identity.

3.3.3 The Resistance doctrine to explain Hamas' Duel Resistance strategy

As previously mentioned, Hamas' Resistance doctrine considers stability and adaptability as essential elements in the survival of its military approach. The reliance of Hamas on armed resistance as a sole strategy restricted its options to this approach; its efforts were concentrated on how to progress with respect to equipment, recruitment, preparation, timing, efficiency and intensity. The variety of Hamas' resistance strategies was limited in developing the fighting tactics to securing the continuity of its military actions. During Hamas' lifetime, the movement confirmed this variety by gradually developing its means from stabbing to suicide bombings to rocket attacks. Following the changes in Hamas' political opportunities after the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, the military activities were less opted by the Palestinians, since the Palestinian scene was in transition to restructure the political system and focus on institutional capacity building and democratization as the necessary precursors for statehood, according to the road map.[776] The political and societal infrastructure of the Palestinian territories was then devastated as Israel sought to retain control on the territories and eliminate the Intifada. As conditions in the territories became deteriorated, in 2005, Hamas, Fatah, and other Palestinian factions signed the Cairo Agreement, effectively signaling the end of the Intifada for many Palestinians. The Agreement foreshadowed the opportunity to end of Fatah's hegemony of the PLO, and committed all factions to undertake the institutional reform of the Palestinian

[773] Ibid. p. 96
[774] Ibid. p. 98
[775] (Milton-Edwards, B. *The 'Warriors Break'*. 2017. Op.cit. p. 18)
[776] Kear, Martin, *Fighting to Stay in Politics: Hamas and Its Dual Resistance Strategy*, Paper presented to the Australian Political Science Association Conference, September 2016, p: 3, retrieved shorturl.at/oqrH0

Authority (PA), including the holding of municipal and Legislative Council elections.[777] The rising calls for reforming the Palestinian Authority, and demands of calming the situation with Israel, put more pressure on Hamas to consider incorporating more political means into its struggle with Israel. However, Hamas was unwilling to set aside its armed resistance for political integration, and was not willing to miss the opportunity to break Fatah's dominance over the aspects of the Palestinian political polity.[778] Hamas envisaged that its political resistance consists of advocating for the reformation and institutional capacity building of the PA as part of a coalition government headed by Fatah.[779] However, after its unexpected election victory, Hamas found itself to govern outright. This transformed Hamas' contest with Israel and Fatah into a struggle against limiting its rule and de-legitimizing its rights to govern. In this contentious political environment, the primary goal of Hamas' political resistance became geared towards entrenching its political authority in the PA and in Gaza, and preserving its rights to exercise political power. [780]

In participating in the elections in 2006, Hamas built its electoral political program on the slogan 'One hand resists, while the other one builds'.[781] This slogan constitutes Hamas' understanding to the function of its dual resistance strategy. This strategy should be a comprehensive strategy where political resistance operates side by side with military resistance, in a mutually supportive manner. Explaining the multiplicity of Hamas' resistance efforts, Hamas Chairman Khaled Meshaal stated '…ours is a comprehensive movement, which has fused military and political activity. Our vision is to combine them without focusing exclusively on either".[782] Indeed, this combination is not merely reversed to the needs of Hamas to diversify its forms of resistance, after realizing that a military action strategy alone is insufficient to achieve the goals of liberation, but importantly reflects the authority of both the political and military leadership within the movement. However, the implementation of the strategy should not be seen as the beginning of the transformation of Hamas into a movement devoted solely to political participation.

The primary goal of the strategy is to drive Hamas' efforts to gain a political voice within Palestinian politics, while simultaneously continuing its armed struggle with Israel over the occupied Palestinian territories. Hamas also found the necessity to adopt a dual strategy, which is a reflection of the public's expectations that their representatives possesses a comprehensive political strategy, and also engages in armed resistance to further the cause of Palestinian statehood. Although Hamas' military put up a less extreme front, the complete absence of military elements and violence is unfeasible. Therefore, Hamas retains

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[777] Ibid. pp. 2-3.
[778] Ibid. p. 4
[779] Usher, Graham, *The democratic resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian elections*, Journal of Palestine Studies, 35(3). 2006. pp 21-22.
[780] Kailitz, Steffen, *Classifying political regimes revisited: Legitimation and durability*, Democratization, 20(1). 2013, p. 41
[781] (The Political Program of "Change and Reform" Bloc, 2006)
[782] Khaled Mishal, Cited in Rabbani, Mouin: *A Hamas Perspective on the Movement's Evolving Role*, Part II', Journal of Palestine Studies, 37(4), (2008), p 64.

its violent means to a great extent as a means of achieving liberation. Political engagement is prioritized over violent actions, and it is not an imperative association with the repudiation of violence.[783]

Despite the challenges arising between each resistance scenario, Hamas is aware of the inability to liberate Palestine by itself, thus highlighting the significance of their coalition. Since Hamas has the same political and military goal, the liberation of Palestine, both its identities, political and military, undertake interwoven paths to achieve this goal.[784] The Palestinians' demand that the representatives of Palestine must exhibit both political and military identities to promote the self-determination of Palestine played a significant role to retain the legitimacy of Hamas as a resistance movement.[785] The employment of the dual resistance strategy, especially the adoption of political means in Hamas' strategy was to substantiate the efforts to liberate Palestine and gain the support of Palestinians for the strategic narrative of Hamas. The ruling group, Fatah, was entirely reliant on diplomacy to liberate Palestine. Its failure along with Hamas' amalgamation of its political and armed resistance identities challenged the efficiency of Fatah and its methods, contributing to the electoral success of Hamas in 2006. One of the key components of the dual resistance strategy adopted by Hamas was political resistance, which was employed to challenge Fatah's dominance in Palestinian politics, and on Israel. The other main component of the dual resistance strategy was armed resistance, which implies violent actions to resist the Israeli occupation. Hamas' rise to governance enabled the development of an increased pragmatism within the leadership, as its members realized that in order to make policy gains, the traditional ideologies have to be compromised, which facilitated Hamas to overcome its ideological inflexibility.[786]

Nevertheless, the two components do not necessarily combine seamlessly, and inherent tensions persist. However, Hamas recognizes that neither political nor armed resistance individually is sufficient to achieve Palestinian statehood. Therefore, while one component can be placed into abeyance, it is never abandoned. It becomes a strategic asset to be utilized judiciously. By emphasizing the duality of its resistance, Hamas was able to mollify moderate and militant members simultaneously, as both components were essential in the struggle for Palestinian statehood. Indeed, adopting this strategy has been a technique for Hamas to cement its own legitimacy amongst Palestinians by amalgamating its electoral legitimacy with its resistance legitimacy.[787]

How do we explain Hamas evolving a duel resistance strategy in light of the two main elements of its resistance doctrine (stability and pragmatism)? In unbalanced struggles such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, violence is often

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[783] (Berti, *Armed political organizations*. 2013. Op.cit. p. 31-33)
[784] Kear, Martin, *The Dilemmas of Dual Resistance: Hamas and Political Learning in Gaza*. In The Politics of Islamism, Palgrave Macmillan, (2018), pp. 243-266.
[785] Milton-Edwards, B., & Farrell, S., *Hamas: The Islamic resistance movement*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010
[786] Sánchez-Cuena, I., *Party moderation and politicians' ideological rigidity*, Party Politics, 2004, 10(3), 325–342.
[787] (Kear, *Fighting to Stay in Politics*. Sep 2016. Op.cit. p: 4)

manifested in the contest of achieving balance of power and to demonstrate the ability of Hamas to harm Israel. Hamas recognizes that a level of violence is necessary to maintain this demonstration. However, since 2004, Hamas concluded that the reliance solely on armed resistance failed, and a flexible approach that involves using violence to resist Israeli occupation, while simultaneous political resistance- that includes the political participation in the PA-, is required to progress its objective in regards to realizing the liberation and remaining in power. To advance this approach, a flexible dual resistance strategy is a new important element in the diversification of Hamas' methods, but without altering the core facet of its *raison d'être*, and the core concept of the resistance doctrine. Reinforcing one over the other is geared by Hamas' analysis on the cost and benefit of ensuring its continued viability to achieve its objectives. For Hamas, the dual resistance strategy, especially the use of violence, consolidates its political power. So that paths serve each other.

As the dual resistance strategy is an important approach that enables Hamas to preserve the core of its resistance doctrine and claim constancy on its ideological principles toward Israel, this strategy is also an important tool for Hamas to remain a viable political actor in Palestinian politics.

3.3.4 Re-conceptualization of the resistance

Since its inception Hamas crystalized a stereotype in respect to its forms of resistance to be associated with the violent context. Indeed, there is an understandable justification to such a conclusion. Both Hamas' Charter and its military records have proven the adherence of Hamas to this trend. The Charter evidently limited the initial method of liberation to *Jihad*, and since 1996, Hamas recorded several violent attacks, including suicide bombings.

However, Hamas, through its New Political Document, attempted to break this stereotype and re-conceptualize the forms of resistance adaptably with the new development that occurred in the movement since joining the PA and ruling Gaza, and to align the development that occurred to its political calculations and its roles in Palestine. Similar to the linguistic shift in Hamas' New Document in respect to redefining the conflict as a conflict with Zionism and not with Judaism, the movement also made a shift from using the term *jihad*, to using the term *Muqawama* (resistance). Hamas' insistence on shifting the terminology can be attributed, according to Samer Bani-Odeh, to two main reasons. The first is to the miss-interpretation of the concept of *Jihad* and being associated with destructive groups such as al-Qaeda and Daesh. The second is to Hamas' attempts to politicize the conflict as a struggle against the occupation, without considering it a religious conflict, and to approach the National Palestinian Movement in terms of its goals.[788]

While the Charter placed great emphasis on *jihad* as a personal obligation of every Muslim, the New Document mentioned it once when emphasizing on the

[788] (Bani-Odah, Author interview, 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)

duty of the *Ummah* in the liberation of Palestine.[789] Regardless the wide association of *Jihad* with violent acts, *Jihad* is also believed to also include non-violent acts that can be in the form of political, electoral, economic and media *jihad*.[790] The "Civilian Jihad" (*Al-jihad Al-Madani*) is defined, according to Khalid Kishtainy, as a non-violent struggle that integrates political struggle whose "weapons" include boycotts, strikes, protests, sit-downs, humor, and other acts of civil disobedience and non-violent defiance.[791] Hamas included such a definition when it justified its participation in the election in 2006. In fact, when Hamas was about to participate in the 2006's elections, the dialectic was around how would the movement justify its participation in elections that emerged form an agreement that it ideologically rejected? Hamas' political leaders such as Hassan Youssef gave a new justification that consider the Participation in the elections as political resistance that correspond to *Al-Jihad Al-Madani* "Civil Jihad". Serving the people, fighting the corruption, and rebuilding Palestinian institutions are all in the interest of the general goals of Hamas, which is to protect the resistance. Such an interpretation enabled Hamas to integrate both the military *Jihad* and the Civilian *Jihad* as different forms of its resistance.[792] Hamas adopts ijtihad (jurisprudence) as a rational interpretation of the main Islamic sources, which helps make its political thinking adaptable. Thus, it does not apply the main Islamic sources in a literal or fixed sense, but reinterprets them.[793]

The elements of the non-violent side of *Jihad* are presented in lesser jihad, which includes the provision of social services, maintenance of social welfare and seeking social justice. *Da'wa,* as an example, includes a wide range of outreach activities which are unrelated to the violent element of *jihad*. *Da'wa* is interpreted as a method to reform the society and an obligation to expand the reach of Islam.[794] However, the lesser *Jihad* has often been under the shadow of the permeating violent discourse of Hamas and its initial Charter, since Hamas often devotes its capital and political powers to the pursuit of the violent, armed struggle.[795]

The re-conceptualization is thus to consider expanding the concept of resistance and giving more room to other (non-military) forms in its work. Contrary to the Charter, the New Document focuses on presenting the resistance without specifying its type, though it included the armed resistance within the concept as a form of it, but not as an initial form. However, Hamas' New Document and the subsequent statements of its leaders developed a procedural concept of the resistance that is called the "comprehensive resistance strategy",

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[789] Hamas' New Political Document (2017)

[790] For further information about the Non-violent Jihad, see: Stephan, Maria J. (Ed): Civilian Jihad Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, shorturl.at/zCVX6

[791] Kishtainy, Khalid, *Nonviolence and 'Civilian Jihad': Common Ground*, News Service—Middle East, June 6, 2002, shorturl.at/bqxL4

[792] Al-Khatib, Moataz, *Civil jihad and the Islamization of non-violence*, Al-Multaka, 20 Mar. 2005. http://almultaka.org/site.php?id=251&idC=3&idSC=12

[793] Koss, Maren, *Flexible Resistance: How Hezbollah and Hamas Are Mending Ties*, Carnegie Middle East Center, July 11, 2018, shorturl.at/gDE16

[794] Levitt, Matthew, Hamas' ideological crisis. Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, 2009. 9, pp. 80-95.

[795] Ibid.

which employs all possible tools, both military and non-military, each according to the circumstances of the situation.[796] When Hamas came to power, a new concept appeared in its vocabulary of discourse, including the government of resistance, and new behavior, such as combining rule and resistance. The process of the self-construction of the Palestinian people in its individual and collective frameworks also came to become in line with Hamas' expanded concept of resistance work. The comprehensive resistance strategy is consistent with the general vision of Hamas, since it highlights the armed resistance as its constant and primary focus, while at the same time, demonstrates more flexibility of the mechanisms of resistance that include non-violent public resistance.[797] However, escalating or deescalating any of the forms or even diversifying the methods are an integral part of the process of managing the conflict, and should not be at the expense of the principle of resistance. The manipulation of resistance, either to intensify it at any time, is continually revised as per the context. With the notion of the re-conceptualizing of the resistance, Hamas does not appear as a pure armed resistance movement, nor does it constitute a sharp shift toward the non-violent resistance. This gives Hamas a wider area of action and options that make the movement appear to be committed to the essential object of its emergence, as a resistance movement, while at the same time it avoids abandoning the resistance in the sake of governance.[798]

In the context of applying the comprehensive resistance strategy, since the late March 2018 and onwards, Hamas operated a series of demonstrations that continued for almost 18 months, which were held each Friday near the Gaza-Israel border, known as the "Great March of Return".[799] The first demonstrations were organized by independent activists who were announced through Social Media as a non-violent way to highlight the living crises in Gaza, and to demand the right of return of the Palestinian refugees. But the initiative was soon endorsed by Hamas as well as other major factions in Gaza. By facilitating the popular marches, Hamas wanted to exert the pressure and anger away from itself and initially towards Israel, but, at the same time, this method gives it the ability to mobilize large numbers of citizens in Gaza through peaceful rallies, to demonstrate its leadership in popular resistance actions. In fact, Hamas was inspired by the revolutions in some of the Arab countries that had received great attention and resulted in toppling the regimes such as Egypt and Tunisia. The developments in the Arab region such as the breaking with the axe of resistance (Iran, Syria and Hezbollah), and the removal of Mohamad Morsi from office, gave Hamas a further reason to attempt the concept of popular resistance as a non-violent civil unrest directed against Israel to attract the world's attention and incite public opinion on the blockade imposed on Gaza.[800] However, the adoption of the popular resistance can be understood as Hamas' attempt to achieve two goals. First, a rapprochement with Fatah, since agreeing on one resistance strategy was a major obstacle between

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[796] Safadi, Nader, *Popular Resistance: The New Hamas' Way to Fight Israel*, Center for Regional Studies-Palestine, April 16, 2018, shorturl.at/suCYZ
[797] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)
[798] Ibid.
[799] (Safadi. *Popular Resistance*. 2018 April 16. Op.cit)
[800] Ibid.

the two parties to accomplish the reconciliation. Second, since Hamas has been in power, the movement has been under pressure by the public because of the ramifications of each round of clash with Israel, and thus leading the popular resistance could be seen as a method to affirm Hamas' public integration.[801]

Al-Jihad Al-Madani, as an essential element of the comprehensive resistance strategy, can be exhibited by emphasizing the political and diplomatic means to confront Israel and its threat to the rise of Hamas' political power. In implementing a popular resistance, Hamas understood that it needed to develop a diplomatic strategy to draw upon the diplomatic means to enhance its political narrative and agenda.[802] In the increasingly unpredictable diplomatic environment, Hamas needed to craft a diplomatic strategy to enable the movement to create diplomatic relationships and communicate strategically with a wide array of external policy makers. External patrons are important to Hamas to recognize its government and legitimacy and ameliorate the siege. The emphasis on violent resistance, as the sole mean, changed after the political participation of Hamas. The situation became more challenging with the increased suffering caused by the pressure of humanitarian responsibilities, causing Hamas to once again adopt a pragmatic and political approach. However, the Arab Spring has also changed Hamas' diplomatic approach. Overall, Hamas' diplomatic strategy became predicated on obtaining international recognition of its ability to govern, while continuing its resistance toward Israeli occupation. To adjust to this political environment, the use of non-violent methods is to serve Hamas in light of the dramatic changes in its diplomatic environment that it experienced since achieving power, and in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.[803]

However, the popular resistance provides Hamas with an important cover to avoid being condemned by the international community, and to stop the potential pressure from regional parties. A Legal Assessment Report issued by the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 25 February 2019 viewed the demonstrations as a civilian act in nature that had clearly stated political aims. Despite some acts of significant violence, it did not constitute combat or a military campaign, and the legal framework applicable to policing the protests was that of law enforcement, based in international human rights law. This assessment did not change following the HRC's investigation into the demonstrators' affiliation to or membership in organized armed groups.[804]

In sum, armed resistance constitutes the principal part of Hamas' comprehensive resistant strategy. But when other forms of resistance such as popular resistance help to strengthen its position in the Palestinian territories or abroad, and to serve its goals, Hamas favors them instead.

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[801] (Koss. *Flexible Resistance*. 2018. Op.cit)
[802] (Kear, *Fighting to Stay in Politics*. Sep 2016. Op.cit. pp: 10)
[803] Ibid. p. 4
[804] Human Rights Council: Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the OPT, Fortieth session, 25 Feb 2019, P: 5, shorturl.at/antCN

3.3.5 Variables to encourage or restrain Hamas' use of violence.

Kobi Michael and Omer Dostri identified several internal and external variables that restrain Hamas' use of violence. Some of these variables have a dual effect. In some circumstances they serve to restrain violence, and in others they encourage it. The choice to use violence is influenced by the internal struggle between the military and the political wings of Hamas, which have always been a significant element in determining Hamas' policies and affecting its decision toward the armed struggle. The ideological strictness and the policy of resistance adopted by those who view Hamas as a resistance movement advance the choices towards the military option. While the political arm has adopted a relatively pragmatic, tolerant approach to Israel, this is a matter of tactics rather than a strategic change, and focuses on reconstructing the Gaza Strip and consolidating its control. The military wing supports a continuation of efforts to build military strength and a war of attrition against Israel. The lack of agreement between the political and military wings can be observed following the end of the war on Gaza in 2014. The political wing preferred closer ties with the Sunni axis (with an emphasis on Turkey and Qatar), and efforts to improve ties with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, while the military wing led the efforts to renew the alliance with Iran and promoted cooperation with Hezbollah.[805]

The internal tension along the political-military line can help to clarify how this variable can affect military use. Hamas has often found itself struggling between preserving its armed struggle and maximizing its political and social activism, alternating these organizational priorities in the course of its development. At the time when Hamas attempted to reposition itself to increase its domestic relevancy and legitimacy in 2005, while the armed struggle was particularly less favorited amongst Palestinians, Hamas deemphasized this option for the favor of the political participation. However, by the end of the 1990s, the failure of the political negotiations with Israel, the decline in the popular legitimacy of the PA and the nonviolent route led Hamas to reverse to invest again in its armed wing. In turn, this led the movement to emerge from the second Intifada as a powerful political and military alternative to Fatah.[806]

The Iranian Influence is classified by Michael and Dostri as an external variable that encourages the use of violence. Iran has for long been an important military backer to Hamas that provided the movement with military assistance in the form of weapons, funding and training. Improving ties with Iran, after a long break following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, is considered an influential factor in accelerating the military option of Hamas and enhancing the military wing within the movement. The Iranian grand strategy, which includes consistent anti-Israel policies, suits Hamas' ideology of violent resistance. Iran

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[805] Michael, Kobi, Dostri, and Omer, *The Hamas Tightrope: Between Political Institutionalization and Armed Struggle*, Strategic Assessment. 21(3). October 2018, p: 40-44

[806] Berti, Benedetta, *Meet the 'new' Hamas: strategic shift or temporary deviation from a violent path?,* Open Democracy Website, 15 January 2012.

sees the resistance movements against Israel as a legitimate means of promoting its interests of harming Israel and exporting regional anti-Western influence.[807]

The reconciliation process with Fatah sets another influential variable that may encourage the use of violence. While the success of the reconciliation process could accelerate the process of political institutionalization of Hamas and power-sharing within the institutions of the PA, its failure could have an entirely opposite effect. The failure of the reconciliation agreement has already affected Hamas and the situation in Gaza, after the Fatah-led PA in Ramallah imposed economic sanctions on the Strip, which harmed thousands of employees whose wages were paid by PA in Ramallah. Indeed, these sanctions undermine Hamas' governance in Gaza. In the recent years, as a consequence of these sanctions, and in addition to the Israeli-Egyptian blockade on Gaza, the humanitarian situation deteriorated, resulting in a lack of the basic necessities of life for Gazans, and widespread unemployment and poverty. The absence of real expectations for improvement in the humanitarian crisis and the inability of Hamas to provide the Gaza population with a better quality of life are the cause of severe disappointment and despair, and Hamas became the target of harsh criticism by Palestinians. The violent choice could be Hamas' legitimate option to direct the anger of residents towards Israel, along with Egypt and the international arena. This can be manifested in operating the Marches of Return along the border since March 30, 2018. The wave of protests, combined with violent demonstrations, aimed to divert attention from the internal problems in the Gaza Strip, and to improve the humanitarian reality in the Strip and promote its political goals.[808] However, the development of the conciliation process could be a factor that may contribute to restrain Hamas' use of violence. If the inter-Palestinian reconciliation provides Hamas with a significant share of political power with a non-threatening security environment, achieves the normalization of Palestinian political life, and results in the creation of a united political coalition, then Hamas may have an interest to subordinate its military options to a higher interest in continuing to invest in non-violent politics.[809]

Hamas' tolerant policy toward Israel in regards to avoiding opining military confrontation against Israel, dissatisfies groups such as the Salafi-jihadist and the Islamic Jihad. To Hamas, the image as a national liberation movement and leader of the armed struggle against Israel is seriously challenged by these groups. As we mentioned earlier in Part Two, such groups reject the flexible approach of Hamas, and attempt to challenge Hamas through violent provocations against Israel. Causing escalation applies pressure on Hamas not to leave the floor for them to top the confrontations, and this may drive Hamas to more extreme positions towards Israel in an effort to respond to the challenge to maintain its status as the spearhead of the Palestinian national struggle. This forces Hamas to preserve its armed resistance ethos.[810]

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[807] (Michael & Dostri, *The Hamas Tightrope*. Oct 2018. Op.cit. pp: 40-44)
[808] Ibid.
[809] (Berti, *Meet the 'new' Hamas*. 2012. Jan, 15. Op.cit)
[810] (Michael & Dostri, *The Hamas Tightrope*. Oct 2018. Op.cit. pp: 40-44)

As for the variables that may restrain Hamas' use of violence, improving the humanitarian situation in Gaza can play a dual effect. Besides being a factor to encourage violence to press on Israel, it could be a factor to restrain violence. Hamas understands that in order to achieve this goal, a state of relative pragmatism must be demonstrated, and calming the situation with Israel must be achieved.[811] Since controlling the Gaza Strip in 2007, an increased pressure of humanitarian responsibilities brought on the movement, and the situation became more challenging with the widespread suffering caused by freezing financial aid and the persistent incursions by Israel. Hamas was careful not to cause an escalation that would draw Israel into a broad military campaign that may result in deteriorating the humanitarian situation in Gaza. This could encourage the possibility of reaching an arrangement with Israel in the short to medium term, causing Hamas to once again adopt a pragmatic and political approach.[812] This is closely related with Hamas seeking not to lose control in the Gaza strip. The deterioration in the humanitarian situation could lead to popular protests against Hamas' Governance. Therefore, avoiding popular discontent with its rule is necessary.[813]

As enforcing Hamas' hegemony on the Gaza Strip is essential to its sovereignty, this factor could make Hamas keen to operate as a responsible governing body to ensure stability and to restrain groups that use violence against Israel, although this is contrary to its own ideology of armed resistance. Since seizing power in the Gaza Strip, Hamas has been obliged to use its military capabilities against organizations that challenge its rule such as the Salafi-Jihadists. Hamas, on different occasions such as in 2009 resorted to forceful actions against members of Salafi jihadist groups who refused to cooperate with Hamas and provoked the situation with Israel.[814] Since the war on Gaza in 2014, Hamas has been careful not to provoke Israel in a way that escalates into a broad military operation. Hamas works to frustrate attempts by the military factions in Gaza to fire rockets at Israel. Even in cases where Hamas feels the need to display its deterrence toward Israel, it chooses to do so at relatively low intensity to avoid a heavy Israeli response. Such a tendency is backed by the declaration made by Yahya Sinwar, Hamas' senior leader in Gaza in August 2017, that his movement has no interest in a war with Israel. It understands well that there are issues that will be solved through popular resistance or diplomatic efforts.[815]

However, as an external variable, Hamas' desire to achieve regional and international legitimacy has the effect to refrain from the use of violence against Israel. In the context of its political institutionalization, Hamas attaches importance to its foreign policy and its diplomatic and political contacts. This stems from the movement's need to maintain balanced relations with the available regional and international actors, in order to widen its legitimacy among the Arab and Islamic world and among the international community as a sovereign entity in Gaza. In the wake of the Arab spring, the regional developments brought new

[811] Ibid.
[812] (Kear, *Fighting to Stay in Politics*. Sep 2016. Op.cit. p: 7)
[813] (Michael & Dostri, *The Hamas Tightrope*. Oct 2018. Op.cit. pp: 40-44)
[814] Ibid.
[815] Ibid.

circumstances for Hamas that have not only represented an ideological challenge, but also forced it to search for new strategic allies after breaking ties with Syria and Iran.[816] Hamas enjoys special relations with Russia, Turkey and Qatar, who are not supportive of its the military option, unlike Iran. Based on this perspective, in light of the shift in the regional balance of power and Hamas' allies, the need for it to stay relevant and retain a level of close contacts with these actors, exerts pressure on the movement to adopt a more pragmatic approach. This could explain the focus of Hamas on alternative non-violent strategies to confront Israel.[817] The same could also be applied on Hamas' relation with Egypt. Egypt's influence on Hamas, and the role that Egypt plays easing the blockade on Hamas and supplying the Strip with necessary goods for survival, as well as acting as a mediator between Hamas and the PLO and also between Hamas and Israel, applies strong pressure on Hamas to be more flexible, bring about a calm and stop the violent disturbances against Israel.[818]

Benedetta Berti stresses two elements to explain Hamas' emphasis on choosing its political and non-violent struggle. The first can be attributed to Hamas' long-standing flexible strategy to create parallel political frameworks. This allows it to benefit from the best of both, ensuring the loyalty of its 'hardcore' constituency by preserving its commitment as an armed struggle against Israel, while also embracing a more mainstream set of values and priorities geared towards the rest of the population and the international community alike.[819] Second, Hamas has also constantly been concerned with its own popularity and legitimacy within Palestine, as exemplified by the correlation between the number and magnitude of violent attacks perpetrated by Hamas and the public's support for such attacks. Specifically, in periods when the public's support for violence significantly declined (such as in the years following the Oslo Accords), so too did Hamas' reliance on violence.[820]

Besides the above variables, two factors could work against Hamas' move to give room for more non-violent practices. The first factor is that it is important to realize that Hamas has invested in boosting its military apparatus over the past few years, which suggests that any attempt to sideline the military leadership might cause dire internal conflict. It is unclear whether Hamas' 'hardcore' constituency would allow a non-violent strategic shift, or whether this would lead to additional internal conflict, deeply threatening the internal cohesion of the movement. Second, it is difficult to ignore the role of the international actors and Israel in advancing Hamas' non-violent behaviors. The refusal to deal with Hamas, or any government that includes it, may lead to a renewed marginalization of the movement, which could backfire, thus empowering the violent option and minimizing the non-violent one.[821]

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[816] (Berti, *Meet the 'new' Hamas*. 2012. Jan, 15. Op.cit)
[817] Ibid
[818] (Michael & Dostri, *The Hamas Tightrope*. Oct 2018. Op.cit. pp: 40-44)
[819] (Berti, *Meet the 'new' Hamas*. 2012. Jan, 15. Op.cit)
[820] Ibid
[821] Ibid

In sum, the above variables may have high, medium and low intensity. Some of them could have a higher influence than the other, and some variables may have dual effects to either encourage or restrain Hamas' use of violence. But they helped to explain Hamas' efforts to balance between its roles as a governor, with the need to establish its sovereignty and legitimizing its rule in Gaza on the one hand, and as a resistance movement that retains the ethos of the armed struggle against Israel on the other. Hamas maneuvers between realizing its identity as a resistance movement and establishing itself as a responsible governing entity. In order to understand its long-term choices, these variables suggest that Hamas emphasizes violent or non-violent political methods, depending on the situation. The use of violence may be a choice if any of the two roles is acutely challenged.

Conclusion

Understanding Hamas' doctrine of resistance makes it safe to conclude that the armed struggle is a constant in its comprehensive resistance strategy. Although, theoretically, the doctrine of resistance calls for escalation, in practice, Hamas attempts to improve its relative situation by fine-tuning its options of resistance. While Hamas has exhibited the tendency to adopt a less militant and a more political approach to deal with the conflict, giving significant room for the popular and non-violent resistance, it is unlikely that this evolving approach will be an introduction to a voluntary disarmament. But any degree of non-violence would be a striking departure for Hamas, which over the years has attacked Israel using multiple different violent means. Hamas repeatedly emphasized its position insofar Israel continues to occupy Palestinian land, and the rights of the Palestinian people are not realized, the armed struggle, and all it entails, should stay at the heart of Hamas' strategy. In the Palestinian internal dialogue over unifying the Palestinian political program, Hamas strictly forbid to negotiating its military power, but was flexible to discuss the needs for rationalizing the use of the arms against Israel. At certain junctures, using military attacks had become Hamas' strongest card in the conflict with Israel, as well as in its struggle for power against its rivals and the Fatah movement. Relinquishing this card would affect Hamas' capacity.

Along with Hamas' history, the movement has often emphasized or de-emphasized the use of violent methods under the requirements of the losses and benefits concept as well as the variables of its working environment. An example is when political participation gave Hamas a significant opportunity to establish itself in power, the use of violent was de-emphasized. However, considering the role of the different discussed variables that may affect Hamas' behavior to either encourage or restrain the use of violence, makes it safe to conclude that the future of Hamas' nonviolent strategy and adopting a more pragmatic and less violent approach is as promising as it is uncertain.

3.4 Chapter Four

Hamas and the Peace Process: Is engagement possible?

This chapter examines the development of Hamas' attitude toward the 'Peace Process' with Israel. We discuss three main issues: the first is Hamas' conviction toward Peace; the second is Hamas' position as a spoiler to the Peace Process; and the third is the potentiality of Hamas' engagement in the Peace Process.

3.4.1 No conviction in Peace or in the Peace Process?

Hamas is believed to be among the major obstacles to a peaceful solution. From the initiation of the Peace Process, Hamas has openly expressed an aversion towards the Oslo Agreement in 1993, and the Madrid Conference preceding it. It explicitly revolted against any attempts made to establish peace in the region. Protests and acts of violence seemed to be Hamas' devices to respond to the repercussion of the Oslo Agreement. Since 1994, Hamas orchestrated several attacks that aimed to complicate or impede holding negotiation sessions or undermining the Peace Process. Moreover, protests were organized with other Palestinian factions to delegitimize the Peace Track such as PFLP.[822]

The suicide attacks were not only for revenge against the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in 1994, or against the assassination of Hamas' leaders such as Yahiya Ayyash in 1996, but also as a way to revolt against the peace process. The inconsistency between Hamas' objectives and the Oslo Accord was a major reason for the opposition to the peace process.[823] As an ideological conviction, it is not strange that the Charter of Hamas played an influential role in shaping such a stance. The Charter endorsed that peace was explicitly rejected. Hamas' ideology conflicts with any proposed settlement, other than the full liberation of Palestine. The most contentious features of Hamas' Charter comprise two central strategies, jihad, particularly its militant manifestations, and rejection of peace agreements and negotiations, given its belief that all of historic Palestine constitutes an un-negotiable Islamic *waqf*.[824] Article 13 in Hamas' Charter views the initiatives to settle the conflict with Israel in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement, whose *raison d'être* is resistance, and would offend God.[825] Hamas' literature, discourse and statements clearly expressed the lack of faith in the peace process, claiming that Israel would never commit itself to it, and that

[822] (Pettersen, *Hamas and a Future Palestinian*. 2009, Op.cit. p. 41)
[823] (Chehab. *Inside Hamas*. 2007, pp: 39-41)
[824] Hamas' Charter (1988), Article 13
[825] Ibid.

resistance is the only way to force the occupation to end. Therefore, Hamas did not believe that the Oslo Peace Process would be capable of restoring rights or giving rightful justice to the Palestinians. It was believed that such an agreement is unfair, and is made to search for serving the existence of Israel and its security. The Oslo agreement was considered as treasonous and as a conspiracy.[826] Hamas truly believes that the peace process, as stipulated by both the Oslo Accord and the Road Map later, is not a solution for genuine peace. To Hamas, the peace process represents an Israeli attempt of consolidating control of the occupied territories.[827] This attempt, Hamas argues, is verified by Israel creating 'facts on the ground', most notably the continued construction of Jewish settlements and roads in the West Bank, the Barrier and other closure obstacles hindering the Palestinian movement. [828]

Besides the ideological restrictions leading to the refusal of the Political Track with Israel, we previously referred to several objective and subjective justifications for Hamas' rejection and its efforts to hamper it. Among these justifications is the exclusion of Hamas from the process. Being marginalized from the peace process, which involves making decisions for Palestine, places Hamas in a position of less responsibility and legitimacy. Oslo was believed to consolidate Fatah's power in the Palestinian territories, and build a state around the central figure of Arafat.[829] Accordingly, Hamas ultimately chose to boycott the first elections in 1996, as it estimated that the potential loss of the election would provide significant disincentives to the existing opposition groups. Nevertheless, Hamas' attempts to sabotage the peace process were not grounded solely on its ideological principles, but also on its attempts to undermine the PA and PLO. It is important to note that Hamas opposed that the PLO should be the sole representative of the Palestinian people, by excluding Hamas as an actor.[830]

Thus, Hamas' use of violence to undermine the peace process with Israel was not only backed by its ideology and religious doctrine. It was also backed by enfolding events in a changing socio-political environment that considers an interpretation of the contextual surroundings, and on Hamas' relations with its own constituency to its Palestinian secular opponents, to Israel, and to the outside world. The period of the Oslo Peace Process attested to Hamas' conviction that resistance is the only way to end the Israeli Occupation.[831]

This position thus suggests that Hamas rejects any peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, Hamas' position in settling peace with Israel has been inconsistent. Although Hamas continued its armed resistance against Israel in the years following the Oslo peace process and during the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, and continuously denounced the peace process with Israel, Hamas seemingly promoted its concept of conditional peace, and

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[826] Hamas' Communiqué, (30 Sep 1993)
[827] (Pettersen, *Hamas and a Future Palestinian*. 2009. Op.cit. p. 90)
[828] Ibid.
[829] Mullin, Corinna, *Islamist Challenges to the 'Liberal Peace' Discourse: The Case of Hamas and the Israel-Palestine 'Peace Process*. Millennium, 39(2), 2010, pp: 528-530
[830] (Pettersen, *Hamas and a Future Palestinian*. 2009. Op.cit. p. 89)
[831] Ibid. p. 61

exemplified its willingness to maintain a moderate profile and pragmatism concerning Israel. As an evolving policy, Hamas proposed a *Hudna* as a means of finding a political solution to the conflict with Israel. Hamas expressed conditional willingness to sign a truce for a decade or more, if Israel accepted to withdraw the borders before 1967. This was mentioned on different occasions in 1988, 1994, and 1997, and continued to maintain this concept during the second Intifada (2000-2005).[832] Throughout the history of Hamas, the proposals of *Hudna* have been often offered as an Islamic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[833] Mahmoud Al-Zahar and Ahmad Yassin raised this initiative on separate occasions during conversations with Israeli leaders. Some examples are with Shimon Peres on March 1988, or with Israeli intelligence officers during Yassin's imprisonment in 1994. It was also conveyed via King Hussein of Jordan in 1997. The most explicit outline of the basic conditions for a *Hudna* was found in a memorandum sent to European diplomats by Hamas in 1999. Hamas declared its willingness to cease all hostilities in exchange for the evacuation of the settlements, release of prisoners, and withdrawal of the 1967 borders.[834]

Two different instruments were involved in Hamas' terminology for setting Peace: *Tahdi'ah* (Ceasefire) and *Hudna* (Truce). *Tahdi'ah* is a suspension of acts of violence that is offered often when there is an intense escalation of violence. So whether unilaterally or through mediation, the conflicted parties achieve a short-term pause of violence. The idea of *Tahdi'ah* has not been confined to long-term arrangements, nor is a word that has religious connotations. Hamas has always adopted *Tahdi'ah* as a tactical, pragmatic approach to deescalate its conflict with Israel. This concept does not necessarily include further political steps related to settling the conflict. However, in several occasions, it has been initiated by the Palestinians as a goodwill gesture to resume the negotiations sessions. As a part of tactical decision, Hamas chose to implement a de-escalation of armed attacks against Israel or to agree to a ceasefire without announcing that they were taking such a step. *Hudna* has a deep-rooted connotation in Hamas' ideology. Although it occasionally gives the same sense of *Tahdi'ah*, the concept here is used to refer to Hamas' offer to exchange peace with Israel that involves a complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territories of 1967's land, the right of return of refugees, and the release of all Palestinian political prisoners, in return for halting military activities by Hamas. In other words, this is a temporal form of co-existence that includes recognition of a counterpart without implying the party's legitimacy.[835]

For a placement of the concept of *Hudna* in the Peace Resolutions' agreements, it worthy to distinguish between Reconciliation Treaty and Peace Treaty. Reconciliation refers to a relationship between two countries and how they deal with a conflicting past. This is characterized by words of apology from the perpetrator, negotiation on war reparation, and forgiving gestures from the victim. Deep reconciliation includes common narration of history, de-sensitization of

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[832] (Chehab. *Inside Hamas*. 2007.)
[833] Tuastad, Dag, *Hamas' Concept of a Long-term Ceasefire: A Viable Alternative to Full Peace?* Oslo: PRIO: Peace Research Institute, November 2010, p: 12-13
[834] (Tuastad. Hamas' Concept. 2010. Op. cit. pp:12-13)
[835] Ibid. p.8

historical issues, and restoration of affection between two countries.[836] A peace treaty is an agreement between two or more hostile parties, which formally agree to end a state of war between them or to significantly reduce the probability of war. However, peace does not always reflect reconciliation.[837] *Hudna* is far from a Reconciliation Agreement, and is better to be referred to as an interim Peace accord. This concept, besides being similar in content with Peace Treaty, since both aim to end a violent conflict, also has various step-by-step agreements that can be reached during a peace process that could potentially lead to a comprehensive settlement, such as cessation of hostilities, ceasefire agreements, pre-negotiation agreements or preliminary agreements.[838] *Hudna* is understood as a time-limited ceasefire and more than an agreement to abstain from hostilities. It is also a treaty in the form of a partial agreement. Moreover, this partial agreement is a sort of trial agreement. It is a trial whose verdict is to be made by the next generation.[839]

Hamas has repeatedly provided religious justification for peace with enemies, and often linked the act of reaching a truce with Israel with the same acts that existed in Islamic history and that took place during the Prophet Muhammad's biography, such as the *Al-Hudaybiya* peace treaty. This interpretation is based on the principle of Muslims' interests. Muslims avoiding the harm of fighting enemies is most preferable. Achieving the security of Muslims through peace and treaties is a priority.[840] This scenario occurs particularly when Muslims are less forceful than the enemy is. These treaties do not mean eternal ownership of the land by enemies, but a temporary ownership until the end of the truce.[841] Since Hamas does not envision a situation in which it would relinquish its rights to the rest of historic Palestine, the *hudna* would be viewed as a cease-fire of violence for a short period. In contrast, the Palestinian and Israeli peace accords conceded to Israel 78 percent of historic Palestine, upon which the state of Israel exists today, and effectively renounced Palestinian claims to it.[842] This is essential to Hamas, because it is the current view of most mainstream Islamic scholars that Palestine is an inalienable part of the Muslim homeland, and cannot be ruled by non-Muslims. Moreover, it is particularly sacred because it contains the third most important city for Muslims, after Mecca and Medina. This is the basis for Hamas' denial of any right for Israel to exist. [843]

In contrast to the inflexibility expressed in the Charter that requires Hamas to demand for the whole of mandatory Palestine, Hamas' leadership expresses a

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[836] Wu, Chengqiu & Yang, Fan, *Reconciliation and Peace Building in International Relations: An Empirical Analysis of Five Cases*. Chinese Political Science Review, 1, (2016). shorturl.at/qCLOY
[837] American Bar Association, *Understanding Peace Treaties*, Nov, 20, 2018, shorturl.at/euJZ4
[838] Yawanarajah, Nita & Ouellet, Julian, *Peace Agreements, Beyond Intractability*. Guy Burgess & Heidi Burgess (Eds). Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. September 2003 http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/structuring-peace-agree
[839] (Tuastad. *Hamas' Concept*. 2010. Op. cit. p: 19)
[840] (Bani-Odah, Author interview, 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit)
[841] (Al-Betawi, Author interview, 5th of October 2017. Op.cit)
[842] Scham, Paul and Abu-Irshaid, Osama, *Hamas: Ideological Rigidity and Political Flexibility*, Special Report, Washington: United States Institute for Peace, June 2009, P: 11
[843] Ibid. p.7.

more pragmatic side of the movement.[844] On several occasions, Hamas' senior leaders (Yassin, Rantisi and others) have repeatedly offered alternative peace deal solutions in similar wordings to the existing Peace Process, and have shown flexibility that meets the major international agreements and the UN Security Council's resolutions regarding accepting a two-state solution.[845] The "interim solution" temporarily accepts the two-state solution, and has been historically linked to the concept of *Hudna* as the first of a multi-phase process toward the ultimate liberation of Palestine.[846] Although the two concepts do not stop the historic claim to all of Mandatory Palestine, they acknowledge peace as a part of Hamas' strategy for ending Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967. Shifting the emphasis from the destruction of Israel to the adoption of a political resolution reflects Hamas' acknowledgment of the value of other options than the armed resistance in order to obtain basic rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.[847] However, this raised concerns about the possibility of extending the duration of the *Hudna*, and the opportunity of turning the partial agreement into a more permanent one. Ahmad Youssef explained that "*Hudna* is an instrument to resolve the conflict. [It] extends beyond the Western concept of a ceasefire and obliges the parties to use the period to seek a permanent, non-violent resolution to their differences. [...] A *Hudna* affords the opportunity to humanize one's opponents and understand their position with the goal of resolving the intertribal and international dispute".[848]

Hudna aims to reach temporary peace, and not a longstanding settlement. Hamas differentiated between 'peace' and '*Hudna*'. The latter has religious connotations and refers to a truce which is agreed upon for a limited period of time, first used by Prophet Muhammad. This concept allows Hamas to establish a non-violent end without yielding to the demands of Israel and agreeing to the peace agreement. It also allows Hamas to remain dedicated to its objectives, while presenting a flexible policies. Hamas believes that a peace treaty would not ensure the liberation of the Palestinian land. Israel would no longer be under pressure, and would no longer face threats to the security of its citizens. Thus a *Hudna*, unlike a peace agreement, would compel Israel to withdraw from the land of 1967, and maintain pressure on it. Moreover, the adoption of a long-term ceasefire would allow Hamas to defer its "historic claims" for a generation, and offer the prospect of Islamist recognition of Palestinian sovereignty arrangements, alongside a sovereign Israeli state.[849]

Indeed, the issue of the duration of the *Hudna* is theoretically indefinite, which makes a permeant end to the conflict unguaranteed. But this offers an opportunity for the parties to search for an option to settle the *Hudna* as a permeant resolution, as the possibility for continual renewal by future generations is

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[844] Swiney, Chrystie F., *Ideological & Behavioral Metamorphoses: A New Charter for a New Hamas*, (Master thesis), Oxford University, 2007, p: 63
[845] Ibid.
[846] Ibid. p.64
[847] (Crooke. *From Rebel Movement*. March 13,2007. Op. cit)
[848] Yousef, Ahmed. *"Hudna" (Truce)*. Gaza: House of Wisdom for Conflict Resolution & Governance, 2006.
[849] (Crooke. *From Rebel Movement*. March 13,2007. Op. cit)

explicitly provided an available option. Gunning has observed that several Hamas leaders claim that a peaceful period could socialize the next generation into acceptance of the status quo, allowing them to turn a permanent ceasefire into peace.[850] This could be notable in the word of Hassan Youssef, a senior Hamas leader in the West Bank, who clarified that the function of the *Hudna* is to settle longstanding Peace, saying: [*Hudna*] mean[s] that both sides in the lifelong conflict could live in safety and peace as long as it lasts, and that it could even be extended indefinitely. We can dream about all Palestine being Muslim - like some Israelis dream of a Greater Israel, that includes all our lands - but it is not practical. […] We must negotiate with Israel. […] As long as a *Hudna* was agreed upon, it could be extended indefinitely.[851] Other Hamas leaders such as Muhammad Shama'a, a formal member of Hamas' *Shura* council, attenuated the importance of the duration issue, saying that the "truce is a principle and an issue, and the time period is something procedural. [T]here is no problem in a longer period, depending on the situation".[852] In the same context, Yehia Mousa, a former member of Hamas in the PLC, commented that "Political flexibility is not related or assigned to a specific time period, but is related to the general interest of the Palestinian people, and the current situation".[853] Salah Bardaweel, Hamas' politburo member, said that "The only solution is to have two states, without forcing anybody to recognize the other, only to have peace and then leave the issue for the next generation".[854] He adds [The duration] depends on the mechanisms related to how the truce is implemented".[855] One of Hamas' leaders was interviewed by the International Crises Group, and hinted to this issue by saying "By then, [the future generations] will have learned to live under different, more normal conditions. Who knows what they will decide".[856]

Indeed, on a tactical level, the concept allows Hamas to strategically outmaneuver, without total abandonment to its core concept of the Islamic Waqf, or recognize the right of Israel to exist. Nevertheless, it is also a means that allows Hamas to escape from the inflexible waqif's restrictions, and refuse to give up even a single inch of historic Palestine.[857] Even the "interim solution", whether to be interpreted as Hamas' tactical or strategical means of a multi-phased process leading toward the ultimate liberation of Palestine, the concept means that Hamas has tacitly come to accept a share out of Palestine on the basis of the borders as they stood before 1967. The *Hudna* could act as a vehicle to drive Hamas to put aside the historical solution, and ultimately allow the interim solution to become the final agreed-upon solution.

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[850] Gunning, Jeroen. *Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation*. International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), 80(2), 2004. P. 250
[851] Hassan, Youssef, Cited in Atran, Scott, *Hamas May Give Peace a Change.* New York Times, December 18 2004. shorturl.at/uBC49
[852] Shama'a, Muhammad, Cited in (Tuastad. *Hamas' Concept*. 2010. Op. cit. p:19)
[853] Mousa, Yehia, Cited in Ibid.
[854] Bardaweel, Salah, Cited in Ibid. p.17
[855] Ibid. p.20
[856] (ICG, *Engaging Hamas*, Feb 2007, Op. cit. P: 30).
[857] (Swiney. *Ideological & Behavioral*. 2007. Op cit. p:63)

Dag Tuastad, in his work (Hamas' Concept of a Long-term Ceasefire), understands Hamas' proposal of *Hudna* as being a means rather than a goal, and tactical rather than a strategy. He considers *Hudna* as Hamas' Islamic recipe for a peaceful solution to the conflict. It is tactical rather than strategic in the sense that it is thought of as a means to reach a goal, rather than being a goal in itself, as well as a recognition that peaceful means may be more politically-efficient than violent ones.[858] He demonstrates his conclusions that Hamas, along its history, tends to change its policies basing on nuance calculations that are more beneficial in order to achieve long-term goals. Mahmoud al-Zahar, the strongman of Hamas in Gaza, mentions that "If we can fulfil our goals without violence, we will do so. Violence is a mean, not a goal".[859] Changing its position toward the participation in the Palestinian elections in 2006 is an example of Hamas' flexibility and calculations. The *Hudna* could thus provide Hamas with more political and diplomatic tools, as an alternative to violence.[860]

In sum, to answer the question of whether Hamas is against the Peace or the Peace Process, several indications suggest that Hamas was skeptical of the viability of the peace process, not with the peace itself. Hamas believes that the peace process based on the Oslo and Madrid initiatives is unjust for the Palestinians, and makes the Palestinians concessioners. Therefore, Hamas believes that, without possessing military power, the Palestinians have no leverage over Israel to force it to live up to its commitments; negotiations by themselves are unlikely to persuade it to do so. To Hamas, military power offers more strategic calculations and an instrument to improve the Palestinian position. The Peace itself, in principle, is recognized in Hamas' ideology, as *Hudna* is a form of such. Nevertheless, the controversy is around the long-term peace that the *Hudna* does not offer. Hamas' perception of peace is rather concerned with interim peace, not ultimate peace. The ultimate goal is to liberate the mandate Palestine, which might not be achieved at once, but as the conflict is believed to be a long-lasting one, interim solutions are accepted since they do not waive the historical rights of the Palestinians. The *Hudna* explains the tactical and strategic thinking to alter the track of the existing Peace Process between the PLO and Israel. Hamas believes that *Hudna* is unlike the existing Peace Process. Even though both parties recognize the two state solution, the former is supposed to end the conflict, while *Hudna* is a form of co-existence that holds the liberation for the future generations to decide. Of course, by making the agreement temporary and postponing the question of making a final agreement also provides the option for change in the power balance, which is what occurred in the historic precedent of the Treaty of *Hudaybiya*.[861]

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[858] (Tuastad. *Hamas' Concept*. 2010. Op. cit. p:41)
[859] Al-Zahar Mahmoud. Cited in Ibid.
[860] (Tuastad. *Hamas' Concept*. 2010. Op. cit. p:41)
[861] Ibid.

3.4.2 Hamas: What spoiler is it?

However, to clarify the constants and variables of Hamas' position toward the Peace Process and the changes that took place to the movement's stance in this regard, it is vital to explain what sort of spoiler Hamas is.

According to Stedman, spoilers are leaders and groups who perceive that achieving peace emerging from negotiations is a great threat to their interests, power, and worldview. Therefore, in return, they employ different means including violent or/and nonviolent ones, to undermine the Process and disrupt attempts to achieve it. However, Stedman believes that the role, goals, and location of the spoilers are important elements when classifying them. The spoilers can be of three types, depending on their goals and commitment to achieve them; 'total', 'greedy', and 'limited'. 'Total' spoilers are highly committed to attain total power and exclusive recognition of authority and hold immutable preferences. In other words, the groups who fit the 'total' spoiler profile perceive the world in "all-or-nothing terms". They lack the pragmatism necessary for making compromises or altering their ultimate goals.

'Limited' spoilers have limited goals such as addressing a grievance, having a share of power or demand for basic security. 'Limited' spoilers may be dedicated to achieving their goals, and capable of a level of pragmatism that makes compromise and accommodation a possibility in a negotiated peace process.[862]

However, 'Greedy' spoilers lie between the aforementioned spoilers and pursue goals that are expanded or contracted, as per their convenience and needs. This is to mean that greedy spoilers measure their goals and commitments depending on the costs and risks of making such changes.[863]

As the location of the spoiler is an important element to explain its role, Stedman points to two locations of spoilers: 'inside' and 'outside'. Inside spoilers are those who are included in the peace negotiations, and who demonstrate willingness to reach a peaceful solution, but they later 'fail to fulfil' their obligations to an agreement. Conversely, outside spoilers are those actors or parties who are excluded from the negotiations for peace, wittingly or unwittingly.[864] 'Inside Spoilers' are likely to continue supporting the discussion or the implementation of a negotiated settlement, up to the point that it ceases to benefit them or their cause. Therefore, their actions are defined by the fact that they must conceal any opposition up to the point of the actual spoiling, lest they be revealed as a potential spoiler. Accordingly, their actions are characterized by stealth. Once an inside spoiler is party to a peace agreement, it must demonstrate, however falsely, that its intentions are to continue to adhere to the terms of the settlement. Stedman notes that 'inside spoilers' are likely to do this, while maintaining an 'offensive military capability'. Should the peace process show

[862] Stedman, Stephen. J., *Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes*. International Security, 22(2), 5–53. 1997. P.10.
[863] Ibid. p.11
[864] Ibid. p.8

signs of disadvantaging an actor, or advantage its rival, the actor may begin to spoil.[865] The 'outside spoilers' often tend to sabotage the negotiations if the prospect threats their legitimacy, power or ideology of continued strife. However, excluding them from the political dialogue would deny them from a platform to articulate their grievance. In the post-settlement they would unlikely be represented in future arrangements.[866]

Examining the different conclusions of scholars about Hamas' attitude towered the Peace Process could suggest that there is a division among them to precisely define Hamas' intention out of spoiling the Peace Process. It is widely accepted that Hamas is an outside 'spoiler', given the fact that the peace process was perceived to be an event that threats Hamas' legitimacy, power, ideology and future role and existence. Spoiling the negotiations was confirmed as Hamas' sole tool to undermine the progression of the Peace Process between the PLO and Israel. The escalation of the use of violence was then a source of legitimacy for Hamas, since it was excluded voluntarily out of the negotiations, and a means to minimize the legitimacy of Fatah as a leading figure of the peace process.[867] Hamas understood the principles of the Oslo agreements, particularly those that dismantle the military resistance organization, as a great threat to its existence as a resistance movement.[868] Mahmoud Al-Zahar affirms that 'peace with Israel would undermine the very bases of [Hamas'] existence.[869]

However, the debate was then around whether Hamas is a Total, Limited or Greedy Spoiler. The definition of Stedman of the three sorts of spoilers informs us that there is a margin of differences in the reasons behind spoiling the negotiations. John Darby casted Hamas as a 'total' spoiler, depending on its understanding to its goals and to the role the ideology plays in shaping its position, since the movement's central critique to the Peace Process forbids giving up Islamic Land. They perceived that Hamas' purpose is not to influence the content of the peace agreement, but to ensure that an agreement is not reached.[870] Those who belong to this classification seem to do so based on an assertion that the religious conceptualization of the conflict offers powerful motivation and justification for Hamas to reject the peace process, and to justify the military attacks. This is attributed to how to perceive Hamas and how to interpret its ideology, action and history. In contrast, other scholars such as Shaul Mishal, Avraham Sela[871], Are Knudsen and Basem Ezbidi[872] cast Hamas as a "limited" spoiler. They assume that it is not literally governed by its ideology, nor its activities and decisions are subordinated to the officially held religious doctrine. Hamas is believed to be more

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[865] Ibid. pp. 8-9
[866] Ibid.
[867] Gray, Daniel, *The Role Played by 'spoilers' in Peace Processes*, E-internationa Relations, Aug 25 2009, https://bit.ly/2utX6te
[868] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[869] Al-Zahar, Mahmoud, Cited in (Gray, *The Role Played*. 2009. Op. cit)
[870] Darby, John. *The Effects of Violence on Peace Processes*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2001, P. 48
[871] (Mishal, & Avraham, *The Palestinian Hamas*. 2000, Op.cit. p. 8)
[872] Ezbidi, Basem & Knudsen, Are, *Hamas and the Quest for Palestinian Statehood*, Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. (2006), P. 7

of a political, reformist, and populist movement, than a military, revolutionary and *avant-garde* movement. Moreover, Hamas has shown itself to be open to political maneuver, and acts outside of its Ideology. This no longer makes it a 'total' spoiler.[873] However, religion cannot be the only explanation of Hamas' rejections to the Peace Process, and the use of violence. Different factors such as intra-Palestinian politics, Israeli actions and internal divisions can also explain Hamas' position.[874]

Although in its initial years, Hamas has exhibited traits of a 'total' spoiler, which could not be conditioned or pursued to favor or even accept a peace deal. Hamas, especially with increasing involvement in the political process since 2006, has exhibited willingness to compromise its stance and become less defiant of the Peace Process. It has expressed that the acceptance of the peace agreements would be possible if its requirements were fulfilled. Prior to the 2006 elections, Mohammed Ghazal, a spokesperson of Hamas, has shown less resistance towards the negotiations with Israel. In a procession of unprecedented statements, he acknowledged that the actual situation differs from the ideal one. He stated the belief that as per history, the Palestinian land, usurped by Israel, in 1967 and 1948, belongs to the Palestinians. This is the 'historical' truth, whereas the reality differs. He thus, expresses that negotiating with Israel should not be an issue.[875] Hamas incorporated more flexibility, and developed a pragmatic approach and sensitivity towards the Peace Process. The movement went so far as agreeing, in Cairo 2005 and later in Mecca 2007, to "respect" past agreements between the PLO and Israel, and promise to not undermine the efforts of President Mahmoud Abbas and his talks with the Israel.[876] Although this move fell short to full recognition of past agreements, and was made under increasing internal and external pressure, this is an overlap in Hamas' attitude since the Peace Process started in 1990. It shed light on an evolving position that negates the initial classification of Hamas as a 'total spoiler'. Gunning regarded Hamas' diminishing commitment to its core goals toward the Peace Process as an attempt to seek political recognition and respect as a political organization, and not just a militant force. Gunning adds that due to the lack of success in yielding the desired results through the paradigm of resistance, Hamas took the opportunity to play a political figure.[877]

Several considerations make Hamas fall under either 'limited' or 'greedy' spoilers, but not 'total' Spoiler. Against Steadman's definition of 'total' spoiler, which assumes that the actor does not show pragmatism or compromises its ultimate goals and further views the world in "all-or-nothing" terms, Hamas' offer of Hudna, which implicitly means sharing the land with Israel, could prove its willingness to negotiate its principles and set an obvious contradiction to such an assumption. It is true that Hamas justified its rejections to the Peace Initiatives,

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[873] Ibid.
[874] (Gunning. *Hamas in Politics*. 2009, op.cit. p. 202)
[875] Ghazal, Muhammad, *Hamas may amend its charter, and there is no problem in negotiating with the Israelis*, Press release, Al-Ayyam Newspaper, 22 Sep 2005.
[876] See Cairo agreement (2005) and Mecca Agreement (2007)
[877] (Gunning. *Hamas in Politics*. 2009, op.cit. p. 208-211)

considering ideological reasons, but its promotion of religious justification is attributed to its Islamic discourse and identity. The use of such rhetoric can be understood if we consider that Hamas addressed both its audience and the Islamic community. Indeed, employing the religious justification was its tactic to discard the PLO and Fatah among the Palestinians and the Islamic community. Nevertheless, Hamas seemed to be more concerned to resist the threat of its existence. Standing out of the negotiations process exposed Hamas to suffer from a lack of legitimacy and to be excluded from the future arrangements. But joining the Peace Process, under the supremacy of Arafat's Power, endangers Hamas' future, since it was believed that the Peace Process aimed to first turn the total power to its rivals, and second to dismantle the Palestinian military factions. Adnan Asfour gave significance to such consideration. He stated that Hamas' fears to join the peace process were attributed to signs that disadvantaged Hamas and its rival Fatah. Therefore, Hamas was unwilling to scarify its principles and popularity, and in turn destroy the movement's internal coherency, for joining a process that was believed to fall.[878] Asfour also attributes Hamas' position to being unqualified to join the Process in terms of internal conditions (such as the conflict of power between the different trends within the movement) and for being unqualified to prepare its grassroots for such a dramatic move.[879]

Having decided not to participate in negotiations and later in the PLC elections in 1996, Hamas lacked an alternative political arena for contesting Arafat and Fatah. Therefore, undermining the peace process became a particularly attractive option.[880] However, if we consider the principles of the *Hudna*, and offer it at the time when the PLO was running official peace negotiations with Israel, it could be safe to claim that Hamas attempted to find a parallel track to the Peace Process that would include it in power.

Placing Hamas as either a limited or greedy spoiler can better describe Hamas' role and position toward the Peace Process. Since the "limited" and "greedy" spoilers can be either conditioned or co-opted to accept a peace deal, Hamas has shown considerable pragmatism to accept a peace deal with Israel. According to Adnan Asfour and Ahmad Youssef, the negotiation with Israel is possible as long as it services the Palestinian people. They both attested in principle that Hamas does not forbid the negotiations, but it objects the ground principle of the negotiations that result in relinquishing the rights of the Palestinian people.[881] Such a conclusion has also been raised during the 2006 election campaign. Seniors of Hamas in the West Bank, Hassan Yousef and Muhamad Abu Tir, categorized negotiations with Israel, concerning a two-state solution, as legitimate if they were both in the interests of the people, were approved by the PLC and embodied to the popular will.[882] However, Hamas leaders' have been widely concerned with two points. The first is changing the principle of the Peace Agreements not to destroy the Peace. The second is that if the Palestinians do not

[878] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[879] Ibid.
[880] (Pettersen, *Hamas and a Future Palestinian*. 2009, Op.cit. p. 41)
[881] (Asfour, Author Interview. 2019. Op.cit) & (Youssef, 2019. March 11th. Op.cit)
[882] (Gunning. *Hamas in Politics*. 2009, op.cit. p: 205)

have the power to change the course of negotiations to their favor and to possess the means to force Israel to abide by the agreements, then Israel will have the predominance to determine what should be given to the Palestinians.[883]

Since Hamas does not operate in isolation, the consideration of other entities such as international communities, the Palestinian population and factions becomes imperative. As one of the primary objectives of Hamas when joining the PA through the elections was to seek for a platform that could open channels to the international scene as an elected movement. Hamas became more aware that for achieving the acceptance of the international actors, the Quartet in precise, it needs to show more pragmatism toward the negotiations with Israel and the two-state solution. Hamas' efforts to demonstrate such pragmatism and openness is indeed addressed in the New Political Document. Softening its stance toward any future negotiations by accepting the idea of a Palestinian state in the territories occupied in 1967, is meant to break down the international and political embargo that isolated it. This also reflected Hamas' attempt to present itself as an interlocutor capable of eventually being part of an internationally-negotiated political solution.[884] Since it has been in Power, it became more aware of the difficulties to neglect the consensuses among the main actors in the Palestinian cause over the negotiations as the sole mean to resolve the Palestine-Israeli conflict.[885] Khaled Mishaal made a previous stance on Newsweek on October 14, 2010. In his statement, Mishaal attempted to address the West giving hints of Hamas' willingness and openness to join future negotiations with Israel, and accept future peace agreements. He stated that Hamas shares the position and program that all Palestinians agreed on. Hamas would accept any agreement with the Israelis, upon which the majority of Palestinians agreed on. Hamas' demonstration to act as a pragmatic side and evolve new perspectives within the movement toward the negotiations with Israel implies to international actors that Hamas is a viable partner, and its inclusion would not mean the end of negotiations.[886]

In sum, it could be safe to conclude that Hamas, based on its history, has had different positions to the negotiations with Israel, which range from total rejection, conditional acceptance, to no opposition to the negotiations with Israel. For several reasons, Hamas perceived that the negotiations with Israel are a "waste of time" and the principles of Oslo aim to serve Israel much more than the Palestinians. Hamas cannot accept the preconditions for negotiations that would imply recognizing Israel, dismantling its Military' wing and accept previous agreements that abrogate territorial, political and historic conditions to the Palestinian state. This is not because Hamas is a spoiler, but because it believes that it has learnt lessons from the experience of the PLO-Israeli's negotiation that without real pressure on the Israelis, they will not withdraw to the 1967 borders.

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[883] (Bani-Odah, A. Interview, 2017, Oct 13. Op.cit), (Al-Betawi, A. Interview, 5 Oct 2017. Op.cit)
[884] Liberation, *La Charte du Hamas mentionne-t-elle la destruction de l'Etat d'Israël?* 12 Apr. 2018 shorturl.at/ilwDG
[885] (Asfour, A. interview. 2019. Op.cit) & (Youssef, A. interview, 11 Mar. 2019. Op.cit)
[886] Meshaal, Khaled, in Dehghanpisheh, Babak, *Hamas Sticks to the Hard Line*, Newsweek, 14 Oct 2010, shorturl.at/nI014

If Jeroen Gunning[887] classifying Hamas as a 'limited' spoiler was valid in 2004, it is obvious that Hamas has been more pragmatic after being in Power since 2006, and developing its New Political Document in 2017, which included removing the ideological ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, 'politicizing' the conflict with Israel and accepting the two-state solution. The movement felt the obligation to consult other means that would achieve Palestinian rights, besides the armed resistance. But as 'greedy' spoilers measure changing their goals and commitments depending on the costs and risks of making such changes, Hamas measures its moves toward the Peace Process accordingly.

3.4.3 The evolution of Hamas' position toward the Peace Process with Israel.

Despite the denial of Hamas' leaders to have made any substantive changes in their strategic thinking toward Israel, their actions suggest otherwise. Hamas made two remarkable steps that imply no real objection to negotiate with Israel. The first is manifested in its cabinet platform, presented on 27 March 2006, during which Hamas showed willingness to consider previous international conventions and peace agreements.[888] The platform exhibited Hamas' hints of willingness to accept, in practice, at least some existing decisions. Article nine ensures that the Hamas-led government "will deal with the signed agreements with high responsibility and in accordance with preserving the ultimate interests of [the Palestinian] people and maintaining [their] rights without compromising [their] immutable prerogatives," [889] Article ten assures that "[t]he government will deal with the international resolutions with national responsibility and in accordance with protecting the immutable rights of our people."[890] This less rejectionist language was echoed in Hamas' first press conference following the elections in 2006, during which Khalid Mishaal promised to deal with preexisting agreements and peace proposals with 'utmost realism'. He said that: "We have an Authority [PA] that was established on the basis of Oslo, and we will deal with this reality very realistically, but in a way that does not detract from the right of our people."[891] Hamas understands that it cannot play international politics while ignoring previous accords with Israel. Al-Zahra, Hamas' Government' foreign Minister, made this willingness more explicit in his letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. He said that his movement seeks to open a constructive dialogue with the "Quartet" (US, the EU, the UN, and Russia) and to cooperate with the international community to bring an end to the occupation, to remove Israeli settlements, and to bring Israel to withdraw fully from the 1967 borders.[892]

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[887] (Gunning, *Peace with Hamas?*. 2004. Op.cit)
[888] Hamas' cabinet Platform. 27 March 2006.
[889] Ibid.
[890] Ibid.
[891] Meshaal, Khaled, First Press conference after Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, January 28, 2006. Retrieved: shorturl.at/hzUYZ
[892] (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p. 456)

The second is the agreement by Hamas in Cairo 2005 and in Mecca 2007 (based on the 'Prisoners Document') to authorize Mahmoud Abbas, president of the PA, to carrying out negotiations with Israel if the talks lead to different results than in the past.[893] The platform of Hamas' first-led government made a formal position that is far from outright rejection to previous agreements. It instead reveals a more conciliatory and accommodating position to political considerations rather than ideological justifications. Signing Cairo and Mecca's Agreements marked the beginning of redrawing and codifying Hamas' position toward the peace process with Israel and past peace agreements. Hamas went further than the Governmental Platform of 2006, and pledged to 'respect' past agreements and the international resolutions and prior commitments made between Israel and the PLO.[894] The peace process and previous agreements were the core issues in which the Palestinian factions sought to formulate a consensus policy and to formulate the foundations for political work and partnership in Palestine. The approval of Hamas on these Agreements constituted a breakthrough in Hamas' absolute rejection to the philosophy of the negotiations. This embodied an indirect endorsement of the negotiations as a mechanism to deal with Israel. Although Hamas' definition of 'respect' has not been tested, it is clear that when compared to the original 1988 Charter and Hamas' historical stances, the movement has undergone an important ideological softening, from wholesale rejection, to outright 'respect'.[895]

It is unusual that Hamas' top officials voice contradictory positions on political negotiations. Hamas has discredited the PLO-Israel talks, considering them as a 'betrayal' to the martyrs' blood.[896] However, in principle, whether through *Hudna* or peace agreement, Hamas showed no objection to reach interim or partial arrangements with Israel, including the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, on the condition that it be approved by the people. Mahmoud Al-Zahar, who is believed to be one of the 'hardcore' leaders in Hamas, declared that if Israel has a proposal in which the Palestinians can achieve even some of the their rights in the framework of negotiations, Hamas will think it over.[897] Most of the disagreement centers on whether Hamas may itself negotiate with Israel, and under what conditions. Those who would permit direct talks with Israel perceive a pragmatic view that negotiating with Israel is not a matter of principle, nor is it deplorable, but a way of achieving national goals that serve as a stage in a process to full liberation. Emphasizing that talks with Israel need to lead to a complete withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 borders, including Jerusalem, the release of all prisoners, and the dismantlement of the separation fence, with no compromising the Palestinian rights. It does not mean sacrificing the right of return to territories that have not been liberated. In contrast, direct talks, for those who forbid negotiations with Israel, constitute a violation of the red line. Israeli withdrawal will be achieved by negotiations through a third party, and not by

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[893] See Cairo (2005) and Mecca (2007) Accords between the Palestinian factions.
[894] Ibid.
[895] (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p: 454)
[896] Palestine Today, *Hamas: negotiations with 'Israel' are a crime and a betrayal to the blood of the martyrs and to the Holy sanctities*, Gaza, Aug 7, 2013. See: (Hamas' Charter, 1988)
[897] Al-Zahar, Mahmoud, Cited In: (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p. 454)

direct talks with Israel.[898] Hamas showed openness to deal with the PA's obligations pragmatically, including the possibility to work, whether directly or indirectly, with Israel, on "all mundane affairs", and to negotiate multiple issues related to business, trade, health, and labor. Khalid Mish'al proclaimed that Hamas is realistic and pragmatic, and knows that things are done by agreement and gradually. Such matters will be dealt with pragmatically, without giving up our principles. [899]

In contrast to the opposition oriented by the Charter who ties the raison d'être of Hamas with its militant rejection of the Oslo process, Hamas exhibited a more pragmatic approach, including emphasizing political vocabulary that is full of diplomatic terms, such as *Tahdi'ah* and *Hudna*, rather than militant terms, such as *jihad* and *intifada*.[900] The term 'Peace' was firmly absent from Hamas' discourse; only gradually did the movement begin using it. Khaled Meshaal, in an official visit to Moscow in 2006, declared that Hamas' government would take the required steps to ensure peace if Israel was willing to withdraw, cooperate and fulfill Hamas' conditions. Similar discourse was echoed when presenting Hamas' cabinet to the PLC in 2006. Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' Prime Minister at the time, addressed the international community and expressed the expectation of Hamas that the Quartet must facilitate the achievement of complete and fair peace in the region. He assured that Hamas would put in a lot of effort to achieve peace for Palestine, and ensure the end of occupation and the restoration of their homeland.[901] The term 'peace' was also used in a letter by Mahmoud Al-Zahar addressed to Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Al-Zahar called upon the international community to collaborate with Hamas and work towards the achievement of a stable and peaceful state in Palestine; a peace that does not lean towards one nation and is just and fair. He made the point clear that "The [Hamas] government came as a result of the Palestinian people exercising their right to choose their representatives through fair elections supervised by the United Nations and the world at large, and we expect the international community to work with the new government to achieve peace and stability in the region."[902] However, the letter conveyed Hamas' willingness to engage in a constructive and a critical dialogue with various international actors to strengthen the security and peace around the world, and to achieve a fair and absolute solution for the conflict between Palestine and Israel. Unlike its image, Hamas demonstrated its openness to create a peaceful and secure environment in the region. The inclination towards peace was a result of considering public interest and a way to strengthen its position in international politics by demonstrating itself more as a political

[898] (Klein. Hamas in Power. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p: 455)
[899] Ibid. p. 454
[900] (Swiney. *Ideological & Behavioral*. 2007. Op cit. p:67)
[901] Haniyeh, Ismail, Addressing the PLC during a session for voting for confidence for the 10th government (Mar 28, 2006)
[902] Al-Zahra, Mahmoud, letter to Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations Agency on the Conflict with Israel, (Apr 4, 2006) retrieved from (The Palestinian documents for the year 2006), Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies & Consultations (compi), 2006, p: 206

movement than a violent movement, and to have an upper hand over Fatah and other factions within Palestine.[903]

Some might wonder, since Hamas has repeatedly offered *Hudna,* and softened its stance toward the Peace Process as a method to achieve the Palestinian state, which it accepted on the borders of 1967, why does Hamas give priority to keeping the matter of negotiating with Israel postponed? In fact, several factors play significant roles to make Hamas decides against talks with Israel in the foreseeable future. Besides those factors related to Hamas' internal debate over the question of the negotiations, the relationship with Israel is a sensitive issue for Hamas. Since the establishment of the PA, 'negotiation' has been widely associated with normalization and security coordination. Hamas has for long believed that the functions of the PA should meet the national grounds, and should not be a 'security agent' for Israel.[904] Adnan Asfour emphasized this understanding by saying that Hamas' apprehension to engage in direct talks with the Israel is returned to the reputation of the Peace Process between the PLO and Israel, which resulted in a 'disconnected' unsovereign entity whose functions are restricted to fighting the Palestinian resistance and serving the security of Israel.[905] Hamas never tires of voicing its fundamental criticism and rejection to the structure of the negotiations which Fatah conducted. It believed that Fatah negotiated from a position of inferiority, since it held back armed military attacks on Israel and displayed only a diplomatic approach, whilst Israel continues its military aggression, so Israel decided the outcome of the negotiations and enchained the Palestinians with accords that are maintained the occupation.[906]

Moreover, Hamas' views the negotiation as a tool to recognize Israel, whom it believes that does not have the right to exist on the Palestinian territories, nor is it an eligible partner to negotiate with. Hamas seeks to show that it will not track the same path of Fatah, which, according to it, gave Israel the predominance to decide what should be given to the Palestinians. To Hamas, negotiation would successfully be materialized if the Palestinians have strength cards in hand. Otherwise, negotiations promise Israel a predominance to impose the terms of the solution, and the pressure should be then on the Palestinians to accept. Hamas stressed the need to restructure the conduct of the negotiations with Israel based on a position of equality and mutual obligations. Similar to Hamas' attitude that the agreements signed between Israel and the PLO should be reexamined in light of the interests of the Palestinian people, Hamas believes that the recognition of the international decisions on the Palestinian issue must also be revisited, claiming that some of these decisions run counter to the interests of the Palestinian people, and the PLO went to accept them without discrimination, despite the fact that Israel did not act in accordance with them. Palestinians have negotiated with Israel for decades, and Israel has proven to be tremendously manipulative on a grand

[903] Ibid.
[904] Alioglu, Ahmet, *Negotiating with the enemy: Hamas and Israeli prisoner exchange talks*, Middle East Monitor, May 7, 2020, shorturl.at/uCPRT
[905] (Asfour, Author interview. 2019. Op.cit)
[906] Ibid.

scale.[907] Hamas perceives that entering in negotiations with Israel should not be for 'free', neither should it be preconditioned with recognizing it. Isma'el Haniyya made this point clearer by saying that "we do not provide political positions free of charge". [908]

However, the lack of a decent impartial mediator that liaised between the two parties is a prominent reason. The US administration has demonstrated its unequivocal backing to Israel, implicitly and explicitly, and has been practicing more pressure on the Palestinians to force them to accept unfair negotiating terms.[909] Therefore, as a part of restructuring the ground of the negotiations, Hamas believes in the role of the Arab and Muslim world as an alternative strategic depth to the one that Fatah sought to construct in Europe and the US, while maintaining the military arms provided a source of balance of power, albeit not equal, with Israel. [910]

However, the shift of Hamas' views toward the Peace Process was not limited to the Government Platform. The New Document by Hamas in 2017 has exhibits significant flexibility in its view toward the Peace Path. These changes can be observed in comparison between the Charter of 1988 and the New Document of Hamas. While the Charter condemned the Peace Path itself as a method to solve the conflict, the New Document impliedly acknowledged the Peace Path as an option and adopted a less rejectionist undertone with conditional acceptance to the result. The Charter articulated this rejection by stating that the "Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement." [911] However, the New Document stipulated accepting the results if they do not violate the Palestinian's rights. "Hamas rejects all the agreements, initiatives and settlement projects that are aimed at undermining the rights of the Palestinian people. In this regard, any stance, initiative or political program must not in any way violate these rights, and should not contravene them or contradict them."[912]

Thus, it can be said that despite Hamas' increasing demonstration of flexibility and political pragmatism, especially regarding its stance on the peace process and two-state solution, it can be observed that Hamas maintains a certain ambiguity, so as to not commit wholly to the establishment of complete peace with Israel, while also ensuring the safety and satisfaction of Palestinians by proposing a ceasefire. This helps Hamas to mediate between the need to be committed to the core of its ideology and principles, and demonstrating a more flexible pragmatic approach that gives prominence to political sensitivity over religious connotations. Hamas' endorsement of permanent peace, irrevocable acceptance of the two-state solution, along with the consideration of previous agreements, has been unclear, despite its progressive position as exhibited in the New Document. Despite Hamas' rejection of the Quartet's three demands post-elections, it has actively attempted to

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[907] (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p: 456)
[908] Haniyya, Isma'el, Cited in Ibid.
[909] (Alioglu. *Negotiating with the enemy*. May 7, 2020. Op.cit.)
[910] (Klein. *Hamas in Power*. Summer 2007. Op.cit. p. 456)
[911] (Hamas Charter, 1988) Article Thirteen
[912] (Hamas New Political Document, 2017)

alter and revise its early rejections. It has also showed a profound ideological evolution with respect to the peace process, and has transformed from a ‘total’ spoiler to a 'greedy' spoiler, lingering closer to the acceptance of peace than before. Hamas has shown a political pragmatic shift in its ideology, revising its founding principles to accommodate a more flexible approach that is consistent with the consensus among the Palestinian populations, and works towards the best interests of the Palestinians.

Conclusion

The above discussion makes it safe to conclude that the probability of Hamas’ engagement in the Peace Process is complicated but not impossible. Hamas since it has been in power, demonstrated realpolitik considerations and a distinct willingness to prioritize political exigency over historical ideology. The gradual modifications of its position towards the political track with Israel, from total rejection to conditional acceptance, testifies the adaptability of the position of Hamas and makes it safe to argue that Hamas’ position is anything but constant. This modification bears witness of a movement that is highly influenced by its contextual surroundings and a willingness to change. It is justifiable to say that Hamas is no longer a ‘total spoiler’ but it is more to be an outside ‘Greedy’ spoiler. Analyzing Hamas’ evolving stance towards the Peace Process suggests that the movement is likely to seek to change the fundamental of the peace process rather than undermining the process. In other words, Hamas has its own perception to the structures of the negotiations with Israel that considers affecting the conditions and the results of the negotiations.

In contrast to the inflexibility of the Charter, Hamas has, on different occasions, shown openness to more peaceful and political approaches to settling peace with Israel. Offering Hudna signifies the political pragmatism within Hamas and its willingness for diplomatic efforts to negotiate a solution and establishing peace. Regardless of the duration, Hudna is a two-state solution, not far from the solutions proposed in the Oslo Accords and the Road Map. The time frame is arguably indefinite, however, it explicitly leaves the possibility for continual renewal and/or decisive action by future generations as available options.

It is unlikely that Hamas will accept the conditions of the Quartet in the near term, because they are inconsistent with key tenets of its ideology. In principle, Hamas rejects the preconditions that stipulate to recognize Israel and dismantling its military arm. With time, Hamas has come to scale down its expectations regarding its absolutist insistence on the liberation the Mandate Palestine. That is not to say that Hamas has degraded its position, but rather it leaves it to the future generations to decide on it.

It is clear that Hamas is not in a hurry to join the negotiations process with Israel. It seems likely that the best scenario for Hamas is to apply ‘wait and see’ policy by which the movement neither objects nor supports the negotiations, but to decide upon results. Nevertheless, Hamas makes the keys for further practical pragmatism on its relation with Israel determined the Palestinians consensus and

domestic necessity. This is expressed in Adnan Asfour's comments, who said if the Palestinian interest requires Hamas to negotiate directly with the Israelis, we will respond to them.[913]

[913] (Asfour, Author interview. 2019. Op.cit)

General Conclusion

- The dissertation aimed at improving the understanding about the evolving position of Hamas in regards to the borders of the Palestinian statehood (Two States Solution), the Armed Resistance and the Peace Process with Israel. We intendedly focused on Hamas after participating in the political process in 2006 and assuming power in Gaza strip since 2007, to check its ability to stand true to its ideology and principles when facing the challenges of the governance. However, we made efforts to explain the different elements that affected Hamas' decision to take part in the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Councils in 2006, and the factors that drove the movement to rethink its goals and redefining its identity.It is impossible to explain the rise of Hamas and placing itself in Power within the Palestinian contexts, without considering the wider socio-economic and political circumstances that occurred in the region since the wars of 1948 and 1967. The rise of Hamas was not only a response to the Palestinian intifada in 1987, although it coincided with it, but it came as a result of the different, internal and external, factors that affected the structure of opportunity of the Muslim Brotherhood and produced a major shift in its behaviors. Likewise, to explain Hamas' behaviors and evolving positions, it is necessary to understand both; the elements that shaped its ideology and objectives, and the different roles it plays in the Palestinian scene. Indeed, Hamas' actions and policies are widely guided by its ideology and principles. But, the assumption that Hamas' behaviors and stances are literally governed by its ideology, makes it short to give a comprehensive picture of the Movement. Despite the fact that the most prominent feature of Hamas was essentially a national liberation movement, however, in this dissertation we attempted to come closer to explain Hamas' different roles and functions in the Palestinian society that also play roles in shaping its political theory and tactical decisions. Therefore, we concluded that one definition of the movement is inaccurate. Hamas can also be defined in other two basic ways: First, as an Islamic political movement that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood and supported the long-term global project of the MB. Second, as a social movement, active in various fields in Palestinian society namely intellectual, religious, economic and charitable areas aiming to shape Palestine, both ideologically and politically.

- The question of joining the political process had been a critical for Hamas. To Hamas, the PA was a nascent experience, emerged from a Peace Process that conflicted with its convictions, ideology and identity and endangers it *raison d'être*. This led the movement to be very skeptical about the political opportunities that the newborn political body might offer them. The unwillingness of Hamas to risk its identity, losing its authenticity and uniqueness as a normative opposition to PLO, and endangering its internal cohesion, made the movement to prioritize the military action on the account of questing for constitutional legitimacy or developing its political will. For Hamas, the competition for power was not only to gain a large number of sets in the PLC, but also a battle of ideologies and approaches with the PLO. The

armed action served the movement's goals, gave it political credibility, and made it stand out as a distinct peer in its opposition to the settlement project.

- The second Palestinian Intifada (2000-2005) and the death of Yasser Arafat have changed the set of opportunities for Hamas. In fact, Hamas' decision to switch its priorities toward joining the political process was not merely driven by the changes in the Palestinian political scene that gave the movement the opportunity to break the hegemony of Fatah over the political system, but also came as a result of the lack of opportunity the military action might offer to the movement. The continuation of the military action became no longer prioritized by a significant part of the Palestinian, after the deterioration that affected their lives in the wake of militarizing the second Intifada. This consequently, besides reasons such as losing an important part of its military and political leaderships that endangered its capacity to preserve its organizational and military capabilities, and the Israeli' measures that affected the conduct of Hamas' military actions, have threatened Hamas' primary source of legitimacy as well as threaten its role in the Palestinian arena. The interplay of these factors pressured the movement to expand and maintain its influence and existence. Therefore, the changing of priorities towards the political action became a better option for Hamas to live longer, and searching for better conditions to achieve its goals.

- The unexpected move towards power made Hamas to experience a real dilemma to determine its identity and goals, and accommodating between its general objectives (liberation) and the tasks of government and obligations. This challenged Hamas ability to retain its ideology without being affected and to balance between being a liberation movement and ruling party. The movement felt strange toward the ideology and the determinants of the PA that obviously conflicted with its orientations. The adoption of both resistance and governance made it difficult for the movement to coexist with the components of the political system, and thus opted to reframing the philosophy of the system and adapt it with its ideology, rather than adapting itself to it within the limits permitted by its political realism. Unsurprisingly, Hamas, while in governance, had unclear priorities and vision, as well as unclear objectives and an ambiguous political program. Hamas did not afford a tangible philosophy of governing, neither clarified the mechanism to adhere to either line or how to reconciling between them without causing a real conflict that may exclude one over the other. The most significant fault line for establishing a significant Political program, that defines the goals and positions of Hamas, lies between those within Hamas who tend to go further along the political and governing path and those who tend to retain the military identity of Hamas as a primary duty of the movement to liberate Palestine. The question of balancing all these lines has complicated the development of a political program, and thus finding a formula upon which Hamas can agree on all trends was impossible unless the movement has experienced a major threat to its existence and political presence.

- The struggle for Power and legitimacy against Fatah, the challenge to present a clear political program, besides the challenge to maintain its internal cohesion, and the failure of the Arab Spring to deliver a supportive ideological

environment to Hamas, were all significant elements that prompted Hamas to rethink its goals and redefining its Identity. Hamas felt the need to re-evaluate its tracks in an effort to bridging the gap between its broad ideological thoughts and political practices. Coming up with a pragmatic political program that takes into account the changing roles of the movement within the Palestinian political arena, and strengthening both, its capability to sustain its rule and its position in the regional politics after losing two important allies, Iran and Syria, was one of Hamas conclusions to open more political and diplomatic options on the domestic and regional levels.

- The emphasis on the Palestinian cause from a national dimension rather than a religious one, proves Hamas' efforts to reshape its identity as a Palestinian national movement involved in internal Palestinian politics and independent, politically and ideologically, from the broad goals of the MB, to leave no argument for those who accused the movement of caring for Islamic and non-Palestinian issues. The New Document presents nonreligious definitions of Palestine and Palestinians, and Islam is mentioned in general terms. Nevertheless, Hamas attempts to balance between the political obligations and the ideological principles.

- The acceptance of a Palestinian state on the borders of 1967 is a new-old position of Hamas. The offer of Hudna has exhibited Hamas' flexibility and openness to such solution. Despite the efforts extended to redefine the conflict with Israel to be more political than religious; conducting a genuine transformation of Hamas' religious principles is complicated. Hamas is convinced that the conflict with Israel is a long-existential battle. At the ideological level, Hamas is inflexible to recognize the two state solution as an ultimate solution to the conflict with Israel. The prospect of a unified Palestine is not completely abandoned, and thus brings no change in the perception of Hamas regarding the border of Palestine as a homeland. Both the Charter and the New Document have one perception and recognize only one "historic Palestine", from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordanian river, or that of 1948. However, Hamas can maneuver to accept political options that can be compatible with the minimum level of its intellectual and ideological grounds, without giving up its core principles. Hamas differentiates between the short-run policy and tactic that are necessary for political integration at the international, regional and domestic levels, and the long-run objectives of Hamas as an Islamic resistant movement. By accepting the two states solution, Hamas attempts to appear aligned with the national interest and the Palestinian will. However, the movement is conservative to adopt this will as its new principle and to claim responsibility for it. Hamas attempts to exert effort to distinguish between its stances as a political movement in governance, in terms of finding a common political program with the Palestinian movements, Fatah in particular, and its long-run stances as the resistance movement, who adheres to its ideological principles.

- The recognition of the right of Israel to exist makes up a major conflict with Hamas' intellectual and Islamic Identity and would make Hamas renounce its founding principles and beliefs toward Palestine and destroys its religious

narrative. Hamas is believed to reject to a de jure recognition of the right of Israel to exist, given its perception toward Israel as an occupying state and the land of 1948 as an occupied territory, which justifies Hamas' raison d'être as a resistant movement and the use of armed action. However, although Hamas does not legitimize Israel's recognition, being open to a de facto recognition of Israel demonstrates Hamas' flexibility and highlights the negotiable nature of Hamas' position towards Israel.

- Verifying Hamas' comprehensive strategy of resistance informs that the armed action is a constant element. Hamas repeatedly emphasized its position insofar Israel continues to occupy Palestinian land, and the rights of the Palestinian people are not realized, the armed resistance should stay at the heart of Hamas' strategy. However, Hamas has exhibited the tendency to adopt a less militant and a more political approach to deal with the conflict, giving significant room for the popular and non-violent resistance. It is unlikely that this evolving approach will be an introduction to a voluntary disarmament. Hamas, in practice, attempts to improve its relative situation by fine-tuning its options of resistance. But any degree of non-violence would be a striking departure for Hamas, which over the years has attacked Israel using multiple different violent means. At certain junctures, using military attacks had become Hamas' strongest card in the conflict with Israel, as well as in its struggle for power against its rivals and the Fatah movement. Relinquishing this card would affect Hamas' capacity. However, considering the role of the different discussed variables that may affect Hamas' behavior to either encourage or restrain the use of violence, makes it safe to conclude that the future of Hamas' nonviolent strategy and adopting a more pragmatic and less violent approach is as promising as it is uncertain.

- The engagement of Hamas in the Peace Process seems complicated but not impossible. Hamas since it has been in Power, demonstrated realpolitik considerations and a distinct willingness to prioritize political exigency. Analyzing Hamas' stance towards the Peace Process suggests that the movement is likely to seek to affect the conditions and the results of the Peace Process and changing its fundamental of rather than undermining it. In contrast to the inflexibility of the Charter towards the political solutions, Hamas has, on different occasions, shown openness to more peaceful and political approaches to settling peace with Israel. Offering Hudna signifies the political pragmatism within Hamas and its willingness for diplomatic efforts to negotiate a solution and establishing peace. The gradual modifications of its position towards the political track with Israel, testifies the adaptability of the Hamas' position and makes it justifiable to say that Hamas is no longer a 'total spoiler' but it is more to be an outside 'Greedy' spoiler.

- The investigations of the impacts of Hamas experience in governance on its political stances make it safe to claim that the changes in its positions on the issues pertaining to the Two Stats solution, the Armed Resistance and the Peace Process, were directly related to its seek to enhance its position in power. Hamas, in terms of means, positions and policies, has recorded a qualitative leap

in giving priority to political action over military action contrary to the original positions articulated in its Charter of 1988. The New Political Document of Hamas, released in May 2017, marks a departure from several of its earlier controversial positions, and sets pragmatic goals that address means and ends, stages, and the needs of the hour, rather than theological and ideological goals. This indicates that the Islamic movement is willing to take a more realistic perspective of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This conclusion confirms the main hypothesis of the dissertation which assumed that Hamas' changing roles after moving from opposition to government in 2006, necessitated modifying its priorities and political calculations compared to its previous considerations when it was established in 1987 as an opposition movement that focusing on military action.

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ANNEXE 1

Hamas Covenant 1988

The Covenant
of the
Islamic Resistance Movement

18 August 1988

In The Name Of the Most Merciful Allah

"We are the best nation that hath been raised up unto mankind: ye command that which is just, and ye forbid that which is unjust, and ye believe in Allah. And if they who have received the scriptures had believed, it had surely been the better for them: there are believers among them, but the greater part of them are transgressors. They shall not hurt you, unless with a slight hurt; and if they fight against you, they shall turn their backs to you, and they shall not be helped. They are smitten with vileness whosesoever they are found; unless they obtain security by entering into a treaty with Allah, and a treaty with men; and they draw on themselves indignation from Allah, and they are afflicted with poverty. This they suffer, because they disbelieved the signs of Allah, and slew the prophets unjustly; this, because they were rebellious, and transgressed." (Al-Imran - verses 109-111).

Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it" (The Martyr, Imam Hassan al-Banna, of blessed memory).

"The Islamic world is on fire. Each of us should pour some water, no matter how little, to extinguish whatever one can without waiting for the others." (Sheikh Amjad al-Zahawi, of blessed memory).

In The Name Of the Most Merciful Allah

Introduction

Praise be unto Allah, to whom we resort for help, and whose forgiveness, guidance and support we seek; Allah bless the Prophet and grant him salvation, his companions and supporters, and to those who carried out his message and adopted his laws - everlasting prayers and salvation as long as the earth and heaven will last. Hereafter:

O People: Out of the midst of troubles and the sea of suffering, out of the palpitations of faithful hearts and cleansed arms; out of the sense of duty, and in response to Allah's command, the call has gone out rallying people together and making them follow the ways of Allah, leading them to have determined will in order to fulfill their role in life, to overcome all obstacles, and surmount the difficulties on the way. Constant preparation has continued and so has the readiness to sacrifice life and all that is precious for the sake of Allah.

Thus it was that the nucleus (of the movement) was formed and started to pave its way through the tempestuous sea of hopes and expectations, of wishes and yearnings, of troubles and obstacles, of pain and challenges, both inside and outside.

When the idea was ripe, the seed grew and the plant struck root in the soil of reality, away from passing emotions, and hateful haste. The Islamic Resistance Movement emerged to carry out its role through striving for the sake of its Creator, its arms intertwined with those of all the fighters for the liberation of Palestine. The spirits of its fighters meet with the spirits of all the fighters who have sacrificed their lives on the soil of Palestine, ever since it was conquered by the companions of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, and until this day.

This Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS), clarifies its picture, reveals its identity, outlines its stand, explains its aims, speaks about its hopes, and calls for its support, adoption and joining its ranks. Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious. It needs all sincere efforts. It is a step that inevitably should be followed by other steps. The Movement is but one squadron that should be supported by more and more squadrons from this vast Arab and Islamic world, until the enemy is vanquished and Allah's victory is realised.

Thus we see them coming on the horizon "and you shall learn about it hereafter" "Allah hath written, Verily I will prevail, and my apostles: for Allah is strong and mighty." (The Dispute - verse 21).

"Say to them, This is my way: I invite you to Allah, by an evident demonstration; both I and he who followeth me; and, praise be unto Allah! I am not an idolator." (Joseph - verse 107).

Hamas (means) *strength and bravery* -(according to) Al-Mua'jam al-Wasit: c1.

Definition of the Movement

Ideological Starting-Points

Article One:

The Islamic Resistance Movement: The Movement's programme is Islam. From it, it draws its ideas, ways of thinking and understanding of the universe, life and man. It resorts to it for judgement in all its conduct, and it is inspired by it for guidance of its steps.

The Islamic Resistance Movement's Relation With the Moslem Brotherhood Group:

Article Two:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine. Moslem Brotherhood Movement is a universal organization which constitutes the largest Islamic movement in modern times. It is characterised by its deep understanding, accurate comprehension and its complete embrace of all Islamic concepts of all aspects of life, culture, creed, politics, economics, education, society,

justice and judgement, the spreading of Islam, education, art, information, science of the occult and conversion to Islam.

Structure and Formation

Article Three:

The basic structure of the Islamic Resistance Movement consists of Moslems who have given their allegiance to Allah whom they truly worship, - "I have created the jinn and humans only for the purpose of worshipping" - who know their duty towards themselves, their families and country. In all that, they fear Allah and raise the banner of Jihad in the face of the oppressors, so that they would rid the land and the people of their uncleanliness, vileness and evils.

"But we will oppose truth to vanity, and it shall confound the same; and behold, it shall vanish away." (Prophets - verse 18).

Article Four:

The Islamic Resistance Movement welcomes every Moslem who embraces its faith, ideology, follows its programme, keeps its secrets, and wants to belong to its ranks and carry out the duty. Allah will certainly reward such one.

Time and Place Extent of the Islamic Resistance Movement:

Article Five:

Time extent of the Islamic Resistance Movement: By adopting Islam as its way of life, the Movement goes back to the time of the birth of the Islamic message, of the righteous ancestor, for Allah is its target, the Prophet is its example and the Koran is its constitution. Its extent in place is anywhere that there are Moslems who embrace Islam as their way of life everywhere in the globe. This being so, it extends to the depth of the earth and reaches out to the heaven.

"Dost thou not see how Allah putteth forth a parable; representing a good word, as a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed in the earth, and whose branches reach unto heaven; which bringeth forth its fruit in all seasons, by the will of its Lord? Allah propoundeth parables unto men, that they may be instructed." (Abraham - verses 24-25).

Characteristics and Independence:

Article Six:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam followers of all religions can coexist in security and safety where their lives, possessions and rights are concerned. In the absence of Islam, strife will be rife, oppression spreads, evil prevails and schisms and wars will break out.

How excellent was the Moslem poet, Mohamed Ikbal, when he wrote:

"If faith is lost, there is no security and there is no life for him who does not adhere to religion. He who accepts life without religion, has taken annihilation as his companion for life."

The Universality of the Islamic Resistance Movement:

Article Seven:

As a result of the fact that those Moslems who adhere to the ways of the Islamic Resistance Movement spread all over the world, rally support for it and its stands, strive towards enhancing its struggle, the Movement is a universal one. It is well-equipped for that because of the clarity of its ideology, the nobility of its aim and the loftiness of its objectives.

On this basis, the Movement should be viewed and evaluated, and its role be recognized. He who denies its right, evades supporting it and turns a blind eye to facts, whether intentionally or unintentionally, would awaken to see that events have overtaken him and with no logic to justify his attitude. One should certainly learn from past examples.

The injustice of next-of-kin is harder to bear than the smite of the Indian sword.

"We have also sent down unto thee the book of the Koran with truth, confirming that scripture which was revealed before it; and preserving the same safe from corruption. Judge therefore between them according to that which Allah hath revealed; and follow not their desires, by swerving from the truth which hath come unto thee. Unto every of you have we given a law, and an open path; and if Allah had pleased, he had surely made you one people; but he hath thought it fit to give you different laws, that he might try you in that which he hath given you respectively. Therefore strive to excel each other in good works; unto Allah shall ye all return, and then will he declare unto you that concerning which ye have disagreed." (The Table, verse 48).

The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the links in the chain of the struggle against the Zionist invaders. It goes back to 1939, to the emergence of the martyr Izz al-Din al Kissam and his brethren the fighters, members of Moslem Brotherhood. It goes on to reach out and become one with another chain that includes the struggle of the Palestinians and Moslem Brotherhood in the 1948 war and the Jihad operations of the Moslem Brotherhood in 1968 and after.

Moreover, if the links have been distant from each other and if obstacles, placed by those who are the lackeys of Zionism in the way of the fighters obstructed the continuation of the struggle, the Islamic Resistance Movement aspires to the realisation of Allah's promise, no matter how long that should take. The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, has said:

"The Day of Judgement will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him. Only the Gharkad tree, (evidently a certain kind of tree) would not do that because it is one of the trees of the Jews." (related by al-Bukhari and Moslem).

The Slogan of the Islamic Resistance Movement:

Article Eight:

Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution: Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes.

Objectives

Incentives and Objectives:

Article Nine:

The Islamic Resistance Movement found itself at a time when Islam has disappeared from life. Thus rules shook, concepts were upset, values changed and evil people took control, oppression and darkness prevailed, cowards became like tigers: homelands were usurped, people were scattered and were caused to wander all over the world, the state of justice disappeared and the state of falsehood replaced it. Nothing remained in its right place. Thus, when Islam is absent from the arena, everything changes. From this state of affairs the incentives are drawn.

As for the objectives: They are the fighting against the false, defeating it and vanquishing it so that justice could prevail, homelands be retrieved and from its mosques would the voice of the mu'azen emerge declaring the establishment of the state of Islam, so that people and things would return each to their right places and Allah is our helper.

"...and if Allah had not prevented men, the one by the other, verily the earth had been corrupted: but Allah is beneficient towards his creatures." (The Cow - verse 251).

Article Ten:

As the Islamic Resistance Movement paves its way, it will back the oppressed and support the wronged with all its might. It will spare no effort to bring about justice and defeat injustice, in word and deed, in this place and everywhere it can reach and have influence therein.

Strategies and Methods

Strategies of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Palestine Is Islamic Waqf:

Article Eleven:

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up. Neither a single Arab country nor all Arab countries, neither any king or president, nor all the kings and presidents, neither any organization nor all of them, be they Palestinian or Arab, possess the right to do that. Palestine is an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Moslem generations until Judgement Day. This being so, who could claim to have the right to represent Moslem generations till Judgement Day?

This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Moslems have conquered by force, because during the times of (Islamic) conquests, the Moslems consecrated these lands to Moslem generations till the Day of Judgement.

It happened like this: When the leaders of the Islamic armies conquered Syria and Iraq, they sent to the Caliph of the Moslems, Umar bin-el-Khatab, asking for his advice concerning the conquered land - whether they should divide it among the soldiers, or leave it for its owners, or what? After consultations and discussions between the Caliph of the Moslems, Omar bin-el-Khatab and companions of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, it was decided that the land should be left with its owners who could benefit by its fruit. As for the real ownership of the land and the land itself, it should be consecrated for Moslem generations till Judgement Day. Those who are on the land, are there only to benefit from its fruit. This Waqf remains as long as earth and heaven remain. Any procedure in contradiction to Islamic Sharia, where Palestine is concerned, is null and void.

"Verily, this is a certain truth. Wherefore praise the name of thy Lord, the great Allah." (The Inevitable - verse 95).

Homeland and Nationalism from the Point of View of the Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine:

Article Twelve:

Nationalism, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement, is part of the religious creed. Nothing in nationalism is more significant or deeper than in the case when an enemy should tread Moslem land. Resisting and quelling the enemy become the individual duty of every Moslem, male or female. A woman can go out to fight the enemy without her husband's permission, and so does the slave: without his master's permission.

Nothing of the sort is to be found in any other regime. This is an undisputed fact. If other nationalist movements are connected with materialistic, human or regional causes, nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement has all these elements as well as the more important elements that give it soul and life. It is connected to the source of spirit and the granter of life, hoisting in the sky of the homeland the heavenly banner that joins earth and heaven with a strong bond.

If Moses comes and throws his staff, both witch and magic are annulled.

"Now is the right direction manifestly distinguished from deceit: whoever therefore shall deny Tagut, and believe in Allah, he shall surely take hold with a strong handle, which shall not be broken; Allah is he who heareth and seeth." (The Cow - Verse 256).

Peaceful Solutions, Initiatives and International Conferences:

Article Thirteen:

Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement.

Abusing any part of Palestine is abuse directed against part of religion. Nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its religion. Its members have been fed on that. For the sake of hoisting the banner of Allah over their homeland they fight. "Allah will be prominent, but most people do not know."

Now and then the call goes out for the convening of an international conference to look for ways of solving the (Palestinian) question. Some accept, others reject the idea, for this or other reason, with one stipulation or more for consent to convening the conference and participating in it. Knowing the parties constituting the conference, their past and present attitudes towards Moslem problems, the Islamic Resistance Movement does not consider these conferences capable of realising the demands, restoring the rights or doing justice to the oppressed. These conferences are only ways of setting the infidels in the land of the Moslems as arbitraters. When did the infidels do justice to the believers?

"But the Jews will not be pleased with thee, neither the Christians, until thou follow their religion; say, The direction of Allah is the true direction. And verily if thou follow their desires, after the knowledge which hath been given thee, thou shalt find no patron or protector against Allah." (The Cow - verse 120).

There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors. The Palestinian people know better than to consent to having their future, rights and fate toyed with. As in said in the honourable Hadith:

"The people of Syria are Allah's lash in His land. He wreaks His vengeance through them against whomsoever He wishes among His slaves It is unthinkable that those who are double-faced among them should prosper over the faithful. They will certainly die out of grief and desperation."

The Three Circles:

Article Fourteen:

The question of the liberation of Palestine is bound to three circles: the Palestinian circle, the Arab circle and the Islamic circle. Each of these circles has its role in the struggle against Zionism. Each has its duties, and it is a horrible mistake and a sign of deep ignorance to overlook any of these circles. Palestine is an Islamic land which has the first of the two kiblahs (direction to which Moslems turn in praying), the third of the holy (Islamic) sanctuaries, and the point of departure for Mohamed's midnight journey to the seven heavens (i.e. Jerusalem).

"Praise be unto him who transported his servant by night, from the sacred temple of Mecca to the farther temple of Jerusalem, the circuit of which we have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs; for Allah is he who heareth, and seeth." (The Night-Journey - verse 1).

Since this is the case, liberation of Palestine is then an individual duty for very Moslem wherever he may be. On this basis, the problem should be viewed. This should be realised by every Moslem.

The day the problem is dealt with on this basis, when the three circles mobilize their capabilities, the present state of affairs will change and the day of liberation will come nearer.

"Verily ye are stronger than they, by reason of the terror cast into their breasts from Allah. This, because they are not people of prudence." (The Emigration - verse 13).

The Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine is an Individual Duty:

Article Fifteen:

The day that enemies usurp part of Moslem land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In face of the Jews' usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised. To do this requires the diffusion of Islamic consciousness among the masses, both on the regional, Arab and Islamic levels. It is necessary to instill the spirit of Jihad in the heart of the nation so that they would confront the enemies and join the ranks of the fighters.

It is necessary that scientists, educators and teachers, information and media people, as well as the educated masses, especially the youth and sheikhs of the Islamic movements, should take part in the operation of awakening (the masses). It is important that basic changes be made in the school curriculum, to cleanse it of the traces of ideological invasion that affected it as a result of the orientalists and missionaries who infiltrated the region following the defeat of the Crusaders at the hands of Salah el-Din (Saladin). The Crusaders realised that it was impossible to defeat the Moslems without first having ideological invasion pave the way by upsetting their thoughts, disfiguring their heritage and violating their ideals. Only then could they invade with soldiers. This, in its turn, paved the way for the imperialistic invasion that made Allenby declare on entering Jerusalem: "Only now have the Crusades ended." General Guru stood at Salah el-Din's grave and said: "We have returned, O Salah el-Din." Imperialism has helped towards the strengthening of ideological invasion, deepening, and still does, its roots. All this has paved the way towards the loss of Palestine.

It is necessary to instill in the minds of the Moslem generations that the Palestinian problem is a religious problem, and should be dealt with on this basis. Palestine contains Islamic holy sites. In it there is al- Aqsa Mosque which is bound to the great Mosque in Mecca in an inseparable bond as long as heaven and earth speak of Isra` (Mohammed's midnight journey to the seven heavens) and Mi'raj (Mohammed's ascension to the seven heavens from Jerusalem).

"The bond of one day for the sake of Allah is better than the world and whatever there is on it. The place of one's whip in Paradise is far better than the world and whatever there is on it. A worshipper's going and coming in the service of Allah is better than the world and whatever there is on it." (As related by al-Bukhari, Moslem, al-Tarmdhi and Ibn Maja).

"I swear by the holder of Mohammed's soul that I would like to invade and be killed for the sake of Allah, then invade and be killed, and then invade again and be killed." (As related by al-Bukhari and Moslem).

The Education of the Generations:

Article Sixteen:

It is necessary to follow Islamic orientation in educating the Islamic generations in our region by teaching the religious duties, comprehensive study of the Koran, the study of the Prophet's Sunna (his sayings and doings), and learning about Islamic history and heritage from their authentic sources. This should be done by specialised and learned people, using a curriculum that would healthily form the thoughts and faith of the Moslem student. Side by side with this, a comprehensive study of the enemy, his human and financial capabilities, learning about his points of weakness and strength, and getting to know the forces supporting and helping him, should also be included. Also, it is important to be acquainted with the current events, to follow what is new and to study the analysis and commentaries made of these events. Planning for the present and future, studying every trend appearing, is a must so that the fighting Moslem would live knowing his aim, objective and his way in the midst of what is going on around him.

"O my son, verily every matter, whether good or bad, though it be the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, Allah will bring the same to light; for Allah is clear-sighted and knowing. O my son, be constant at prayer, and command that which is just, and forbid that which is evil: and be patient under the afflictions which shall befall thee; for this is a duty absolutely incumbent on all men. Distort not thy face out of contempt to men, neither walk in the earth with insolence; for Allah loveth no arrogant, vain-glorious person." (Lokman - verses 16-18).

The Role of the Moslem Woman:

Article Seventeen:

The Moslem woman has a role no less important than that of the moslem man in the battle of liberation. She is the maker of men. Her role in guiding and educating the new generations is great. The enemies have realised the importance of her role. They consider that if they are able to direct and bring her up they way they wish, far from Islam, they would have won the battle. That is why you find them giving these attempts constant attention through information campaigns, films, and the school curriculum, using for that purpose their lackeys who are infiltrated through Zionist organizations under various names and shapes, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, espionage groups and others, which are all nothing more than cells of subversion and saboteurs. These organizations have ample resources that enable them to play their role in societies for the purpose of achieving the Zionist targets and to deepen the concepts that would serve the enemy. These organizations operate in the absence of Islam and its estrangement among its people. The Islamic peoples should perform their role in confronting the conspiracies of these saboteurs. The day Islam is in control of guiding the affairs of life, these organizations, hostile to humanity and Islam, will be obliterated.

Article Eighteen:

Woman in the home of the fighting family, whether she is a mother or a sister, plays the most important role in looking after the family, rearing the children and embuing them with moral values and thoughts derived from Islam. She has to teach them to perform the religious duties in preparation for the role of fighting awaiting them. That is why it is necessary to pay great attention to schools and the curriculum followed in educating Moslem girls, so that they would grow up to be good mothers, aware of their role in the battle of liberation.

She has to be of sufficient knowledge and understanding where the performance of housekeeping matters are concerned, because economy and avoidance of waste of the family budget, is one of the requirements for the ability to continue moving forward in the difficult conditions surrounding us. She should put before her eyes the fact that the money available to her is just like blood which should never flow except through the veins so that both children and grown-ups could continue to live.

"Verily, the Moslems of either sex, and the true believers of either sex, and the devout men, and the devout women, and the men of veracity, and the women of veracity, and the patient men, and the patient women, and the humble men, and the humble women, and the alms-givers of either sex who remember Allah frequently; for them hath Allah prepared forgiveness and a great reward." (The Confederates - verse 25).

The Role of Islamic Art in the Battle of Liberation:

Article Nineteen:

Art has regulations and measures by which it can be determined whether it is Islamic or pre-Islamic (Jahili) art. The issues of Islamic liberation are in need of Islamic art that would take the spirit high, without raising one side of human nature above the other, but rather raise all of them harmoniously an in equilibrium.

Man is a unique and wonderful creature, made out of a handful of clay and a breath from Allah. Islamic art addresses man on this basis, while pre-Islamic art addresses the body giving preference to the clay component in it.

The book, the article, the bulletin, the sermon, the thesis, the popular poem, the poetic ode, the song, the play and others, contain the characteristics of Islamic art, then these are among the requirements of ideological mobilization, renewed food for the journey and recreation for the soul. The road is long and suffering is plenty. The soul will be bored, but Islamic art renews the energies, resurrects the movement, arousing in them lofty meanings and proper conduct. "Nothing can improve the self if it is in retreat except shifting from one mood to another."

All this is utterly serious and no jest, for those who are fighters do not jest.

Social Mutual Responsibility:

Article Twenty:

Moslem society is a mutually responsible society. The Prophet, prayers and greetings be unto him, said: "Blessed are the generous, whether they

were in town or on a journey, who have collected all that they had and shared it equally among themselves."

The Islamic spirit is what should prevail in every Moslem society. The society that confronts a vicious enemy which acts in a way similar to Nazism, making no differentiation between man and woman, between children and old people - such a society is entitled to this Islamic spirit. Our enemy relies on the methods of collective punishment. He has deprived people of their homeland and properties, pursued them in their places of exile and gathering, breaking bones, shooting at women, children and old people, with or without a reason. The enemy has opened detention camps where thousands and thousands of people are thrown and kept under sub-human conditions. Added to this, are the demolition of houses, rendering children orphans, meting cruel sentences against thousands of young people, and causing them to spend the best years of their lives in the dungeons of prisons.

In their Nazi treatment, the Jews made no exception for women or children. Their policy of striking fear in the heart is meant for all. They attack people where their breadwinning is concerned, extorting their money and threatening their honour. They deal with people as if they were the worst war criminals. Deportation from the homeland is a kind of murder.

To counter these deeds, it is necessary that social mutual responsibility should prevail among the people. The enemy should be faced by the people as a single body which if one member of it should complain, the rest of the body would respond by feeling the same pains.

Article Twenty-One:

Mutual social responsibility means extending assistance, financial or moral, to all those who are in need and joining in the execution of some of the work. Members of the Islamic Resistance Movement should consider the interests of the masses as their own personal interests. They must spare no effort in achieving and preserving them. They must prevent any foul play with the future of the upcoming generations and anything that could cause loss to society. The masses are part of them and they are part of the masses. Their strength is theirs, and their future is theirs. Members of the Islamic Resistance Movement should share the people's joy and grief, adopt the demands of the public and whatever means by which they could be realised. The day that such a spirit prevails, brotherliness would deepen, cooperation, sympathy and unity will be enhanced and the ranks will be solidified to confront the enemies.

Supportive Forces Behind the Enemy:

Article Twenty-Two:

For a long time, the enemies have been planning, skillfully and with precision, for the achievement of what they have attained. They took into consideration the causes affecting the current of events. They strived to amass great and substantive material wealth which they devoted to the realisation of their dream. With their money, they took control of the world media, news agencies, the press, publishing houses, broadcasting stations,

and others. With their money they stirred revolutions in various parts of the world with the purpose of achieving their interests and reaping the fruit therein. They were behind the French Revolution, the Communist revolution and most of the revolutions we heard and hear about, here and there. With their money they formed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, the Lions and others in different parts of the world for the purpose of sabotaging societies and achieving Zionist interests. With their money they were able to control imperialistic countries and instigate them to colonize many countries in order to enable them to exploit their resources and spread corruption there.

You may speak as much as you want about regional and world wars. They were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate, making financial gains and controlling resources. They obtained the Balfour Declaration, formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments, and paved the way for the establishment of their state. It was they who instigated the replacement of the League of Nations with the United Nations and the Security Council to enable them to rule the world through them. There is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it.

"So often as they shall kindle a fire for war, Allah shall extinguish it; and they shall set their minds to act corruptly in the earth, but Allah loveth not the corrupt doers." (The Table - verse 64).

The imperialistic forces in the Capitalist West and Communist East, support the enemy with all their might, in money and in men. These forces take turns in doing that. The day Islam appears, the forces of infidelity would unite to challenge it, for the infidels are of one nation.

"O true believers, contract not an intimate friendship with any besides yourselves: they will not fail to corrupt you. They wish for that which may cause you to perish: their hatred hath already appeared from out of their mouths; but what their breasts conceal is yet more inveterate. We have already shown you signs of their ill will towards you, if ye understand." (The Family of Imran - verse 118).

It is not in vain that the verse is ended with Allah's words "if ye understand."

Our Attitudes Towards:

A. Islamic Movements:

B. Article Twenty-Three:

The Islamic Resistance Movement views other Islamic movements with respect and appreciation. If it were at variance with them on one point or opinion, it is in agreement with them on other points and understandings. It considers these movements, if they reveal good intentions and dedication to Allah, that they fall into the category of those who are trying hard since they act within the Islamic circle. Each active person has his share.

The Islamic Resistance Movement considers all these movements as a fund for itself. It prays to Allah for guidance and directions for all and it spares

no effort to keep the banner of unity raised, ever striving for its realisation in accordance with the Koran and the Prophet's directives.

"And cleave all of you unto the covenant of Allah, and depart not from it, and remember the favour of Allah towards you: since ye were enemies, and he reconciled your hearts, and ye became companions and brethren by his favour: and ye were on the brink of a pit of fire, and he delivered you thence. Allah declareth unto you his signs, that ye may be directed." (The Family of Imran - Verse 102).

Article Twenty-Four:

The Islamic Resistance Movement does not allow slandering or speaking ill of individuals or groups, for the believer does not indulge in such malpractices. It is necessary to differentiate between this behaviour and the stands taken by certain individuals and groups. Whenever those stands are erroneous, the Islamic Resistance Movement preserves the right to expound the error and to warn against it. It will strive to show the right path and to judge the case in question with objectivity. Wise conduct is indeed the target of the believer who follows it wherever he discerns it.

"Allah loveth not the speaking ill of anyone in public, unless he who is injured call for assistance; and Allah heareth and knoweth: whether ye publish a good action, or conceal it, or forgive evil, verily Allah is gracious and powerful." (Women - verses 147-148).

C. Nationalist Movements in the Palestinian Arena:

Article Twenty-Five:

The Islamic Resistance Movement respects these movements and appreciates their circumstances and the conditions surrounding and affecting them. It encourages them as long as they do not give their allegiance to the Communist East or the Crusading West. It confirms to all those who are integrated in it, or sympathetic towards it, that the Islamic Resistance Movement is a fighting movement that has a moral and enlightened look of life and the way it should cooperate with the other (movements). It detests opportunism and desires only the good of people, individuals and groups alike. It does not seek material gains, personal fame, nor does it look for a reward from others. It works with its own resources and whatever is at its disposal "and prepare for them whatever force you can", for the fulfilment of the duty, and the earning of Allah's favour. It has no other desire than that.

The Movement assures all the nationalist trends operating in the Palestinian arena for the liberation of Palestine, that it is there for their support and assistance. It will never be more than that, both in words and deeds, now and in the future. It is there to bring together and not to divide, to preserve and not to squander, to unify and not to throw asunder. It evaluates every good word, sincere effort and good offices. It closes the door in the face of side disagreements and does not lend an ear to rumours and slanders, while at the same time fully realising the right for self-defence.

Anything contrary or contradictory to these trends, is a lie disseminated by enemies or their lackeys for the purpose of sowing confusion, disrupting the ranks and occupy them with side issues.

"O true believers, if a wicked man come unto you with a tale, inquire strictly into the truth thereof; lest ye hurt people through ignorance, and afterwards repent of what ye have done." (The Inner Apartments – verse 6).

Article Twenty-Six:

In viewing the Palestinian nationalist movements that give allegiance neither to the East nor the West, in this positive way, the Islamic Resistance Movement does not refrain from discussing new situations on the regional or international levels where the Palestinian question is concerned. It does that in such an objective manner revealing the extent of how much it is in harmony or contradiction with the national interests in the light of the Islamic point of view.

D. The Palestinian Liberation Organization:

Article Twenty-Seven:

The Palestinian Liberation Organization is the closest to the heart of the Islamic Resistance Movement. It contains the father and the brother, the next of kin and the friend. The Moslem does not estrange himself from his father, brother, next of kin or friend. Our homeland is one, our situation is one, our fate is one and the enemy is a joint enemy to all of us.

Because of the situations surrounding the formation of the Organization, of the ideological confusion prevailing in the Arab world as a result of the ideological invasion under whose influence the Arab world has fallen since the defeat of the Crusaders and which was, and still is, intensified through orientalists, missionaries and imperialists, the Organization adopted the idea of the secular state. And that it how we view it.

Secularism completely contradicts religious ideology. Attitudes, conduct and decisions stem from ideologies.

That is why, with all our appreciation for The Palestinian Liberation Organization - and what it can develop into - and without belittling its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, we are unable to exchange the present or future Islamic Palestine with the secular idea. The Islamic nature of Palestine is part of our religion and whoever takes his religion lightly is a loser.

"Who will be adverse to the religion of Abraham, but he whose mind is infatuated? (The Cow - verse 130).

The day The Palestinian Liberation Organization adopts Islam as its way of life, we will become its soldiers, and fuel for its fire that will burn the enemies.

Until such a day, and we pray to Allah that it will be soon, the Islamic Resistance Movement's stand towards the PLO i s that of the son towards his father, the brother towards his brother, and the relative to relative, suffers his pain and supports him in confronting the enemies, wishing him to be wise and well-guided.

"Stand by your brother, for he who is brotherless is like the fighter who goes to battle without arms. One's cousin is the wing one flies with - could the bird fly without wings?"

E. Arab and Islamic Countries:

Article Twenty-Eight:

The Zionist invasion is a vicious invasion. It does not refrain from resorting to all methods, using all evil and contemptible ways to achieve its end. It relies greatly in its infiltration and espionage operations on the secret organizations it gave rise to, such as the Freemasons, The Rotary and Lions clubs, and other sabotage groups. All these organizations, whether secret or open, work in the interest of Zionism and according to its instructions. They aim at undermining societies, destroying values, corrupting consciences, deteriorating character and annihilating Islam. It is behind the drug trade and alcoholism in all its kinds so as to facilitate its control and expansion.

Arab countries surrounding Israel are asked to open their borders before the fighters from among the Arab and Islamic nations so that they could consolidate their efforts with those of their Moslem brethren in Palestine.

As for the other Arab and Islamic countries, they are asked to facilitate the movement of the fighters from and to it, and this is the least thing they could do.

We should not forget to remind every Moslem that when the Jews conquered the Holy City in 1967, they stood on the threshold of the Aqsa Mosque and proclaimed that "Mohammed is dead, and his descendants are all women."

Israel, Judaism and Jews challenge Islam and the Moslem people. "May the cowards never sleep."

E. Nationalist and Religious Groupings, Institutions, Intellectuals, The Arab and Islamic World:

The Islamic Resistance Movement hopes that all these groupings will side with it in all spheres, would support it, adopt its stand and solidify its activities and moves, work towards rallying support for it so that the Islamic people will be a base and a stay for it, supplying it with strategic depth an all human material and informative spheres, in time and in place. This should be done through the convening of solidarity conferences, the issuing of explanatory bulletins, favourable articles and booklets, enlightening the masses regarding the Palestinian issue, clarifying what confronts it and the conspiracies woven around it. They should mobilize the Islamic nations, ideologically, educationally and culturally, so that these peoples would be equipped to perform their role in the decisive battle of liberation, just as they did when they vanquished the Crusaders and the Tatars and saved human civilization. Indeed, that is not difficult for Allah.

"Allah hath written, Verily I will prevail, and my apostles: for Allah is strong and mighty." (The Dispute - verse 21).

Article Thirty:

Writers, intellectuals, media people, orators, educaters and teachers, and all the various sectors in the Arab and Islamic world - all of them are called upon to perform their role, and to fulfill their duty, because of the ferocity of the Zionist offensive and the Zionist influence in many countries exercised through financial and media control, as well as the consequences that all this lead to in the greater part of the world.

Jihad is not confined to the carrying of arms and the confrontation of the enemy. The effective word, the good article, the useful book, support and solidarity - together with the presence of sincere purpose for the hoisting of Allah's banner higher and higher - all these are elements of the Jihad for Allah's sake.

"Whosoever mobilises a fighter for the sake of Allah is himself a fighter. Whosoever supports the relatives of a fighter, he himself is a fighter." (related by al-Bukhari, Moslem, Abu-Dawood and al-Tarmadhi).

F. Followers of Other Religions: The Islamic Resistance Movement Is A Humanistic Movement:

Article Thirty-One:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is a humanistic movement. It takes care of human rights and is guided by Islamic tolerance when dealing with the followers of other religions. It does not antagonize anyone of them except if it is antagonized by it or stands in its way to hamper its moves and waste its efforts.

Under the wing of Islam, it is possible for the followers of the three religions - Islam, Christianity and Judaism - to coexist in peace and quiet with each other. Peace and quiet would not be possible except under the wing of Islam. Past and present history are the best witness to that.

It is the duty of the followers of other religions to stop disputing the sovereignty of Islam in this region, because the day these followers should take over there will be nothing but carnage, displacement and terror. Everyone of them is at variance with his fellow-religionists, not to speak about followers of other religionists. Past and present history are full of examples to prove this fact.

"They will not fight against you in a body, except in fenced towns, or from behind walls. Their strength in war among themselves is great: thou thinkest them to be united; but their hearts are divided. This, because they are people who do not understand." (The Emigration - verse 14).

Islam confers upon everyone his legitimate rights. Islam prevents the incursion on other people's rights. The Zionist Nazi activities against our people will not last for long. "For the state of injustice lasts but one day, while the state of justice lasts till Doomsday."

"As to those who have not borne arms against you on account of religion, nor turned you out of your dwellings, Allah forbiddeth you not to deal kindly with them, and to behave justly towards them; for Allah loveth those who act justly." (The Tried - verse 8).

The Attempt to Isolate the Palestinian People:

Article Thirty-Two:

World Zionism, together with imperialistic powers, try through a studied plan and an intelligent strategy to remove one Arab state after another from the circle of struggle against Zionism, in order to have it finally face the Palestinian people only. Egypt was, to a great extent, removed from the circle of the struggle, through the treacherous Camp David Agreement. They are trying to draw other Arab countries into similar agreements and to bring them outside the circle of struggle.

The Islamic Resistance Movement calls on Arab and Islamic nations to take up the line of serious and persevering action to prevent the success of this horrendous plan, to warn the people of the danger eminating from leaving the circle of struggle against Zionism. Today it is Palestine, tomorrow it will be one country or another. The Zionist plan is limitless. After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. When they will have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion, and so on. Their plan is embodied in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion", and their present conduct is the best proof of what we are saying.

Leaving the circle of struggle with Zionism is high treason, and cursed be he who does that. "for whoso shall turn his back unto them on that day, unless he turneth aside to fight, or retreateth to another party of the faithful, shall draw on himself the indignation of Allah, and his abode shall be hell; an ill journey shall it be thither." (The Spoils - verse 16). There is no way out except by concentrating all powers and energies to face this Nazi, vicious Tatar invasion. The alternative is loss of one's country, the dispersion of citizens, the spread of vice on earth and the destruction of religious values. Let every person know that he is responsible before Allah, for "the doer of the slightest good deed is rewarded in like, and the does of the slightest evil deed is also rewarded in like."

The Islamic Resistance Movement consider itself to be the spearhead of the circle of struggle with world Zionism and a step on the road. The Movement adds its efforts to the efforts of all those who are active in the Palestinian arena. Arab and Islamic Peoples should augment by further steps on their part; Islamic groupings all over the Arab world should also do the same, since all of these are the best-equipped for the future role in the fight with the warmongering Jews.

"..and we have put enmity and hatred between them, until the day of resurrection. So often as they shall kindle a fire of war, Allah shall extinguish it; and they shall set their minds to act corruptly in the earth, but Allah loveth not the corrupt doers." (The Table - verse 64).

Article Thirty-Three:

The Islamic Resistance Movement, being based on the common coordinated and interdependent conceptions of the laws of the universe, and flowing in the stream of destiny in confronting and fighting the enemies in defence of the Moslems and Islamic civilization and sacred sites, the first among which is the Aqsa Mosque, urges the Arab and

Islamic peoples, their governments, popular and official groupings, to fear Allah where their view of the Islamic Resistance Movement and their dealings with it are concerned. They should back and support it, as Allah wants them to, extending to it more and more funds till Allah's purpose is achieved when ranks will close up, fighters join other fighters and masses everywhere in the Islamic world will come forward in response to the call of duty while loudly proclaiming: Hail to Jihad. Their cry will reach the heavens and will go on being resounded until liberation is achieved, the invaders vanquished and Allah's victory comes about.

"And Allah will certainly assist him who shall be on his side: for Allah is strong and mighty." (The Pilgrimage - verse 40).

The Testimony of History

Across History in Confronting the Invaders:

Article Thirty-Four:

Palestine is the navel of the globe and the crossroad of the continents. Since the dawn of history, it has been the target of expansionists. The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, had himself pointed to this fact in the noble Hadith in which he called on his honourable companion, Ma'adh ben-Jabal, saying: O Ma'ath, Allah throw open before you, when I am gone, Syria, from Al-Arish to the Euphrates. Its men, women and slaves will stay firmly there till the Day of Judgement. Whoever of you should choose one of the Syrian shores, or the Holy Land, he will be in constant struggle till the Day of Judgement."

Expansionists have more than once put their eye on Palestine which they attacked with their armies to fulfill their designs on it. Thus it was that the Crusaders came with their armies, bringing with them their creed and carrying their Cross. They were able to defeat the Moslems for a while, but the Moslems were able to retrieve the land only when they stood under the wing of their religious banner, united their word, hallowed the name of Allah and surged out fighting under the leadership of Salah ed-Din al-Ayyubi. They fought for almost twenty years and at the end the Crusaders were defeated and Palestine was liberated.

"Say unto those who believe not, Ye shall be overcome, and thrown together into hell; an unhappy couch it shall be." (The Family of Imran - verse 12).

This is the only way to liberate Palestine. There is no doubt about the testimony of history. It is one of the laws of the universe and one of the rules of existence. Nothing can overcome iron except iron. Their false futile creed can only be defeated by the righteous Islamic creed. A creed could not be fought except by a creed, and in the last analysis, victory is for the just, for justice is certainly victorious.

"Our word hath formerly been given unto our servants the apostles; that they should certainly be assisted against the infidels, and that our armies should surely be the conquerors." (Those Who Rank Themselves - verses 171-172).

Article Thirty-Five:

The Islamic Resistance Movement views seriously the defeat of the Crusaders at the hands of Salah ed-Din al-Ayyubi and the rescuing of Palestine from their hands, as well as the defeat of the Tatars at Ein Galot, breaking their power at the hands of Qataz and Al-Dhaher Bivers and saving the Arab world from the Tatar onslaught which aimed at the destruction of every meaning of human civilization. The Movement draws lessons and examples from all this. The present Zionist onslaught has also been preceded by Crusading raids from the West and other Tatar raids from the East. Just as the Moslems faced those raids and planned fighting and defeating them, they should be able to confront the Zionist invasion and defeat it. This is indeed no problem for the Almighty Allah, provided that the intentions are pure, the determination is true and that Moslems have benefited from past experiences, rid themselves of the effects of ideological invasion and followed the customs of their ancestors.

The Islamic Resistance Movement is Composed of Soldiers:

Article Thirty-Six:

While paving its way, the Islamic Resistance Movement, emphasizes time and again to all the sons of our people, to the Arab and Islamic nations, that it does not seek personal fame, material gain, or social prominence. It does not aim to compete against any one from among our people, or take his place. Nothing of the sort at all. It will not act against any of the sons of Moslems or those who are peaceful towards it from among non-Moslems, be they here or anywhere else. It will only serve as a support for all groupings and organizations operating against the Zionist enemy and its lackeys.

The Islamic Resistance Movement adopts Islam as its way of life. Islam is its creed and religion. Whoever takes Islam as his way of life, be it an organization, a grouping, a country or any other body, the Islamic Resistance Movement considers itself as their soldiers and nothing more.

We ask Allah to show us the right course, to make us an example to others and to judge between us and our people with truth. "O Lord, do thou judge between us and our nation with truth; for thou art the best judge." (Al Araf - Verse 89).

The last of our prayers will be praise to Allah, the Master of the Universe.

ANNEXE 2

In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful
The Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas"

A Document of General Principles and Policies

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all worlds. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad, the Master of Messengers and the Leader of the mujahidin, and upon his household and all his companions.

Preamble:

Palestine is the land of the Arab Palestinian people, from it they originate, to it they adhere and belong, and about it they reach out and communicate.

Palestine is a land whose status has been elevated by Islam, a faith that holds it in high esteem, that breathes through it its spirit and just values and that lays the foundation for the doctrine of defending and protecting it.

Palestine is the cause of a people who have been let down by a world that fails to secure their rights and restore to them what has been usurped from them, a people whose land continues to suffer one of the worst types of occupation in this world.

Palestine is a land that was seized by a racist, anti-human and colonial Zionist project that was founded on a false promise (the Balfour Declaration), on recognition of a usurping entity and on imposing a fait accompli by force.

Palestine symbolizes the resistance that shall continue until liberation is accomplished, until the return is fulfilled and until a fully sovereign state is established with Jerusalem as its capital.

Palestine is the true partnership among Palestinians of all affiliations for the sublime objective of liberation.

Palestine is the spirit of the Ummah and its central cause; it is the soul of humanity and its living conscience.

This document is the product of deep deliberations that led us to a strong consensus. As a movement, we agree about both the theory and the practice of the vision that is outlined in the pages that follow. It is a vision that stands on solid grounds and on well-established principles. This document unveils the goals, the milestones and the way in which national unity can be enforced. It also establishes our common understanding of the Palestinian cause, the working principles which we use to further it, and the limits of flexibility used to interpret it.

The Movement:

1. The Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" is a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement. Its goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. Its frame of reference is Islam, which determines its principles, objectives and means.

The Land of Palestine:

2. Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the

Mediterranean in the west and from Ras Al-Naqurah in the north to Umm Al-Rashrash in the south, is an integral territorial unit. It is the land and the home of the Palestinian people. The expulsion and banishment of the Palestinian people from their land and the establishment of the Zionist entity therein do not annul the right of the Palestinian people to their entire land and do not entrench any rights therein for the usurping

Zionist entity.

3. Palestine is an Arab Islamic land. It is a blessed sacred land that has a special place in the heart of every Arab and every Muslim.

The Palestinian People:

4. The Palestinians are the Arabs who lived in Palestine until 1947, irrespective of whether they were expelled from it, or stayed in it; and every person that was born to an Arab Palestinian father after that date, whether inside or outside Palestine, is a Palestinian.

5. The Palestinian identity is authentic and timeless; it is passed from generation to generation. The catastrophes that have befallen the Palestinian people, as a consequence of the Zionist occupation and its policy of displacement, cannot erase the identity of the Palestinian people nor can they negate it. A Palestinian shall not lose his or her national identity or rights by acquiring a second nationality.

6. The Palestinian people are one people, made up of all Palestinians, inside and outside of Palestine, irrespective of their religion, culture or political affiliation.

Islam and Palestine:

7. Palestine is at the heart of the Arab and Islamic Ummah and enjoys a special status. Within Palestine there exists Jerusalem, whose precincts are blessed by Allah. Palestine is the Holy Land, which Allah has blessed for humanity. It is the Muslims' first Qiblah and the destination of the journey performed at night by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is the location from where he ascended to the upper heavens. It is the birthplace of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him. Its soil contains the remains of thousands of Prophets, Companions and Mujahidin. It is the land of people who are determined to defend the truth – within Jerusalem and its surroundings – who are not deterred or intimidated by those who oppose them and by those who betray them, and they will continue their mission until the Promise of Allah is fulfilled.

8. By virtue of its justly balanced middle way and moderate spirit, Islam – for Hamas - provides a comprehensive way of life and an order that is fit for purpose at all times and in all places. Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. It provides an umbrella for the followers of other creeds and religions who can practice their beliefs in security and safety. Hamas also believes that Palestine has always been and will always be a model of coexistence, tolerance and civilizational innovation.

9. Hamas believes that the message of Islam upholds the values of truth, justice, freedom and dignity and prohibits all forms of injustice and incriminates oppressors irrespective of their religion, race, gender or nationality. Islam is against all forms of religious, ethnic or sectarian extremism and bigotry. It is the religion that inculcates in its followers the value of standing up to aggression and of supporting the oppressed; it motivates them to give generously and make sacrifices in defence of their dignity, their land, their peoples and their holy places.

Jerusalem:

10. Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. Its religious, historic and civilizational status is fundamental to the Arabs, Muslims and the world at large. Its Islamic and Christian holy places belong exclusively to the Palestinian people and to the Arab and Islamic Ummah. Not one stone of Jerusalem can be surrendered or relinquished. The measures undertaken by the occupiers in Jerusalem, such as Judaization,

settlement building, and establishing facts on the ground are fundamentally null and void.

11. The blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque belongs exclusively to our people and our Ummah, and the occupation has no right to it whatsoever. The occupation's plots, measures and attempts to judaize Al-Aqsa and divide it are null, void and illegitimate.

The Refugees and the Right of Return:

12. The Palestinian cause in its essence is a cause of an occupied land and a displaced people. The right of the Palestinian refugees and the displaced to return to their homes from which they were banished or were banned from returning to – whether in the lands occupied in 1948 or in 1967 (that is the whole of Palestine), is a natural right, both individual and collective. This right is confirmed by all divine laws as well as by the basic principles of human rights and international law. It is an inalienable right and cannot be dispensed with by any party, whether Palestinian, Arab or international.

13. Hamas rejects all attempts to erase the rights of the refugees, including the attempts to settle them outside Palestine and through the projects of the alternative homeland. Compensation to the Palestinian refugees for the harm they have suffered as a consequence of banishing them and occupying their land is an absolute right that goes hand in hand with their right to return. They are to receive compensation upon their return and this does not negate or diminish their right to return.

The Zionist Project:

14. The Zionist project is a racist, aggressive, colonial and expansionist project based on seizing the properties of others; it is hostile to the Palestinian people and to their aspiration for freedom, liberation, return and self-determination. The Israeli entity is the plaything of the Zionist project and its base of aggression.

15. The Zionist project does not target the Palestinian people alone; it is the enemy of the Arab and Islamic Ummah posing a grave threat to its security and interests. It is also hostile to the Ummah's aspirations for unity, renaissance and liberation and has been the major source of its troubles. The Zionist project also poses a danger to international security and peace and to mankind and its interests and stability.

16. Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the

Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity.

17. Hamas rejects the persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds. Hamas is of the view that the Jewish problem, anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews are phenomena fundamentally linked to European history and not to the history of the Arabs and the Muslims or to their heritage. The Zionist movement, which was able with the help of Western powers to occupy Palestine, is the most dangerous form of settlement occupation which has already disappeared from much of the world and must disappear from Palestine.

The position toward Occupation and Political Solutions:

18. The following are considered null and void: the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate Document, the UN Palestine Partition Resolution, and whatever resolutions and measures that derive from them or are similar to them. The establishment of "Israel" is entirely illegal and contravenes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and goes against their will and the will of the Ummah; it is also in violation of human rights that are guaranteed by international conventions, foremost among them is the right to self-determination.

19. There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. Whatever has befallen the land of Palestine in terms of occupation, settlement building, Judaization or changes to its features or falsification of facts is illegitimate. Rights never lapse.

20. Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts. Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus.

21. Hamas affirms that the Oslo Accords and their addenda contravene the governing rules of international law in that they generate commitments that violate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the Movement rejects these agreements and all that flows from them, such as the obligations that are detrimental to the interests of our people, especially security coordination (collaboration).

22. Hamas rejects all the agreements, initiatives and settlement projects that are aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause and the rights of our Palestinian people. In this regard, any stance, initiative or political programme must not in any way violate these rights and should not contravene them or contradict them.

23. Hamas stresses that transgression against the Palestinian people, usurping their land and banishing them from their homeland cannot be called peace. Any settlements reached on this basis will not lead to peace. Resistance and jihad for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honour for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah.

Resistance and Liberation:

24. The liberation of Palestine is the duty of the Palestinian people in particular and the duty of the Arab and Islamic Ummah in general. It is also a humanitarian obligation as necessitated by the dictates of truth and justice. The agencies working for Palestine, whether national, Arab, Islamic or humanitarian, complement each other and are harmonious and not in conflict with each other.

25. Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.

26. Hamas rejects any attempt to undermine the resistance and its arms. It also affirms the right of our people to develop the means and mechanisms of resistance. Managing resistance, in terms of escalation or de-escalation, or in terms of diversifying the means and methods, is an integral part of the process of managing the conflict and should not be at the expense of the principle of resistance.

The Palestinian Political System:

27. A real state of Palestine is a state that has been liberated. There is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

28. Hamas believes in, and adheres to, managing its Palestinian relations on the basis of pluralism, democracy, national partnership, acceptance of the other and the adoption of dialogue. The aim is to bolster the unity of ranks and joint action for the purpose of accomplishing national goals and fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

29. The PLO is a national framework for the Palestinian people inside and outside of Palestine. It should therefore be preserved, developed and rebuilt on democratic foundations so as to secure the participation of all the constituents and forces of the Palestinian people, in a manner that safeguards Palestinian rights.

30. Hamas stresses the necessity of building Palestinian national institutions on sound democratic principles, foremost among them are free and fair elections. Such process should be on the basis of national partnership and in accordance with a clear programme and a clear strategy that adhere to the rights, including the right of resistance, and which fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

31. Hamas affirms that the role of the Palestinian Authority should be to serve the Palestinian people and safeguard their security, their rights and their national project.

32. Hamas stresses the necessity of maintaining the independence of Palestinian national decision-making. Outside forces should not be allowed to intervene. At the same time, Hamas affirms the responsibility of the Arabs and the Muslims and their duty and role in the liberation of Palestine from Zionist occupation.

33. Palestinian society is enriched by its prominent personalities, figures, dignitaries, civil society institutions, and youth, students, trade unionist and women's groups who together work for the achievement of national goals and societal building, pursue resistance, and achieve liberation.

34. The role of Palestinian women is fundamental in the process of building the present and the future, just as it has always been in the process of making Palestinian history. It is a pivotal role in the project of resistance, liberation and building the political system.

The Arab and Islamic Ummah:

35. Hamas believes that the Palestinian issue is the central cause for the Arab and Islamic Ummah.

36. Hamas believes in the unity of the Ummah with all its diverse constituents and is aware of the need to avoid anything that could fragment the Ummah and undermine its unity.

37. Hamas believes in cooperating with all states that support the rights of the Palestinian people. It opposes intervention in the internal affairs of any country. It also refuses to be drawn into disputes and conflicts that take place among different countries. Hamas adopts the policy of opening up to different states in the world, especially the Arab and Islamic states. It endeavours to establish balanced relations on the basis of combining the requirements of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's interests on the one hand with the interests of the Ummah, its renaissance and its security on the other.

The Humanitarian and International Aspect:

38. The Palestinian issue is one that has major humanitarian and international dimensions. Supporting and backing this cause is a humanitarian and civilizational task that is required by the prerequisites of truth, justice and common humanitarian values.

39. From a legal and humanitarian perspective, the liberation of Palestine is a legitimate activity, it is an act of self-defence, and it is the expression of the natural right of all peoples to self-determination.

40. In its relations with world nations and peoples, Hamas believes in the values of cooperation, justice, freedom and respect of the will of the people.

41. Hamas welcomes the stances of states, organisations and institutions that support the rights of the Palestinian people. It salutes the free peoples of the world who support the Palestinian cause. At the same time, it denounces the support granted by any party to the Zionist entity or the attempts to cover up its crimes and aggression against the Palestinians and calls for the prosecution of Zionist war criminals.

42. Hamas rejects the attempts to impose hegemony on the Arab and Islamic Ummah just as it rejects the attempts to impose hegemony on the rest of the world's nations and peoples. Hamas also condemns all forms of colonialism, occupation, discrimination, oppression and aggression in the world.

May 2017