Political Islam and the Middle East peace process: a veiled threat

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IN THE MIDDLE East, security is strongly influenced by politicized forms of fundamental belief systems. This chapter examines the dual role of political Islam, with specific focus on Palestine and the case of *Hamas*, the Islamic Resistance Movement, in the West Bank and Gaza. In this context, political Islam represents a general rejection of the Arab–Israeli peace process as well as an instrument of political protest against an indigenous Arab regime.

Hamas is an excellent case study with which to demonstrate the role religion performs in political conflict. Currently, *Hamas* is gaining in popular support due to renewed violence in the Middle East and the Palestinian population's increased endorsement of suicide or 'martyrdom' operations against Israeli targets.¹ Consequently, *Hamas* will continue to pose a significant threat to peace and stability in the region with its seemingly unhindered ability to strike deep inside Israel. *Hamas* thus represents both the most significant Palestinian force opposed to the peace process, initiated by the secret talks between Israel and the Palestinians in Oslo, Norway, and the only viable alternative to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)/Palestinian Authority (PA)² and its dominance over Palestinian society.

In examining the issue of security in the context of the Middle East, it is the various actors themselves – groups, parties, movements – when forced to interact within a structure of insecurity, that possess the potential to either contribute to or undermine the peace process. In that sense, general insecurity exists when neither the Israeli military nor the Palestinian Authority can truly guarantee the lives of their respective citizens. Extremists (or rejectionists) on both sides attempt to exploit the weaknesses inherent in the security apparatus to further their own interests. For its part, *Hamas* has consistently demonstrated a willingness to derail the peace process in support of its own narrowly defined objectives.

In the context of the Arab-Israeli peace process, although *Hamas* is a unique movement,³ it should be seen as representing a general oppositional or

counter-hegemonic trend in the Middle East. Thus, Islamic movements in general (e.g. Algeria, Egypt, Turkey) have sought to present themselves as political alternatives to the contemporary system by articulating the grievances of those segments of society that feel the most politically alienated, socially marginalized and economically insecure. In the case of Palestine, in spite of pronouncements to the contrary, *Hamas* remains essentially a political movement. This can be demonstrated by focusing on the essentially pragmatic or flexible approach it has assumed toward the Palestinian issue and its tendency to emphasize the national (i.e. political) aspects of the Israeli–Arab dispute over the more universal (i.e. religious) orientation of Islam’s worldview.

Most specifically, *Hamas*’ main role in the Palestinian context has been to provide a legitimate alternative to the PLO and to attempt to supplant what *Hamas* and its supporters perceive as the corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual rule of the PLO. In the current environment, *Hamas*’ alternative nature is most clearly demonstrated by its rejection of the Oslo process and its embodiment as its principal opponent. In terms of support, *Hamas* continues to garner most of its popular backing when the peace process stalls and is perceived as providing most Palestinians with few, if any, tangible benefits. This pattern can be observed in the round of violence and instability gripping the Middle East since September 2000 to the time of writing. While *Hamas* faces an uncertain future, as long as peace continues to elude the two principal parties of the Arab–Israeli conflict, it will remain a legitimate threat to the entire peace process and a necessary ‘evil’ that both the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority will be forced to address.

Political Islam in the Middle East

Hamas in Palestine is a national manifestation of a more regional phenomenon (Mishal and Sela, 2000: 1). Throughout the Middle East over the past two decades Islam has appeared as the only true oppositional force to the prototypical one-party state. While perceived as essentially religious movements concerned with issues of religious principle and moral doctrine, Islamist movements should be more accurately interpreted as political movements utilizing Islam as an instrument of political protest to attack and denounce the legitimacy of the ruling regimes. Consequently, ‘political Islam’ should be viewed primarily as an indigenous response to problems associated with attempts at economic development and the subsequent failure to create a more inclusive political structure (Faksh, 1997: xii; Sivan, 1997: 125). Most individuals who support the Islamists do so not necessarily for religious reasons, but because they possess a deep-seated discontent with the status quo and desire a radical restructuring of the current order (Esposito, 1995: 189), a change it is believed that can only be provided by contemporary Islamic movements.

Political Islam has been able to most effectively articulate and express the grievances experienced by an ever-expanding segment of the population in the Muslim world. Increased frustration with growing unemployment, the lack of adequate housing and the loss of cultural identity, in addition to feelings of marginalization and alienation resulting from the perception that the Government is unresponsive and that there is still a lack of real participation within the system, has continued to draw individuals to the Islamist cause (see Sivan, 1997: 125; Esposito, 1995: 15–16; Ayubi, 1991: 158–60; and Qureshi, 1983: 76–7). In the current environment, it is Islam that has been most effective in expressing the social, economic and political injustices experienced by a large segment of the masses in the Middle East.

The Islamists continue to garner most of their support because of their ability to provide a counter-force to the current regimes. It has been this ‘unity through opposition’ that allows all those individuals disenchanted with the present system to coalesce around the Islamists, while the Islamists have capitalized on the fact that only they have been able to portray themselves as an authentic alternative to corrupt, inefficient and sometimes repressive regimes. According to Ayubi:

A wide variety of groups are attracted to the Islamist thesis because . . . [it] imparts a certain sense of intimacy and assurance, and because they also share with the militants a certain degree of antagonism towards the existing social order and the state that keeps it in place. The Islamic language therefore most fundamentally represents a broad alternative system of meaning and power to the hegemonic system represented by the existing social – political order which invariably marginalizes and/or alienates certain individuals and certain social groups. To an extent, the details of the Islamic thesis become less important than the fact that it is a very different thesis from that advocated by the State. (1991: 175)

In the Muslim world there clearly exists a need for some type of oppositional force to counter the Government’s hegemonic domination over all facets of the State and civil society. There are two principal reasons for the effectiveness of the Islamists in filling this void as opposed to other opposition groups. First, political Islam utilizes vocabulary and imagery that already deeply resonate with a large segment of a population nurtured on such rituals and ideas, bestowing on Islam a legitimacy that no other ‘ideology’ can attain.⁴ Second, Islam remains essentially ‘uncontaminated’. With the exception of Iran, Islam is the one ideology that has not been tainted by the actual exercise of power and proven ineffectual in terms of solving the problems of the various populations. Past hegemonic ideologies, such as National Socialism, Pan-Arabism, and even the contemporary variant of Liberal Democracy have all demonstrated varying degrees of failure in this regard. As AbuKhalil has succinctly stated: ‘Since the 1970s, Islam has emerged as the one political ideology that has not been tried and exhausted. Its distance from the actual political process represents its

greatest advantage at a time when all ruling ideologies are perceived as bankrupt' (1994: 677; see also Faksh, 1997: 34–45).

Hamas (the Palestinian context)

Political Islam in Palestine performs a very similar role to that of other Islamic groups throughout the Muslim world. Most specifically, it represents an oppositional force (i.e. a practical alternative) to the dominant power(s) and articulates the grievances of those marginalized and frustrated by the current system and ruling elites. In that sense, the individuals who tend to support *Hamas* do so more for what they oppose – the status quo – and less for what they propose – an authentic Islamic state (i.e. one based on the *Sharia*⁵) situated in the entire mandated area of Palestine (including Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip).⁶

However, the situation in Palestine is unique for two fundamental reasons. First, the environment of occupation has clearly exacerbated the problems associated with marginalization and alienation. Three decades of Israeli occupation have included such policies as land expropriation,⁷ collective punishments (including house demolition), deportation, the usurping of Palestinian water (preventing widespread agriculture) and continuing Palestinian economic dependence (see Abu-Amr, 1994: 53).⁸ Consequently, while feelings of marginalization and alienation are seen as determining factors in the decision of certain individuals to lend their support to Islamist groups in general, Ahmad argues that the conditions of Israeli occupation have added an extra dimension to such experiences, especially among the more educated members of Palestinian society frustrated and embittered by their current circumstances (1994: 27–9).⁹

Second, *Hamas* does not confront a single hegemonic force, but instead two – the Palestinian Authority and the Israelis. This unique circumstance is based on the fact that the Islamic movement in Palestine is engaged in fighting not simply an indigenous government or regime, but a foreign occupying power. This colonial status obviously constitutes a distinct situation for the Palestinian Islamists.¹⁰ Yet, although Israel will remain *Hamas*' principal adversary so long as the occupation of Palestine continues, the Islamists still ultimately seek to supplant the PLO as the dominant or hegemonic force within Palestinian society. In other words, the actual armed conflict may be against Israel, but *Hamas*' political struggle is clearly focused on the PLO and Yasser Arafat (see Usher, 1995: 70).

In terms of the PLO's status in the occupied territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip), while it is true that it does not possess all the instruments of power or the autonomy of a state in the traditional sense of the word, the PLO does represent the primary source of legitimacy in the territories, in terms of both domestic and international recognition. This was reinforced with the signing

of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 (Legrain, 1997: 169). While it only recently acquired the state-like apparatus of a police force and a more fully-defined administrative structure, the PLO has long been the principal distributor of services and patronage through its control of civil institutions and financial resources (Mishal and Sela, 2000: 149) and, more importantly, has long been recognized as the true governing power in the occupied territories by the Palestinian people themselves. Prior to the *intifada*, according to Mishal and Sela, 'no serious Palestinian political or military group existed outside the PLO's sphere of influence. All the major groups were either affiliated with or identified with the PLO. It had become the dominant force in Palestinian political life, its symbolic status, charismatic leadership, and political influence among the Palestinian people were beyond question' (2000: 149).¹¹

Hamas (a political movement)

In attempting to present itself as a legitimate alternative to the PLO, it must be demonstrated that *Hamas* is a political movement interested in acquiring power rather than a religious organization concerned solely with moral pronouncements and issues of religious doctrine. First, *Hamas*' pragmatic approach to the Palestinian issue is examined to demonstrate that political considerations have always assumed more significance than dogmatic (i.e. religious) principles in its views and actions toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Second, in spite of Islam's international orientation and universal declarations, *Hamas* has always focused on the specific national (i.e., Palestinian) context over this more global worldview. In other words, *Hamas*' aims have always been primarily motivated by its national aspirations and its desire to protect Palestinian interests.

Though there is little doubt about their religious devotion and their belief in the fundamental principles of Islam, the Islamists in Palestine have consistently demonstrated a willingness to adopt a more pragmatic stance when deemed necessary. In fact, the degree of flexibility assumed by *Hamas* in all areas of its struggle is cited by a number of authors as its defining characteristic. According to Mishal and Sela, 'Hamas is fully acquainted with and adaptable to the political world, driven by primordial sentiments, conflicting interests, and cost–benefit considerations, a world of constant bargaining and power brokering, multiple identities and fluid loyalties – in which victory is never complete and tension is never ending' (2000: viii; see also 85–6 and 147). As Milton-Edwards succinctly puts it: 'In this field the leadership of Hamas has turned the politics of pragmatism into a fine art and positive attribute' (1996: 216).¹²

It is not surprising that *Hamas*' pragmatic approach to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has intensified in recent years. This more flexible stance is

in response to both the perception of the antiquated nature of some of its policies (e.g. a Palestinian state in all of the mandated area of Palestine through *jihad*¹³), and the belief within the leadership in the importance of increasing the potential for growth in the post-Oslo environment. As a result of this willingness to be both ideologically flexible and more pragmatic in its approach to the conflict, *Hamas* remains the most significant and only real legitimate threat to the PLO. As Al Jarbawi argues: 'Thus, while expectations are limited for the influence to be exerted by the . . . other Islamic movements on the future of political life in Palestine, the scope of possibilities for Hamas, in addition to its pragmatism and multiple options, make it a major and fundamental element for the future' (1994: 153).

As head of the 'moderate' wing of *Hamas*, Shaykh Ahmad Yasin has on various occasions demonstrated his readiness to be pragmatic for reasons of political gain and a willingness to adapt his strategy to the realities of the situation. As early as September 1988, when asked if *Hamas* might negotiate with Israel, Yasin did not quote the recently published *Hamas* Charter (August 1988), which explicitly forbids any talks with Israel, but instead put forward certain pre-conditions for future negotiations (Klein, 1997: 116). In 1993, Yasin explicitly differentiated between full-fledged peace (*sulh*) with the Jews and a temporary armistice (*hudna*) which he would accept if Israel would immediately withdraw from the occupied territories.¹⁴ In addition, in late 1995, Yasin led the moderate wing of the Party in endorsing *Hamas*' participation in the Palestinian elections of January 1996, though hard-line members of *Hamas* eventually forced the movement to boycott those elections (Amayreh, 1995: 8).

In terms of the primacy of political considerations over issues of religious doctrine, *Hamas* has had to confront the type of fundamental dilemma that has faced Islamic movements throughout the Middle East. Essentially, all Islamist movements are torn between the need to consider the practical implications of a strategy emphasizing the primary importance of their unique national context, versus a more internationalist approach as demanded by the universalism of their ideology: in other words, while the religion of Islam demands a universal approach, their audience and its particular goals are clearly national in scope.¹⁵

In the Palestinian context, prior to 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood had assumed a decidedly international approach to this question by preaching the need to spread Islam throughout the Muslim world, while deliberately de-emphasizing the centrality of Palestine in terms of the Israeli–Arab dispute. With the outbreak of the *intifada*,¹⁶ a fundamental shift occurred in terms of the Islamists' overall strategy from the universalist approach of the Muslim Brotherhood to the more nationalist orientation of *Hamas*. The *Hamas* Charter (published 18 August 1988) gives the clearest indication of this fundamental change in orientation from a universal strategy to one emphasizing the primacy

of the Palestinian issue. In terms of its Palestinian dimension, the Charter asserts that *Hamas* 'is an outstanding type of Palestinian movement' (Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Hamas*) of Palestine, 1993: Article 6), and that 'Palestine is the heart of the earth, the meeting of continents, and the lure of the avaricious since the dawn of history' (Article 34). Consequently, 'the liberation of Palestine is obligatory for every Muslim, no matter where he is' (Article 13). Klein summarizes this transformation in *Hamas*' strategy, and the change in focus from its universal orientation to the national context and, hence, from the religious to the political realm: 'Since its inception, Hamas has "Palestinianized" the universal claim of Islam and given the movement a national-religious-political profile. This trend may be interpreted as the Hamas leadership giving preference to "Palestinianizing" Islam over "Islamicizing" Palestine' (Klein, 1997: 112–13).¹⁷

Hamas: the only alternative

Throughout its short history, *Hamas* has continued to depict its movement most fundamentally as a clear and viable alternative to the secular forces led by the PLO. *Hamas*' basic nature as a counter-force to the PLO was originally articulated in its Charter. Another consequential repercussion of the Charter was that it helped to clarify the crucial distinctions that existed between the secular and Islamic forces within Palestine, especially those differences *vis-à-vis* Israel.

The Charter explicitly mentions *Hamas*' relationship to, and views of, the mainstream PLO: it specifically refers to the *Hamas*–PLO relationship as that 'of a son toward his father, and the brother toward his brother, and the relative toward his relative', and states that 'our nation is one, plight is one, destiny is one, and our enemy is the same' (Charter, 1993: Article 27). Furthermore, the Charter states that 'all nationalist elements working in the arena for the sake of liberating Palestine should be assured that it is a helper and supporter and will never be anything but that' (Charter, 1993: Article 25).

However, the Charter is also very clear regarding *Hamas*' distinctive nature *vis-à-vis* the mainstream PLO. With reference to 'liberating Palestine', *Hamas* rejects the two-state solution and any negotiation with or recognition of the State of Israel.¹⁸ In fact, Article 13 states that 'as far as the ideology of the Islamic Resistance Movement is concerned, giving up any part of Palestine is like giving up part of its religion'. Furthermore, with specific reference to the PLO, Article 27 asserts that 'we cannot exchange the current and future of Islam in Palestine to adopt the secular ideology because the Islamic nature of the Palestinian issue is part and parcel of our *din* (ideology and way of life) and whosoever neglects part of his *din* is surely lost'.

By fundamentally opposing the PA over the nature of the future Palestinian state (secular or Islamic), the shape of that state (two-state or all of Palestine), and the means to the creation of that state (negotiation with Israel or *jihad*) (see Abu-Amr, 1994: 29–30), it is clear that the PLO and the Islamists are offering the Palestinian people two contrasting visions of the future. As a result, it is obvious that one of the principal aims sought in the declaration of its Charter was to allow *Hamas* to present itself as a clear alternative to the current hegemonic position of the PLO within Palestinian society, especially in terms of the continuing struggle against Israeli occupation (Abu-Amr, 1993: 13; see also Frisch, 1994: 52).

Throughout the early years of the Palestinian uprising, *Hamas* continued to emphasize the fundamental distinctions that existed in terms of its ideology, organization and strategy *vis-à-vis* the other participants in the *intifada*, especially *Fatah*¹⁹ and its dominant position within the PLO (Ahmad, 1994: 51; see Peretz, 1990: 15–16). One of these crucial differences involved *Hamas*' focus on building an independent social infrastructure (e.g. schools, hospitals, sports clubs) separate from the PLO's, and in aiding those segments of Palestinian society most detrimentally affected by the continuing Israeli occupation. This emphasis on its social policies was further accentuated when Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States transferred their financial support from the PLO to the Islamists as punishment for the PLO's decision to back Iraq in the 1990–91 Gulf War. In September 1992, *Hamas* crystallized its opposition to the PLO by fronting a ten-faction group of parties opposed to continued Palestinian participation in the Madrid peace talks. While parties both within the PLO umbrella organization – the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) – and outside – the Islamic *Jihad* – were represented, it was clear that *Hamas* was the dominant group within this newly formed 'rejectionist' coalition, as well as the largest of all the factions represented. As a result, by September 1992, *Hamas* was 'offering an alternative political program that rejected the peace process, and by expanding its organizational infrastructure in the territories at the expense of the PLO's network . . . emerged as the most serious challenge yet to the PLO's claim of exclusive representation of the Palestinian people' (Litvak, 1992: 267).

By presenting itself as a viable alternative to the entrenched position of the PLO, *Hamas* has continued to deny the PLO's self-appointed position as 'the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people' (Milton-Edwards, 1996: 208, see also Litvak, 1989: 23). In fact, *Hamas* has openly challenged the legitimacy of the PLO, while proclaiming itself as the 'sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people's holy war' (Litvak, 1992: 269; see also Litvak, 1990: 252). In reference to the rejectionist front it helped create in 1992, Litvak observes that *Hamas* was essentially 'advocating that the ten factions form an

alternative provisional leadership under its domination that would constitute the authentic representation of the Palestinian people' (1993: 194). Throughout this period, *Hamas* stressed its Islamic ideology as opposed to the secularism of the PLO, provided an efficient network of social institutions as a substitute for the PLO's bankrupt one, and escalated its armed struggle as opposed to the PLO's route of negotiation and moderation (Litvak, 1993: 194).

The uncompromising position assumed by *Hamas*, toward both Israel and the PLO moderates willing to negotiate with the Israelis, is clearly intended to gain adherents to *Hamas*' more 'revolutionary' approach to the Palestinian issue. In this sense, *Hamas*' entire existence is based on Palestinian discontent with the status quo (Ahmad, 1994: 106; Zahhar, 1995: 83). In addition, 'the abandonment by PLO factions of ideological and revolutionary discourse' (Abu-Amr, 1994: 86) remains a key factor in *Hamas*' appeal. According to Yezid Sayigh, *Hamas* continues to attract 'an increasing number of adherents, who support its call for armed resistance to the military occupation and rejection of compromise' (1993: 17).²⁰

Therefore, on the one hand, because of the colonial status of the Palestinians as an occupied people, *Hamas* has assumed an almost 'necessary' revolutionary function within the Palestinian political landscape as a force of national liberation against Israeli rule. Yet, on the other hand, *Hamas* is also viewed as a legitimate alternative to the PLO for those Palestinians who accept its declarations regarding the need to change the current political, economic and social structure within Palestinian society itself and, in the process, replace the current indigenous hegemon in the occupied territories, the PLO (Ahmad, 1994: 117).²¹

An additional factor in *Hamas*' ability to provide the only effective opposition to the PA's dominance in Palestinian life has been its conscious attempt to portray itself as both completely separate from and independent of the PLO. In fact, the Islamists, especially *Hamas*, have gone to great lengths to argue that only they – as opposed to other radical factions within the Palestinian movement such as the PFLP and the DFLP – have remained a truly independent Palestinian force (Kodmani-Darwish, 1996: 31). As Andoni comments in reference to Islamic groups, such as *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad: 'Neither [was] born out of the PLO womb and neither feels obliged, morally or politically, to adhere to policies that they had no part in formulating' (1994: 18). *Hamas* has maintained this independent stance by continually reasserting its intention to remain outside the PLO umbrella, in spite of the PLO's offer of seats on the Palestinian National Council (PNC). The importance of such assertions of independence cannot be overestimated when assessing its self-professed role as the only genuine counter-force to the PLO. As Kodmani-Darwish states: 'The movement does not want to bear responsibility for the PLO's collapse. But if the PLO did collapse on its own because of the wrong choices it made, the Islamist move-

ment would present itself as the only structured alternative with its own base within the population independent of the PLO and capable of relieving it' (1996: 29). In effect, this statement summarizes the belief held by many members of *Hamas* that only it can provide a truly separate and independent alternative to the PLO and its hegemonic position within Palestinian society.

While the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 clearly forced *Hamas* to embark upon a decidedly more pragmatic approach, it has continued to follow a strategy that accentuates its fundamental nature as an alternative to the PLO. *Hamas* still refuses to recognize the sole representative status of the PLO (i.e. the PA), and now promotes itself primarily through its opposition to the Oslo peace process (see Milton-Edwards, 1996: 210).²² In that sense, the Oslo Accords have done little to alter *Hamas*' self-image as the only option to the PLO's route of negotiated settlement.

[T]he Oslo agreements do not seem to carry the promise of a near and real peace as much as they open the way for the Islamists to compete for power. It follows that the stake has become a struggle for power between two competing claims of legitimacy: that of the PLO, acquired through 25 years of armed struggle, and an Islamic movement that claims that same legitimacy in the name of its present resistance in the territories, the only means it sees (as opposed to peaceful settlement) to force Israel to evacuate the territories. (Kodmani-Darwish, 1996: 28)

In its contemporary context, it is this staunch rejection of the Oslo Accords and the entire peace process that best represents its current oppositional nature and its position as the only true alternative to the PA and its 'bankrupt' policies. In the view of most members of *Hamas*, the Oslo Accords offer little hope of a fair and just peace for the Palestinians and their national aspirations. In fact, to many within *Hamas*, Oslo is less a peace process than a security pact between the PA, Israel and the United States, with the ultimate aim of obliterating their movement.²³ While Oslo was presented by Arafat, and by others in the *Fatah* movement, as the first step towards satisfying Palestinian national aspirations for eventual statehood, *Hamas* argued that Oslo did little more than shift the burden for controlling Palestinian society and the security apparatus in the occupied territories from the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) onto the Palestinian Authority.

While fundamental divisions still exist within the leadership of *Hamas* over questions of strategy and ideology (see below), it is unequivocal in its damnation of the whole Oslo process. In March 1997, after a suicide bombing attack in Israel²⁴ Hamas spokesman Ibrahim Ghoshah argued for the need to bury once and for all 'Oslo, the PA, and the so-called peace process' (cited in *The Economist*, 9 August 1997: 8). Moreover, in April 1999 Yasin was urging the Palestinian leadership to 'extricate us all from this calamity called Oslo', stating that 'freedom from Oslo is essential for building national unity'. He added that the aim of *Hamas* remains to shed the 'crippling restrictions' imposed on the

Palestinians by the Oslo Accords, and 'to reaffirm our opposition to the Oslo Process'.²⁵ *Hamas'* strident rejection of the Oslo Accords has become the primary factor in unifying the very divergent factions that exist within the Islamic movement, and it remains the most discernible difference between the PA and a *Hamas* movement that continues to depict itself as the only legitimate alternative to that rule. It has also been this opposition to the Oslo Accords and its damnation of the entire process that has accounted for the core of *Hamas'* support.

Support

A definite trend has developed in *Hamas'* support base since its creation as a separate wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in January 1988. *Hamas'* popular support is most directly linked to the peace process and the willingness of the Palestinian people to back violent resistance to Israeli occupation. Public opinion surveys and various elections conducted for student unions, professional syndicates, and the chambers of commerce exhibit a clear pattern in growth for *Hamas*. At those times when the lack of significant progress in the peace negotiations has led to increased feeling of disenchantment and hopelessness among the Palestinian people, many Palestinians have demonstrated a greater readiness to back the Islamic cause.²⁶

Within two years of the outbreak of the *intifada*, *Hamas* achieved some spectacular gains in terms of its support within Palestinian society.²⁷ While backing for *Hamas* steadily rose during this period, no one event garnered *Hamas* as much sympathy and support as the Israeli deportation of 418 'suspected' Islamic activists in December 1992.²⁸ The media's depiction of the deportees stranded in 'no man's land' just inside the Lebanon border greatly enhanced the image of the Palestinians as victims of continuing Israeli repression. According to Litvak:

the deportations at the end of 1992 boosted *Hamas'* popularity in the territories and enhanced its image of being at the forefront of the struggle against Israel. Furthermore, the strike at the *Hamas* organisational infrastructure, mainly at welfare and religious institutions, was perceived in the territories as an attack upon Islam itself, rallying many around the Movement. (Litvak, 1993: 195)

To many Palestinians, not only did the deportations demonstrate the true futility in the PLO's misplaced hopes for a negotiated settlement,²⁹ but *Hamas*, not the PLO, was now perceived as the vanguard in the struggle against Israeli occupation (Litvak, 1992: 275).

According to actual public support received throughout this period (1988–1993), *Hamas* had come to represent a legitimate threat as a national alternative to the mainstream PLO. In terms of pure public opinion and by some

estimates, support for *Hamas* as much as tripled during this time. In one of the earliest measures of *Hamas*' backing in the occupied territories, polls placed *Hamas*' support at somewhere between 10 and 15 per cent of the Palestinian population.³⁰ Yet, by December 1992, in the wake of the large-scale deportations of Islamic activists, some experts claimed that as many as 40 per cent of Palestinians in the occupied territories were now supporting *Hamas*, while similarly rejecting the more moderate policies of the PLO (*The Economist*, 19 December 1992: 39). While this zenith of support may have just indicated an upsurge in sympathy for *Hamas* in the aftermath of the mass deportations, even by February 1993, *Hamas* was still estimated to be enjoying the backing of approximately 30–40 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip and 20–5 per cent in the West Bank (*The Economist*, 20 February 1993: 39).

Public opinion surveys alone are not always an accurate indicator of a certain individual's actual voting intentions, but a number of elections held throughout the occupied territories during this period confirm the increased popular support for the 'Islamic Bloc', led by *Hamas*.³¹ According to Iyad Barghouti, 'in the 1992–93 elections, a systematic increase in *Hamas*' popularity was demonstrated, even in liberal institutions such as Bir Zeit University [in Nablus], with the group typically obtaining between 35 and 40 per cent of the vote' (Barghouti, 1996: 168). While the victory at the liberal-leaning Bir Zeit surprised many PLO officials, it was the startling success of the Islamists in the Chamber of Commerce election in Ramallah in March 1992 that 'sent a chill down nationalist spines' because Ramallah was a heavily Christian centre and had always been a nationalist stronghold (Kuttab, 1992: 6).

However, according to Elie Rekhess, the PLO defeat in Ramallah was not an aberration but instead represented a systematic pattern of increased Islamic support that had been occurring ever since the PLO had entered the Madrid peace talks. Prior to this defeat, other losses had occurred in the Hebron Chamber of Commerce, Hebron University, the Union of Electric Company's employees and the Employees' Union of the East Jerusalem Maqasid Hospital (Rekhess, 1992: 299).

To demonstrate the degree to which the Islamic Bloc was gaining in terms of its popular support, in the fall of 1992, Mahmoud al-Zahhar examined more than twenty election campaigns conducted in the territories during 1991–92. According to Al-Zahhar, 34,221 Palestinians voted in these elections, with the Islamist candidates winning 43 per cent of the overall votes.³² While it is evident that by the summer of 1993 *Hamas* represented a legitimate alternative to the PLO, according to Dilip Hiro, what is more remarkable is that 'within four years *Hamas* came to rival Fatah, which had been active for a generation' (Hiro, 1997: 17).

While *Hamas*' success over this period was based primarily on the inability of the PLO to achieve any significant results during the Madrid peace

negotiations in Washington, the surprise announcement and subsequent signing of the Oslo Accords in August and September 1993 had an equally dramatic impact on *Hamas'* growing support. Almost immediately after the Accords were signed a poll showed *Hamas'* support had plunged to 13 per cent (Al Jarbawi, 1994: 141).³³ Backing for *Hamas* remained at that level over the next few years, even in the face of its new strategy of suicide bombings from April 1994 to March 1996.³⁴ In December 1995, it was reported that *Hamas'* support was stuck at 15 per cent, after a high of nearly 40 per cent just before the Oslo Accords were signed (*The Economist*, 2 December 1995: 41; also see Mishal and Sela, 2000: 134 and 137). That figure further declined to 10 per cent in the former stronghold of Gaza after *Hamas* decided to boycott the Palestinian General Elections in January 1996.³⁵ Thus, there was a direct link between the ability of the Accords to exhibit tangible territorial and economic benefits on the ground and *Hamas'* declining support.

Conversely, it is not surprising that the corresponding support for both Yasser Arafat and the overall peace process continued to increase over the same period. From September 1995 to January 1996, support for Arafat climbed from 54 to 58 per cent while backing of the Israeli–Palestinian deal rose from 66 to 72 per cent (*The Economist*, 30 September 1995: 46 and 5 January 1996: 52). Furthermore, both Yasser Arafat's election as president and the sweeping to power of his *Fatah* party in the January 1996 elections were interpreted as an overwhelming endorsement of the PLO's platform of negotiation and moderation.

However, developments since the early 1990s demonstrate that it would be premature to discount *Hamas* and the influence it still exerts on the Palestinian political scene, especially regarding the peace process. At those times when the Oslo peace process seemed in jeopardy of self-destructing, *Hamas* had been able to make credible gains. In November 1993, when negotiations for the first stage of Israeli withdrawal from the territories were near collapse, student council elections at Bir Zeit produced a 'Rejectionist Front' coalition, with the PFLP DFLP and *Hamas* acquiring a clear majority with 52 per cent of the vote (Kuttab, 1993: 5–6). Two years later at the same university, when negotiations for the second stage of Palestinian autonomy were stalled, the rejectionists won 27 out of a total of 51 seats – *Hamas* alone winning 18 seats.³⁶

Such gains for *Hamas* were even more notable during the three-year reign of Benjamin Netanyahu when not only did peace talks remain essentially dormant, but many Palestinians perceived the Likud Prime Minister's policies as inflammatory and provocative not just to the peace process, but to Israeli–Palestinian relations in general. In December of 1996, both in the wake of Netanyahu's ascension to power and in response to the large scale fighting in the territories in September 1996,³⁷ *Hamas* emerged as the leading party in student elections at the Najah University in Nablus, a traditional *Fatah*

stronghold (Amayreh, 1996: 4). In fact, by the end of 1997 – Netanyahu's first full year in power – the Islamic Bloc controlled the student unions at 6 of the 7 Palestinian universities (See Amayreh, 1997: 4; Hiro, 1997: 19). This public shift away from the negotiated option, proposed by Arafat and the PLO, was also exhibited in a January 1999 poll (i.e. Netanyahu's last year in power) conducted by the Nablus-based Centre for Palestine Research and Studies. According to the poll, the number of Palestinians who supported armed resistance had risen from 41 to 53 per cent in the previous two months, while the number who backed the peace process had dropped from 75 to 66 per cent (Hamzeh-Muhaisen, 1999: 7).

Since the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2000, the descent into open warfare between the Israelis and Palestinians – and the apparent death of the peace process – has been reflected in increased backing for violent resistance to Israeli occupation and growing support for *Hamas*. A recent poll conducted by Bir Zeit University showed that 74 per cent of Palestinians now support suicide operations inside Israel (*The Economist*, 16 June 2001: 46). In addition, a February poll demonstrated that the combined support for *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* now rivalled that of Arafat's *Fatah* party.³⁸ Clearly, Islamist movements continue to benefit the most from the growing insecurity and violence in the Middle East. Thus, while many Palestinians still support the peace process as the best option for achieving Palestinian national aspirations, armed attacks, and *Hamas*' utilization of such a strategy, remain a viable option to the policies of negotiation and moderation long advocated by the PA.

The future

Many factors demonstrate *Hamas*' future as a viable oppositional force to the PLO including those that are seemingly beyond *Hamas*' control. If final status talks produce a generally acceptable solution for the majority of Palestinians, *Hamas*' significance as a political force would come under scrutiny. In addition, continued joint repression at the hands of both Palestinian and Israeli security forces might disable the movement to such an extent that its future viability is negligible. Yet, in terms of its own internal position and those components *Hamas* can influence, it would seem that there are two areas *Hamas* must address if it wants to be considered a legitimate vehicle of political counter-protest on the Palestinian political landscape. The first is the necessity of healing the rifts and divisions that have become more pronounced within *Hamas* in the latter half of the 1990s, especially in terms of strategy. The second is the seeming necessity of working with the PA/PLO in some type of 'national unity' government, at least while the current violence continues unabated, or even to return to the type of strategy conducted so effectively by the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Basically, this involves a strategy of

non-violent resistance and building support at the grassroots level to represent that segment of society opposed to the PLO's secular orientation, and general policies, in addition to any capitulation of Palestinian rights.

Although there have always been splits within the movement, divisions within *Hamas* have played a prominent role in undermining its efforts to provide an effective oppositional force. In fact, the very creation of *Hamas* as a separate wing of the Muslim Brotherhood was partially in response to the differences that existed between older, more moderate, members of the Brotherhood and the younger, more radical, Islamists. Thus, according to Abu-Amr, during the first month of the *intifada*,

the question debated [about actively joining the *intifada*] was whether it was incumbent upon the society to delay the *jihad* against the Israeli occupation until an Islamic society is founded or whether it was the Brotherhood's duty to enter into the confrontation immediately. Traditional Brotherhood leaders were not enthusiastic about an early participation in the *intifada*, but the young leaders were able to impose their will and vision in this regard. (1994: 83)

Deep-seated divisions have always existed within *Hamas* over fundamental questions of ideology, organization, and strategy.

In terms of ideology, it is evident that there is a fundamental division between those Palestinians who tend to support *Hamas* for its conservative and religious orientation, and those who are clearly drawn to *Hamas* because of its revolutionary appeal as a force of national liberation. In fact, these differences appear to have become even more pronounced in the new environment created by the Oslo Accords. According to Graham Usher, 'reconciling these strains of social conservatism and radical nationalism within the same movement is the dilemma *Hamas* faces on the changed terrain of autonomy' (1994: 9).

In addition to the ideological disputes, an organizational schism has developed between various branches of the movement over questions of strategy. With each department responsible for fundamentally different aspects of the organization's orientation – military, political, charitable³⁹ – splits between the various wings, or even within a specific branch, was a real possibility. Consequently, by 1996, it appeared that the organization's internal polarization had openly splintered between its hard-line military wing (i.e. the '*Iz al-Din al-Qassam* brigades) and the more moderate members of the movement (Al Jarbawi, 1996: 33; see also Webman, 1996: 129–30). The rash of suicide-bombings in the spring of 1996 was indicative of the fundamental nature of that split (*The Economist*, 9 March 1996: 15).

Moreover, the 1996 suicide-bombing campaign revealed a schism between *Hamas*' political leadership both within the occupied territories and between its internal and external leadership. In Gaza, the more moderate leaders of the movement opposed the bombings, while the military wing of the party in the

West Bank supported such a strategy (*The Economist*, 18 April 1998: 41). In addition, divisions have surfaced between the leadership *within* the territories (which has tended to advocate a more restrained strategy and is fearful of the cost of PA repression linked to the bombing campaign) and the leadership *outside* of the territories which has maintained that only an active military presence can ward off such repression (*The Economist*, 22 August 1998: 38). According to Webman, especially in the post-Oslo era, fundamental divisions within *Hamas* have become severe enough to threaten the very existence of the movement: 'the issues of handing over of arms, the continuation of a radical operations against Israel and the acceptance of the PA were controversial within Hamas, threatening to split it apart . . . Various reports referred to divisions between a moderate and a radical camp, between the political wing and the military wing, between activists inside and outside the territories, and even between activists in Gaza and the West Bank' (Webman, 1996: 129).

Hamas continues to allot primary importance to presenting a united front in the face of constant repression and PA attempts to sow disunity by ostracizing and delegitimizing its external leadership in Jordan, Iran and Syria (Amayreh, 1998: 10). However, such divisions must be addressed if *Hamas* is to once more threaten the position of the PLO/PA as the dominant force within the occupied territories.

Currently, there have been various attempts to transform *Hamas* into a legitimate political party (i.e. a loyal opposition), as demonstrated by the 'national unity' talks initiated by Arafat with *Hamas* on 7 August 2001 (*The Economist*, 18 August 2001: 33). A competing view is that *Hamas* would be better served by returning to the Muslim Brotherhood's grassroots strategies (i.e. 'Islamization') that helped the movement increase its support in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁰ Through its extensive network of social institutions such as Islamic charity associations, nursery schools, kindergartens, neighbourhood libraries and sports clubs (Abu-Amr, 1994: 14–15), the Muslim Brotherhood championed a strategy of evolutionary change. In doing so, it sought to transform Palestinian civil society from within, while bringing it into accordance with the principles of Islam and the rule of the *Sharia*. In this period, the Muslim Brothers assumed the view that the foundations of an Islamic society must first be created, primarily through Islamic education, before *jihad* could be legitimately and successfully undertaken.⁴¹

In the end, whatever future strategy *Hamas* decides to pursue, it will focus on a grassroots and incremental strategy to build opposition to the entire Oslo process and, in its opinion, allow it to 'crumble' under its own contradictions (Al Jarbawi, 1994: 148). According to Mahmud Zahhar, one of *Hamas'* principal spokesmen, 'Hamas is not in a hurry. We know that the PLO's practice will inevitably lead to its downfall . . . Communism had to be allowed to go to the end of its capacities, and it fell of its own weight' (1995: 83).⁴² Many members of

Hamas have realized that in the current environment, the PA – especially when it co-operates with Israel – is too powerful to overthrow militarily from its entrenched position as the dominant force in the occupied territories. Yet, as Khalil Shikaki cautions:

Hamas remains the sole credible alternative to Fatah and the mainstream nationalists. Those who have deserted the Islamists have not changed loyalties; most have simply sat on the sidelines. They could become a reservoir for an Islamist revival. One of the reasons that Yitzhak Rabin . . . went to Oslo was his fear that his choice was to deal either with the PLO today or Hamas tomorrow. [Israel still] faces the same choice (1998: 43).

Conclusion

In the Israeli–Palestinian dispute, unless the Oslo process can eventually produce the type of minimal territorial concessions and economic benefits sought by a significant segment of the Palestinian population, *Hamas* will continue to dictate and shape strategic calculations and security considerations in the region. By portraying the PLO–PA as a weak, corrupt and ineffective regime, and as little more than an extension of the Israeli security apparatus, *Hamas* remains a significant force. *Hamas* is strengthened particularly through its ability to most effectively articulate the grievances of those individuals marginalized and alienated by the current regime and its policies. In the climate of the recent violence and the re-emerging support for suicide bombings, *Hamas* has achieved prominence as the vanguard in the struggle to protect Palestinian interests and security in the occupied territories. *Hamas* can neither be completely destroyed nor simply wished away and, as the primary rejectionist power within the Palestinian Bloc, *Hamas* continues to constitute the most significant threat to both the Israeli–Palestinian peace process and to the general stability of the region.

NOTES

- 1 This latest round of violence, referred to as the *al-Aqsa intifada*, followed Ariel Sharon's visit to the *al-Aqsa* mosque on 28 September 2000 as a show of Israeli sovereignty over east Jerusalem.
- 2 Henceforth, the 'Palestine Liberation Organization' and 'Palestinian Authority' will be freely interchanged. While it is recognized that they constitute two fundamentally different entities, both are dominated by Yasir Arafat's *Fatah* movement and by Arafat himself.
- 3 As will be demonstrated, *Hamas* is a unique movement among political Islamist groups because its target is both external (i.e. the Israelis) as well as internal (i.e. the indigenous regime) in nature.
- 4 According to Dekmejian: 'In the absence of other institutional and ideological channels of opposition, fundamentalism has provided a religiously sanctioned means for the articulation of popular dissatisfaction' (1985: 176. Also see Mishal and Sela, 2000: 4).

- 5 The *Sharia*, or more specifically Islamic Law, is derived primarily from the *Quran*.
- 6 *Hamas* was not originally created for the purpose of providing an alternative to the PLO, but rather for the purpose of responding to the *intifada* and the continuing Israeli occupation. However, it has become clear that *Hamas* now sees the PLO's presence in Palestinian society as the main obstacle to increasing its own power. For an explanation of this change in *Hamas*' strategy, see Usher, 1995: 67–8.
- 7 Israeli officials have confiscated over 60 per cent of the land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- 8 The PA is dependent on Israeli goodwill for much of its tax revenue while many Palestinians provide cheap migrant labour for the Israelis.
- 9 Several other authors take a similar position, arguing that *Hamas*' support tends to be over-represented among the more educated segments of Palestinian society (especially university students and professionals). For the best examples, see Mishal and Sela, 2000: 23 and 37; Shikaki, 1998: 31–2; Abu-Amr, 1994: 6, 18, 21; Hoffman, 1994: 19; and Satloff, 1989: 392.
- 10 In the post-Oslo period, a good historical example may be that of Egypt after the Second World War, when a retreating Britain transformed the Muslim Brotherhood from a force primarily concerned with fighting Western colonialism into a 'true' counter-hegemonic force desiring the overthrow of, first, the indigenous Royalist forces and, subsequently, the Nasser regime.
- 11 This domestic view of the PLO concurs with the international status it received as early as 1974, when it was given observer status at the United Nations (UN) and was recognized by the Arab governments of the Middle East as the Palestinian people's 'sole representative'.
- 12 Other authors who emphasize this pragmatic nature of *Hamas* include Legrain, 1997: 173; Abu-Amr, 1994: 133; Ahmad, 1994: 55, 73, 88 and 117; Al Jarbawi, 1994: 136, 145, and 153; and Barghouti, 1993: 11.
- 13 *Jihad* is, of course, a highly contested concept within Islam. While many have focused exclusively on its military character, others have interpreted *jihad* as more inclusive. According to Armstrong, 'the root *jhd* implies more than a "holy war". It signifies a physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual effort' (1992: 168).
- 14 According to Litvak, Yasin defended this apparent change of position by arguing that it 'is lawful for Muslims . . . to accept such an armistice if the enemy is powerful while the Muslims are weak and need time to prepare and recover their strength' (1998: 160).
- 15 A number of authors examine this national–universal paradox in the context of *Hamas*. For examples, see Klein, 1997: 112–13; Frisch, 1994: 45; Litvak, 1989: 238.
- 16 When the *intifada*, or Palestinian uprising (literally, 'shaking off'), erupted in December 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood, though preaching the peaceful spread of Islam, feared that its failure to engage more actively in the *intifada* would adversely affect its support, and that consequently it would forfeit whatever gains it had achieved over the previous twenty years. Therefore, the decision was made by the Muslim Brotherhood to create an ostensibly separate organization (i.e. *Hamas*) to actively participate in the *intifada*. For the best explanation of these developments, see Abu-Amr, 1994: 63–8.
- 17 Frisch reaches a similar conclusion about *Hamas* when she states that 'the Palestinization of the movement is probably its [the Muslim Brotherhood's] most prominent innovation incorporated into the *Hamas* document' (1994: 52). See also Mishal and Sela, 2000: 41.
- 18 While earlier comments regarding *Hamas*' pragmatic nature and willingness to negotiate a two-state solution with Israel would appear to contradict this stance, it must be

noted that even Yasin stated that any truce would be only a temporary armistice (*hudna*) and, thus, the first stage in the eventual reacquisition of all of Palestine. See Mishal and Sela, 2000: 108–9.

- 19 The PLO is basically an umbrella group comprised of various Palestinian groups. The *Fatah* wing, led by Arafat, is clearly the dominant group within this movement.
- 20 In the spring and summer of 2001, in an atmosphere of escalating violence and growing insecurity, *Hamas'* endorsement of armed resistance remains the primary factor in increasing its support among Palestinians. See *The Economist* 18 August 2001, 33.
- 21 According to Khalil Shikaki, many Palestinians support *Hamas* because of their general disillusionment with the PA over 'issues like corruption, mismanagement, and lack of democratisation' (1998: 32). For a similar explanation, see Mishal and Sela who argue that part of *Hamas'* success is based on its ability to project 'credibility, dedication, and integrity compared with the PLO's outdated and notoriously corrupt leadership' (2000: 89).
- 22 See also *The Economist*, 22 April 1995, 46.
- 23 *The Economist* 22 August 1998, 38. For example, *Hamas* spokesman Shaykh Naif Rajub dismissed the agreement as a 'total surrender' and described it as a 'security pact', saying 'the Israelis, Americans, and PA are all after *Hamas*' (quoted in Khaled Amayreh, 'Hopes But Mostly Fears', *Middle East International*, 30 October 1998, 7).
- 24 In reaction to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to build additional settlements in disputed lands on the outskirts of east Jerusalem, what the Palestinians refer to as *Jabal Abu Ghneim*, on 21 March a *Hamas* suicide bomber destroyed a café in Tel Aviv, killing three and injuring nearly fifty.
- 25 Yasin as quoted in Khalid Amayreh, 'Arafat Evades the Issue', *Middle East International*, 23 April 1999, 6.
- 26 According to Mishal and Sela, this support for *Hamas* is most apparent when 'Yasir Arafat and the Palestinian Authority fail to translate Israeli–Palestinian peace negotiations into tangible territorial achievements and economic benefits' (2000: ix).
- 27 See *The Economist*, 2 December 1989, 47. In addition, this growth occurred in spite of the fact that in May 1989 Israel formally outlawed the *Hamas* movement and arrested its leader Shaykh Yasin, seven other senior leaders, and over 200 leading activists.
- 28 For a more detailed examination of this event, see Barghouti, 1993: 11; Ahmad, 1994: 80–2; and Milton-Edwards, 1996: 203–4.
- 29 The PLO at this time was involved in the doomed Madrid peace talks that had begun in October 1991.
- 30 See *The Economist*, 22 December 1990, 49, and Steve Sherman, 'Gazans and the Intifada: United and Steadfast', *Middle East International*, 13 April 1990, 18.
- 31 In terms of the 'Islamic Bloc', other Islamist organizations are included in this group, most notably, *Islamic Jihad*. *Hamas* represents by far the largest single group within this bloc.
- 32 See Ahmad Rashad, *The Truth About Hamas*, available online: www.iap.org/politics/misc/truth.html (p. 5).
- 33 The Oslo Accords had the impact on *Hamas* that the PLO had intended. Hiro establishes a link between *Hamas'* support and the Oslo Accords by arguing: 'In the absence of a fast-growing Islamist movement among Palestinians, it is doubtful that Rabin would have negotiated with Israel's sworn enemy, a point made publicly by Chaim Herzog, president of Israel from 1983 to [19]93' (Hiro, 1997: 17).
- 34 According to a poll conducted by the Palestinian Research Centre in Nablus in May 1995, *Hamas* only had 12 per cent support among the Palestinian population. See Mishal and Sela 2000: 134.

- 35 *The Economist*, 5 January 1996, 52. In addition, decreased popular backing for *Hamas* was directly linked to a decline in support for armed attacks against Israel. According to Shikaki: 'Support for attacks against Israelis dropped from 57 per cent in November 1994, to 46 per cent in February 1995, to 33 per cent a month later, and to 21 per cent in March 1996' (1998: 35).
- 36 'West Bank Student Elections', *Middle East International*, 9 June 1995, 4.
- 37 In September 1996, Netanyahu opened an ancient tunnel that ran alongside the *Haram al-Sharif*, the site of the *al-Aqsa* mosque in Jerusalem. In the ensuing violence 73 people were killed, 58 of them Palestinians, and over 1,500 were injured.
- 38 According to Usher 2001: 13, the Bir Zeit poll gave the Islamists 22 per cent support compared to 26 per cent for *Fatah*. However, according to *The Economist*, a poll conducted in mid-2001 by Bir Zeit University showed that backing for the Islamists now outstripped support for Arafat's *Fatah* movement. See *The Economist*, 16 June 2001, 46.
- 39 For a more thorough examination of the structure of *Hamas*, some good sources include Mishal and Sela, 2000: 58–9; Abu-Amr, 1994: 63; Litvak, 1993: 194; Litvak, 1990: 237; and Rashad, *The Truth About Hamas*: 2–3.
- 40 See Tamar Hausman, 'Experts: Hamas Has Reasons to Refrain from Terror Attacks', *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 February 2000. Ely Karmon, 2000: 8, also examines the likelihood of *Hamas* returning to this type of strategy.
- 41 According to Robert Satloff, the Brotherhood sought 'evolutionary change over radical revolution' (1989: 396). Also see Legrain, 1997: 163; Ahmad, 1994: 15–17, for a more thorough explanation of the Brotherhood's strategy at this time. This idea of patience or forbearance (*sabr*) has gained many adherents within the Islamic movement over the past few years. Hamas spokesman Abu Marzuq argued that the key to the movement's survival was patience, while Ibrahim Ghoshah endorsed a 'wait and see' attitude and declared 'that the agreement's collapse was only a matter of time'. For an example of their views on this issue, see Mishal and Sela, 2000: 102 and 139.

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