Hamas' political transformation and engagement, 2003-2013

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ……..

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the process of Hamas' political transformation and engagement between 2003 and 2013 as well as the implications of the transition. In general, conventional scholarship research on Hamas and its transition in politics focuses either on the discussion of its tendency to violence or on its orientation towards moderation. However, both analyses fail to capture the essence of Hamas' political transition over the ten years under discussion. This thesis argues that Hamas' transition is interrelated with its perception of resistance. That is to say, Hamas' transition aimed to keep its resistance work intact.

Hamas believed that because of its Zionist ideology, Israel would continue to occupy and colonize at Palestinians' expense. Furthermore, past negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel had not helped Palestinians but on the contrary, had intensified the Israeli occupation. Therefore, nothing but resistance would restore Palestinians' rights and defend them against Israel's aggression. Ever since its inception in 1987, resistance has been Hamas' only strategy and its means to end the Israeli occupation. It is worth noting that Hamas sophisticated the concept of resistance into a 'resistance project' from 2003 onwards, and then enforced it after taking over Gaza in June 2007; and for Hamas, the elements of resistance are comprehensive. In order to end Israeli occupation, armed struggle is its major tactic but this includes: the necessity of the national unity of Palestinians, the need for substantial support from the Arab and Muslim states and the understanding of the West. This thesis argues that as long as the Israeli occupation is in place, it is inevitable that Hamas' engagement in politics will be irreversible and its work on resistance will continue, irrespective of the circumstances. However, it might appear in a different form.

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Introduction

1. Research Background and Motivation

This research aims to explore the process of Hamas' transition in politics between 2003 and 2013 and to attempt to interpret the implications of the transition. Over the decade, Hamas experienced a remarkable change in its practices and rhetoric. Prior to 2003, in the eyes of Western countries, Hamas was considered to be a spoiler, undermining the peace process and aiming to destroy of Israel. Its suicide bombings and rocket attacks were regarded as a form of terrorism and its hardline stance against Israel seemed to be clear indications of this. However, after its acceptance of the ceasefire in June 2003, Hamas gradually reduced the numbers of military attacks and considered the possibility of a political transformation. This turn towards a more political orientation was discernible. In addition, its military tactic did not appeal after its victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) election in January 2006. After that, Hamas gradually became an important non-state actor in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and played an essential role across the Middle East particularly during the period between Hamas' take-over of Gaza after June 2007 and the Arab Spring (2011-2013).

Hamas' leaders demonstrated their willingness to coexist with Israel based on a long-term truce[1] in order to erase the 'terrorist' stigma, to distance itself from the international militant Islamists and to be better accepted within the international community.[2] On the other hand, Hamas' leaders started to articulate their views on why at this moment they rejected the disarmament and refused to recognize Israel, which was one of the demands of the Quartet.

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[1] The long-term truce was based on the condition that Israel withdrew from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the ease of Gaza and the right of return for Palestinian regugees, which corresponds to international law and the resolution of the United Nations. Please refer to Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2002), pp.73-78. Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), pp.55-57.

[2] Hamas leaders often cite the United Nations Resolution 194 in the General Assembly as a principle of the right of return for refugees. Please refer to Khalid Amayreh, 'Hamas debates the future: Palestine's Islamic Resistance Movement attempts to Reconcile ideological purity and political realism', *A Conflicts Forum Monograph*, (Beirut: November 2007), p.8.

[3] Hamas' leaders also reiterated that the reason for their fight with Israel was simply because of the Israeli occupation and persecution of Palestinians instead of fighting its Jewish background and Judaism. Hence, Hamas' new stance was noteworthy when compared with its previous record of suicide bombings during the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005).

In general, Western scholarship on Hamas' transition in politics often leads to two conflicting and confusing interpretations. One places emphasis on Hamas' rigid ideology, the form of its radicalization and its record of violence based on intransigent Islamic dogma, which is similar to that of al-Qaeda. This approach brands Hamas as a terrorist group under the banner of counter-terrorism and also ignores the evolution of the organization. Although Hamas has demonstrated its flexibility and pragmatism in the social, educational, political, and religious dimensions, this approach considers that these shifts are only for the purpose of violence or in preparation for the destruction of Israel. For example, one researcher who takes this view, Matthew Levitt, denies the possibility of Hamas' transformation and concludes that its main goal is to promote a violent Islamist agenda in politics.[4] Similar discourse can also be found in Jonathan Schanzer's research. In his book, entitled *Hamas VS. Fatah: The struggle for Palestine*, he focuses on one side of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah and attributes Hamas' ideology to the trend of 'radical Islam' that shares common ground with al-Qaeda.[5]

To some extent, this approach to researching Hamas is not always invalid but the presumption that Hamas is a terrorist organization does not completely grasp Hamas' complex features. According to this approach, Hamas is always regarded as Israel's antagonist and its transition serves the ultimate purpose of the destruction of Israel. Furthermore, this approach takes

[3] The Quartet, set up in 2002, is an organization for mediating 'Middle East peace negotiations and supporting Palestinian economic development and institution-building in preparation for eventual statehood.' It consists of the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia. Please refers to Office of the Quartet Representative, <http://www.quartetrep.org/quartet/pages/the-quartet/> (accessed on 19 October 2014).

[4] Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven. CT: Yale University Press and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006), p.240.

[5] Jonathan Schanzer, *Hamas VS. Fatah: The struggle for Palestine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.5-6.

violence as Hamas' main resort, which seems to neglect its historical development under the conditions of the Israeli occupation. As a matter of fact, Hamas is an integral part of Palestinian society. Therefore, research on Hamas and its transition should explore the historical, social, political, cultural and economic factors in Palestine. If research deliberately excludes Hamas from the context of Palestinian society and neglects the repercussions of the Israeli occupation and aggression on Palestinians as a whole, it would not possibly provide a clear description of Hamas' transition in politics from 2003 to 2013.

As for the other approach, Hamas' transition is contextualized in the Palestinian historical, social and political background, that is, it considers Hamas to be part of Palestinian society instead of linking it to an international terrorist organization or presenting it as an exceptional case. Indeed Hamas' violent record is still a major focus of this approach but violence is the only one aspect of the analysis and this feature should be examined in a specific context. This approach notes that Hamas has evolved with the changing environment in order to adapt to challenges in the period of the first Intifada (1987-1993), the Oslo Peace Process (1993-2000) and the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005). Researchers who have taken this approach often conduct interviews with Hamas members and use document analysis of Hamas' leaflets and statements. Sometimes, theoretical frameworks are also adopted for reviewing Hamas' development. [6]

In view of this, current literature that adopts this approach has noticed Hamas' transition between 2003 and 2013 and these discussions could be roughly divided into two stages. The first stage is Hamas' political transformation. From the time of the ceasefire in June 2003 to the PLC election in January 2006, Hamas considered suspending its 'martyrdom operation' (suicide bombings) and simultaneously, leaned towards political

[6] For example, Jeroen Gunning and Robinson Glenn adopt the Social movement theory and Omar Ashour employs the de-radicalization theory. See Gunning Jeroen, *Hamas in politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence* (London: Hurst, 2007); Glenn Robinson, 'Hamas as Social Movement' in Quintan Wiktorowicz, (ed.), *Islamic Activism: a social movement theory approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 112-142 and Omar Ashour, 'Hamas and the Prospects of De-radicalization' Klejda Mulaj (ed.), *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics* (London: Gulf Research Centre, 2010) pp.157-180.

integration. Several papers have indicated that Hamas' transition from an unyielding commitment to armed resistance to political participation was a gradual process.[7] For example, in terms of the acceptance of the ceasefire by Hamas in June 2003, Beverley Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke argue that the ceasefire was regarded as a breakthrough during the al-Aqsa Intifada. This ceasefire implied that Hamas was willing to comply with the first conditions of the Road Map that is, that 'the Palestinian groups immediately undertake an unconditional cessation of violence'.[8] Jeroen Gunning also supports this point. He argues that the ceasefire probably led to Hamas' de facto recognition of Israel in terms of the acceptance of the principle of power-sharing with other Palestinian factions. Thus, Hamas took a pragmatic approach that was contrary to its absolutist ideas on the liberation of all Palestine.[9]

The second stage of the transition was that of Hamas' political engagement. After Hamas won the PLC election in 2006, literature tended to maintain its focus on Hamas' pragmatism and ability to adapt to a new environment.[10] Several scholars argue that Hamas' political engagement

[7] See, for example, Alastair Crooke and Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Costly Choice', *The World Today*, Vol.59, No.2 (Dec 2003), pp.15-17; Alastair Crooke and Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace process', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No.4 (Summer 2004), pp.39-52; Alastair Crooke and Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Waving, Not Drowning: Strategic Dimensions of ceasefires and Islamic Movements', *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, No.3 (September 2004), pp. 295-310; Haim Malka, 'Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No.4 (Autumn 2005), pp.37-54; International Crisis Group, 'Dealing with Hamas', *ICG Middle East Report*, (January 2004), pp.1-33; International Crisis Group, 'Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration,' *ICG Middle East Report*, (January 18, 2006); Jeroen Gunning, 'Peace with Hamas? The transforming potential of political participation', in *International Affairs*, 80 (2), (March 2004), pp.233-255; Khaled Hroub, 'Hamas after Shaykh Yasin and Rantisi', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No.4 (Summer 2004), pp.21-38; Sara Roy, 'Hamas and the Transformations of Political Islam in Palestine', *Current History*, Vol. 102, No. 660 (January 2003), pp.13-20.

[8] The Road Map is a peace initiative proposed by the Quartet in April 2003. See Alastair Crooke and Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Waving, Not Drowning: Strategic Dimensions of ceasefires and Islamic Movements,' *Security Dialogue*, Vol.35, No.3, *op.cit.,* p.296.

[9] Jeroen Gunning, 'Peace with Hamas? The transforming potential of political participation,' in *International Affairs*, 80 (2), *op.cit*., pp.249-253.

[10] See, for example, Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: C. Hurst, 2007); Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge: Polity press, 2010); Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective* (London: I.B Tauris, 2009); Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence* (London: Hurst, 2007); Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011);

reflected its evolution and moderate inclination in terms of its view of Israel and the two-state solution. For example, the rhetoric involving Hamas' rejection of Israel had been changed from a purely religious motivation to political consideration; that is, Hamas leaders did not revert to its Charter to underpin religious or ideological grounds for the rejection of Israel.[11] Instead, Hamas' rejection of Israel's legitimacy is because of the Israeli occupation at the expense of Palestinian rights.[12] On the other hand, Hamas leaders reiterate that they were willing to reach a peaceful coexistence with Israel provided Israel would withdraw to the 1967 borders which corresponds, in part, to the framework of the two-state solution. The approach that contextualizes Hamas' transition in a specific context enables readers to grasp Hamas' complexity and its features of moderation and pragmatism between 2003 and 2013. However, apart from highlighting Hamas' approach it failed to elucidate why Hamas had tended towards moderation while at the same time maintaining a strong belief that resistance was the only option in a fight for the rights that Palestinians had lost since 1948.

It seems that discussions regarding either Hamas' tendency to radicalization or its orientation towards moderation as outlined above do not capture the process and implications of Hamas' transition over the decade; and perhaps an analysis of the concept of resistance that Hamas elaborated between 2003 and 2013 would provide a further perspective that counters the dichotomy between radicalization and moderate inclination in the discussion of Hamas' transition in politics. The concept of 'resistance' has been less analyzed by current research. For the purposes of analysis, scholars should avoid the tendency to ascribe negative moral value to this concept, or equate it with hatred or terrorism, as Israel and some western governments have indicated. Larbi Sadiki argues that Hamas' resistance could be viewed as an

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Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold story of the Militant Islamic Movement* (New York: Nation Books, 2007).

[11] In Hamas' charter, the terms, Jew and Zionist sometimes overlap. For example, article 7 quotes a Hadith, 'The Final Hour will not come until Muslims fight against the Jews and the Muslims kill them…' See 'The Hamas Charter,' in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political thought and practice*, *op.cit.,* p.272.

[12] Khalid Amayreh, 'Hamas debates the future: Palestine's Islamic Resistance Movement attempts to reconcile ideological purity and political realism,' *A Conflict forum monograph* (Beirut: November 2007), pp.5-7.

alternative model. This model 'not only sabotages the Weberian template of single monopoly, legitimacy and centre in the dispensation of violence, but also deploys it from the margins as part of a Godly-sanctioned ethical quest for notions of sacrifice, worship, emancipation, transnational solidarity, and civil community.'[13] He adds that Hamas provides 'the explicit ideology of resistance, and thus cannot be reduced to, or confused with, the misnomer of radicalization.'[14] Since its inception in 1987, Hamas firmly believed that resistance is the only way to restore Palestinians' rights. From 2003 to 2013, Hamas often raised the topic of resistance publically when it participated in political events. But less attention has been paid to how Hamas articulated the concept of resistance in association with its transition. On the other hand, since the 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan also participated in political elections and transition. As Hamas is derived from the Muslim Brotherhood who believe that Islam is a comprehensive guide applicable to different times and spaces, Hamas' transition could be said to be similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood's. Thus, a conceptual framework of Islamists' transition may help to further examine Hamas' transition.

According to the background described above, it seems that Hamas' political transition is related to its concept of resistance in the political arena between 2003 and 2013. Hence, questions related to Hamas' political transition (transformation and engagement) are interrelated with its perception of resistance from 2003 to 2013 and this forms the main focus of this thesis.

First of all, it is worth exploring the context in which Hamas developed and employed the concept of resistance in the political field between 2003 and 2013. Secondly, the interrelation between Hamas' political transition (transformation and engagement) and its perception of resistance shall be further analyzed. In addition, whether Hamas' transition represents a shift in its ideology or merely a shift in tactics shall be explored further. Finally, the implications of Hamas' transition in politics overall shall be reviewed.

[13] Larbi Sadiki, 'Reframing resistance and democracy: narratives from Hamas and Hizbullah,' *Democratization*, Vol.17, No.2, 2010, pp.350-357.

[14] *Ibid*., p.351.

2. Research Questions

As indicated in the above background and motivation for the study, this research examines questions as below:

1. How does Hamas construct and employ the concept of resistance?
2. Why and how is Hamas' political transition (transformation and engagement) interrelated with its perception of resistance?
3. Does the transition represent a shift in Hamas' ideology or merely a shift in tactics?
4. What are the implications of its political transition for Hamas overall?

3. Sources and Methodology

Hamas' transition in politics is mainly examined by analyzing transcripts of interviews with Hamas leaders' and members from 2003 to 2013 as the primary source. Since the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas' leadership has been interviewed by the Western media, and some academic journalists,[15] but there were too few sources to scrutinize adequately how Hamas elaborated the concept of resistance in relation to the process of its political transformation prior to the PLC election of January 2006. However, the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) website filled the gap. This website is run by 'an independent Palestinian organization, established first in Arabic on 1st December, 1997'.[16] In spite of this, it is regarded as the unofficial Hamas website,[17] reflecting Hamas' political views. The website presents in eight languages: Arabic, English, French, Turkish, Urdu, Russian, Persian and Indonesian. The Arabic website has old and new editions, collecting a large number of Hamas leaders' interviews and official statements. In the older edition of the website, there is a section called: 'Islamic resistance movement,

[15] Roger Gaess, 'Interviews from Gaza: What Hamas wants,' *Middle East Policy*, Vol.9, No.4 (December 2002), pp.102-115. 'Interview with Hamas' Abd Al-Aziz Rantisi and Ismail Abu Shanab,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 33, No.1 (Fall, 2003), pp. 164-168.

[16] The Palestinian Information Center, 'About Us,' <http://english.palinfo.com/site/pages/aboutus.aspx> (accessed on 18 April 2013).

[17] Lori Allen, 'Martyr bodies in the media: Human rights, aesthetics, and the politics of mediation in the Palestinian intifada", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2009), p.162.

Hamas', [18] which is a collection of documents containing interviews with Hamas' political leaders, Hamas' official statements and statistics covering the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005).

These documents of interviews could provide the analysis of Hamas' political transition from 2003 to 2013. From these documents, we can understand why Hamas reiterated the importance of resistance and how Hamas considered the possibility of political transformation from 2004 to 2006. The PIC has collected a number of documents of chronological interviews with Hamas' leadership from the middle of 2002 to the beginning of 2006. Around twelve main political leaders and several local leaders in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria were interviewed. [19] Most interviews were conducted by the PIC itself. Some interviews were collected from Arabic newspapers and TV stations.[20] Other information is about Hamas leaders' speeches to its audiences on important occasions such as the anniversary of the foundation of Hamas and the memory of the al-Aqsa Intifada.

This research mainly traces, and analyzes how Hamas leaders and members responded to and commented on various questions in interviews. The questions that Hamas leaders and members were asked could be categorized into general and specific questions. The general questions were about how Hamas leaders and members viewed the al-Aqsa Intifada, the Israeli invasion and the essence of Israel/Zionism from the Palestinian historical perspective. On these general questions, Hamas has always defended the necessity of resistance when Palestinians have faced large casualties, sufferings and the assassinations of Hamas' leaders and members. As for the specific questions, these have referred to how Hamas has adapted

[18] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Islamic resistance movement: Hamas,' <http://web.archive.org/web/20111214144026/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/index.htm> (accessed on 27 July 2014).

[19] Ahmed Yassin, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, Ismail Haniyeh, Mahmud al-Zahar, Mushir al-Masri and Said Siyam in Gaza. Aziz Dweik and Hassan Yousef in the West Bank. Abu Marzuq, Khalid Mishal, Muhammad Nazzal, and Usama Hamdan outside Palestine and Other local leaders in Jenin, Nablus Ramallah, and Tulkarem. The Palestinian Information Center, 'Topics of dialogue and meeting'. <http://web.archive.org/web/20131214011436/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/index.htm> (accessed on 27 July 2014).

[20] Al-Hayat (London), Al-Manar (Lebanon), Al-Jazeera (Qatar), Al-Sabil, (Jordan), Quds Press (Palestine).

to challenges and opportunities at particular times, such as the campaign of the U.S.-led War on Terror in 2001, the appointment of a Prime Minister in the PA, the initiative of the Road Map, the ceasefire in 2003, the Israeli disengagement plan in Gaza and Hamas' preparation for elections in Palestine since 2004. It could be observed that Hamas' leaders and members responded to these questions based on the concept of resistance. Hamas believes that resistance is the only and legitimate way to end the occupation, but the way that Hamas articulates the language of resistance could be varied in different periods. From these specific questions, it is noted that the resistance that Hamas has advocated is not a fixed concept but has evolved from the focus on military expression in 2003, to the consideration of and participation in political integration and reform from 2004 to 2006.

After Hamas won the PLC election and formed a government in 2006, Hamas' transition in politics has been widely discussed within academia. Most discussions have not related Hamas' transition to its resistance discourse but rather, have mostly narrowed the arguments to whether Hamas would recognize Israel or Islamize Palestine. In fact, the resistance language remained vivid when Hamas engaged in politics from 2006 to 2013. The current edition of the PIC website contains a large number of copies of Hamas' interviews throughout this period.[21] From the analysis of these documents, it is noted that the way that Hamas responded to, and justified its actions to major events, such as the takeover of Gaza in June 2007, the Israeli war on Gaza from December 2008 to January 2009 and the Arab Spring, did not diminish it focus on the principle of resistance. Furthermore, as mentioned before, resistance is not a fixed concept; it is evident that this concept of resistance was articulated when Hamas clearly elaborated contentious issues such as preconditions for negotiation with Israel and Hamas's view on Zionism, or the two-state and the one-state solutions. In a sense, Hamas interviews on the PIC website are the primary source for the analysis and evaluation of Hamas' political transformation and engagement between 2003 and 2013. In addition to the PIC website, after 2006 several collections of

[21] The Palestinian Information Center, <https://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/default.aspx> (accessed on 27 July 2014).

Hamas' leaders' and members' interviews from Western newspapers,[22] academic journals,[23] Palestinian websites[24] and Hamas' Information Office website,[25] could be adopted as complementary sources for analyzing Hamas' views on resistance in relation to its political transition.

Around 140 copies of Hamas' interviews from websites, newspapers and journal articles outlined above have been collected and used as the primary source of this research. The selection of these documents is based on the timing of Hamas' response to crucial events from 2003 to 2013, such as the ceasefire of June 2003, the announcement of the Israeli disengagement plan in 2004, the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2005, the municipal elections from 2004 to 2006, the PLC election in early 2006 and the division between Fatah and Hamas after June 2007, among others. Examination and analysis of these documents reveal how Hamas leaders and members evaluated the Israeli occupation as a whole and commented on these crucial events from 2003 to 2013. This provides a clear chronological view of the process whereby Hamas determined its political transition before the election as well as how Hamas has enforced its political agenda in accordance with the principle of resistance since coming to power. Without scrutinizing this collection of documents, it is difficult to assess properly Hamas' transition in politics and interpret the implication of this transition.

The copies of Hamas' interviews may be considered alternatively as ideological documents or may risk being viewed as Hamas propaganda.

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[22] See 'A conversation with Ismail Haniyeh, ''We do not wish to throw them into the sea,'' *Washington Post* (26 February, 2006). Abu Marzook, Mousa, 'What Hamas is seeking,' *Washington Post* (31 January, 2006). Mishal, Khaled, 'We will not sell our people or principles for foreign aid', *The Guardian* (31 January 2006). Yousef, Ahmed, 'Judge Hamas on the measures it takes for its people,' *The Guardian*, (14 November, 2014).

[23] Mouin Rabbani, 'A Hamas perspective on the movement's evolving role: An Interview with Khalid Mishal: Part I,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring, 2008), pp.59-73. Mouin Rabbani, 'A Hamas perspective on the movement's evolving role: An Interview with Khalid Mishal: Part II,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer, 2008), pp.59-81.

[24] Al-Zaytouna Centre, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/en/> (accessed on 27 July 2014), House of Wisdom, < http://www.howgaza.org/english/>, Middle East Monitor, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/> (accessed on 27 July 2014), Almonitor, < http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/contents/authors/adnan-abu-amer.html> (accessed on 27 July 2014).

[25] The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Information Office, <http://tinyurl.com/mousb4j> (accessed on 31 July 2014).

Hamas leaders have always insisted that resistance is the only way to attain victory and have often cited Qur'anic verses to encourage Palestinians' steadfastness and patience while suffering from Israeli aggression. In fact, the contents of the Hamas' interviews corresponds with Palestinian historiography, as opposed to the prevailing Israeli narrative on the land of Palestine. The Israeli narrative comes from the Israeli/Zionist historiography that claims that Palestine belongs exclusively to Jews and no other ethnic group has the right to claim this land. An Israeli sociologist, Baruch Kimmerling, indicates that the Israeli/Zionist historiography has two distinct features. The first is that the land of Israel 'is used indiscriminately for all historical periods'. With all due respect to Kimmerling, there is no historical period when there were no Jews living in the land since the Israelite people first settled there.[26] The second is that Jews living abroad are obliged to return to this land. The immigration of Jews to Palestine from 1882 to 1939 reflects this vision[27] and the creation of Israel in 1948 materialized its ultimate goal.

However, this Israeli/Zionist historiography is completely denied by Palestinian historiography. As Edward Said argues, 'Zionism was a hothouse flower grown from European nationalism, anti-Semitism and colonialism, while Palestinian nationalism, derived from the great wave of Arab and Islamic anti-colonial sentiment, has since 1967, though tinged with retrogressive sentiment, been located within the mainstream of secular post-imperialist thought.' [28] From the Palestinian historiography, the Palestinian national movement since the 1920s has stressed an ethos of resistance, heroism and sacrifices against the project of Zionism at the expense of Palestinian rights.[29] The idea of Palestinian nationalism has been integrated into Hamas' resistance discourse, as its Charter states, 'Nothing is loftier in nationalism or deeper in devotion than this: If an enemy invades Muslim territories, then

[26] Baruch Kimmerling, 'Academic history caught in the cross-fire: The case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography,' *History and Memory*, Vol.7, No.1 (Spring-Summer, 1995), p.48.

[27] *Ibid*., pp.48-49.

[28] Edward Said, 'Permission to Narrate,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.13, No.3 (Spring, 1984), p.31.

[29] Jamil Hila, 'Reflections on contemprary Palestine History' in Ilan Pappe and Jamil Hilal (ed.), *Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp.177-179.

Jihad and fighting the enemy becomes an individual duty for every Muslim.'[30] In this sense, Hamas' interviews reflecting on resistance, and its later political transition, could be seen as a continuation and evolution of the Palestinian national movement and could be understood from the angle of Palestinian historiography.

Another method used to enhance and validate the collection of Hamas interviews from the PIC website is to conduct fieldwork in Gaza. This would be an effective way of obtaining detailed information and observing how Hamas has incorporated the concept of resistance into its political agenda. Currently, the possible way into Gaza is through the Rafah crossing, managed by the Egyptian authorities. In early 2013, I prepared for a fieldtrip and obtained a certificate of ethical approval from the University of Exeter, and then I attempted to apply for permission to visit Gaza from the Consulate General of Egypt in London in July 2013. But I did not gain approval. In addition, the Rafah crossing was closed as a consequence of the uncertainty of Egyptian politics after the ousting of President Mursi. As the Rafah crossing is frequently closed, it was difficult to visit Gaza at the time. As for the West Bank, it is difficult to contact Hamas leaders and members in the West Bank as many of them are in Israeli jails; also Hamas-affiliated charities have been dissolved by the PA in Ramallah since 2007.[31]

In spite of these difficulties, I tried to find other ways of obtaining complementary information which validated the collection of Hamas interviews on the PIC website. Since I was unable to get access to Gaza to interview Hamas' leaders and members, I sought the perspective of Palestinian scholars who are familiar with issues of Hamas to enable me to understand and analyze Hamas' documents from the PIC website. From 2011 to 2014, I conducted 9 in-depth interviews with three Palestinian scholars in Exeter. The purpose of these was to discover the interviewees' perspectives on Hamas'

[30] Hamas Charter (3:12) See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice,* appendix, *op.cit*., p. 274.

[31] It is estimated that 2,000 Hamas members remains in Israel jails, including 36 elected PLC members. See 'Hamas in the West Bank,' *The Economist* (3 September 2014), < http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2014/09/hamas-west-bank> (accessed on 8 October 2014).

idea of resistance and the implication of its transition into politics. The interviews were based on the conceptual understanding of Hamas' transition in politics rather than involving a sensitive or a controversial issue that may cause harm to interviewees. Before conducting the interview, I had received formal consents from interviewees and they had been given the transcript of the interview for detailed review. They were also given the option of anonymity to avoid any possible harmful effects on their security, jobs or positions. Furthermore, the interviewees were informed that the results of the interview would not be used for commercial purposes, and also that the collected data would not be passed to a third party, which might misuse it and cause possible harm to them.

The other way to validate the collection of Hamas interviews in the PIC is to observe how the daily life of Palestinians is affected by the Israeli occupation as Hamas always refers to the concept of resistance in response to this, and Hamas' political transition has been cited as a means to end it. A number of scholarly works have disclosed how Israel denies and restricts the fundamental rights of Palestinians, annexes Palestinian land on the West Bank and East Jerusalem, besieges Gaza, and treats Palestinians inside Israel as second-class citizens.[32] 'Bantustans', a term that comes from the period of Apartheid in South Africa, has been used to describe the status of Palestinians in occupation. Leila Farsakh indicates that 'Oslo has made the Occupied Territories more analogous to the Bantustans of South Africa's apartheid. The Israeli permit or pass system, the territorial fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza under the Oslo accords, and the expansion of settlements all contributed to the creation of disconnected Palestinian

[32] Edward Said, 'The Mirage of Peace, *The Nation*, (October 16, 1995), pp.413-420. Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2004). Ilan Pappe, *The forgotten Palestinians: A history of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Jad Isaac and Owen Powell, 'The transformation of the Palestinian environment,' in Jamil Hila (ed.), *Where Now for Palestine? The Demise of the two-state solution* (London: Zed Books, 2007), pp.144-166. Salem Ajluni, 'The Palestinian Economy and the Second Intifada,' *Journal of Palestine Studi*es, Vol.32, No.3 (Spring 2003), pp.64-73. Sara Roy, 'Palestinian Society and Economy: The Continued Denial of possibility,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No.4 (Summer 2001), pp.5-20. Sara Roy 'The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Palestinian Socioeconomic Decline: A Place Denied', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring, 2004), pp.365-403. Susan M. Akram, 'Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Spring 2002), pp. 36-51.

population reserves that have the characteristics of Bantustans.'[33] In this sense, observing how the Israeli occupation works in the daily affairs of Palestinians could help us to understand the background to and motivation for Hamas' insistence on resistance language while simultaneously participating in politics.

A trip organized by the Alternative Information Center (AIC),[34] a local non-governmental organization in the West Bank, provided this opportunity. This organization runs such trips four times a year which are open to researchers and people who are concerned about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. From 13th to 20th October 2014, I participated in a trip in order to experience and witness how the Israeli occupation affects Palestinians on a daily basis by attending lectures by local Palestinians and short field trips to Palestinian towns and villages. Before the trip, I needed to register, and filled in an application form at the AIC's request. In this application, I clearly stated that as a PhD student in Palestine studies I needed to participate in this trip since it corresponded with my field of research. Furthermore, before I prepared to travel to the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel, I had consulted my supervisor, who knows the AIC well, about safety issues. For this trip, I also obtained another approval from the ethics committee.

During this trip, I attended several lectures[35] by Palestinian activists and scholars, visited two refugee camps,[36] and cities where Palestinians live: Bethlehem, Hebron, Jerusalem, Jaffa and Lod. These activities provided a framework for observing how the Israeli occupation affects Palestinian society as a whole. That is to say, the Israeli occupation is firmly embedded in Palestinian society and deeply affects the daily life of Palestinians. Furthermore, this trip helped me to gauge the feelings and emotions of local Palestinians regarding the Israeli occupation, which I could not experience by

[33] Leila Farsakh, 'Independence, Cantons, or Bantustans: Whither the Palestinian State,' *Middle East Jorunal*, Vol.59, No.2 (Spring 2005), p. 245.

[34] The Alternative Information Center, <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[35] Lectures include refugee issues, political prisoners, BDS campaign, apartheid system inside Israel and the West Bank and the reconstruction of Gaza after the Israeli war on Gaza.

[36] Aida and Dheisheh refugee camps.

merely reading newspapers and academic journals. What interested me during this trip was that even though Palestinians who attended workshops and led the tour did not fully agree with Hamas' political ideology and sometimes criticized its practices, they still considered Hamas as an integral part of Palestinian society and shared much common ground with Hamas' resistance discourse regarding the Israeli occupation.[37] This account is very different from the narrative promoted by the western media and some academic work, which suggests that Hamas is alienated from Palestinian society.[38]

It is noted that the purpose of the trip resonates with Hamas' resistance discourse to the problems of the Israeli occupation include the suffering experienced by the overwhelming majority of Palestinians, the issue of refugees, the Judaization of Jerusalem, the fragmentation of the West Bank, the isolation of Gaza, the prisoner issue and the social status of Palestinians inside Israel. Therefore, the purpose of the trip corresponded to Hamas' real concerns, that are evident in interviews on the PIC website; and this helped me to understand the motivation behind Hamas' articulation of the concept of resistance to the public between 2003 and 2013.

Analysis of Hamas' interviews from 2003 to 2013 collected from the PIC website and other websites allowed me to reconstruct the process whereby Hamas determined to take part in political integration as well as enforce its political agenda with regard to its concept of resistance. In addition, secondary sources complement the analysis of this primary source. English academic publications on Hamas, the collection of articles written by the Gazan scholars,[39] and materials regarding the historical, political and socio-

[37] Some lecturers even argue that the armed resistance under the foreign occupation is legitimate and is self-defence in accordance with the International Law.

[38] Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven. CT: Yale University Press and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006) and Jonathan Schanzer, *Hamas VS. Fatah: The struggle for Palestine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[39] See House of Wisdom, <http://www.howgaza.org/english/> (accessed on 27 July 2014) and Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/en/> (accessed on 27 July 2014).

economic background in Palestine, poll surveys and news, provide a general background of Hamas' political transition from 2003 to 2013.

4. The Scope and significance of the Study

4.1 The Scope

The scope of this research is divided into two phases. One is the stage of Hamas' political transformation between 2003 and 2006; the other is the stage of Hamas' political engagement between 2006 and 2013. Before exploring these two stages, Hamas' transition in politics could be analyzed in light of the wider historical context from the early 1920s to 2000. It is noted that Hamas' transition in politics may be seen as a continuation of Hamas' historical evolution instead of an abrupt change. Thus, it is better to contextualize Hamas' practices and its features within a wider historical perspective.

4.2 The Significance of the study

Hamas' transition in politics deserves to be further researched as Hamas has become an indispensable actor in Palestinian politics and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well. Therefore, analyzing the essence and implication of Hamas' transition in politics is needed for the reference of the future solution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole. Since Hamas' electoral victory in 2006, a large amount of literature has focused on its shifts in ideas, its pivotal role in Palestine and its impact on the region of the Middle East. But a new understanding is needed of Hamas' features and its engagement after 2006. This research argues that Hamas' political engagement after 2006 is associated with Hamas' transformation between 2003 and 2006. Without examining these three years, the analysis of Hamas' political engagement after 2006 is incomplete.

Secondly, it is necessary to trace the process of Hamas' transition in politics in particular from the period of 2003 to 2006. It is worth noting that Hamas' transition in politics was related to the Israeli disengagement from

Gaza plan[40] that essentially changed Hamas' resistance discourse from armed resistance to political reform in 2004, and the death of Yasser Arafat in late 2005, which compelled Hamas to embark on a course of political engagement. The analysis of the resistance discourse that Hamas disseminated, which is little emphasized in other scholarly research, might also elucidate the rationale for Hamas' reluctance to abandon armed resistance in the pursuit of national liberation, while at the same time compromising with Israel in terms of ceasefires provided that Israel stopped its aggression and adhered to the two-state solution.

Thirdly, current scholarly literature tends to delineate Hamas' features of either radicalization or moderate inclination for the analysis of Hamas' transition in politics. This research argues that Hamas' transition into politics serves the cause of its resistance principle, which aims to end the Israeli occupation. In this respect, the concept of resistance, Hamas developed during the al-Aqsa Intifada and the way it was implemented after the PLC election in January 2006, provides us with another viewpoint that skips the debate of radicalization and moderate inclination of Hamas' transition in politics.

Finally, as an Islamist movement, the way that Hamas practices, its political ideology, and its political transformation, are fundamentally different from extremist Islamists such as Al-Qaeda and other Jihadist groups. As a branch of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas shares a common aspiration for the reform of Muslim society with other mainstream Islamist movements affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood's ideals. In spite of the fact that Hamas has engaged in armed resistance against the Israeli occupation since its inception in 1987, Hamas' transition into politics from 2003 to 2013 demonstrates similarity with the school of the Muslim Brotherhood. Much western academic literature has discussed the transition of Islamist movements from various angles such as nationalism, democracy and civil society, and it seems that Hamas' transition in politics could be observed,

[40] The Israeli disengagement plan was initially announced in December 2003 and was implemented in August 2005. During this period, Hamas had essentially changed its discourse from the armed struggle to the participation of the Palestinian politics.

analyzed and evaluated in this way. In addition, the concept of Islamic revival could elaborate on the implication of Hamas' transition since other Islamists who work on politics are influenced by this concept as well.

5. Thesis Outline: A brief description of each chapter

The thesis outline and a brief synopsis of each chapter are presented as follows:

Introduction

The motivation for the chosen topic is elucidated in the introduction. The research questions, the sources of materials, the methods of approaching this topic and conducting this research, and the significance of this research are also presented.

Part I: Approaching the transition of the Islamists and the study of Hamas' transition

Apart from the introduction, this thesis will be divided into three sections. The first, which is entitled 'Approaching the transition of Islamists and the study of Hamas' transition', acts as the foundation of the thesis and includes the conceptual framework and a historical review. The second part, entitled, 'The political transformation and engagement', is the main section of the thesis. The third part is the conclusion.

In the first two chapters form the first part, Chapter One provides a conceptual framework of the Islamists' transition and why this framework could be appropriate to Hamas' transition from 2003 to 2013. The chapter will navigate how the transition of Islamists has been observed, analyzed and evaluated as well as helping to understand Hamas' transition between 2003 and 2013.

Chapter two is a historical review of how the concept of resistance is perceived, developed and practiced by Hamas in a wider historical context (1920s - 2000). How Hamas' transition and its concept of resistance are related to Palestinian history will be examined in this chapter. The first section uncovers how the concept of resistance emerged and developed in the periods from the British Mandate in Palestine to the outbreak of the first Intifada (1920s-1987). The second section analyzes the features of Hamas'

transition in the new environment during the Oslo Peace Process (1993-2000), and ways in which Hamas adjusted its tactics to this adverse condition. The final section concludes with the implication of Hamas' transition from a historical perspective.

Part II: Political transformation and engagement

As has been said, Hamas' political transformation and engagement is associated with the concept of resistance. During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas gradually constructed the concept of resistance into a holistic project known as the 'resistance project'. The resistance project was not an actual archive or a well-planned paper in written form but Hamas leaders frequently addressed the public on why resistance against the Israeli occupation and aggression is indispensable. Therefore, the analysis and evaluation of how Hamas constructed and implemented its resistance project in the political field will be dealt with in Part II.

Chapter Three, the first of the main parts of the thesis, will analyze how Hamas constructed the resistance project during the al-Aqsa Intifada, and the decisive factor that drove Hamas' Palestinian political integration. The process of Hamas' political transformation will be analyzed in five sections. The first will present the background of the emergence of the resistance project during the al-Aqsa Intifada. The second section will examine the main content of the resistance project. The third section will articulate the process of how Hamas shifted its tactics from military operations to ceasefire and toward possible political integration in the Palestinian Authority. The fourth section will elaborate how, after Yasser Arafat's death at the end of 2004 Hamas grasped the opportunity to legitimatize its political participation that was compatible with its principle of resistance. The last section aims to elucidate the implications of Hamas' political transformation.

Chapter Four, the second main part of the thesis, examines how the Hamas combined its policy of resistance with governance particularly after its political split with Fatah in 2007. This chapter will be divided into four sections. The first section will analyze the factors of the polarization of Palestinian politics after Hamas formed a new government and the evaluation of Hamas'

government before its takeover of Gaza. The second section will present how Hamas institutionalized its resistance concept in governing Gaza for the first time after the political division with Fatah in June 2007. The third section will demonstrate the process of ways in which the Arab Spring enhanced Hamas' confidence in its resistance and explore why this fulfilment was ephemeral after the military coup in Egypt in July 2013. The final section will evaluate Hamas' overall political engagement with regard to its resistance project.

Part III: Conclusion

Part III is the conclusion of the thesis. In this section the major arguments of the previous chapters will be summarized and the findings will be presented. In addition, this section will indicate potential or further research that is outside the scope of this thesis.

Part I Approaching the transition of the Islamists and the Study of Hamas' transition

Part I that is, the foundation of the thesis, consists of two chapters. Chapter One outlines two main approaches, the essential and pluralist approaches to the conceptions of the transition of Islamists. This chapter will examine: the reasons why the essentialist approach is not suitable for analyzing the transition of Islamists, how the pluralist approaches that observe, analyze and evaluate the transition of Islamists from various angles could help to understand Hamas' transition. Chapter Two places Hamas' transition and its concept of resistance in a wider Palestinian historical context from the 1920s to 2000 in order to realize the implication of Hamas' transition from the historical perspective.

Chapter One: The Conceptual Framework: The transition of Islamists

1. Introduction: The transition of Islamists

This chapter is aimed at shaping a conceptual framework for the transition of Islamists. 'Islamists' are usually described as a certain group of Muslims who are anti-modernity and who espouse a revolutionary idea regarding a dramatic change in the current political system in order to create an ideal Islamic state.[41] Islamists started to occupy the headlines in the West after the time of the Iranian revolution in 1979.[42] Since then, Islamists were presented as hostile and intolerant, an image which contradicted the concepts of modernity such as liberalism, democratization, gender equality and pluralism. The September 11 attacks in 2001 further strengthened this impression. Images of Islamists are easily connected with violence, radicalization and fanaticism. As a matter of fact, Islamists are not monolithic and homogenous groups. Instead, Islamists in different countries have various manifestations and have even experienced different stages of transition in response to the modernity.

Before discussing the transition of Islamists, it would be useful to offer a definition of Islamists. James Piscatori, who specialized in the subject argues that 'Islamists are Muslims who are committed to political action to implement what they regard as an Islamic agenda and have routinely participated in most of these elections. They have engaged in the kind of tactical political calculations that are common to other groups.'[43] That is to say, Islamists are a certain group of Muslims involved in politics and not every Muslim is included in this category.

In general the argument about the transition of Islamists is related to whether Islamists have abandoned the original ideology of creating an Islamic

[41] See Barry Rubin (ed.), *Political Islam, Critical concepts in Islamic Studies, Volume 1, Introduction to Political Islam: Ideas and Key issues* (London: Roultedge, 2007), pp.1-14.

[42] *Ibid*., p.2.

[43] James Piscatori, *Islam, Islamists, and the electoral principle in the Middle East* (Leiden: ISIM, 2000), p.2.

state, restoration of *sharia* or discussions concerning the ways Islamists experienced transition. Usually, two types of approaches, the essentialist and the pluralist, represent two contrasting perspectives that observe, analyze and evaluate Islamists' transitions. The essentialist approach pays much attention to a monolithic level and assumes that Islamic movements are homogenous in essence.[44] Islamists, in this approach, are characterized as holding a belief in immutability, are anti-modernity and anti-pluralism. The transition of Islamists is incomplete until Islamists abandon their own ideology and embrace a 'universal value', which refers to Western democracy, market economy and separation of church and state.[45]

Conversely, the pluralist approaches suggest that Islamists could accept the concepts of the modernity through the transitions.[46] Although the pluralist approaches have diverse views and used various theories on the transition of Islamists, it seems that these approaches reveal common grounds. Most research in the pluralist approaches show that the transition of the Islamists took place within local and specific contexts; as Khaled Hroub argues, 'an enormous corpus of scholarly literature have contextualized the rise of Islamism in the 20th century but the key argument of all these approaches is that Islamism is highly responsive to contextual conditions'.[47] In this respect, the transition of Islamists is shaped by a specific context rather than by their fixed ideological foundation.[48] Following this contextualizing approach, most pluralists are inclined to view the transition of Islamists as a modern trend. For

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[44] Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic political identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 17.

[45] Jeroen Gunning, *Re-thinking Western Constructs of Islamism: Pluralism, Democracy and the theory and Praxis of the Islamic movement in the Gaza Strip,* PhD Thesis (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, University of Durham, 2000), p.13.

[46] Unlike the essential approach, the pluralist approach is interdisciplinary including a contextualizing approach, constructivism, historical narratives, sociological and political economy approach, Islamic revival and Marxist theory…etc. See Khaled Hroub (ed.), *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology* (London: London Middle East Institute, 2010). Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic political identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.20. Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), pp. 6-7. Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.1-25. Cihan Tuğal, 'Islamism in Turkey: Beyond Instrument and Meaning,' *Economy and Society*, Vol. 31, No.1 (February 2002), p. 87.

[47] Khaled Hroub (ed.), *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*, *op.cit*., p.14.

[48] *Ibid*., p.9.

example, Peter Mandaville points out that modernity paved the way for the emergence of Islamism after the formation of the nation-state in the Middle East. He uses the term 'New Islamists' referring to the shift of Islamists who gradually accept concepts of modernity such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law unlike their predecessors.[49] James Piscatori and Dale Eickelman make a similar observation and highlight that Islamists invent tradition in terms of making use of Islamic language and symbols in a flexible interpretation in order to constitute an image of the ideal Muslim Society.[50] In their critique on the traits of modernity such as secularization and globalization, Islamists utilize parts of the Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's sayings to guide them and help them to overcome challenges.

Much of the literature of the pluralist approaches addresses the Islamists' outward displays as an indication of transition. Islamists are viewed as a modern phenomenon, disengaged from the Islamic tradition and history. Islamists invent 'tradition' by exploiting the concepts of modernity such as nationalism, democracy and civil society for the sake of their political and religious aims. To some extent, there is no denying that the Islamists' transition is to adjust to the repercussions of modernity formed in the 20th century. However, behind the discussion in some pluralist approaches' literature of how Islamists adapt to modernity, lies the possibility that they are inspired and motivated by the concept of an Islamic revival. In this sense, the concept of the Islamic revival may help us to gain an insight into to why the transition matters to Islamists and how Islamists see themselves in transition.

In view of this, a conceptual framework for the transition of Islamists from the pluralist approaches will be provided. Before scrutinizing the transition of Islamists in the pluralist approaches, the essentialist approach will be examined in order to explain why this approach is not suitable for the analysis of the transition of Islamists.

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[49] Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.96-103.

[50] Dale F Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp.16-21.

2. The Essentialist approach to the transition of Islamists

The essentialist approach to Islamists plays a dominant and influential role in the Western media and academia.[51] For the essentialist approach, Islamism as a reactionary ideology started in the 1930s and reached a climax in the Iranian revolution in 1979. Since then, Islamism has created uncertainty and threatened Western civilization.[52] After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several vital and serious events involving Islamists, such as the electoral victory of the Islamist FIS in Algeria, terrorist attacks by radical Islamists in Egypt and the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre, validate the assumption that the Islamist is a menace.[53] Furthermore, these chaotic images were disseminated by the media as well as endorsed by think tanks and scholars that delivered the message that in essence, Islamists are violent, reactionary and intolerant of democratic and free values.[54] This type of discourse on Islamists was exacerbated after the September 11 attacks in 2001. With the global 'war on terror' and the spillover effects of 'the clash of civilization', the impression that Islamists carry out terrorist attacks all over the world and are the biggest threat to Western civilization, has been normalized. In this vein, Islamists whether 'moderate' or 'radical', inherently retain the character of extremism and a rejection of Western values.[55]

2.1 The critique on the essentialist approach

The incompatibility between modernity and Islamist is the recurring theme in the essentialist discourse. Bernard Lewis, who is one of the leading figures stresses that freedom, liberalism, the separation of religion and politics, and citizenship are alien concepts to Muslim societies and absent in Islamic

[51] Maria do Ceu Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States: A study of U.S policy towards Islamist movements in the Middle East* (Reading: Ithaca, 1999), p.161.

[52] Barry Rubin (ed.), *Political Islam: Critical concepts in Islamic studies, Volume 1, Introduction to Political Islam: Ideas and Key issues*, *op.cit.,* p.21.

[53] Maria do Ceu Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States: A study of U.S policy towards Islamist movements in the Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.184.

[54] *Ibid.,* p.187.

[55] Daniel Pipes holds this view. See Maria do Ceu Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States: A study of U.S policy towards Islamist movements in the Middle East, op.cit.,* p.174.

history and culture until westernization in the 19th century.[56] The essentialist approach sounds convincing, with plenty of solid evidences, but this approach could be seen as a continuation of the 'Orientalist' tradition, as Edward Said describes, 'Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient[57]' and 'To dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title ''contribution to modern learning'' when the native had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the native…'[58] It could be said that despite the fact that the western colonization in the Middle East does not actually exist, Ethnocentrism, Euro-centrism and Western cultural imperialism are still embedded in this essentialist mindset.'[59]

In this respect, the essentialist approach might not be applicable to the analysis of Islamists. The reasons are as follows. The first critique on the essentialist approach is the generalization and reduction of Islamists. The essentialist approach lumps all Islamists into a homogenous category even though there is a distinction between moderate and radical: their essence remains the same, that is, in a rejection of the Western and modern values.[60] Emad Eldin Shahin disagrees with this argument. He states that it is true that the two cultures are obviously different, deriving from two unique historical experiences but this difference might not lead to enmity but is recognized as diversity.[61] This observation seems to be valid. Each Islamic movement is unique and their development is largely determined by a specific context even though they share similar Islamic idioms.[62] It is true that radical and violent

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[56] See Bernard Lewis, 'A Historical overview,' in Larry Diamond, Marc Plattner and Daniel Brumberg (ed.), *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University press, 2003), pp.210-214; Bernard Lewis, *Faith and Power Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.50-52; pp.63-69.

[57] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), p.3.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.86.

[59] Larbi Sadiki, *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), p.61.

[60] Martin Kramer, 'The mismeasure of political Islam,' in Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Islamism debate* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1997), pp, 161-173.

[61] Emad Eldin Shahin, *Political Ascent contemporary Islamic Movements in North Africa* (Oxford: Westview press, 1997), p.3.

[62] Mohammed Ayoob, 'Political Islam: Image and Reality,' *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 21. No.3 (Fall 2004), p.2.

Islamists damage the security and stability of the host country and terrify the West but the phenomenon of radicalization is not purely derived from a religious ideology as the essentialist claims. The radicalization of Islamists is due to the deprivation, dispossession and foreign interventions as Francois Burgat argues, 'the West's decades-long unswerving support for tyrannical dictatorships have fostered in their populations a sentiment of deep despair, favorable to the most extreme forms of revolt.' [63] In fact, a great number of Islamic movements mainly engage in domestic affairs in a non-violent way and aim for a transformation of societies through constitutional and incremental means.[64] Most Islamists are willing to reconcile their political ideology with the Western democratic system but the West seems to prefer to support an authoritarian stance rather than democratization in this region due to the geopolitical calculations, governed by the factors such as oil reserves, the security of Israel and stability in the region.[65] John Esposito notes that Islamic groups are various and flexibly interpret Islam within specific country contexts, far from a monolithic reality.[66] Joel Beinin and Joe Stork have a similar argument. They concur that Islamists, by and large, accept the territorial and political framework of existing states and economic foundations.[67]

The second critique is that the essentialist approach often sets up or dominates specific agendas in the academy and mainstream media, such as issues concerning whether Islam is compatible with modernity, the question of Islamization and the status of women, minority and non-Muslim, which often stir contentious debates. Those debates are not less important than many that Islamists have tackled since 1990s but the problem for the essentialists is that they aim to target Islamists as reactionary and inflexible groups rather than

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[63] Francois Burgat, Patrick Hutchinson (transl.), *Islamism in the shadow of al-Qaeda* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), p.3.

[64] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and politics in the Muslim World*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p.17.

[65] Larbi Sadiki, *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses, op.cit.,* pp.354-356.

[66] John Esposito, (ed.), *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), p.4.

[67] Please refer to Joel Beinin, and Joe Stork (ed.), *Political Islam Essays from Middle East Report* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p.4.

analyzing Islamist discourse on sensitive agenda, case by case. For example, during the Arab Spring (2011-2013), the question of 'Islamization' was a prominent theme in the essentialist approach when the Muslim Brotherhood took power in Egypt. The essentialists seemed to indicate that this 'Islamization' was a fundamental problem of the polarization of society and a possible threat to Western and Israeli stability. But this type of analysis seems to be cursory. The accurate explanation for the causes underlying the polarization of society, and whether Islamists actually 'Islamize' the state were missed by the essentialists.[68]

The third critique is that the essentialist ignores the fact that Islamists are embedded in a specific context and are an integral part of the local society and history. Essentialists tend to believe that 'Islamism' or 'Islamists' are transient phases. Like Marxism and pan-Arabism, Islamism as a certain ideology may fail at great cost.[69] But they failed to predict the outbreak of the Arab Spring that brought the ascendancy of Islamists. The phenomenon of mass demonstrations and the rise of Islamism in politics across the Arab countries surprised essentialists. This deficiency is attributed to their narrow political history as power relations were always at the top of their analysis, while the vast majority of people who live in this region were not their major concern.[70] As a result, they failed to predict the aspirations, hopes and expectations of the people. The rise of Islamists in politics might reflect this trend. It indicates that Islamists are not abnormal or an exception but are an integral part of their society. The rise of the Salafists in Egypt was also one of the issues that essentialists were unaware of. The Salafists won 20 per cent of the seats in parliament which surprised many experts and even the local liberal. Shadi Hamid argues that Salafists were already there and had been for some time. The reason why Salafists were invisible was due to their political quietism during the Mubarak period. Meanwhile, to some extent, the

[68] Shadi Hamid has a sophisticated analysis on the polarization of Egyptian and Tunisian politics during the Arab Spring. See Shadi Hamid, *Temptation of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp.140-205.

[69] Martin Kramer, 'Fundamentalist Islam at large: The driving for power,' *The Middle East Quarterly,* Vol. III, No.2 (June 1996), pp.37-49.

[70] Ilan Pappe, *The Modern Middle East: A social and cultural history* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp.326-327.

Egyptian society has become a 'Salafist' society as Salafist TV channels are the most popular and Salafist social activities have integrated into society.[71]

In short, the essentialist approach suggests that Islamists are revolutionary and reactionary and that it is unlikely that they would fulfill the universal values of democracy, freedom and pluralism due to their incompatibility with modernity. In this sense, there are no serious and deep discussions and arguments on the transition of Islamists from the essentialist perspective. In contrast, the pluralist approaches usually observe, analyze and evaluate the transition of Islamists from various angles which reveals different picture and even comes to the opposite conclusion to the essentialists. In this approach, Islamists are not inflexible but dynamic and may evolve in their ideas and practices.

3. The Pluralist approaches to the transition of Islamists

Unlike the essentialist approach, the pluralist approaches treat Islamists as heterogeneous groups rather than a homogenous group due to their long-term empirical, investigative and personal observation on Islamists. That is, pluralists do not put all Islamists in the same basket. Since the 1990s, Islamists who believe that modernity is not contradictory to Islam have adjusted their political discourse and are willing to align with non-Islamist parties and authoritarian regimes. It could be argued that the discussion above relating to the transition of Islamists in the pluralist approaches revolves around the topics of how modernity propelled them to change and how they adapted to modernity. Under the umbrella of modernity, the transition of Islamists can usually be observed in three major aspects: nationalism, democracy and civil society, indicating that most Islamists who have moved away from the violent option have suspended or abandoned the idea of an Islamic state shaped by a compulsion to adapt to modernity.[72] Apart from the above analysis, the concept of an Islamic revival could provide Islamists with an insight into their transition. The concept of an Islamic revival

[71] Shadi Hamid, *Temptation of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.20.

[72] Sami Zubaida, *Beyond Islam: A new understanding of the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p.109.

is an important theme in contemporary Islamic movements. The definition and principle of an Islamic revival as well as the implications of an Islamic revival in the modern context for Islamists will be discussed later. The next section is divided into four issues, that is, the analyses of the transition of Islamists in association with nationalism, democracy, civil society and the concept of Islamic revival. The conceptual framework for the transition of Islamists could also illustrate the transition of Hamas in a broader sense.

3.1 The transition of Islamists and nationalism

The emergence of Islamists in the 1920s originally reacted to the concept of nationalism derived from modernity originating in the West. Islamists considered nationalism and modernity had a negative implication for Muslim society since the late 18th century.[73] Modernity has an implication of the increasing penetration of European ideas as a universal value that fragments the structure of tradition in Muslim societies. Accordingly, traditional Muslim society has faced dramatic changes in the spheres of society, economic and politics. The demise of the Caliphate in 1924 as well as the making of the modern state in the Middle East designed by Britain and France brought about the identity predicament for Muslim communities. In response to this crisis in the Muslim world, in 1928, Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood which is considered to be the first prototypical modern Islamic movement. [74] Al-Banna advocated the Islamic reform with the combination of the modern sciences and technology against the Western economic, political and military ascendancy.[75]

Unlike the West where modernity usually leads to political democracy and religious pluralism in the public place, modernity in the context of the Muslim society seems to be Western domination in the early 20th Century. Furthermore, the concept of modernity remained a negative implication for Islamists after independence. To Arab societies, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, modernity usually referred to an experience of repression and

[73] Sami Zubaida, *Beyond Islam: A new understanding of the Middle East*, *op.cit*., p.91.

[74] Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam*, *op.cit.,* p.49.

[75] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution an Islamist movement* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), p.22.

assault on Islamists and even Islam.[76] In this period, many Arab countries experienced a series of coup d'états that transformed government and political structure.[77] The spread of pan-Arab nationalism and socialism overwhelmed Islamism's concern. As a result, the function of the religious principle which sustained the social order gradually declined under these authoritarian regimes.[78]

Paradoxically, the development of modernity by the authoritarian regimes contributed to an Islamic resurgence in the Arab world during the 1970s and 1980s partly due to declining Arab nationalism and socialism.[79] Although the secular nationalist leaders were wary of Islamists who were seen as a potential political opponent, they continued to preserve the necessity of Islam as a source of stability in society. Numbers of mosques and *madrasas* were built and due to improved transport, communication and accessible books, people had more opportunity to learn and adhere to their faith.[80] From this perspective, modernity for Islamists and society was not entirely a negative effect. That is to say, modernity that used to be a foreign notion to the Muslim society has been part of society. 'Islamic modernity' is a term that Sami Zubaida uses to elaborate this phenomenon. Islamic modernity according to his definition 'is not the product of cultural influences, imitations and invasion form the West, but the consequence of transformations of social relations, powers and authorities brought about by sweeping socio-economic forces'.[81]

The acceptance of nationalism in Islamists' discourse reflects the concept of Islamic modernity. In the past, the restoration of the Caliphate was

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[76] Tariq Ramadan, *The Arab awakening: Islam and the New Middle East* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), pp.81-83.

[77] Sami Zubaida, *Beyond Islam: A new understanding of the Middle East*, *op.cit.*, p.102.

[78] Ejaz Akram, 'The Muslim world and Globalization: Modernity and the roots of conflict,' in Joseph Lumbard (ed.), *Islam fundamentalism and the betrayal of tradition: Essays by Western Muslim scholars* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2004), p.243.

[79] Philip Sutton and Stephen Vertigans, *Resurgent Islam: A Sociological approach* (Cambridge: Polity press, 2005), p.177.

[80] Robert Hefner (ed.), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) pp.18-20.

[81] Sami Zubaida, *Beyond Islam: A new understanding of the Middle East*, *op.cit.*, p.5.

the pressing issue. From 1924 to 1926, Muslim scholars took different perspectives on how to reshape Islamic political institutions after the Caliphate.[82] This is because nationalism for Islamists was a man-made invention as well as an obstacle to the unity of *ummah*. As a matter of fact, this concept is not always the case. The unity of *ummah* seems to be a secondary issue for Islamists. On the one hand, nationalism is adopted and elaborated as a resistance and liberation discourse when Islamists resist foreign intervention.[83] On the other hand, for most Islamists who follow the thought of the Muslim Brotherhood, they have already accepted the framework of the nation-state as they aim to participate in political elections and take a non-confrontational stance towards the authoritarian regime.

In sum, Islamists have accepted or acquiesced to the concept of nationalism, the product of modernity. Getting rid of the concept is not their aim. The attention could be focused on how Islamists reconcile with this concept into their Islamic agenda in order to engage with other non-Islamist groups, the authoritarian regime and the West.

3.2 The transition of Islamists and democracy

Other discussion in the literature of pluralists is why democracy is essential for the transition of Islamists. From the essentialist point of view Islamists who have a vision of the creation of an Islamic state in accordance with *sharia* as an immutable legislative source would inevitably clash with the democratic values.[84] The September 11 attacks in 2001, the US' invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the recent ISIS phenomenon have intensified this discourse while the assumption has been challenged by the pluralist literature.

In the pluralist literature, Islamists do not always challenge the status quo by force. For those Islamists who incline towards political participation via election there is no major contradiction between Islam and modern

[82] Abdelwahab El-Affendi, 'Umma, State and Movements: events that shaped the Modern Debate' in Khaled Hroub (ed.), *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*, *op.cit,* pp.24-26.

[83] Ilan Pappe, *The Modern Middle East, op.cit.,* pp. 4-5.

[84] Gudrun Kramer, 'Islamist Notions of Democracy,' in Joel Beinin and Stork (ed.), *Political Islam* essays *from Middle East Report*, op.cit., p.71.

democratic values.[85] They believe that democratization in the Muslim countries is crucial to achieving social justice, human rights, and sustainability of economy, polity and society as long as this democratization is not contrary to Islamic values.[86] As a matter of fact, the concept of democracy has been elaborated in the circle of Islamists. Rashid al-Ghannushi, the founder of al-Nahda party in Tunisia, contends that democracy is an intrinsic part of Islam. He argues that, 'democracy is not for export (from the West): wholesale exportation of democracy entails imposing a whole host of values and practices that could endanger indigenous values'.[87] In other words, Islamists themselves have a set of discourses on democracy that distinctly differs with western discourse. When Islamists talk about democracy, the usage of Islamic terminology is imperative and rational since Muslims believe that Islam is not only a religious but also a way of life, encompassing all levels of politics, economics, social issues and culture, etc. Contrary to western democracy, which strictly adheres to the principle of secularization, Islamic democracy takes the view that the unity of God and the role of Quran have a fundamental and non-negotiable position.[88] To put it another way, Islamists have a right to borrow from non-Muslim ideas, methods and systems as long as these compositions do not contradict the principle of *sharia*.[89] *sharia*, the Islamic law, is considered an immutable legislative source based on the Qur'an and the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim jurists formulated laws according to the principles of *sharia*, which is unchangeable; nevertheless, political systems could take many forms symbolizing these spirits that do not contravene this doctrine.[90]

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[85] Islamists largely agrees that the Western democracy is not incompatible with the Islamic values. But when it comes to the concept of individualism and secularism, Islamists are concerned the applicability of the values in Muslim society. See Larbi Sadiki, *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses, op.cit.,* pp.366-368.

[86] *Ibid.,* pp.322-323.

[87] Quoted from Larbi Sadiki, *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses, op.cit.,* p.320.

[88] *Ibid*., p.77

[89] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, 'Islam and Democracy,' in Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (ed.), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought texts and contexts from al Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p.237.

[90] Sayed Khatab and Gary D. Bouma, *Democracy in Islam*. (London: Routledge, 2007), p.16.

It seems that *sharia* plays a crucial role when Islamists become involved in politics. Islamists believe that an ideal state is in accordance with *sharia*. However, in practice, this is not always the case. From 1980 onwards, the mainstream Islamist movement such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan was inclined to democratic orientation and started to participate in elections. Campaigning for the application of *sharia* was the top priority in their political agenda. [91] But in the 1990s under the authoritarian regime's repression they did not insist on this topic and were inclined to take a democratic approach. This shift of the Brotherhood in policy was because the authoritarian regime was suspicious of the Brotherhood and launched massive arrests in 1990s. To protect themselves, the Brotherhood chose not to confront the government and remained moderate.[92] In 2004 and 2005, the Brotherhood's discourse in Jordan and Egypt underwent a major shift from the original religious rhetoric to the notion of a civil state, good governance, and political reform which was a breakthrough. It is worth noting that over three decades, the Brotherhood has experienced a remarkable evolution in behaviour, rhetoric or even ideology to some extent. The implementation of *sharia* is rarely heard from this Islamist discourse.[93]

It can be said that the implementation of *sharia* or the creation of an Islamic state is not the Islamists' pressing concern. Francois Burgat states that Islamists' rhetoric has been diluted, gradually reconciled with liberal values and co-operates with secularist ideas.[94] In other words, gradualism is a characteristic in Islamists when they involve in politics and society. By means of a ballot box and non-governmental institutions in civil society, Islamists obtain massive assistance from intellectuals, businessmen and grassroots grounds and they realize that confrontation with non-Islamists is fruitless; most of which has changed their discourse toward democracy, human right and rule of law.[95]

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[91] Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.71.

[92] *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

[93] *Ibid.*, pp.88-133.

[94] Francois Burgat, *Face to Face with political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), pp.162-174

[95] Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam*, *op. cit*., pp. 103-104.

Regarding this phenomenon in the transition of Islamists, Asef Bayat raises the new term of 'Post-Islamism' indicating that Islamists would experience a qualitative shift once they stand firmly in politics. Because faced by societal pressure and their internal contradictions, Islamists may suspend certain principles and depart from the underlying ideological package toward integration of religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty.[96] But there is another argument for the observation of the transition of Islamists. Although most moderate Islamists do not campaign for the implementation of *sharia* as an urgent issue, it does not mean that Islamists are entirely remote from their original ideology.[97] For the issue of non-Muslim minorities, gender and enforcement of *hudud* (the criminal law in *sharia*), Islamists may continue to hold ambiguous positions.[98] Shadi Hamid elaborates that this ambiguity of Islamists on certain issues is attributed to the Islamists' orientation toward illiberal democracy. Hamid argues that Islamists were Islamists for a reason. They were open to democracy, human rights and pluralism but they weren't liberals in disguise; the restoration of society as a religious duty toward the Islamic way of living is not defined in the framework of liberalism.[99] Hamid argues that the transition of Islamists may be considered to be a tactic for their survival and protection under the authoritarian regime.[100] As we saw during the Arab Spring, after the downfall of the dictatorship, the Brotherhood was not as cautious as usual when it won parliamentary and presidential elections. The role of *sharia* in the constitution became the major contentious debate between Islamists and Secularists. Apart from that, Islamists-led government in Egypt and Tunisia could not really bring sustainability to economic development, social and political stability after revolution.[101] To

[96] Asef Bayat, 'Islam and Democracy: What is the real question?' *ISIM Paper 8* (Leiden: Amsterdam University press, 2007), pp.18-20.

[97] Nathan Brown., A. Hamzawy and M. Ottaway, 'Islamist Movements and the Democratic process in the Arab world: Exploring the Gray Zones', *Carnegie Pappers*, No. 67 (March 2006), p.6.

[98] *Ibid.,*p.8.

[99] Shadi Hamid, *Temptation of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* pp.187-188.

[100] *Ibid.,* p.50.

[101] This is not to say that the social unrest, economic degeneration and political disability In Tunisia and Egypt were all the falut of Islamists. The antagonism of secularists, the suspicion

some extent, it could be said that the temptation of power, as Hamid contends, may distort the Islamist's democratic credit as they used to claim.[102]

To sum up, election through a democratic process is likely to be a significant impetus for the Islamists' transition as Islamists have accepted democracy as an intrinsic part of their political agenda. Islamists' discourse on democracy is not inflexible and monolithic. The concept of democracy could be easily integrated into the Islamists' political agenda as long as it is not contrary to *sharia*. But in reality, Islamist discourse has changed according to the local political climate. When the authoritarian regime restricts Islamists' activities in politics, Islamists tend to shift their policy for their political survival. But when there is a regime change such as the Arab Spring, they tend to fulfill their original commitment via democratic election.

3.3 The transition of Islamists and civil society

Another factor that affects the Islamists' transition in politics is the role that Islamic civil institutions play in Muslim society. Islamic civil institutions have a long-standing history and retain a pivotal role in providing material and spiritual support for the masses, particularly in a crisis.[103] Pluralist literature indicates that civil society has already appeared in the pre-modern Muslim society. As for the essentialist argument that civil society as a modern concept did not exist in traditional Muslim society, as a matter of fact, non-states actors were rather active and prosperous throughout Islamic history. For example, the function of Islamic scholars (*Ulama*) played an important role in pre-modern society. Forming a consensus and a process of legislation in civil society before the 19th century was a task for the *Ulama* who were autonomous and their authority derived from society, not from rulers.[104] *Ulama* outside a state's control exerted efforts in applying *sharia* in the defense of

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of the West and the factor of 'deep state' were other considerations that the Islamists' commitment failed to fulfil.

[102] Shadi Hamid, *Temptation of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.162.

[103] For example, civil societies in Lebanon and Kuwait support many Lebanese and Kuwaiti citizens at home and abroad during the crisis. See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Civil society and prospects of democratization in the Arab world,' in Augustus Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East, Vol.1* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), p.43.

[104] *Ibid.,* p.55.

people's rights. Ahmad Moussalli, a leading expert in Muslim civil society, has contended that, 'when a legal opinion of a scholar became widely accepted in society, it became a part of the legislative compendium of the community that the government had to honor and fulfill. This is why Muslims did not formalize legislative processes separate from political authority until the 19th century…'.[105] Apart from the function of the *Ulama* in civil society, various actors also contributed to traditional Muslim society. In the past, the Sufi orders, charitable endowment (*waqf*), guild and merchants associations, non-Muslim minorities, Christian and Jewish, all co-existed and had special roles.[106] These non-state actors enjoyed autonomous status in running their internal affairs and often kept harmonious relations with the ruler.[107] In this respect, civil society in Islamic history could be seen as a pluralistic and tolerant society.

But the traditional form of civil society had fragmented since the late 19th century due to the western penetration of Arab-Muslim society[108] and by the 1920s was deeply affected by the appearance of the modern state.[109] A top-down form of a modernization largely marginalized long-established practices and traditions.[110] To make matters worse, from the 1950s to the 1960s the nationalist regimes that promoted modernization either banned or restricted autonomy of Islamic civil institutions on social issues[111] but they failed to address the various social and economic problems that most countries in the third world experienced.[112] In this sense, the Islamic movements filled the gap

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[105] Ahmad Moussalli, 'Modern Islamic fundamentalist discourse on Civil Society, Pluralism and Democracy' in Augustus Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East Vol.1*, *op.cit*., p. 85

[106] Mohammad Kamali, *Shari'ah law: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008) pp.216.-217.

[107] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Civil Society and prospects of democratization in the Arab world,' in Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, *op.cit.,* pp.31-32.

[108] *Ibid*., p.32.

[109] Ahmad Moussalli, 'Modern Islamic fundamentalist discourse on Civil Society, Pluralism and Democracy' in Augustus Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East Vol.1*, *op.cit*., p.87.

[110] Harmsen Egbert, *Islam, Civil Society and social work: Muslim Voluntary Welfare Associations in Jordan between patronage and Empowerment* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), p. 61.

[111] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Civil Society and prospects of democratization in the Arab world,' in Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East, op.cit.,* p.37.

[112] Islah Jad, *Women ar the cross-roads: The Palestinian women's movement between Nationalism, Secularism and Islamism*, PhD Thesis (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 2004), p.218.

that the regime was unable to undertake, for example, to care for the needy. It can be said that the Islamic civil institutions play the same role as other non-Islamic and secular civil institutions in sustaining the social order. Islamic civil institutions' work is no different than non-Islamic and secular civil institutions since they share the same values of civility and tolerance as well as the roles of independent entities compensating for the deficiencies of the state.[113]

Islamic civil institutions, whether affiliated to Islamists or not, may catalyze Islamists' pragmatism and evolution when they prepare to participate in elections. Islamic civil institutions share the same values and aspirations with Islamists. All believe that Islamic teaching motivates them to serve in society. Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, indicates that the first step to Islamic revival is a spiritual awakening among individuals.[114] Therefore, social service such as the improvement of public health, education and medical care could help individuals to become 'sound Muslims'.[115] This is not to say that Islamists mobilize people in terms of providing social services to benefit their political agenda. In fact, social service is not necessarily an instrumental exchange. According to multiple research works, Islamic civil institutions enjoy autonomy from Islamists' domination. Islamic civil institutions are not a political and ideological tool utilized by Islamists.[116] Instead, Islamic civil institutions demonstrate professionalism and good quality service to people from various backgrounds. The reputation and credibility of Islamic civil institutions create a sense of belonging to a community with an emphasis on the community's well-being and civil

[113] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit.,* p.51.

[114] Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.234.

[115] *Ibid.,* p. 283-291.

[116] Sara Roy, *Hamas and civil society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist social sector*, *op.cit.,* p.187. International Crisis Group, 'Islamic Social Welfare Activism in the occupied Palestinian Territories: A legitimate target,' *ICG Middle East Report*, (2 April 2003), p.21. Steven Brooke, 'Why do Islamists provide social services,' *Middle East Political Science*, (31 January 2014), <http://pomeps.org/2014/01/31/why-do-islamists-provide-social-services/> (accessed on 15 May 2015). Melani Cammett, 'How Hezbollah helps (and what it gets out of it),' *The Washington Post*, (2 October 2014), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/15/islamists-and-their-charities/> (accessed on 15 May 2015).

restoration, rather than political violence and radicalization.[117] In this regard, the social service that the Islamic civil institution provides may help Islamists to realize the mass' priority needs and adjust their policy to meet public expectation when they engage in politics.[118]

3.4 The transition of Islamists and the concept of Islamic revival

From the analysis above, we can see that the transition of Islamists is a response and adaptation to the repercussions of modernity. For adaptation, Islamists claim that the concepts of modernity are not contradictory to the Islamic principle. In a sense, Islamists exploit Islamic reference and symbol to legitimate their causes in politics. It seems that Islamists invent 'traditions' in accordance with political agendas. However, there is another way of looking at the Islamists' motivation. Building a just and sustainable society free of corruption is always the Islamists' vision. To understand this mindset the concept of Islamic revival might help. The Islamic revival is considered to be a driving force behind the Islamists' work. The Islamic revival which is not an innovative idea could be found in Islamic tradition and history. Islamists motivated by this concept have confidence in overcoming any problems they encounter in the modern period. They adopt Islamic principles, such as the concept of *tajdid* (renewal), *islah* (reform), *Ijtihad* (reasoning), *maslaha* (public interest), *wasatiyyah* (middle way) to adapt to a changing circumstance. The Islamic revival that is less stressed in pluralist literature will be presented as a complementary aspect for the analysis of the transition of Islamists.

3.4.1 The connotations of the Islamic revival

From the mainstream Islamists' perspective, revolution that could bring chaos and unpredictability, and causing social and political turmoil is not a suitable option for Islamists. Rather, they tend to adopt a gradual and moderate approach to reform society. Reform has religious implications in Islam. It can be said that the foundation of Islamic revival is through reform.

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[117] Sara Roy, *Hamas and civil society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist social sector*, *op.cit.,* p. 53. Melani Cammett, 'How Hezbollah helps (and what it gets out of it),' *The Washington Post*, (2 October 2014), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/15/islamists-and-their-charities/> (accessed on 15 May 2015).

[118] Michael Irving Jensen, *The political ideology of Hamas: A grassroots perspective* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p.6.

According to Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said: 'God will send to this (Muslim) community, every hundred years, someone or some people who will renew its religion'.[119] This Hadith refers to a significant implication that when the Muslim society is in crisis and degradation, some Muslim reformer will appear and reform it based on the Islamic doctrine. Regarding reform in Islam, two concepts, *tajdid* and *islah*, need elaboration. *tajdid* refers to renewal or even rebirth and regeneration; as for *islah*, it refers to the idea of improving, purifying, reconciling, repairing and reforming. [120] The notions of *tajdjd* and *islah* are complementary and convey the same idea of reform whose aim is a just and ethic society.[121] It is noted that reform in Islam did not follow a parallel path of Christianity, which experienced religious reformation during the 16th and 17th centuries. Reform in Islam is not meant to remove Islamic essence as Tariq Ramadan states that if Islam follows Christianity's path, Islam would no longer be Islam.[122] The Islamic reform is undertaken in the name of ethics, the acquisition of a deep knowledge of the context and aims to master all areas of understanding.[123] The purpose of reform is to purify Muslims' faith and correct backwardness in society. Muslim scholars believe that the declining situation in Muslim society is not a flaw or imperfection within Islam but the people themselves or an un-Islamic system corrupts Islam; therefore a reformer will lead the Muslim community to rectify problems and remove falsehood in terms of restoring Islamic teaching.

In this respect, reform is the key to the Islamic revival. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926-) an Egyptian scholar based in Qatar, has further elaborated on the implications of Islamic reform. Before we look at his argument, it would be useful to overview al-Qaradawi's works on Islamic issues. He is probably the most influential Sunni Muslim scholar in the world and his many publications, translated into several languages, deal with various contemporary Islamic issues, including, Muslims in the West, the relationship

[119] Hadith reported by Abu Dawud.

[120] Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation*, *op.cit.,* p.12.

[121] *Ibid., op. cit.,* pp.13-14.

[122] Khalid Masud, *Islam and Modernity: Key issues and Debates* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. vi.

[123] Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation*, *op.cit.*, p.33.

between Sunni and Shitte, modernity and Islam, *sharia* and life, Palestine, Islamic movements and Western foreign policy in the Middle East. Apart from that, he speaks on Al-Jazeera and he has a website, *Islamonline* to spread his ideas to an audience of millions.[124] However he was a controversial figure when he sanctioned suicide attacks of Palestinians in Israel even though he condemned al-Qaeda's attack on 11th September.[125]

Islamic revival or Islamic awakening is a recurring theme that al-Qaradawi delivers to the Arab and Muslim world. He expands the concept of reform on an individual basis to the collective responsibility, indicating that the mission of Islamists is the revival of Islam for the sake of Allah.[126] He refuses the ideal of separation of Church and State as well as the terminology of Political Islam. Al-Qaradawi argues that the Western imperialists either promoted the idea that Islam has nothing to do with politics or that it misleads people into thinking that Islamists only seek power. Rather, his emphasis is on the idea of the 'comprehensiveness of Islam' in personal, family, social and political affairs.[127] In this sense, the Muslim Brotherhood could be seen as a model for reformists for the restoration of the comprehensiveness of Islam.[128] Al-Qaradawi has a close relation with the Brotherhood and he is considered to be a spiritual guide due to his intellectual and jurisprudential contribution.[129] Al-Qaradawi's thought, to a certain extent, guides the Brotherhood and other Islamists who are inclined towards political integration and democratic elections[130] as he argues that Islamists could learn skills from the western technologies and political systems as long as they do not contradict Islamic

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[124] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, 'Islam and Democracy,' in Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (ed.), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought texts and contexts from al Banna to Bin Laden*, *op.cit.,* p. 224.

[125] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit.,* p.251. Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op. cit*., p.52; pp.184-185.

[126] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Hasan al-Banna (transl.), *Priorities of the Islamic movement in the coming phase* (Swansea: Awakening Publications, 2002), p.6.

[127] Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *State in Islam* (Cairo: Al-Falah foundation, 2004), p.25.

[128] *Ibid.,* p.25.

[129] Israel Elad Altman, 'The Brotherhood and Shitte Quesiton,' in *Current Trends in Islamist ideology, Volume 9*, (Washington: Hudson Institute, 2009), p.54.

[130] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit.,* pp.58-59. Osama Aburishaid, *The Dialectic of Religion and Politics in Hamas' Thought and Practice,* PhD thesis, (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 2013), p.31.

values.[131] It could be said that the Islamists' transitions in politics and towards moderation is related to al-Qaradawi's thought.[132]

3.4.2 Reconsidering the concept of the Islamic revival in the modern context

As mentioned before, reform is the only way to achieve the Islamic revival. Motivated by the concept of reform in Islam, Islamists feel obliged to take on this leading role in Muslim communities. As Islam is the comprehensive and ultimate guidance, Islamists firmly believe that they could implement Islamic values under any circumstance. As Tariq Ramadan states, 'this renewal of religion does not entail a change in the sources, principles, and fundamentals of Islam, but only in the way the religion is understood, implemented, and lived in different times or places.'[133] But the crucial question is how do Islamists adapt to changing circumstances when they cannot find clear evidence from the Islamic texts? Perhaps, *Ijtihad* could provide a solution. *Ijtihad*, which literally means 'exerting oneself,' promotes a critical reading of texts when Muslim jurists are unable to locate explicit practices in *sharia*.[134] In the past, the person who has the ability to implement *Ijtihad* is called *Mujtahid.*[135] The spirit of *Ijtihad* contributed to the early development of the Islamic jurisprudence, since, due to the expansion of Islamic territories, Muslim scholars could not find a text or evidence in the Qur'an and Hadith which offered a precedent in dealing with complicated matters. A Muslim jurist, Abu Hanifah (669-767), the founder of the Hanafi School, exercised the principle of *Ijtihad* by looking at a particular issue when the scriptural sources failed to provide a solution.[136] Therefore, there is a rule that when a jurist exercises *Ijtihad*, he should retain the Islamic principles intact but the

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[131] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Hasan al-Banna (transl.), *Priorities of the Islamic movement in the coming phase, op.cit.,* p.33.

[132] Osama Aburishaid, *The Dialectic of Religion and Politics in Hamas' Thought and Practice, op.cit.,* pp.30-31.

[133] *Ibid*., p.12.

[134] *Ibid*., p.22.

[135] In traditional Islamic perspective, *Mujtahid*, a title of Muslim jurists who possess highest level of understanding *Sharia*, is the only one who has quality to exercise *Ijtihad.* Please refer to Tariq Ramadn, 'Ijtihad and Maslaha: The foundations of Governance,' in Muqtedar Khan (ed.), *Islamic Democratic Discourse* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), p.13.

[136] Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation*, *op.cit*., pp. 50-56.

relationship with the relevant culture, customs and social context could be different.[137]

It is noted that *Ijtihad* played an essential role in early Islamic jurisprudence up until the end of the 9th century. After that, *Ijtihad* was replaced by imitation (*taqlid*) which became the mainstream trend in Islamic jurisprudence. That is to say, most Muslim jurists did not exercise *Ijtihad* but merely followed the legal precedent in dealing with matters. [138] However, the tradition of following a legal precedent was questioned in the modern period; and, due to Western domination in Muslim society, Muslim scholars look at the possibility of *Ijtihad* to cope with unprecedented challenges. The application of *Ijtihad* in the modern period seems to be a prescription for Islamists but there are contrasting views about who has the right to implement it. Some Muslim scholars state that everyone has the right to access *Itjihad* and the right to oppose *Ijtihad* is solely to be monopolized by a special group.[139] Other Muslim scholars who adhere to the Islamic tradition express the opposite view, that the exercise of *Ijtihad* should require certain conditions and not everyone can undertake this mission. They believe that if Muslims do not have a professional knowledge of *sharia*, the emancipation of the interpretation of Islamic law is a dangerous thing, which could lead to disorder and fragmentation of Islamic principles.[140]

The contrasting arguments outlined above reflect the confusion and even disaster, experienced by the circle of Islamists. Reformists such as the Muslim Brotherhood who advocate reform, attempt to reconcile the concept of modernity with the Islamic values. They believe that moderation and gradualism is the proper way to reach an Islamic revival. Even though they

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[137] *Ibid*, p.97.

[138] Wael Hallaq, 'Was the Gate of Ijtihad closed?' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 16, No.1, (March 1984), p.3.

[139] Some modern Muslim scholars condemn that Muslim jurists dominate the right of *Ijtihad*, which is a barrier to the freedom of thought. Therefore, they advocate that everyone has right to exercise *Ijtihad*. Please refer to Abdullahi An-Na'im, 'A theory of Islam, state and society,' in K. Vogt., L. Larsen and C. Moe (ed.), *New Directions in Islamic Thought* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p.154 and Muqtedar Khan, *Islamic Democratic Discourse, op.cit.,* p.63.

[140] Ihsan Yilmaz, '*Ijtihad and Tajdid* by conduct: The Gulen Movement' in Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito (ed.), *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gulen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University press, 2003), pp. 215-217.

faced a crackdown by the local authoritarian government, they tended to avoid confrontation with the government. On the other hand, Jihadists who often overshadow the reformist voice take the opposite approach. They do not believe in the value of democracy and liberalism because these are man-made inventions and a deviation from Islam. As Western foreign policy has a negative effect on the Middle East, they consider the West as an enemy. Therefore, they believe that Jihad is the only way to change the status quo and to restore the glory of Islam. Therefore, the Jihadists' argument on democracy, liberalism and relations with the West is incompatible with the view of the reformist Islamists.

What should we make of the contrasting approaches between reformists and Jihadists? Theoretically, diversity in Islam is allowed, with a specific condition. Diversity with unity is a fundamental principle in Islamic jurisprudence. Many agree that Islam is one, but its texts allow multiple interpretations. In other words, unity is a basic principle, but there can be diversity regarding details.[141] According to this concept, disagreements in Islamic affairs are grounded in the spirit of tolerance and understanding. Any disagreement that leads to fighting, hatred, and fragmentation in the Islamic community is forbidden.[142] From this viewpoint, some Islamic groups who attack other Muslims seem to violate the harmony of juristic disagreements.[143]

Yusuf al-Qaradawi has further expanded on the radical thought of Jihadists. Isolation, radicalization and ideological orientation of Jihadists undermine the unity of Islam and are obstacles to the Islamic revival. He emphasizes that driven by ideology, radical Islamists, have misconceptions and misjudgment of Islamic affairs.[144] They tend to assume that they are the only Muslims who can interpret Islam but in fact they are isolated from other Islamic movements. Furthermore, al-Qaradawi disproves the assertion that radical Islamists legitimate their vicious actions in the light of the Qur'an and

[141] Mohammad Kamali, *Shari'ah law: An Introduction*, *op.cit.*, p.99.

[142] Ahmad Hammad, 'Understanding Juristic differences' in Riza Mohammed, and Dilwar Hussain (ed.), *Islam and the way of revival* (Leicestershire: Revival Publications, 2003), p.218.

[143] Mohammad Kamali, *Shari'ah law: An Introduction*, *op.cit.*, p.118.

[144] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Hasan al-Banna (transl.), *Priorities of the Islamic movement in the coming phase*, *op.cit.,* p.105.

Hadith. He quotes one Hadith which rejects radicalism: 'The banner of Islamic knowledge will be carried from one generation to the other by the moderates who defend it against the distortions of bigots, the claims of falsifier and the misinterpretation of the ignorant.'[145] In other words, moderation (*wasatiyyah*) or balance is a fundamental principle of the Islamic movements. Islamic texts remind believers to exercise moderation and to reject all kinds of extremism, such as excessiveness, meticulous religiosity and austerity.[146] In a similar manner, Tariq Ramadan shares this argument. He criticizes some of the Islamists who disregard the principles of *Ijtihad*, oversimplify the message of Islam, and merely imitate or duplicate an historical model without considering and evaluating the reality of conditions in their society.[147] Following the principle of diversity with unity in Islam, it can be argued that the Islamists who advocated reform were able to make a clear distinction between themselves and the radical Islamists by claiming that violent acts are un-Islamic and unethical according to the principle of the Islamic revival.

Nevertheless the biggest challenge that the reformists face today is that they failed to persuade non-Islamist actors about their Islamic agenda. It is true that the reformists such as the Brotherhood and other affiliated Islamist groups driven by the concept of the Islamic revival have endeavored to accommodate democracy, civil rights, and liberalism in coordination with Islamic values, and are willing to cooperate with non-Islamist actors and avoid confrontation with the authoritarian regimes. But for many who are suspicious of the Islamists' intention the goal of Islamists is not the Islamic revival but an act that serves self-interest or a hijacking of the whole country. This suspicion reached a peak when the Brotherhood faced an unprecedented crackdown by the Egyptian military with support from almost all of liberals after a coup d'état in July 2013. Overall, Islamist activism in politics looks bleak. Only Islamists in Turkey and Tunisia seem to have avoided a disturbing scenario. Despite this, it is still worth observing the future development of Islamists who are

[145] Yusuf Al Qaradawi, Anas Al Shaikh-Ali and Mohamed Wasti (transl.), *Islamic awakening between rejection and extremism* (London: Zain International, 1991), p.14.

[146] *Ibid*., pp.21-23.

[147] Tariq Ramadan, *Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation*, *op. cit*., p.18.

motivated by the concept of the Islamic revival since this concept also motivated Hamas' engagement in the social and political fields.

4. Conclusion

As mentioned above, we have examined the way that the essentialist and pluralist approaches observe, analyze and evaluate the transition of Islamists respectively. The essentialist approach, derived from the Orientalist tradition places all Islamists in the same category. That is, they carry a hidden and bigoted agenda threatening the security of the West and the stability of the host country. Therefore, the transition of Islamists is not a real issue in this approach. On the other hand, the pluralist approaches contextualize the Islamic movements through the accumulation of case studies with interdisciplinary training and analyze the transition of Islamists from the angles of modernity. In addition, the concept of the Islamic revival needs to be redefined and elaborated in a modern context in order to review the Islamists' motivation when they engage in political activities.

The conceptual framework for the Islamists' transition could realize Hamas' political transition between 2003 and 2013 as Hamas shares common features with other Islamists who accept the boundary of the nation-state, the value of democracy, pluralism in civil society and driven by the concept of Islamic revival. However, compared with other Islamists who are inclined towards political participation, Hamas could be considered a special case. As Palestine is under the Israeli occupation, Hamas' transition could be interrelated with resistance in the Palestinian context. The resistance has been a long-term process since the creation of Israel in 1948. Before understanding how Hamas leaned political transition from 2003 to 2013, it is necessary to review the cause for, and the development of resistance in a wider Palestinian historical context from the 1920s to 2000.

Chapter Two: Hamas' transition and its concept of resistance from the Palestinian historical perspective

Hamas' transition in politics from 2003 to 2013 is often placed within the current social, economic and political context. Broadly speaking, this feature of transition could be put in a wider historical context as well. Since Hamas won the PLC election in 2006, Israel and the West have urged Hamas to recognise Israel's right to exist and renounce violence; but Hamas have always defied this condition and stressed the necessity of resistance. As a consequence, an international sanction was immediately imposed on the Hamas-led government. It is worth noting here, that Hamas' policy has always been to reject Israel's legitimacy; and there was no sign that Hamas' leadership would recognise Israel at this stage. Perhaps, in order to understand Hamas' stance, it is necessary to return to the history of Islamists in Palestine before the creation of Hamas from the British Mandate in 1930s to the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000. The course of modern history in Palestine could enable us to contextualise Hamas' perspective for its insistence of resistance toward the Israeli occupation and its later political participation from 2003 to 2013.

1. Before the 1987 Intifada

This section 'Before the 1987 Intifada' will outline the history of Islamists in Palestine and development of concept of resistance prior to the creation of Hamas in 1987, corresponding to various phases such as: al-Qassam revolt in 1935, the Arab revolt between 1936 and 1939 during the British Mandate, the implications of Nakba after the creation of Israel in 1948, the Muslim Brotherhood's activities in Gaza between 1948 and 1987 and the emergence of Islamists in the occupied territories between 1970 and 1980.

1.1 The British Mandate (1920 - 1948)

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, in the early days of the British Mandate, Palestinians did not have a specific agenda of calling for creation of an Islamic state and they did not call for Jihad against Britain's

authority.[148] Instead, the Palestinian *a'ayan* (noble families), particularly Haj Amin al-Husayni, the mufti of Jerusalem as a leader, cooperated with the British authority to a large extent, and at the same time, attempted to change British policy in favour of the Zionists. The situation in Palestine was relatively quiet between November 1921 and August 1929, that is, there was no major confrontation between the Zionist settlers and Palestinians or Palestinians and the British authorities; but after 1929 unrest began to grow.[149] In the 1930s, the situation between Palestinians and the British authority was tense due to the British pro-Zionist policy. Following the release of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the end of World War I, the proportion of Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine grew and climaxed between 1931 to 1936, which increased the Jewish population in Palestine by 12 percent.[150] With the surge of Jewish immigration and land purchases, local Palestinian residents and political leaders gradually experienced economic deprivation and political despair.[151] In 1935, Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam had enlisted hundreds of men against the British authority and Jewish settlers. In spite of the failure of his uprising, al-Qassam became a national symbol of resistance and an inspiration for the following 1936-1939 Revolt.[152] The 1930s revolts still have profound implication for Hamas. In memory of al-Qassam's resistance, Hamas named the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades as its military wing, and stressed the link between its resistance and that of al-Qassam in the 1930s.[153]

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[148] Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), pp. 253-254.

[149] Ilan Pappe, *The Rise and fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis 1700-1948* (London: Saqi books, 2002), pp. 222-226.

[150] In 1931, the Jewish population was 16 percent of the total population in Palestine, while in 1936 the Jewish one was up to 28 percent of the total. Please refer to Samih Farsoun and Christina Zacharia, *Palestine and the Palestinians* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p.76.

[151] By the end of the 1930s, 40 percent of the overall spending of the Jewish Agency was on the purchase of land and agricultural colonization. A large number of peasants suffered from land loss, which was a main cause of the 1936 Arab revolt. Please refer to Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People*, *op.cit.,* pp.91-98.

[152] Ted Swedenburg, 'The role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt 1936-1939' in Edmund Burke and Ira Lapidus (ed.), *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 189-190.

[153] In Hamas' Charter (1:7): 'The Islamic Resistance Movement is a link in the chain of Jihad against the Zionist invasion. It is tied to the initiation of the Jihad by the martyr 'Izz al-Din al-

It is noted that the al-Qassam revolt was largely attributed to the cause of Jewish immigration and land purchases while to a certain degree, al-Qassam revolt also reflected the concept of Jihad. al-Qassam studied at al-Azhar University in Egypt. Since he had been taught by Muhammad Abduh, the idea of Pan-Islamism as a force against the colonialists influenced al-Qassam.[154] When al-Qassam stayed in Haifa in the 1920s, he preached to the local people to be pious and sound Muslims for the salvation of Palestine.[155] With the deterioration of the economic and political situations in Palestine, it was not surprising that al-Qassam adopted an Islamic resistant discourse, Jihad, as a way of defending Islam against foreign occupations.[156]

In contrast to al-Qassam revolt at the grassroots level, there was another form of adopting Islam in resisting the British Mandate and the Jewish settlers. Between the 1920s and 1930s, Palestinian politics was managed by local *a'ayan* such as the al-Husayni and Nashashibi families. Among these notables, Haj Amin al-Husayni was a key figure, leading political and religious affairs. In the 1920s, Jihad or resistance was not a major option against the British mandate and the Jewish settlers. On the contrary, Haj al-Husayni preferred a diplomatic approach. In 1921, the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC) was established and Haj al-Husayni was elected as the President. Facing the growing numbers of Jewish immigrants, the SMC raised public awareness of Palestinian problems in terms of seeking solidarity from overseas Muslim communities.[157] 'Islamic revival' was a theme in the 1920s in the SMC discourse. The terms *nahda* (revival) and *ihya'* (revivification) were frequently used in the early publications of SMC, terms which couched an emotional reflection on the political and social challenges.[158] The SMC's Islamic revival

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Qassam' and his Mujahid brothers in 1936.' See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice,* appendix, *op.cit*., p. 271.

[154] Nels Johnson, *Islam and the politics of meaning in Palestinian Nationalism* (Boston: Kegan Paul,1982), p.39.

[155] *Ibid.,*pp.39-44.

[156] Beverley Milton-Edward and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* p.26.

[157] Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine*, *op.cit.,* p.225.

[158] *Ibid*., p.226.

campaign not only raised awareness of Pan-Islamism in the 1920s but also mobilized the masses against the waves of Jewish immigration.[159]

While Haj Amin al-Husayni's non-violent approach in dealing with British authority did not work effectively, the year 1929 was a turning point in the growing tense relations between Arabs, Jewish settlers and the British Mandate. In August of that year, a disturbance in Jerusalem caused the deaths of 133 Jews and 116 Arabs.[160] In the aftermath of this incident, which was accompanied by massive Jewish immigration and land purchases, Palestinian Muslims felt that Zionists not only threatened the al-Aqsa Mosque but were also attempting to take over the entire territory of Palestine which would further eliminate the presence of Islam and Arabs in this territory.[161] To stop Zionist activities, the SMC issued a fatwa along with a strong religious condemnation and the prohibition of land sales to Jewish settlers. However, this order was ineffective since it was ignored and the trend of land sale continued.[162]

The political failure of the higher echelons to convince the British authorities to change pro-Zionist policy is one factor that led to mass demonstrations and disturbances in the 1930s. As mentioned early, the 1935 revolt led by al-Qassam essentially changed the form of resistance from one of high politics to one of mass political action. Although this revolt failed, the feeling of resentment was aggravated and finally broke out in 1936, lasting until 1939. In 1936 Haj al-Husayni was obliged to fall in line with the masses against the British Mandate.[163] The 1936-1939 Revolt devastated Palestine's economy, society and politics. Statistically, more than 5,000 Palestinians had

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[159] Musa Budeiri indicates that the 1920s Islamic movement in Palestine assimilated a nationalist discourse; therefore, it is difficult to separate the Islamic discourses from the nationalist discourse. Please refer to Musa Budeiri, 'The Palestinians: Tensions between Nationalist and Religious Identities' in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (ed.), *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p.195.

[160] Basheer Nafi, *Arabism, Islamism and the Palestine Question, 1908-1941 A Political History* (Reading: Ithaca, 1998), p.95.

[161] Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine, op.cit.,* p 241-242.

[162] *Ibid.*, pp.243-247.

[163] Philip Matter, 'The Mufti of Jerusalem and the politics of Palestine,' *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Spring 1988), p.235.

been killed and over 14,000 wounded.[164] Political elites were exiled from Palestine which left a political vacuum so that later, Palestinians were unable to compete with the Zionist military forces during the 1947 - 1948 War.[165]

Overall, although Palestine was under the British Mandate, there was no certain and systematic resistance force in early 1920s. Palestinian resistance coloured by Islamic discourse had been grown in 1930s in response to the British policy which favoured Jewish immigration and land purchases. Eventually, after 1939 it was crushed by the British authority. Yet, this did not mean that the force of politics and resistance from the Islamic narrative had ended. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which was considered to be the first modern Islamist organization in the 20th century, had been concerned about the question of Palestine since the 1930s. This school of thought began to reach Palestine in the 1930s, declined between the 1950s and the 1970s but incrementally played an influential role from the 1970s onwards.

1.2 The Muslim Brotherhood and Palestine (1930-1948)

According to Hamas' Charter, 'The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) is one of the wings of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine'.[166] Today, Hamas retains a strong connection with the Brotherhood in Egypt as well as its political thought, organizational structures and training. During 1930s and 1940s, the Brotherhood in Egypt paid attention to the development of Palestine for two main reasons. One had a purely religious motivation. To put it more simply, all Muslims are brothers and when one brother is in trouble, other brothers have a duty to relieve his pain. Secondly, as far as politics and economics were concerned, the Brotherhood was afraid that the Zionists would create a 'Greater Israel' from the Nile to the Euphrates, which

[164] Jamil Hila, 'Reflections on contemporary Palestine History' in Ilan Pappe and Jamil Hilal (ed.), *Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p.192.

[165] *Ibid.,*pp.189-193.

[166] *Hamas Charter* (1:2) See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice,* appendix, *op.cit*., p.269.

potentially, constituted a threat to neighbouring Arab countries.[167] In the light of these considerations, in August 1935, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Brotherhood, began to delegate senior members to spread his ideas and show solidarity to Palestine. In a trip to Jerusalem, Haj al-Husayni welcomed this delegation and praised their ideas of Pan-Islamism.[168] During the 1936-1939 revolt in Palestine, al-Banna did not appeal for Egyptians to intervene in this event militarily but he adopted a non-violence approach such as the publication of articles and social activities in order to promulgate the significance of Palestine's questions in the Egyptian society.[169]

After the Second World War, with its rising popularity and maturity, the Brotherhood considered that the only path to solving the questions of Palestine was through Jihad. It decided to form the first branch in Jerusalem in October 1945 and later extended to other cities, such as Haifa, Hebron and Gaza.[170] The Brotherhood's branches in Palestine not only addressed the concept of liberation to Palestinians but also emphasized Islamic values in every aspects of life.[171] From December 1947 to May 1948, Al-Banna sent volunteers in three battalions to Palestine. While these fighters had small successes in guerrilla warfare in the Negev and the West Bank, they were unable to change the fate of Palestine in 1948. Meanwhile, the Egyptian government disbanded the Brotherhood's activities in December 1948, which ended its operation in Palestine.[172]

1.3 The 1948 War and *Nakba*: The cause of resistance

The force of Islamists was insignificant in the 1948 war although the Egyptian Brotherhood engaged in the conflict. In addition, the flame of Islamists inside Palestine that had been extinguished after 1939 took no

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[167] Abd Al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928-1947* (London: Tauris, 1998), pp.1-18.

[168] *Ibid.,* pp.31-32.

[169] *Ibid.,* pp.38-45.

[170] *Ibid.,* p.152.

[171] *Ibid.,* p.156. For example, the Brotherhood engaged in the social, economic, medical and academic fields in Palestine. Transmitting the religious education was one of the major tasks for the Brotherhood at that period.

[172] *Ibid.,* pp.209-210.

decisive role in the 1948 war. The result of the 1948 War was the creation of Israel and the collapse of Palestinian society. In the Israeli official narrative, the 1948 War was a miracle since a little Jewish David defeated a giant Arab Goliath. Israel could not be blamed for the fact that during this war, many Palestinians had fled from their hometown. Furthermore, the Jews had pleaded with Palestinians to stay in order to demonstrate their willingness to coexist. This narrative also blames the Arab countries; and the Palestinians were held responsible for their own predicament and their failure was due to Arab intransigence toward Zionists.[173]

However, for Palestinians, the 1948 War that had resulted in the devastation of Palestinian society has constructed a collective memory, *Nakba*, which literally means, catastrophe, in almost every Palestinian mind.[174] According to Ilan Pappe's research, the Zionist leaders put their plan into practice for the expulsion of native Palestinians between May 1948 and January 1949. Over 750,000 Palestinians which accounted for more than half of the population had lost their homeland because of the Zionist militant activities.[175] These Palestinians who had been expelled by the Zionists became refugees. They and later generations have been denied a return to their homeland over six decades. In other words, *Nakba* represents the symbol of homeless Palestinians, the ruination of society and disillusionment but it also creates an aspiration for the reconstitution of Palestine and a claim to fundamental rights for many Palestinians.[176] It can be argued that this collective memory became a national identity for nearly all Palestinians,[177] regardless of the political factions they come from and the places where they

[173] Avi Shlaim has analyzed the traditional Israeli narrative in the 1948 war and then deconstructed these myths. See Avi Shlaim, 'The debate about 1948' in Ilan Pappe (ed.), *The Israel/Palestine Question* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.172-180.

[174] The 1948 war at least caused the dispossession of around 77 to 83 percent of the Palestinians who originally lived in Palestine that was later occupied by Israel and they became refugees. See Ahmad Sa'di, 'Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a component of Palestinian Identity', *Israel Studies*, Vol. 7, No.2 (Summer 2002), p. 175.

[175] Ilan Pappe, 'The 1948 Ethnic cleansing of Palestine,' *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol. XXXVI, No.1 (Autumn 2006), pp.6-20.

[176] Ahmad Sa'di, and Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the claims of memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp.5-9.

[177] *Ibid.,* pp.4-5.

live. Hamas' political thought, the concept of resistance and its rejection of the Israeli legitimacy could be understood from this perspective as many of their leaders, members and constituencies are refugees who have been denied a return to their homeland since 1948.

1.4 The absence of Islamists in Palestine, 1948-1967

After the creation of Israel in 1948, Gaza and the West Bank were respectively managed and ruled by Egypt and Jordan. The Brotherhood's resistance in Gaza did engage in guerrilla operations in 1950 against Israel but the military impulse was rather more nationalist than religious in character.[178] From the 1950s to the early 1960s, Arab nationalism was a leading trend throughout the Arab countries. Islamist discourse in Palestinian politics was less influential when the President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) suppressed the Brotherhood in Egypt in 1954, which also forced the Gazan Brotherhood to turn into a clandestine organization.[179] In the mid-1960s the Brotherhood's activities in Gaza almost terminated due to the effect of the execution of Sayyid Qutb, an influential Islamist intellectual in Egypt.[180] In short, from the 1950s to the 1960s, Islamists in Gaza was fragmented and overwhelmed by Arab Nationalism.

1.5 'Islamic revival' and Gazan Brotherhood from the late 1960s to the 1970s: Non-confrontational resistance

While things changed in the late 1960s, a trend of 'Islamic revival' appeared to replace the Arab Nationalism and this was due to the fact that the defeat of the Six-Day war was considered to be a deviation from the path of Islam.[181] That is to say, the failure of the 1967 War was the consequence of the Muslim leaders' neglect of Islamic values by imitating western nationalism and socialism. From 1969 onwards, Islamism seems to have been an alternative solution in the defense of foreign interventions and a challenge in domestic politics; whilst in the occupied territories, the West Bank and Gaza

[178] Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People, op. cit.,* p.148.

[179] Azzam Tamimi, Hamas: Unwritten Chapters, *op. cit*., p.17.

[180] Mohammed Shadid, 'The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the West Bank and Gaza,' *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2 Islam & Politics (April 1988), p.660.

[181] Yvonne Haddad, 'Islamists and the "Problem of Israel": The 1967 awakening,' *Middle East Journal*, Vol.46, No.2 (Spring 1992), p.274.

Strip, there were other stories. Nationalism was still strong among Palestinians after the 1967 war. PLO as a national resistance movement whose ultimate goal was the liberation of Palestine played the leading role in launching guerrillas within the occupied West Bank and Gaza and nearby Arab countries. Islamic discourse, as the source of resistance, was seldom heard during this period. In the occupied territories, the Brotherhood members chose not to join the nationalist movement and distanced themselves from armed resistance against Israeli occupation.

From the Gazan Brotherhood's perspective, it shared a similar sentiment with other Islamists: that Muslims' misery was attributed to the disobedience to Islamic teaching. But they did not follow the military path that other Palestinians engaged in. The reason was that Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the Brotherhood activist and later the founder of Hamas, believed that in the 1970s the armed resistance against the Israeli occupation had not been mature, and it required a fuller preparation by reconstructing Palestinian society in the direction of an Islamic environment. [182] Under these circumstances, Yassin began to be involved in Islamic social activities. In 1967 and 1973, Yassin set up two associations, Islamic society (*al-Jam'iyah al-Islamiyah*) and the Islamic centre (*al-Mujamma' al-Islami*) in Gaza.[183] The purpose of these organizations was to preach Islamic values in the occupied society. By doing that, Islamic education took a pivotal role in reforming society into an Islamic orientation. A large number of mosques were built in Gaza in the 1970s.[184] The role of the mosque was not only to provide for

[182] Yassin is convinced that Palestine could only be liberated from the Zionists by a strong Islamic society and this requires a gradual and long-term process of transformation in the individual, family and the entire community. See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-28.

[183] Although the Islamic centre (*al-Mujamma' al-Islami*) was founded in 1973, Yassin could not obtain official license for running this centre from the Israeli permission until 1977. Mayhib Sulaman, *Hamas: mi al-dakhil (Inside Hamas)* (Gaza: Dār al-sharuq, 2002), p.13.

[184] The Islamic centre was responsible for 40 percent of Mosques' construction and most of them were out of control by the waqf administration in Gaza. See Gleen Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1997), p.137. Michael Dumper, 'Forty years without slumbering: Waqf politics and Administration in the Gaza Strip, 1948-1987', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.20, No.2 (1993), pp.185-189.

worship but also multifunctional services such as, teaching, communication, and social assistance.[185]

In reviewing the Islamic social and cultural revival in Palestine in 1970s, it seems that the Gazan Brotherhood presented an alternative form of resistance. In contrast to the armed resistance led by the PLO, the Gazan Brotherhood believed that the first step to liberation is to create an Islamic society from the bottom. This concept is from Hassan al-Banna's political doctrine. Al-Banna deemed Islam to be a comprehensive system, encompassing all physical and spiritual dimensions. In his time, Egyptian society was affected by Western culture, economy, and politics. Therefore al-Banna believed that only through intellectual, social and cultural liberation that real political independence could be achieved.[186] In the early period of the Egyptian Brotherhood, Al-Banna promoted Islamic education, and social services all over Egypt in order to transform Egyptian society from the yoke of Western influence to the real Islamic orders.[187] In the 1970s, the Gazan Brotherhood adhered precisely to this route and insisted that Palestine's liberation would only occur when the Islamic order was implemented. This was partially the reason why the Gazan Brotherhood did not confront the occupational forces.[188]

Another reason why the Gazan Brotherhood did not choose armed resistance in the occupied territory was their incompetence in resisting Israel militarily and politically. From 1967 to 1976, the Palestinian armed resistance and political movement usually took place outside the occupied territories. Within the West Bank and Gaza, the form of resistance put emphasis on steadfastness instead of military operation. Under the Israeli military administration between 1967 and 1981, the pressing issue for Palestinians inside the occupied territories was to seek a new sense of normality and a

[185] Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The untold story of Militants, Martyrs and spies*, *op.cit.,* p19.

[186] Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, *op.cit.,* p.230.

[187] *Ibid*., pp.283-291.

[188] Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op. cit*., p.29.

way to endure the Israeli occupation.[189] Within this context, the Gazan Brotherhood's non-confrontational work can be understood.

Overall, during the 1970s, the Brotherhood in Gaza avoided military and political confrontation with Israel and devoted itself to the promotion of Islamic education and social services. However, other Palestinian factions criticized the stance of 'non-resistance' and the Brotherhood gradually faced a challenge from within. In the 1980s, due to criticism of its non-resistance and the accusation of collaboration with Israel, the Brotherhood was compelled to consider the military option.[190]

1.6 The emergence of Islamist armed resistance in Palestine during the 1980s

The Islamists' armed resistance in Palestine in the 1980s that had been precipitated by several factors, gradually emerged. At a regional level, the 1979 Iranian revolution and Hizbullah's guerrilla operation in 1982 against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon inspired Palestinian Islamists' determination to struggle with the Israeli occupation.[191] On the domestic level, the role of the Likud party with its strong Jewish messianic ideology[192] and the fall of PLO in Lebanon in 1982 wrecked the national movement and increased the voice of Islamists in Palestine.

The Islamic Jihad with leaders that had originated from the Gazan Brotherhood, was the first Palestinian Islamic organization to launch attacks against the Israeli occupation in the early 1980s. In Gaza, the Brotherhood's non-confrontational approach was challenged from within and criticized by the

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[189] Kim Cragin, *Palestinian Resistance through the eyes of Hamas*, PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 2008), pp.33-49.

[190] Azzam Tamimi refers to an accusation that was made against the Brotherhood in Gaza that they collaborated with the occupation authorities; therefore, they could be tolerated and obtained licensed projects, See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op. cit*., p.42.

[191] Hizbullah demonstrated its capacity to confront Israeli forces, enhancing a perception that only Islam could defeat Israel. See Yvonne Haddad, 'Islamists and the "Problem of Israel": The 1967 awakening', *Middle East Journal*, *op. cit*., p.270.

[192] Likud leaders declared that the West Bank and Gaza an integral part of the biblical Land of Israel and contended that Jews had an inalienable right there. See Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search leadership West Bank politics since 1967* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), p.141.

Islamic Jihad.[193] In 1983, Yassin considered the possibility of setting up armed branches. He formed two military wings called *al-Majd* and *al-Mujahideen* for the preparation of collecting weapons, but this plan failed in 1984 when Yassin and his members were arrested by Israel.[194] Despite the setback, a seed of Islamic consciousness for resistance which was planted in the 1970s had bloomed in public spaces. Palestinian Islamists were active in religious practice, institution-building and student body elections at universities in the 1980s.[195]

This debate concerning armed resistance was finally resolved when the first Intifada broke up in December 1987.[196] The Intifada that was triggered by an accident led to the creation of Hamas. Azzam Tamimi asserts that the Intifada was a gift from heaven for the Gazan Brotherhood since they had been preparing since 1983.[197] He adds that the Brotherhood had to seize this occasion for calling resistance in order to end the occupation; otherwise, the Brotherhood would face demise.[198] Glenn Robinson argues that the birth of Hamas was an internal coup within the Gazan Brotherhood and that the middle-stratum cadres were able to take the lead in opposition to the reform approach espoused by traditional leaderships.[199] To sum up, the first Intifada, to a great extent, has inevitably transformed the character of the Brotherhood in Gaza from one of a social orientation into a resistance movement and it started to compete with Fatah's leadership during this period.

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[193] Islamic Jihad was founded in the early 1980s and the founder of Islamic Jihad, Fathi al-Shiqaqi used to be a pupil of Sheikh Yassin. Islamic Jihad believed that armed struggle and Islamization of Palestine could be done simultaneously. See Gleen Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The incomplete Revolution*, *op. cit.,* p. 146.

[194] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector, op. cit.,* p.24.

[195] Glenn Robinson cited the 1984 survey, showing that the increasing numbers of Palestinian Muslims practiced the daily prayer, Qur'anic recitation and fasting. In addition, more and more college students tended to embrace Islamism, which became the second big bloc in student elections of university. See Gleen Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The incomplete Revolution*, *op. cit.,* p. 136.

[196] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector, op. cit.,* p.25.

[197] Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op. cit*., p.52.

[198] *Ibid.,* p.52.

[199] Gleen Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The incomplete Revolution*, *op. cit.,* pp. 149-153.

This section does not chronicle the historical details of the development of the Brotherhood in Palestine since several scholarly studies have already done that.[200] This exploration devotes more space to the history of Islamists in Palestine and a brief Palestinian history from the British Mandate to the eve of the first Intifada because these critical moments shaped Hamas's perception of resistance toward the Israeli occupation, the Oslo Peace Process and the motivation for its political integration in the period between 2003-2006. It is clear to see that Hamas, as an Islamic resistance movement, is in step with al-Qassam, a resistance icon of the 1930s and it connects in its emphasis on Islamic culture, education and social services, to the Egyptian Brotherhood, as an example of Islamic reform.

The next section will address Hamas' position on the first Intifada, the international peace conferences and the Oslo Peace Process. In addition, the way that Hamas confronted and adapted to the new reality will be highlighted.

2. From the first Intifada to the Oslo Peace Process (1987-2000)

The outbreak of the first Intifada in December 1987 led to the embodiment of Hamas detached from the Gazan Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas, as a resistance movement that was painted with Islamic reference, gradually turned into an alternative force that was in competition with Fatah for seeking dominance of political discourse in the occupied territories during the first Intifada and the Oslo Peace Process. In this section, a brief political and social background between 1987-1993 and 1993-2000 will be presented chronologically. In particular, the period of the Oslo Peace Process attested to Hamas' conviction that resistance is the only way to end the Israeli occupation. This is because the negotiation failed to reach Palestinians' aspiration of freedom and dignity but rather it fragmented Palestinian lands into cantons

[200] Ziad Abu Amr and Khaled Hroub have delineated a brief history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine during the British Mandate. Shaul Mishal, Avraham Sela and Beverley Milton-Edwards have dealt with the Islamic centre (al-Mujamma' al-Islami) in the 1970s. See Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp.1-3. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp.19-23. Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2002), pp.12-25. Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), pp.98-101. Jean-Pierre Filiu, 'The origins of Hamas: Military legacy or Israeli tool?' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.41, No.3 (Spring 2012), pp.54-70.

and strengthened Israeli domination. It is noted that Hamas gained invaluable experience and learned lessons from this period when it constructed its resistance project and considered the applicability of political participation to the PA from 2003 to 2006. Therefore, it is necessary to have a basic outline of a historical review of the way Hamas confronted and adapted to the new scenario during the Oslo Peace Process.

2.1 The First Intifada (1987 - 1993)

The first Intifada that could be seen as a rather abrupt episode that erupted on the 9th December 1987 had profound repercussions on ensuing developments in Palestine, the rest of the Middle East and international relations, as well. The Intifada not only prompted the creation of Hamas but also paved the way for international peace conferences and the Oslo Peace Process. In addition to this, the Intifada was a turning point for the revival of the PLO, which had been marginalized in the Arab world since their expulsion in Lebanon in 1982.[201] The exiled PLO leadership seized this opportunity to take an initiative by declaring independence in November 1988, and calling for a Palestine State in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. This declaration was an historical breakthrough for the PLO. It replaced the PLO's original goal in 1964 of the elimination of Israel,[202] and also symbolized that the two-state solution had become a tangible agenda amongst the PLO leadership. [203] Nevertheless, Hamas believed that this declaration was equivalent to the repudiation of resistance, indicating that the PLO had compromised with Israel and the United States.[204]

Hamas' uncompromising stance towards Israel was reflected in the Charter that was issued in August 1988. This Charter revealed a fundamental different approach to the declaration of independence made by the PLO. It

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[201] Kahled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, *op.cit.,* p.36.

[202] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Oxford: Oneworld Oxford, 2009), p.154.

[203] David Newman and Ghazi Falah, 'Bridging the Gap: Palestinian and Israeli Discourses on Autonomy and Statehood,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol.22, No.1 (1997), p.119.

[204] Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, *op.cit.,* pp.73-74.

aimed to liberate Palestine and denounced any peace deal or International conference that worked against Palestinian interests. Hamas was convinced that peace negotiations were a betrayal of Islamic belief and an abandonment of Palestine.[205] This uncompromising stance remains in Hamas' political thought during and after its electoral victory in 2006. Apart from this, the Charter courted controversy as some of clauses conflate Jews and Zionists that are considered to be anti-semitism or anti-Jewish. For example, Article 7 of the Charter cites a narration from Hadith referring to Jews: 'The Final Hour will not come until Muslims fight against Jews and the Muslims kill them, and until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, and a stone or tree would say: "O Muslim, servant of God, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him! But the tree of *Gharqad* would not say it, for it is the tree of the Jews".'[206] Regarding this dispute, Khaled Hroub who specializes in Hamas indicates that this Charter was not sophisticated and was written by an old Muslim Brotherhood member who was completely isolated from the outside world and who did not seek other Hamas members' consultation and consensus. Hroub adds that Hamas leaders regretted that some of the clauses were anti-Semitism since they engaged with the West frequently. Therefore, Hamas leaders rarely referred to the Charter after two years of its publication.[207] Instead, Hamas later issued documents that clearly differentiated the difference between Zionist and Jews, emphasizing its fight is only aimed at Zionism as an occupier and not against the Jews as a religious and ethnic group.[208]

Regarding the reasons of the emergence of Hamas during the first Intifada, there are possibly two explanations. One is the existence of a Palestinian milieu that motivated the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza to create a new Islamic organization against the Israeli occupation. Before the Intifada, young Islamists in the Brotherhood were under enormous pressure from the Islamic Jihad and other nationalists, who condemned their passivity towards

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[205] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice,* appendix, *op.cit*., p. 274.

[206] *Ibid.,*p.272.

[207] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, *op.cit.,* p.33.

[208] *Ibid*, pp.31-34.

the Israeli occupation. Consequently, it was unlikely that the Brotherhood would remain silent as usual when the Intifada broke out.[209] The other cause of establishing a new Islamic resistance movement was an internal calculation within the Brotherhood. Ahmed Yassin was cautious about the unprecedented incident that may have been detrimental to all the Brotherhood organizations. He did not want to drag the Brotherhood into an uncertain situation. For this reason, Yassin and other senior Brotherhood members distinguished Hamas from the other socially-oriented organizations such as the Islamic Society (*al-Jam'iyah al-Islamiyah*) and the Islamic Centre (*al-Mujamma' al-Islami*). In this respect, Hamas was specifically defined as a resistance movement with a clear goal for resisting the Israeli occupation in order to ensure and restore the Palestinians' rights and security.[210]

Admittedly, the Intifada was not characterised by an Islamic reference like the Iranian revolution in 1979 but Islamists such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad actively engaged with demonstrations and strikes. At the same time, Islamists were in competition with the PLO in dominating the leading role during the Intifada. It is noted that the PLO appealed to Palestinian nationalism and its aspiration for national independence. Nationalism is also an essential element for Hamas' resistance discourse and in Hamas' Charter, nationalism is an integral part of the resistance. The divergence between Hamas and PLO is that Hamas colours nationalism with the Islamic reference. Unlike some foreign Islamists whose vision is to break the barriers of artificial borders across the Middle East, Hamas empowered Nationalism with the Islamic rationale. As Hamas' Charter states, 'Nothing is loftier in nationalism or deeper in devotion than this: If an enemy invades Muslim territories, then Jihad and fighting the enemy becomes an individual duty for every Muslim.'[211]

To sum up, the Gazan Brotherhood that encountered an unprecedented scenario since the outbreak of Intifada decided to create Hamas to engage the ranks of resistance in line with the Palestinian

[209] Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*, *op. cit*., pp. 36-37.

[210] Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, *op.cit,* pp.66-67.

[211] Hamas Charter (3:12) See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice,* appendix, *op.cit*., p. 274.

nationalists. Hamas defined its character of resistance as Islamic and it gradually became an alternative force in challenging Fatah's hegemonic political power during the Intifada and later, the Oslo Peace Process.[212]

2.2 The Madrid Conference and Hamas

When referring to the Oslo Peace Process, it is necessary to go back to the Madrid Conference in October 1991 that was an important occasion for PLO in the negotiation with Israel. It can be said that without the Madrid conference, the Oslo Peace Process could not possibly have taken place.[213] It is no wonder that Hamas continued to deny the legitimacy of this International conference and denounced Palestinian delegates who attended it [214] as they considered such peace talks to be a conspiracy by the West and a betrayal of Islam.[215]

Prior to the Oslo Peace Process, the popularity of Hamas was getting stronger inside Gaza through its well-organized Islamic social welfare system. In contrast to this, Fatah faced a financial crisis and was unable to provide services as its financial source was halted by Gulf States following its political decision for the support of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War in 1990. [216] In view of the rise of Hamas and the crisis of the PLO, Arafat tried to diminish Hamas' leverage in the occupied territory on the one hand[217] and precipitated the process of international negotiation on the other. The secret talks in Oslo in 1993 can be seen against this background. Another incident that might bring about the secret negotiation was the mass expulsion of 415 Palestinians, mostly from Hamas, to the Marj al-Zuhur, the Lebanese mountain in December 1992. This expulsion led to skepticism amongst many Palestinians

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[212] Rashid Khalidi indicates that Fateh has effectively dominated Palestinian politics since the late 1960s, and never really practised power-sharing with other factions. Please refer to Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, *op. cit.,* p.152.

[213] Beverley Milton-Edward, 'Political Islam in Palestine in an environment of peace,' *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No.2, 1996. p.200.

[214] Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, *op.cit.,* p.156.

[215] Andrea Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*, *op.cit.,* pp. 129-133.

[216] Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, *op.cit*., p.89.

[217] *Ibid.,* p.96

concerning the international negotiations under the framework of the Madrid Conference.[218] Apart from the expulsion in 1992 this was the toughest year for Hamas since its inception because it was almost annihilated at this stage. Israel outlawed Hamas and arrested hundreds of Hamas members; and Fatah launched a major attack on Hamas in July. According to the account from Ibrahim Ghushen, the former Hamas' spokesman, this crackdown aimed to crush Hamas in Gaza once and for all.[219]

2.3 The Oslo Peace Process (1993 - 2000) and Hamas

The period of the Oslo Peace Process was considered to be a decisive factor in determining the current irreversible Palestinian outcomes: the fragmentation of the West Bank, the devastation of the Palestinian economy, and the destruction of the ordinary lifestyle.[220] During this period, Hamas was the major opposition to the peace process. The notorious violent and brutal suicide attacks against Israel seemed to have become Hamas' trademark and the violence was seen to be a huge obstacle to the peace process. It is an undeniable fact that Hamas' military branch, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was responsible for several grave assaults in 1994-1996.[221] However, these attacks were not random and should be examined in a specific and broader context.[222] This section aims to outline Hamas'

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[218] Ali Jarbawi and Roger Heacock, "The Deportations and the Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXII, No.3 (Spring 1993), pp. 32-45. As a matter of fact, other factors also contributed to the Oslo Process. For example, the PLO was facing financial crisis in that it could not run its administration. In addition, Arafat saw the U.S could play a major role in the Middle East after the cold war. In this way, accepting Oslo process seems a political survival for the PLO. See Beverley Milton-Edward, *Islamic Politics in Palestine, op.cit.,* p.160. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1948-1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 654-660.

[219] Ibrahim Ghusheh, Hassan Ibrahim and Salma al-Houry (transl.), *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghusheh* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre, 2013), p.170.

[220] Sara Roy, 'The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and Palestinian Socioeconomic Decline: A place Denied,' *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *op.cit.,* pp. 365-403.

[221] According to a statistic from the website of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 132 Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed by bombing attacks from 1994 to 1996. See Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Suicide and the Other Bombing attacks in Israel Since the Declaration of Principles (Sep 1993)', <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/suicide%20and%20other%20bombing%20attacks%20in%20israel%20since.aspx> (accessed on 13 May 2012).

[222] Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*, *op. cit*., p.46.

evaluation of the peace process and to articulate how Hamas confronted and then accommodated to this new era.

The Oslo accord, namely, the Declaration of Principles on Interim self-Government Arrangements (DOP), was signed on 13th September 1993 on the lawn of the White House. It aimed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian long-term disputes within 5 years as per the provisions of this agreement. The DOP was the framework for basic principles of interim Palestinian governance in the occupied territories. This declaration did not directly address the major disputes such as the status of Jerusalem, the Jewish settlements, borders and refugees. These crucial issues would be dealt with in the later permanent status negotiations.[223] That is to say, the DOP was a nucleus of the Oslo Peace Process but the actual practice of governance would be settled through later negotiations.[224]

With regard to the DOP, Hamas was frustrated about the news of the agreement and worried that it would reinforce the Israeli occupation and fragment Palestinian society. In response to this new reality, Hamas claimed that it would not give up the right of resistance to the occupying power until liberation was achieved.[225] Hamas' spokesman Ibrahim Ghusheh said, 'This treaty (Oslo accord) is to be basically a security arrangement, as it focuses on the building of a large, strong and effective Palestinian force, whose prime aim was to stop the first Intifada, and to repel any operation against Israel.'[226] However, in view of the social context in 1993, the majority of Palestinians had the opposite view. According to a poll made by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC) after six days of the DOP announcement, showed that nearly 70 per cent of Palestinians agreed with the decision made by the PLO to a preliminary agreement with Israel. Most specifically, the

[223] Gilles Kepel, Pascale Chazaleh (transl.), *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2004), p.43.

[224] The Oslo II signed on 28th September 1995 was a crucial agreement for the peace process, defining the West Bank into three administrational areas. Edward Said had predicted the failure of the peace process after the signing of the Oslo II shortly. See Edward Said, "The Mirage of Peace," *The Nation*, (October 16, 1995), pp.413-420.

[225] Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*, *op.cit*., pp. 21-22.

[226] Ibrahim Ghusheh, Hassan Ibrahim and Salma al-Houry (transl.), *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghusheh, op.cit*., p.179.

proportion in Gaza (72 per cent), which was considered Hamas' stronghold was higher than in the West Bank (66.4 per cent). The poll also suggested that whether the agreement would strengthen the Israeli occupation and lead to internal Palestinian conflict, over 55 per cent of Palestinians disagreed with these assumptions.[227] It is clear that most Palestinians were not on Hamas' side.

Since the inception of the Oslo Process, Hamas lacked public support for its resistance discourse. It also faced a dilemma when the principles of the Oslo Process were put into practice in 1994, especially regarding the security co-operation between the PA and Israel. From 1994 to 1996, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad carried out several suicide attacks[228] inside Israel, causing more than 100 Israeli casualties.[229] These violent acts enraged Israel; and it coordinated with the PA to arrest more than 1,200 Islamists.[230] What is worse, Hamas was placed on the terrorism list by the United States, which negatively affected the Arab countries' solidarity with Hamas.[231] In this sense, Hamas' popularity took heavy blows not only from the Israeli repression but also from Palestinian society and the Arab countries.

The lowest point of Hamas' popularity came in 1996. Hamas' resistance discourse including its tactic of suicide bombings was not supported by the majority of Palestinians who were looking for a brighter future instead of constant confrontation with Israel. According to JMCC poll,

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[227] The dates of survey were from 19th to 21st September in 1993. 54.6 per cent of interviewers disagreed that DOP would strengthens the occupation and 60.8 per cent of interviewers disagreed the possibility of internal conflict. See JMCC, 'Opinion Poll No.3,' 23 September 1993 On Palestinian Attitudes to the PLO-Israel Agreement <http://www.jmcc.org/documentsandmaps.aspx?id=503> (accessed on 25 October 2014).

[228] It is noted that Hamas rejects the concept of suicide attacks but calls it a martyrdom operation.

[229] See Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Suicide and the Other Bombing attacks in Israel Since the Declaration of Principles (September 1993)', <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/suicide%20and%20other%20bombing%20attacks%20in%20israel%20since.aspx> (accessed on 13 May 2012).

[230] Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*, *op. cit*., pp. 21-22.

[231] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, *op.cit*., p. 245. In 1990s, Hamas political bureau was stationed in Jordan. Once Hamas' military branch launched attacks on Israel, the political bureau faced huge pressure and harassment from the Jordanian government. Finally, in 1999 Hamas members in Jordan were all expelled out of Jordan. See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op. cit*., pp. 78-125.

84 per cent of Palestinians were optimistic about Palestine's future. Hamas' popularity came to 10 per cent while Fatah shared 38.9 per cent of popularity in a poll. [232] In addition, Fatah's landslide victory in the first PLC election and Arafat's election as the PA's president in January 1996 further overwhelmed Hamas' resistance discourse. In March 1996, Hamas' popularity had dropped to the lowest point of 6 per cent.[233] Yet, after 10 years, Hamas recovered from its descent to reach a climax of popularity in the PLC election in 2006. Perhaps, three dimensions, armed resistance, political engagement and social service could illustrate how Hamas proved its resilience in order to survive under the Oslo Peace Process.

2.3.1 Armed resistance

Armed resistance was the early tactic that Hamas responded to the repercussion of the Oslo Peace Process while it was considered as a form of terrorist act by the western media and countries. In particular, the armed resistance reached a peak in 1994 and 1996 when Hamas launched several suicide attacks inside Israel. On the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, all Hamas' attacks on Israel are recorded exhaustively in a special section, 'Hamas' terror war against Israel'.[234] However, when we examine the social context of this period, it is not difficult to grasp Hamas' motivation behind them.

The two events: the Hebron massacre[235] on 25th February 1994 and the assassination of Yahya Ayyash[236] on 5th January 1996, triggered a series of fatal retaliations by Hamas. The Hebron massacre dramatically changed Hamas' tactic from targeting Israeli soldiers and settlers to Israeli civilians. On many occasions, Hamas' leadership declared that these operations were in

[232] See JMCC, 'Poll No.3,' 23 September 1993 On Palestinian Attitudes to the PLO-Israel Agreement <http://www.jmcc.org/documentsandmaps.aspx?id=503> (accessed on 15 May 2012).

[233] Kim Cragin, *Palestinian Resistance through the eyes of Hamas, op.cit*., p.159.

[234] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Hamas terror war against Israel*, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed on 15 May 2012).

[235] On 25th February 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish settler, opened fire to Muslims who were praying in Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron, causing 29 deaths and 150 wounds.

[236] On 5th January, 1996, Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas military leader, was assassinated by Israel. Hamas' military branch launched a bombing attack in Israel, causing 27 Israeli deaths and 78 wounds. See Charles Enderlin, Fairfield Susan (transl.), *Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East 1995-2002* (New York: Other Press, 2003), p.23.

response to the killing of Palestinians by Israel and claimed that the only precondition for stopping the suicide bombings (as Hamas called martyrdom operation) was that Israel stopped killing Palestinian children and civilians.[237] Clearly this tactic would not resolve the problems of the occupation. These suicide bombing put Hamas in an awkward position. Thousands of members were thrown into jail and affiliated social and charity organizations were closed by the PA,[238] which led to further tensions and clashes between Hamas and the PA. Overall, Hamas' armed resistance was counterproductive. The PA's crackdown and Israel's propaganda de-legitimized Hamas' resistance discourse and affected its popularity.[239]

2.3.2 Political engagement

It is fair to say that Hamas misread the Oslo Peace Process; its armed resistance rather harmed its reputation. At the same time, Hamas was marginalised in politics. This is because Hamas refused to participate in the framework of the Oslo accords as a whole. But in practice, Hamas showed its pragmatism in this predicament. Theoretically, Hamas should have opposed any affiliations with the Oslo accords including the governance of the PA. As a matter of fact, its opposition was passive and no aggressive. Hamas leaders were against the PA only in the form of rhetorical criticism on the PA security cooperation with Israel and policies made by Arafat.[240] Abdel Aziz Rantisi, who had been a senior Hamas leader, once stated that despite the PA's crackdown on Hamas, it would remain patient and continue the struggle against Israel. In other words civil war in Palestine was never an option as it only served Israeli interests.[241]

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[237] Roger Gaess, 'Interviews from Gaza: What Hamas Wants,' *Middle East Policy*, Vol.9 No.4 (December 2002), pp.104-105.

[238] Beverley Milton-Edwards, and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* p.79.

[239] Despite Hamas claim bombing attacks are not for suicide but for martyrdom operation, this tactic is still controversial and debatable in Muslim world. See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, *op. cit*., pp. 180-186.

[240] Kim Cragin, *Palestinian Resistance through the eyes of Hamas, op.cit*., pp.140-148.

[241] Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective, op.cit.,* pp. 22-23.

As for Arafat, he had his own political calculations. Even though he considered that Hamas and other opposing forces undermined the peace process and spoilt the relations between the PA and Israel, he did not totally bow to Israel's command to ban all Hamas' activities. He attempted to persuade Hamas leaders to end the violence against Israel and encouraged Hamas towards political integration.[242] For the first time, the PLC election held in 1996 had created an opportunity for Hamas to share political power and extend its influence in the political arena. Regarding this election, there was an intensive debate inside Hamas as to whether the election was a legitimate one to join. Initially, Hamas saw the political election as a way of propagating its resistance idea but in viewing the essence of this election, found that it was under the framework of the Oslo Peace Process, which contravened Hamas' principle.[243] In spite of this contradiction, some Hamas members were still prepared to run in the election but following a collective consultation which was against joining as well as a warning from other leaders, those members finally withdrew from participation.[244] This is not to say that Hamas was essentially against a concept of election. In reality, Hamas was rather active in local elections, which were nothing to do with the Peace Process. For example, Hamas members won Engineering Union elections and al-Najah student elections in 1996.[245] What concerned Hamas was that participation in the PLC election would endorse the Oslo Peace Process and legitimate the Israeli occupation.[246]

It seems that the refusal to participate in the PLC elections, the records of the suicide bombings and its objection to recognising Israel isolated Hamas. Hamas was considered to be a spoiler of the peace process and a saboteur of a possible coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis. But Hamas did have an alternative political solution for resolving the Israeli occupation. The

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[242] Glenn Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, *op.cit.,* p.192

[243] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, *op.cit*., pp. 220-224.

[244] Such as Ismail Haniyyah registered in candidate lists but withdrew the candidacy under other members' pressure. See Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*, *op. cit*., pp. 110-111.

[245] See Are Knudsen, 'Crescent and Sword: The Hamas Enigma', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No.8 (2005), p. 1379.

[246] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice,* appendix, *op.cit*., pp. 225.

hudna, which is traditionally a 10-year ceasefire in the Islamic context, is a means of reaching peace with an enemy[247]; and Hamas had proposed this resolution to Israel on several occasions. It was first presented to the Israeli foreign minister, Shimon Peres in March 1988 by Mahmud al-Zahar. Hamas raised this initiative again in April 1994.[248] This proposal was to ask Israel's withdrawal from Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for a temporary peace.[249] Israel has never taken it seriously, claiming that the *hudna* only bought time for Hamas to increase its military power. However, when scrutinizing the content of *hudna*, it is interesting to note that its initiative mirrored the spirit of the UNSC resolutions 242 and 338, which are also key documents in the Oslo Peace Process.[250] In this respect, the spirit of *hudna* is not contradictory to international treaties but a different interpretation of them.

Further, *hudna* may imply a de facto recognition of Israel, which many scholarly literatures have observed.[251] For Hamas, *hudna* is not only a ceasefire but also a significant mechanism in which to rebuild its homeland. Many Hamas leaders spoke ambiguously in public when they were asked if they would recognize Israel. Ismail Abu Shanab, the late Hamas political leader, was asked about the idea of a two-state solution in November 1997. He indicated that the destruction of Israel was not Hamas' agenda. Hamas fought Israel because of the occupation at the expense of Palestinian

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[247] For example, the Hudabiyya treaty was a kind of *hudna* in the 7th century between the Prophet Muhammad and Quraysh in Mecca. Another example were agreements between Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi and the crusade in the 12th century. See Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Visioin, Violence, and Coexistence, op.cit.,* pp. 108-109.

[248] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, *op.cit*., pp. 73-77.

[249] *Ibid.,* pp. 73-77.

[250] Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*, *op. cit*., pp. 35-36.

[251] See Graham Usher, 'The New Hamas: Between Resistance and Participation,' *Middle East Report*, (21 August 2005). <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero082105.html> (accessed on 20 May 2012). Beverley Milton-Edwards, and Alastair Crooke, 'Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace Process,' *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Vol.XXXIII, No.4 (Summer 2004), pp. 39-52. Haim Malka, 'Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas,' *The Washington Quarterly,* Vol 28, No.4 (Autumn 2005), pp.37-54. Jean-François Legrain, 'Hamas: Legitimate Heir of Palestinian Nationalism?' in John L Esposito (ed.), *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform*? (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), p.173. International Crisis Group, 'Dealing with Hamas,' *ICG Middle East Report,* (January 2004), pp.1-33. Graham Usher, 'Hamas Risen,' *Middle East Report 238* (Spring 2006), pp. 2-11, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer238/hamas-risen> (accessed on 15 May 2012).

rights.[252] But if Israel withdrew to the 1967 borders based on the mutual agreement of a ceasefire, the fighting would stop. He added that 'Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories since 1967 was a good solution for both sides. When we have our state, we will accept the Israelis in our land as a guest and as a nationality. Regarding the future of the relationship between Israel and the Palestine, let the next generation works on it.'[253]

Hence, the suggested *hudna* could have been seen as an alternative peace deal, which while it was not written in Hamas' charter, it at least showed a flexibility that was in accordance with major international agreements and UNSC resolutions. Hamas had proposed *hudna* several times but Israel did not and does not believe Hamas' sincerity and viewed this *hudna* as a conspiracy to ultimately destroy Israel.[254] This skepticism may be the root cause of why the peace process had stalled. Many scholars who have interviewed the Hamas leadership suggest that Israel and the International society should engage with Hamas in terms of understanding its point of view during the peace process. If the United States, the European countries and Israel brought Hamas into negotiations on the one hand and Hamas was ready to stop attacks and take a non-violent approach on the other, it is possible that one day the peace process might be activated.[255]

2.3.3 Social service

Since Hamas' military resistance led to a counterproductive result and it failed to participate in the political process, the only way to keep its presence was to return to its work on civil society and social service as its predecessor the Muslim Brotherhood used to engage in during the 1970s. During the Oslo Process, Hamas promoted its resistance discourse in terms of the creation of its own media. *Al-Watan* was the first newspaper that

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[252] Roger Gaess, 'Interview: Ismail Abu Shanab,' *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 6, No.1, (January 1998), p.118.

[253] *Ibid.,* p.118.

[254] Asaf Maliach, 'Hamas' Post-Election Strategy Step-by-step to the liberation of Palestine,' The Institute for Counter-Terrorism, <http://web.archive.org/web/20060507062050/http://ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=557%20> (accessed on 16 May, 2012)

[255] International Crisis Group, 'Dealing with Hamas,' *ICG Middle East Report,* (January 2004), p.31.

Hamas published but it did not last long as it was closed by the PA.[256] Another newspaper, *Al-Risala* first issued in February 1997 reflected Hamas' resistance and political thought concerning the Oslo Process. This newspaper constantly disclosed how the Oslo Peace Process negatively affected Palestinian society such as: the dispute over the security collaboration between Israel and the corruption, and the human rights violation of the PA.[257]

Apart from the media outlets, Islamic grassroots organizations such as charities, nurseries, hospitals, schools and sports clubs are considered to be the foundation of social support for Hamas' resilience since Hamas' popularity is empowered by those Islamic social networks. Islamic institutions in civil society have provided multiple social services for long periods since the 1970s. Some organizations, like the Islamic Society and the Islamic Centre, which was founded by the Gazan Muslim Brotherhood offer services to masses of poor and working class people that the PA are not able to reach. These Islamic grassroots organizations are also reputable for their highly trained, well-organized, and high quality features. Inevitably, these Islamic institutions became a pillar of Palestinian society when tensions were exacerbated during the Oslo Peace Process and they enabled Hamas to undergo a process of internal transformation.[258]

In terms of the relationship between the Islamic grassroots organizations and Hamas in the peace process, Michael Irving Jensen and Sara Roy both indicate that Hamas started to turn to social service in the late 1990s.[259] The change in direction to the civilian society could be analyzed in the context of Hamas' declining power as a result of political and military setbacks. The crackdown on Hamas and its weakening military ability caused by Israel and the PA was the main reason why Hamas had toned down its

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[256] Wael Abdelal, *From the Mosque to Satellite Broadcasting: A historical perspective of Hamas Media Stategy*, PhD thesis (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2012), p.136-148.

[257] *Ibid.,* pp.136-148.

[258] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit*., pp.186.

[259] Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, *op.cit.,* p.187 and Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*, *op. cit*., p.36.

military rhetoric and returned to the involvement of civil society.[260] The Oslo Peace Process, from the Islamists' perspective, did not only change the economic and political structures but also led to the degradation of society by Western cultural hegemony.[261] Therefore, the restoration and revival of Palestinian society by means of Islamic teaching, practice and ethics became an essential mission at that time.

As for these Islamic institutions' relations with Hamas, according to Sara Roy's research, it is an undeniable fact that parts of the Islamic institutions have a natural relationship, such as the Islamic Society, the Islamic Centre, *al-Salah* Islamic Association, *al-Wafa* Medical Rehabilitation Hospital and the Islamic University, and others founded by the Gazan MB members. Some of the directors and members were senior Hamas leaders' relatives[262] but this does not suggest an evil relationship or manipulation by Hamas.[263] Hamas' leaders have denied that they have mobilized and intervened in these Islamic institutions for political and military purposes and they do not have a formal connection to them.[264] Roy indicates that if people want to point out the kind of connections that exist between Hamas and Islamic institutions, the sharing of the Islamic values and principles would be their common ground.[265]

To sum up, since the inception of the first Intifada in 1987, Hamas has actively engaged in Palestinian affairs against the Israeli occupation that rid them of the stigma of non-resistance in the 1980s. However with the exiled PLO's acceptance of a two-state solution and the secret negotiation between

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[260] Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*, *op. cit*., p.34.

[261] Michael Irving Jensen, ''Re-Islamising' Palestinian Society 'From Below': Hamas and Higher Education in Gaza', *Holy Land Studies*, Vol.5*,* No.1 (May 2006), p.72.

[262] For example, Ahmad al-Zahar, Mahmud al-Zahar's brother, was a director of the al-Raham Associaiton in 1999. Regarding other information on major Islamic institutions in Gaza in the late of 1990, Sara Roy has provided a detailed description and analysis. See Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit*., pp.103-160.

[263] Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, *op.cit*., p. 186.

[264] Roy mentions the financial sources of Islamic institutions in Gaza are independent and autonomous coming from the Gulf states, Iran and the international Muslim Brotherhood. Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit*., p.142.

[265] *Ibid*., p.63.

Israel and the PLO, Hamas was gradually sidelined. The Oslo Peace Process launched in 1993 diminished the role that Hamas played. During this period, Hamas was not only weak in the political arena, but its bombing tactics inside Israel also infuriated Israel, and embarrassed the PA. Arrest and assassination almost terminated Hamas. In response to this crisis, Hamas modified its tactics by reverting to the old path of serving the civil society at the end of the 1990s. It is noted that after September 1997 until the breakout of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, bombing attacks did not occur inside Israel except for the case in October 29th 1998.[266] The dramatic drop in the numbers of suicide bombings seemingly indicated Hamas' pragmatism in seeking its political survival.

With regard to the previous analysis of armed resistance, political engagement and social service during the peace process, the three aspects suggested interrelation rather than separation. When Hamas was marginalized in politics and its armed resistance failed, the reversion to social service seemed to be the only sustainable path for survival during the Oslo Peace Process. On the one hand Hamas created its own medias in terms of spreading its resistance message continuously. On the other hand, the widespread Islamic grassroots institutions in Gaza, whether affiliated to Hamas or not, have facilitated Hamas' reputation in local society. What Hamas could do was to wait for another occasion that was more amenable to its resistance discourse. The al-Aqsa Intifada that erupted in September 2000 definitely revived Hamas' resistance discourse. The next chapter will address how Hamas evaluated the al-Aqsa Intifada, and constructed the resistance project in association with its political transformation from 2003 onwards.

3. Conclusion: The transitions of Islamists in Palestine and the concept of resistance from the historical perspective

Given the analysis of the Gazan Muslim Brotherhood between 1970s to 1987 and the early development of Hamas during the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Oslo Peace Process (1993-2000), Palestinian Islamists

[266] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Suicide and the Other Bombing attacks in Israel Since the Declaration of Principles' (September 1993), <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/suicide%20and%20other%20bombing%20attacks%20in%20israel%20since.aspx> (accessed on 17 May 2013)

experienced different transitions over three decades. It can be argued that the transitions of Islamists was to protect themselves whilst adapting to the dramatic changes in the socio-economic and political contexts. In other words, were it not for its adaptation to the new scenario, their survival would have been problematic. The transition of Islamists is not an exceptional case. It also happened in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. Shadi Hamid who specialises in Islamists observed that the transition of Islamists in the 1990s demonstrated quite a different pattern to that of the 1940s or 1970s. Prior to the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, these Islamist parties had been further evolved from the time of their presence in the 1990s.[267] In this sense, the transition of Islamists could be put in the historical context.

From the historical perspective, the transitions of Islamists in Palestine have three respective phases: the first in 1967, then 1987 and in the late 1990s. Before the 1970s, Islamists in Gaza who were invisible and remained underground in the political and social arena were overshadowed by the dominant role of Pan-Arabism across the Middle East. Until after the Six-day war in 1967, the appearance of the Islamic Centre in the 1970s founded by Ahmed Yassin, laid the ground for the rising of Islamists in Gaza, which was the first transition of Islamists. This Islamic Centre engaged in a widespread social network by means of building mosques and providing education, sport and medical services in Gaza. However this did not mean that the Gazan Islamists renounced the right of resistance to the liberation of Palestine that the PLO was attempting in that period. From the Islamist's perspective, the liberation of Palestine needed sufficient preparation, in several stages. The armed resistance was not the Gazan Islamists' first concern at that moment. Without Islamic awareness or the underpinning of Islamic surroundings in society, the armed resistance was unable to achieve a fruitful result. It is noted that the approach Gazan Islamists adopted was one adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. They believed that the first step toward

[267] Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of power Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.47.

liberation is to develop sound Muslims from an individual level and then build an Islamic society rather than resorting to a guerrilla approach.[268]

The second transition was located in the 1980s. In 1983 the Islamic Centre visited the possibility of armed resistance as Khalid Mishal recalled that this year of 1983 'was an important milestone in building a foundation for the creation of Hamas but later being publicised in the first Intifada in 1987.'[269] Since then, Palestinian Islamists in Gaza were prepared to work on resistance. The concept of resistance materialized in the announcement of the birth of Hamas during the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987.[270] After the creation of Hamas, Islamists shifted to a display of a strong militarized character rather than a social dimension by using the resistance as a means to end the Israeli occupation. Their position was straightforward: they refused to legitimize Israel, and opposed negotiation with Israel; at the same time they asserted the armed resistance was necessity throughout the Oslo Peace Process.

The third transition of the Islamists started in the latter part of the Oslo Peace Process at the time when Hamas military and political powers suffered from the double blow struck by Israel and the PA. To save this crisis, Hamas returned to its foundations, and focused on its role as a social network and a service to maintain its credibility in civil society. This trend of moderating its modus operandi echoes that of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The Egyptian regime considered that the Brotherhood was a real threat because of its growing popularity in 1990s and therefore, the regime countered the Brotherhood's influence by all means possible. Shadi Hamid indicates that, 'the years of 1990-1995 saw a systematic escalation of regime policies against mainstream Islamists.'[271] This repression reached such a peak that over a thousand Brotherhood members were arrested in 1995.[272] In response, the Brotherhood chose not to confront the regime but moderated their rhetoric

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[268] Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, *op. cit.,* pp. 233-234.

[269] See Mouin Rabbani, 'A Hamas perspective on the movement's evolving role: An Interview with Khalid Mishal: Part I,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *op.cit*,pp.68-69.

[270] *Ibid.*, p.69.

[271] Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of power Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* pp.90-92.

[272] *Ibid.,* p.90.

and democratized the structure of the organization. This is because under the state's repression, it would have been naïve for them to outline the dream of 'an Islamic state' and to raise an unrealistic Islamic agenda when their fundamental liberties were being denied.[273] In this context, what the Brotherhood was able to do was to be patient and to wait for a more favourable time. This pattern was typical: In the late 1990s Hamas was inclined towards moderation. The vision of liberation and resistance was hardly enforced when masses of their members and supporters were arrested by Israel and the PA and its popularity had come to its lowest point. Under these circumstances, moderation seemed to be the only feasible option for self-protection.

Nevertheless, these transitions of the Islamists and moderation in Gaza did not mean that there was a fundamental change in Hamas' ideology. Whether the Gaza Brotherhood, or Hamas, their position remains the same. Both perceive Israel as an illegitimate entity that has usurped Palestinian land and deprived Palestinians of fundamental rights since the day of its creation in 1948. They consider that Israel should pay the price for the ensuing oppression, dispossession, and colonization of Palestinian society since 1948, and that therefore, the effective way for Hamas to proceed is to undertake resistance instead of negotiation. It could be argued that Hamas' resistance not only includes the implication of military action but also consists of non-violent elements. Returning to the level of civil society for Hamas in the late 1990s seemed to be for the preparation of resistance similar to that engaged by its predecessor the Gazan Muslim Brotherhood between 1970s and 1980s. As the time was not on its side, the only thing that Hamas could do was wait for another opportunity. Eventually the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada created a new space and inflamed Hamas' resistance discourse again.

[273] *Ibid.,* p.4.

Part II The political transformation and engagement

Part II, which is the main body of this thesis will be divided into two Chapters. Chapter 3 will analyze how Hamas constructed the resistance project during the al-Aqsa Intifada and the circumstances in which it started the political integration in early 2004. Chapter 4 will discuss and evaluate how Hamas, as an elected government, promoted the resistance project as a national agenda after the PLC election in January 2006 and also, the way that Hamas implemented this agenda in Gaza after the political split with Fatah in June 2007.

Chapter Three: Analysis of Hamas' political transformation (2003-2006)

As the previous chapter discussed, the only strategy that Hamas insisted upon in order to end the Israeli occupation during the Oslo Process was resistance. But resistance did not always imply a military dimension, for example, when Hamas experienced huge crackdowns imposed by both Israel and the PA when, at the same time, it was losing the public's support. In the late 1990s, Hamas tended to distance itself from confrontation with Israel and instead, became involved in social welfare. However, with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas again called for armed resistance including suicide bombings with popular support. This armed resistance was a distinctive feature of Hamas in the beginning of the al-Aqsa intifada. As a matter of fact, Hamas did not always insist on the armed resistance. From 2003 onwards, Hamas gradually decreased the frequency of the armed struggle and considered the possibility of the political integration.

Generally, this shift is regarded as a response to external challenges in order to keep the organization intact. However, the way Hamas itself looked upon this political transformation attracts less attention from Western scholarship. At the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas highlighted and addressed the reasons why resistance was necessary and important, to Palestinian audiences and Arab countries. Resistance has always been Hamas' major strategy; armed struggle is inevitable since it believes that it is the only way to liberate Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, with the passage of time, Hamas realized that armed resistance that had failed to correspond to the external challenges had come to a deadlock. Therefore it began to rephrase and elaborate the concept of resistance in a more sophisticated way.

Usually, Hamas' shift from armed resistance to political participation is attributed to the electoral victory of the PLC in January 2006. In particular, there are plenty of arguments and debates regarding Hamas' political

engagement after its takeover of Gaza.[274] However, to realize Hamas' political engagement after 2006, it is necessary to go back to the period of 2003 to 2006. This phase was significant and essential for understanding how Hamas elaborated the concept of resistance and started its political participation during the al-Aqsa Intifada.

This chapter will analyze the crucial factors that determined Hamas' tactical shift from military confrontation to political integration and how Hamas responded, and adapted to, these changes by articulating its resistance in chronological order. This is because Hamas' political transformation was an incremental process not an abrupt change. Tracing this chronological order may provide a delicate insight into the process of why and how Hamas changed its tactic from uncompromising armed resistance to political participation from 2003 to 2006. Before scrutinizing various factors that determined Hamas' political transformation, the socio-economic context in the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada should be mapped out in order to provide a backdrop to Hamas' political transformation.

1. The socio-economic context in the al-Aqsa Intifada

Since the inception of its foundation in 1987, Hamas has aimed at the end of the Israeli occupation through resistance. During the Oslo Peace Process, Hamas launched several suicide bombings inside Israel between

[274] Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'The Ascendance of Political Islam: Hamas and consolidation in the Gaza Strip,' *Third World Quarterly,* Vol.29, No.8 (2008), pp.1585-1599. Beverley Milton-Edward and Stephen Farrell, Hamas: *The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010). Baudouin Long, 'The Hamas agenda: How has it changed?' *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVII, No.4 (Winter 2010), pp.131-143. International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine 1: Gaza under Hamas,' *Middle East Report*, No.73, (19 March 2008), pp.1-34. Khaled Hroub, 'Hamas in and out of power,' in 'Domestic Change and Conflict in the Mediterranean: The cases of Hamas and Hezbollah,' *Euro Mesco Papper,* 65, January 2008, pp.6-12. Nathan Brown, 'Gaza five years on Hamas settle in,' *The Carnegie Paper,* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, June 2012), p.1-23. Nicolas Pelham, 'How Islamists govern lessons from Gaza,' *TiDA synthesis report* (January 2011), pp.1-33. Nicolas Pelham, 'Ideology and Practice: The Legal System in Gaza under Hamas,' June 2010. <https://www.academia.edu/2984906/Ideology_and_Practice_The_Legal_System_in_Gaza_under_Hamas> (access on 3 November 2014); Nicolas Pelham, 'Gaza's tunnel phenomenon: the unintended dynamics of Israel's siege,' *Journal of Palestine studies,* Vol.41, No.4 (Summer 2012), pp.6-31. Paola Caridi, Andrea Teti (transl.), *Hamas from Resistance to Government* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012). Yezid Sayigh, 'Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three years on,' *Middle East Brief*, No.41 (March 2010), pp.1-8. Yezid Sayigh, 'We serve the people: Hamas policing in Gaza,' *Crown Paper 5* (Crown Center for Middle East Studies, April 2011), pp.1-177. Ziad Abu-Amr, 'Hamas from opposition to rule from,' in Jamil Hilal (ed.), *Where Now for Palestine? The Demise of the two-state solution* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

1994 and 1996; but this tactic was not supported by the majority of Palestinians. Many of Hamas' members were arrested in the crackdown by the PA and Israel. What is worse is that Hamas' popularity dropped to its lowest point. To avoid further political and social alienation, it is noted that Hamas had a tendency to de-radicalize and demilitarize in the late period of the Oslo Peace Process. The record of suicide bombings was almost absent from 1998 to 2000 before the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada.[275] Sara Roy observes that at the end of the Oslo period 'Hamas was away from political-military action to social-cultural reform, and political violence was slowly but steadily being abandoned as a form of resistance and as a strategy for defeating the occupier'.[276] However the process of Hamas' de-radicalization had been dramatically halted with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada. Hamas seized this opportunity to raise the flag of resistance again. The Israeli military operation and the exacerbated socio-economic context further ignited its determination to resist. Unlike the period of the Oslo Peace Process when Hamas' resistance was unattractive, it has been said that this time the resistance message resonated with the Palestinian society. Perhaps the motivation for Hamas' return to armed resistance and its resistance message accepted by the majority of Palestinians could be placed in the socio-economic context of the al-Aqsa Intifada. Without understanding the context, it would be difficult to understand why Hamas changed its tone from arguing the necessity of suicide bombings (Hamas calls it the martyrdom operation) to accepting the ceasefire in 2003 and its political integration since 2004.

The outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada on 28th September 2000 can be attributed to an unleashing of deep anger, feelings of dispossession, and deprivation felt by Palestinians over the previous seven years (1993 - 2000).[277] During the al-Aqsa Intifada, the context of Palestine can roughly be divided into three stages. Firstly, there was radicalization of the Palestinian society in the first two and a half years (28th September, 2000 – June 29th

[275] The suicide bombings conducted by Hamas only occurred once, on 29th October 1998. See Rashmi Singh, Appendix B in *Hamas and suicide terrorism, Multi-causal and multi-level approaches*, (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.138-139.

[276] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector*, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

[277] *Ibid*., p.191.

2003). This confrontational model was as follows: The Israeli army attacked or assassinated Palestinian militants and civilians and later Palestinian militants exploded bombs in Israeli settlements, checkpoints and inside Israel by way of retaliation. In response, the Israeli authorities launched a massive military operation resulting in the reoccupation of Palestinian territories, the demolition of Palestinian houses and the PA's infrastructures, until the appeal by International society, particularly the United Sates.[278] The second stage was a parallel of negotiation and confrontation from the period of *hudna* (ceasefire) on 29th June, 2003 to the death of Yasser Arafat on 11th November, 2004. During this stage, with the efforts of the International society, especially the Quartet's coordination and the unilateral ceasefire on the Palestinian side, the casualties were lower than previous years while Israel continued carrying out its assassination policy on Hamas and other Palestinian factions.[279] The final stage was the period of relative moderation starting from the inauguration of Mahmud Abbas as the PA President in January 2005 to the Hamas victory in the PLC election in 2006.

With regard to the flashpoint of the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada, this is attributed to Ariel Sharon's visit to *haram al-Sharif* on 28th September 2000 where the al-Aqsa Mosque is located. This is considered to be the third holiest place in Islam while at the same time, Jews believe it to be the Temple Mount that was destroyed by the Roman Empire in 70 AD. There is no denying that Ariel Sharon's visit was a form of provocation to the Palestinians. Afterwards, demonstrations erupted over the West Bank and Gaza and gradually turned into uprising. On the other hand, this Intifada outbreak could be interpreted as the result of Israel's continued occupation since the Oslo Peace Process[280] or the failure of transition to Palestinian statehood.[281] The Oslo accord was initiated in September 1993 and affiliated accords were signed in the ensuing

[278] Regarding the details of Israeli military operations, please refer to Michele Esposito, 'The al-Aqsa Intifada: Military operations, suicide attacks, assassinations, and losses in the first four years,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.34, No. 2 (Winter 2005), pp.85-97.

[279] Two Hamas' co-founders, Ahmad Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi were assassinated by Israel on 22nd March and 17th April, 2004.

[280] Sara Roy, 'The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Palestinian Socioeconomic decline: A place denied,' *International Journal of politics, Culture, and Society, op.cit.,* p.366.

[281] Nigel Parsons, *The politics of the Palestinian Authority from Oslo to Al-Aqsa* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.279.

years. However, after seven years had passed, these agreements did not fulfill the promise of the creation of an independent sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza; on the contrary, the Oslo framework served Israeli domination.[282]

During the Oslo period, for the first time Palestinians had their own autonomous administration in the occupied territory, that is, the Palestinian Authority; but according to the Oslo II Accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas. The PA only possessed complete civil and security affairs in Area A, which accounted for 18 per cent of the West Bank. In addition to this, the socio-economic condition during the Oslo period was undermined by the Israeli policy and the incompetence of the PA. The Israeli closure policy was the main reason why the viability of Palestinian economics was damaged, that is, it incurred a 'restriction on movement of goods, labor and people across internal and external borders and within the West Bank and Gaza'.[283] The expansion of Jewish settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian lands and geographic fragmentation in the West Bank and Gaza further worsened Palestinian economic growth.[284] As for the PA, to some degree it played a complicit role in this difficult situation. Its lack of transparency, accountability and co-operation with Israel were at the expense of Palestinian rights.[285] Economically, the PA could not create a viable economic environment. Instead, new Palestinian elites and the problem of nepotism amongst those close to Yasser Arafat emerged with the monopoly of the economy. As a result, the majority of the poor were even more excluded from resources than they were before Oslo.[286] Apart from the socio-economic factors, the stagnation of the political negotiation between the PA and Israel was another cause for the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada. In March 2000 before the six months of the al-Aqsa Intifada had elapsed, many Palestinians considered that violence was a valid option as the political negotiations between Israel

[282] Sara Roy, 'The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Palestinian Socioeconomic decline: A place denied,' *International Journal of politics, Culture, and Society, op.cit.,*p.366.

[283] *Ibid.,* p.367.

[284] *Ibid.,* pp. 369-370.

[285] Sara Roy, 'Palestinian Society and Economy: The Continued Denial of possibility,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *op.cit.,* pp, 7-13.

[286] *Ibid.,* p.7.

and the PA did not have any concrete result.[287] In this respect, the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada could be seen as the chronic consequence of the accumulation of dissatisfaction, frustration, and grievance among Palestinians for their socio-economic and political situation in the late 1990s.

In the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel and the PA had tried to stop the turmoil through negotiations, with U.S. mediation.[288] This attempt could not reverse the worst situation as Ariel Sharon was elected as Israeli Prime Minister on 6th February 2001. Sharon believed that there was no Palestinian partner for negotiation at this moment until the elimination of the terror in Palestine. That is to say, Israel would not make any concession to Palestine. As the military operation by Palestinian factions escalated, Israel held Arafat responsible for failing to curb the violence. Israel blockaded the PA headquarters and almost destroyed all PA security facilities as a punishment.[289] The PA lost its function of maintaining social order, which gave Hamas more opportunity to disseminate its resistance message.

In addition to the PA's incapacity, the deteriorating socio-economic context in the occupied territories triggered by Israeli policies encouraged many Palestinians to reassess the situation. Hence, the possibility of Hamas' resistance discourse rather than the negotiation discourse that the PA had engaged in with Israel emerged. At the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, the problems of unemployment, poverty and the destruction of normal life reached an intolerable level in Palestinian society. In the first two years of Intifada, the unemployment rate climbed to an unprecedented level, from 11 per cent in 2000 to over 41 per cent in 2002.[290] The high unemployment rates were mainly a result of the loss of employment in Israel, which the Palestinian major labour market relied upon. The problem of unemployment was largely detrimental to the economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[291]

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[287] Kim Cragin, *Palestinian Resistance through the eyes of Hamas*, *op.cit.,* p. 169.

[288] The Sharm el-Shiekh Summit held in October 2000 and the Taba Negotiation held in January 2001.

[289] Anthony Cordesman, *The Israeli-Palestinian war: Escalating to nowhere* (Westport: Center for Strategic and International studies, 2005), pp.169-171.

[290] Salem Ajluni, 'The Palestinian Economy and the Second Intifada,' *Journal of Palestine Studi*es, *op.cit.*, p.69.

[291] Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*, *op.cit.,* pp.258-260.

The loss of employment and the Israeli policy led to the increase of impoverishment. According to a World Bank survey, the poverty rate in the Palestinian population had risen to 60 percent, which was an unprecedented high in modern Palestinian history.[292] In addition, questions arising from the Oslo period such as the Israeli closure policy, the construction of Israeli settlements and fragmentation of territory exacerbated the hardship of Palestinians and affected the devastated economy in the al-Aqsa Intifada.[293] The degree of impoverishment in the population radicalized the young and inspired them to embrace Hamas' resistance discourse.[294]

It could be argued that as well as the severe economic situation, Israel's military operations and its collective punishment policy tended to validate Hamas' resistance discourse among Palestinians. In the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2001), it is estimated that there were 1,781 Palestinian deaths and 20,455 injuries.[295] The demolition of houses and farmland, the detention of prisoners and large casualties led to psychological traumas amongst Palestinians and to retaliation, in terms of suicide bombings.[296] In this context, the resistance discourse that Hamas adopted sounded persuasive to many Palestinians. Hamas believed that the al-Aqsa Intifada created an opportunity for the oppressed Palestinians[297] to liberate Palestine and restore freedom and rights.[298]

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[292] Salem Ajluni, 'The Palestinian Economy and the Second Intifada,' *Journal of Palestine Studi*es, *op.cit.,* p.69

[293] Sara Roy, 'The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Palestinian Socioeconomic decline: A place denied,'*op.cit.,*p.372. Jad Isaac and Owen Powell, 'The transformation of the Palestinian environment,' in Jamil Hila (ed.), *Where Now for Palestine? The Demise of the two-state solution* (London: Zed Books, 2007), p.169.

[294] Salem Ajluni, 'The Palestinian Economy and the Second Intifada,' *Journal of Palestine Studi*es, *op.cit.,* p.72.

[295] Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict*, *op.cit.,* p.292.

[296] Laetitia Bucaille, Anthony Roberts (transl.), *Growing up Palestinian Israeli occupation and the intifada generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp.136-139.

[297] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with al-Zahar,' (13 November 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095830/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/zahaar22.htm> (accessed on 4 October 2013).

[298] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The Speech of Khalid Mishal', (16 October 2002). < http://web.archive.org/web/20051028032752/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/mashal.htm > (accessed on 4 October 2013). Palestinian Information Centre, 'Interview with Rantisi by the Jordanian Newspaper Way', (23 November 2003).

As mentioned above, Hamas firmly believed that armed resistance was the only effective means to end the Israeli occupation; however it is worth noting that Hamas' concept of resistance was not restricted merely to the military dimension during the al-Aqsa Intifada. Rather, Hamas had incrementally constructed the concept of resistance into a holistic project known as the 'resistance project' in association with an Islamic reference. Since this project was the guideline for Hamas' political transformation between 2003 and 2006 as well as its political engagement between 2006 and 2013, it is necessary to understand the content of the resistance project and its relation to the Islamic reference.

2. The content of the resistance project and its relation to the Islamic reference

The resistance project does not refer to an actual project or document like Hamas' Charter and official statements; rather, it is a specific term and concept which Hamas often highlighted the implications of resistance in public during the al-Aqsa Intifada and after being a government. According to research carried out by Dr. Wael Abdelal, the term, 'resistance project' was first used by Hamas' political leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi in late-2002.[299] In an article entitled, 'Protection of the resistance project,' Rantisi did not specify what the resistance project was, but he stressed the necessity of resistance work as 'Palestinians compromised 78 per cent of lands with Israel by negotiation….therefore, for the Palestinian negotiators, they have two choices, either ignore the right of people or adhere to resistance.'[300] Since then, this term has been frequently adopted by Hamas leaders in public, and later the concept was gradually developed and finally embodied in the electoral programme in 2006.

According to Hamas' narrative in the resistance project, Israel is a usurper that built its country on Palestinian territory at the expense of

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095810/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/rantese.htm> (accessed on 4 October 2013).

[299] Wael Abdelal, *From the Mosque to Satellite Broadcasting: A historical perspective of Hamas Media Strategy*, *op.cit.*, P.76.

[300] Abdel Aziz Rantisi, 'Protection of the resistance project,' *Ikhwan Wiki*, (28 July 2002). < http://tinyurl.com/pn8ocwu> (accessed on 6 October 2013).

Palestinian rights; therefore, resistance would never cease until the end of the occupation.[301] That is to say, the resistance had emerged precisely because of the Israeli occupation. During the Al-Aqsa Intifada, due to the Israeli arrests, assassinations and reoccupation of Palestinian cities, Hamas assumed that psychologically, under Sharon's leadership, Israel was in love with murder without a political solution[302] and that it was intent on breaking the spirit of the Palestinian armed resistance.[303]

Development of resistance tactics during the al-Aqsa Intifada

Before the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas did not further elaborate the concept of the resistance to the public while the context of the al-Aqsa Intifada provided the moment that enabled Hamas to articulate its resistance messages. During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas incrementally constructed its resistance project. This project did not vow to destroy Israel nor did it promote a slogan promising to throw the Jews into the seas, which is the general impression given by reports in the Western media. Rather, Hamas leaders talked about the necessity of resistance as the only strategy by which to restore the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as the diaspora who were expelled from Palestine in 1948.[304]

According to Hamas' resistance strategy, the ultimate goal was the liberation of all Palestinian land, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital and the right of return.[305] But learning from history that the Crusade occupied Palestine and the Great Syria

[301] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Haniyeh: Hamas has many leaders and our operation is in the context of liberalization instead of reaction and revenge,' (20 April 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095553/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/haneyah.htm> (accessed on 6 October 2013).

[302] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Abdel Aziz Rantisi,' (9 January 2003). < http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222230/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/rantesi.htm> (accessed on 6 October 2013).

[303] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas,' (2 August 2002). <http://web.archive.org/web/20050322134510/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/palestoday/reports/mokablat02/yasen.htm> (accessed on 6 October 2013).

[304] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal, interview by Hayat newspaper,' (9 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20040830104610/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/meshaal5.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

[305] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Sheikh Ahmed Yassin,' (15 December 2002). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222825/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/yaseen.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

for two hundred years, Hamas realized that the liberation of Palestine could not be achieved overnight.[306] To reach this aspiration, Hamas developed multiple tactics and also required the cooperation and support of all sides of Palestinian society against the Israeli occupation, that is, Arab, Muslim countries and even the West.

When Palestinian casualties increased as a result of the Israeli invasion, Hamas focused on the military tactic. This included the use of: Molotov cocktail, the ticking bomb, suicide bombing, mortar and rocket.[307] The military confrontation is derived from the philosophy of resistance. Hamas was not convinced that the restoration of rights could be achieved by negotiation; and to overcome the occupation, resistance seemed to be the right path to fulfil its goal. Hamas legitimated the use of weapons as a natural right in the defense of Palestinians[308] and aimed to destabilize Israeli security, exhaust Israel in a long-term conflict and finally, render Israel incapable of sustaining the occupation.[309] However, carrying out the military operation definitely led to the loss of Palestinians and Hamas is aware of this high price. But Hamas' leaders argued that Palestinians had, relatively, managed a military achievement in comparison to the liberation war in Vietnam. The rate of casualties amongst Israelis and Palestinians was 1:3 lower than the rate of 1:47 amongst Americans and the Vietnamese.[310]

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[306] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal, interview by Hayat newspaper,' (9 December 2003). < http://web.archive.org/web/20040830104610/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/meshaal5.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

[307] The Palestinian Information Centre, 'Interview with Sheikh Ahmed Yassin,' (15 December 2002).<http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222825/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/yaseen.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

[308] The Palestinian Information Center, 'A meeting with Rafat Nasif, Hamas' representative in Tulkarem,' (8 June 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20050208181024/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/nasef.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

[309] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The text of the interview with Khalid Mishal in the Al-Manar Channel,' (12 March 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222421/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mashal_manar.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

[310] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal: A letter to students in the Palestinian universities, the fifteenth anniversary of Hamas,' (14 December 2002). <http://web.archive.org/web/20051109184925/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/interviews/resalah_mashal.htm> (accessed on 7 October 2013).

Apart from the reality of occupation, as an Islamic movement, Hamas quoted several Qur'anic verses to validate the legitimacy of the military operation.

> 'Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is able to give them (believers) victory'.[311]
>
> 'Then whoever transgresses the prohibition against you, you transgresses the prohibition against you'.[312]

In the military dimension, it seems that Hamas maintained a resolute attitude towards Israel during the al-Aqsa intifada; however Hamas did not always place the military aspect as its first priority. At times when the situation was unfavourable to Hamas in 2004, its military resistance was less emphasized. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the implementation of the Road Map, and the initiative of the disengagement plan by Sharon, Hamas reduced its military operations and considered the possibility of political integration to the PA. Given this situation, Hamas' leaders justified the decision to halt the military operation. They 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 Palestinians.[313]

On a political level, Hamas firmly believed that Palestinian national consensus and unity are the foundations of the resistance. Although Hamas disagreed with the option of political settlement: that the PA and Fatah co-operated with Israel in the political and security issues which contradicts the resistance, Hamas guaranteed that it would not incite strife with the PA and would not criticize specific Palestinian individuals.[314] Hamas regarded the PA's leadership as brothers and not the enemy, despite the fact that they had

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[311] Qur'an (22:39) See *The Noble Qur'an: English translation of the meanings and commentary*, (Madinah, King Fahd Complex, 1999), p.448.

[312] Qur'an (2:194), *Ibid*., p.41.

[313] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Ismail Haniyeh,' (31 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222358/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/haneya3.htm> (accessed on 8 October 2013).

[314] The Palestinian Information Center, A meeting with Rafat Nasif, Hamas' representative in Tulkarem,' (8 June 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20050208181024/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/nasef.htm > (accessed on 8 October 2013).

different opinions toward Palestinian issues. In order to keep the resistance intact and serve the national interest, the continuous dialogue with Fatah and the PA officials was a necessary step for Hamas.[315] But this principle of the unity was broken when Hamas took over Gaza in June 2007. The reason why Hamas did this will be explained later in Chapter Four.

On the other hand, Hamas often raises the significance of solidarity and the concept of unity to the Arab and Muslim community (*ummah*). That is to say, seeking support and understanding from the Arab and Muslim countries is another of Hamas' tactics. In the early period of the 1990s, Hamas started communicating with the Arab and Muslim countries and parties. This emphasis on relationships is based on the principle of *ummah*, which means that every Arab and Muslim country is one family; Palestine is under this roof and the centre of the unification of *ummah*. Therefore, Hamas looked forward to the mobilization of the Islamic community to stop Israeli aggression.[316] In reality, this tactic was unsuccessful during the al-Aqsa Intifada. Only Syria and Iran were willing to provide essential political and financial support. Hamas' resistance message could not move the majority of Arab and Muslim countries, particularly the Egyptian authority who has played a crucial role in Palestinian issues. As a long-term supporter of the peace process and negotiation, it was expected that Egypt would not be interested in this resistance message. Hamas was not naïve about the political reality. It was cautious and patient in dealing with Egypt and expected that Egypt would only understand or accept its resistance position in terms of dialogue.[317]

The dialogue is not restricted to the PA and Arab countries. Hamas leaders claimed that they were willing to talk to any countries in the world[318]

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[315] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Dialogue with Abdel Aziz Rantisi,' (9 January 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222230/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/rantesi.htm> (accessed on 10 October 2013).

[316] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal, interview by Hayat newspaper,' (10 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20040830104557/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/meshaal6.htm> (accessed on 10 October 2013).

[317] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Quds Press,' (19 February 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221937/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mesh3al.htm> (accessed on 10 October 2013).

[318] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Dialogue with Muhammad Nazzal, a member of the Political Bureau of Hamas', (16 October 2002).

particularly to Western countries. Hamas hoped that Western countries would relieve Palestinian suffering and understand why Hamas adopted its resistance option. The effort to conduct a dialogue with the West did not work due to the notorious record of suicide bombings. The United States refused to talk to Hamas and asked Hamas to disarm. As for the European Union, before Hamas was listed as a terrorist organization in 2003, several meetings were held between Hamas and EU officials. During these meeting, Hamas leaders asserted that the EU delegates realized that the problem was not Hamas but the Israeli occupation.[319] However, with the resumption of the suicide bombings in Jerusalem on 20th August 2003 in violation of the ceasefire, the EU officials cut off communication with Hamas.

The resistance also required support within Palestinian society particularly since social service is a cornerstone issue for Hamas and assistance to needy people is one of Hamas' tactics for sustaining the resistance. The facilities of social services such as hospitals, mosques, schools, nurseries and sports clubs relieved suffering and boosted the confidence of Palestinians amidst Israeli aggression.[320] But the financial sources from overseas such as Syria, Iran and even the United States to those Islamic civil institutions were suspicious to the U.S administration. The U.S officials believed that these donations were not for local charities but were meant for Hamas' military use. In this regard, the money from overseas was cut. In addition, the PA was under pressure from the U.S to shut down the Islamic civil institutions. Hamas rejected the accusation and appealed to the West and the PA not to freeze the assets of the charities. It claimed that closing down charities would not have affected Hamas' operation but would

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20050208181334/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/nazal.htm > (accessed on 10 October 2013).

[319] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal, interview by Hayat newspaper,' (8 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20040830104748/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/meshaal4.htm> (accessed on 10 October 2013).

[320] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal, interview by Hayat newspaper,' (10 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226195031/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/meshaal6.htm> (accessed on 11 October 2013).

have had a negative impact on vulnerable people such as orphans, and the families of the martyrs.[321]

The resistance and its relation to Islamic reference

Hamas was aware that the liberation of Palestine was an impossible task during the al-Aqsa Intifada since the existing political and economic structure was in favour of the Peace Process. Israel and the United States insisted that the PA has to disarm Hamas; on the other hand, the resistance option was unacceptable to the EU and Egypt. But Hamas had never abandoned the resistance and was confident that ultimately, Palestinian would achieve victory.[322]

In order to elucidate the resistance and Hamas's conviction, we ought to consider the Islamic reference since it could be argued that it empowers Hamas' inspiration and its insistence on resistance. As an Islamic movement, Hamas considers itself in the right path of God, serving the people instead of obtaining political gain or privilege.[323] Hamas regards Islam as a way of life[324] which gives a clear guideline for Muslim individuals and organizations. Muslims believe that when they encounter difficulties, both the Qur'an, which is from God's revelation and *Sunna*, the teaching and practices of the Prophet Muhammad guide Muslims to break through their predicaments.[325] Hamas recognized that the loss of life and the demolition of homes were painful

[321] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Mahmud al-Zahar,' (30 August 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222311/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/zahaar.htm> (accessed on 11 October 2013).

[322] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The speech from the chairman of political bureau Brother Khalid Mishal in the 16 anniversary of Hamas in Beirut,' (21 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222436/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mashall22.htm> (accessed on 11 October 2013).

[323] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The text of the interview with Khalid Mishal in the Al-Manar Channel,' (12 March 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222421/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mashal_manar.htm> (accessed on 12 October 2013).

[324] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Sheikh Ahmed Yassin gives his views with the Palestinian Information Center,' (16 January 2004) <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222829/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/yaseen3.htm> (accessed on 12 October 2013).

[325] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with al-Zahar,' (13 November 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222431/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/zahaar22.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013).

experiences. The massive pressure from the PA and the United States was also an obstacle to the resistance. However, Hamas was firmly convinced that this was inevitable in the process of liberation. Based on this conviction, Hamas' leadership inspired people in distress not to lose hope. Patience, steadfastness, determination and sacrifice were often highlighted to Palestinians, particularly in the context of the Israeli reoccupation of the West Bank and the strike on the Gaza Strip. This invisible factor played an integral part in upholding the resistance. In a public speech that Khalid Mishal addressed to supporters he said that God would be on their side, provided that they were patient and believed in God.[326]

> 'If you remain patient and become pious, not the least harm will their cunning do to you. Surely, God surrounds all that they do.' [327]
>
> 'Truly, God defends those who believe. Verily, Allah likes not any treacherous ingrate to God'. [328]
>
> 'Verily God will help those who help his cause. Truly God is all-strong, all-mighty.'[329]

To a large extent, Hamas' view in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on its understanding of the Qur'an and other Islamic reference. During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas' leadership naturally recited Qur'anic verses when they were interviewed and gave speeches to its audiences.[330] The

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[326] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The Speech of Khalid Mishal', (16 October 2002) <http://web.archive.org/web/20050208181334/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/nazal.htm > (accessed on 15 October 2013).

[327] Qur'an (3:120), *The Noble Qur'an: English translation of the meanings and commentary*, *op.cit,* p.91.

[328] Qur'an (22:38), *Ibid*., p.448.

[329] Qur'an (22:40), *Ibid*., p.449.

[330] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Abdel Aziz Rantisi,' (9 January 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222230/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/rantesi.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal speaks about the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority,' (25 August 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222417/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/kalide.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Ahmed Yassin,' (28 August 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222021/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/yaseen2.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestinian Information Center 'Interview with Usama Hamdan,' (11 September 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222615/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/hamdan_1.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestinian Information Center, 'Speech from Muhammad Nazzal, the member of the political bureau of Hamas,' (14 December 2003).

following are the verses that the Hamas leadership usually quoted during the al-Aqsa Intifada.

The verses regarding the legitimacy of resistance

> 'Whoever transgresses the prohibition against you, you transgress likewise against him'.[331]
>
> 'Allah does not like that the evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged'.[332]
>
> 'O you who believe! Answer Allah (by obeying Him) and (His) Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life'.[333]
>
> 'Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is able to give them (believers) victory'.[334]
>
> 'The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and rebel in the earth without justification'.[335]

The verses regarding confidence and victory

> 'Allah is All-Sufficient for you. He it is who has supported you with His Help and with the believers'.[336]
>
> 'So do not become weak (against you enemy), nor be sad, and you will be superior (in victory) if you are indeed believers'.[337]
>
> 'They never lost heart for that which did befall them in Allah's way, nor did they weaken nor degrade themselves. And Allah loves the patience'.[338]

<http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221716/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/nazal22.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestinian Information Center, 'Speech from Khalid Mishal, Chairman of the political bureau of Islamic resistance movement,' (14 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222159/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/kalemt_meshal.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Quds Press,' (19 February 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221937/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mesh3al.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013). The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Chairman of Political bureau of Hamas,' (10 April 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221844/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mashall_1.htm> (accessed on 15 October 2013).

[331] Qur'an (2:194), *The Noble Qur'an: English translation of the meanings and commentary*, *op.cit*, p.41.

[332] Qur'an (4:148), *Ibid*., p.135.

[333] Qur'an (8:24), *Ibid*., p.234.

[334] Qur'an (22:39), *Ibid*., p.448.

[335] Qur'an (42:42), *Ibid*., p.658.

[336] Qur'an (8:62), *Ibid*., p.240.

[337] Qur'an (3:139), *Ibid*., p.94.

> ‘Don’t be weak in the pursuit of the enemy; if you are suffering (hardships) then surely, they (too) are suffering (hardships) as you are suffering, but you have a hope from Allah (for the reward) that for which they hope not; and Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise’.[339]

The verses regarding the martyrdom operation

> ‘Verily, you will find them the greediest of mankind for life.[340]
>
> Allah may take martyrs from among you’.[341]
>
> ‘Verily, Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their properties for (the price) that theirs shall be the Paradise. They fight in Allah’s Cause, so they kill (others) and are killed’.[342]
>
> ‘Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah, and showed not their backs to the (disbelievers); of them some have fulfilled their obligations’.[343]

The verse regarding the possibility of peace

> ‘If they incline to peace, you also incline to it’.[344]

Judging by the above excerpts it is obvious that Hamas’ interpretation of the Qur’an relates to its resistance and sacrifice in response to the Israeli occupation throughout the al-Aqsa Intifada. In other words, in order to gain legitimacy and inspiration when constructing the resistance project, Hamas leaders resorted to Islamic references. However, it is noted that the way that Hamas reads the Qur’an is different from Salafists, another Islamists’ trend. In their interpretation of the Qur’an, Salafists are usually literalists, and often fail to consider the whole social and political context. A Salafist leader in Gaza claims that the conditions of Jihad have not yet been fulfilled as there is no army and no leader.[345] Khaled Hroub observes that Salafists in Palestine tend to detach themselves from the Palestinian national struggle and stresses

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[338] Qur’an (3:146), *Ibid*., p.95.

[339] Qur’an (4:104), *Ibid*., p.127

[340] Qur’an (2:96), *Ibid*., p.19.

[341] Qur’an (3:140), *Ibid*., p.94.

[342] Qur’an (9:111), *Ibid*., p.264.

[343] Qur’an (33:23), *Ibid*., p.563.

[344] Qur’an (8:61), *Ibid*., p.240.

[345] Khaled Hroub, ‘Salafi formations in Palestine: The Limits of a de-Palestinianized Milieu,’ in Meijer Roel (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.229.

utopian religious abstractions in daily life.[346] In this sense, Salafist in Palestine tends to neglect the concept of 'liberation of Palestine' and the 'Jihad against Israel.' [347]

However Hamas leaders interpreted the Qur'anic texts in a wider and specific context, which in this case, was the Israeli occupation and aggression. That is to say, when the escalation increased, it was natural that Hamas quoted these types of verses from Qur'an to correspond to the tense situation. For example, Abdel Aziz Rantisi was asked why Hamas rejected a ceasefire early in 2003. In response, he stated that Israel kept killing Palestinian civilians and demolishing their houses.[348] Then he immediately cited Qur'anic verses 'so do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will never deprive you of your deeds[349]' and 'If they incline to peace, you also incline to it'.[350] In this sense, viewing the context of the Israeli occupation, Rantisi who seemed to master Qur'an knew which verses could appropriately be applied to a certain scenario. On the other hand, some Qur'anic verses that Hamas adopted do not refer to the military message. Khalid Mishal argued that Hamas was willing to have dialogue with other nations and civilizations. He quoted a verse: 'We have sent you (Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the mankind',[351] indicating that the Islamic civilization has the character of a universal value and is open to other nations and civilizations.[352]

In addition to the application of the Qur'anic text in the context of the Israeli occupation, it could be argued that Hamas' view on Israel and the PA could correspond to the Islamic jurisprudence. For Israel, Hamas often

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[346] *Ibid*., p.238.

[347] *Ibid.,* p.229.

[348] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Abdel Aziz Rantisi,' (9 January 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222230/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/rantesi.htm> (accessed on 17 October 2013).

[349] Qur'an (47:35), *Ibid.* p. 695.

[350] Qur'an (8:61), *Ibid*., p.240.

[351] Qur'an (21:107), *Ibid*., p.441.

[352] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The speech from the president of political bureau Brother Khalid Mishal in the 16 anniversary of Hamas in Beirut,' (21 December 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222436/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mashall22.htm> (accessed on 17 October 2013).

stresses that resistance is the only way to the path of liberation even though it faced disproportional attacks by Israel. According to the Islamic jurisprudence, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111), the influential Muslim jurist in Islamic history, provided the definition of *maslaha* (the common good) which means, 'to seek something beneficial or avoid something harmful'.[353] The goal of *maslaha* is to protect religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect ('*aql*), lineage (*nasl*) and property (*amwal*). [354] According to these standards, Israel deprived Palestinians of these five fundamental elements during the al-Aqsa Intifada; thus it is the duty of an Islamic movement to restore these rights.

On the other hand, Hamas' view of the PA is based on the principle of avoiding internal strife. Clearly, the resistance project that Hamas promoted aimed to bring about changes to the structure of the peace process. The PA was suspicious of this and condemned the tactic of a martyrdom operation, which it saw as an obstacle to peace and political reform. Hamas worried that the security co-operation between the PA and Israel was harmful to the resistance project. The tension between the PA and Hamas indeed existed while Hamas leaders declared that they would not cross the red line to civil war with the PA. Khalid Mishal provided a metaphor that Palestinians were in the same boat. Any action that damaged this boat would drown everyone.[355] From the Sunni perspective, revolt against the political authority requires strict standards. Firstly, the ruler has to have a clear and undisputed disbelief in Islam. Secondly, the use of force should ensure that change and reform would not result in a state of chaos.[356] Therefore, revolt against the political authority is not the proper approach to bring about change and reform. Hamas' political integration from 2004 could be observed from this angle. Based on this principle, Khalid Mishal stated that Hamas would maintain a peaceful

[353] Tariq Ramadan, 'Ijtihad and maslaha: The Foundations of Governance' in Muqtedar Khan (ed.), *Islamic Democratic Discourse* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), p.5.

[354] *Ibid*., p.5.

[355] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Al-hayat,' (28 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222141/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal.htm> (accessed on 17 October 2013).

[356] Mansoor Jassem Alshamsi, *Islam and political reform in Saudi Arabia: The quest for political change and reform* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.45.

approach in dealing with internal Palestinian affairs even though they have different political opinions.[357]

Overall the resistance project can be seen as an alternative option throughout the al-Aqsa Intifada. Even though Hamas suspended its military operation in 2003 and considered the possibility of political integration, the foundation of the resistance was not shaken. The resistance project could be seen to be the guideline for Hamas' political transition. The following section will trace and analyze how Hamas constructed the resistance project interrelated with its political transformation between 2003 and 2006.

3. From the ceasefire to a call for Political reform

In the first two years of the al-Aqsa Intifada, the armed resistance formed Hamas' major tactic within its resistance project. Unlike the PA, Hamas entirely rejected the political settlement and diplomatic negotiation with Israel. Instead, Hamas highlighted that the military operation is the only path to end the Israeli occupation. This position was changed with the appointment of the first prime minister in the PA and the launch of the Road Map in mid-2003. Hamas accepted a ceasefire with the mediation of Egypt for the first time since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada. Further, as the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon proposed the idea of disengagement from Gaza in December 2003, Hamas swiftly adjusted its discourse from military confrontation against Israel to Palestinian political reform and the participation in elections in 2004. This section will trace and analyze how Hamas changed its tactics from the ceasefire to a call for political reform.

3.1 The ceasefire in 2003

To escape from the quagmire of deterioration in the socio-economic situation in Palestine and the intensity of suicide bombing in Israel, the appeal to reform propelled by the United States was encouraged in Palestinian society. On 15th May 2002, Arafat proposed a plan for the restructure of the

[357] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Al-hayat,' (28 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222141/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal.htm> (accessed on 17 October 2013).

PA administration and a new election.[358] Hamas did not reject this idea but, based on Hamas' resistance principle, ending the occupation was the first priority rather than holding an election as a precondition. Hamas considered that the proposal for election reflected the notion of the Oslo Process [359] and criticized the PA saying that the reform and the election it suggested would serve the interests of Israel and the United States.[360]

The PA seemed to have been in a dilemma. In addition to the criticism from Hamas, the PA also lost the United States' trust. On 24th June 2002, President George Bush delivered a speech[361] that placed emphasis on the necessity of eradicating terrorism, electing new Palestinian leaders, and proposing reform to Palestinians. In this speech President Bush criticized the PA for encouraging terrorism, which was unacceptable to the US administration. Therefore, to reach the peace so that Palestinians and Israelis could live side by side, Palestinians should not compromise with terror. [362] This speech later became the blueprint of the Road Map in April 2003. On analysis, it suggests that ostensibly, Bush was dissatisfied with Arafat's passive attitude since he did not curb Palestinian violence; and the speech implied that a change of leadership in Palestine was a necessary step for Palestinian reform.[363]

The necessity of reform in Palestine, and the termination of conflict between Israel and Palestine, were the core issues that concerned all parties, but there were fundamental differences in the concept of what reform meant to them. For the United States, the key to reaching political reform in Palestine

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[358] Nathan Brown, *Palestinian Politics after the Oslo Accords* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p.250.

[359] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Mahmud al-Zahar, the member of the political bureau of Hamas,' (3 December 2002). <http://web.archive.org/web/20050208181801/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/zaha.htm> (accessed on 18 October 2013).

[360] 'Hamas' Sheikh Yassin: Reform according to Israeli criteria becomes corruption,' *Mideast Mirror,* (22 May, 2002).

[361] 'President Bush calls for new Palestinian Leadership,' *The White House* (24 June 2002) < http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html> (accessed on 18 October 2013).

[362] *Ibid.*

[363] *Ibid*.

was fighting terrorism, a term which referred to the suicide bombings undertaken by Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. If the PA were incapable of combating terror, the United States would not assist the PA in building a democratic Palestinian state. In other words, from the United States' perspective this type of reform and democracy in Palestine is based on the precondition of elimination of parties who were hostile to Israeli security and the national interest of the United States.[364]

Unlike the United States, which always considers security and the war on terror as the major agenda, for Hamas, reform should be based on the foundation of resistance. Before the formation of the new Palestinian government, the PA offered six seats in the Cabinet to Hamas but Hamas rejected this.[365] Khalid Mishal explained that Hamas was not stubborn about political integration but this offer was in the structure of the Oslo Process, which was not in Palestinian interests.[366] For Hamas, the political project and reform should be based on the national consensus to end the occupation, restore Palestinian rights and bring justice to the oppressed people.[367] It should be realized that this reform was pursuant to the resistance cause. That is to say, as a precondition, Israel has to cease aggression; only then would Hamas suspend its military resistance.

Under pressure from the United States, Arafat eventually appointed Mahmud Abbas as the first Prime Minister on 19th March 2003, which conformed to the United States' anticipation and the initiative of the Road Map. Afterwards, the negotiations regarding the peace proposal were initiated. The Road Map was officially announced on 30th April 2003. According to the first

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[364] Nathan Brown describes that the reform for the United States is to weaken Arafat. See Nathan Brown, 'Requiem for Palestinian Reform: Clear Lessons from a troubled record' in Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (ed.), *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab world* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International peace, 2008), p. 109-110.

[365] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The text of the interview with Khalid Mishal in the Al-Manar Channel,' (12 March 2003) <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222421/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mashal_manar.htm> (accessed on 19 October 2013).

[366] *Ibid.*

[367] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal talks about the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority,' (August 25 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222417/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/kalide.htm > (accessed on 19 October 2013).

stage of the Road Map, which called, 'for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to end armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere,'[368] the Palestinian leader would have to take the responsibility in combating Palestinian militias. In this scenario, a series of diplomatic efforts were undertaken. On 4th June, the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas met in Aqaba, Jordan, to discuss ending the conflict. Facing this abrupt change, Hamas cut off dialogue with the PA. Hamas' leadership was convinced that the negotiations and summits in the framework of the Road Map ensured Israeli legitimacy of occupation and terminated the Intifada and the resistance.[369] At the same time, Hamas made a critical response to the PA's compliance with the 'dictate' of Israel and the United States, claiming that the military resistance was still the necessary approach in the defense of Palestinians in order to end Israeli occupation.[370] However, on Egypt's intervention, Hamas changed its tone and began to consider the Egyptian ceasefire proposal.[371] Eventually, Egypt managed to persuade Hamas to declare a three-month ceasefire with other Palestinian factions on 27th June.[372]

The 2003 ceasefire not only fulfilled the International society's expectations but it also symbolized that Hamas was willing to compromise its search for an alternative way out of the suicide bombings under the Israeli occupation. A number of external factors such as the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq led by the United States determined Hamas's decision

[368] 'The Roadmap: Full text', *BBC,* (30 April 2003). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2989783.stm> (accessed on 19 October 2013).

[369] The Palestinian Information Center, 'A meeting with Rafat Nasif, Hamas' representative in Tulkarem,' (8 June 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20050208181024/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/nasef.htm > (accessed on 19 October 2013).

[370] *Ibid.*

[371] Hamas' statement said: "We will study carefully and seriously the ideas that the Egyptian delegation is suggesting".' See 'Egyptian ceasefire proposal meets encouraging Hamas reception,' *Agence France Presse* (16 June 2003).

[372] For the content of the ceasefire, please refer to 'Texts: Palestinian truces,' *BBC Monitoring,* (29 June 2003). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3030480.stm> (accessed on 19 October 2013).

to halt the military operation.[373] When the U.S. invaded Iraq, Hamas inspired Palestinians with a spirit of sacrifice similar to that of the Iraqi people when they resisted the U.S. invasion; [374] while after the war, with the U.S. occupation of Iraq Hamas found that the regional and International environment had changed and was against its resistance strategy. For example, the summit conference held in June discredited Hamas' military resistance option. In the eyes of the United States, the essence of Hamas was no different than Al-Qaeda's who launched the suicide attacks on Western countries. Even though Hamas rejected the brand of terrorism, denied a connection with Al-Qaeda and justified resistance as the means of protecting its people from Israeli attacks,[375] in reality this kind of operation certainly caused losses of Israeli civilians and validated the general impression that Hamas was doing the same sort of terrorist attack as Al-Qaeda.

In addition, public opinion often played a crucial role in shifting Hamas' decision-making. According to a survey, 56.1 per cent of Palestinians felt that the war on Iraq had a negative effect on the Palestinian situation.[376] Khalid Mishal confessed that the occupation of Iraq by the United States put tremendous pressure on the Palestinian and Arab sides. [377] Another poll indicates that before the announcement of the ceasefire in June 2003, 73 per cent of Palestinians supported a ceasefire with Israel under the condition that

[373] Alastair Crooke and Beverley Milton-Edwards, "Waving, Not Drowning: Strategic Dimensions of ceasefires and Islamic Movements," *Security Dialogue*, Vol.35, No.3 (September 2004), p.304.

[374] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Speech of the Hamas' political leadership, Adnan Asfour,' (12 April 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20050208180547/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/asfoor.htm> (accessed on 20 October 2013).

[375] 'Hamas ready to stop attacks on Israeli civilians: Sheikh Yassin,' *Agence France Presse* (18 May 2002).

[376] JMCC, 'JMCC Public Poll No.48: On Palestinian attitudes towards the Palestinian situation in general,' (April 2003). <http://www.jmcc.org/Documentsandmaps.aspx?id=451> (accessed on 20 October 2013).

[377] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Quds Press,' (19 February 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221937/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mesh3al.htm> (accessed on 20 October 2013).

Israel would stop attacking the Palestinians.[378] Hamas was sensitive to this change of public opinion and therefore considered the option of a ceasefire.

The war on terror campaign and the shift in Palestinian opinions could be the reason why Hamas announced the unilateral ceasefire along with other Palestinian factions. But from another angle, this ceasefire may be regarded as a tactic within the resistance project. Resistance had always been the central issue ever since the inception of Hamas in 1987. During the al-Aqsa intifada, Hamas strengthened its military dimension when Israel launched military operations in Palestinian cities. But 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 tactic. 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 resistance and the unity of Palestinian factions.[379] Abu Shanab, a key figure in Hamas' leadership and a man who was engaged in the ceasefire talks in 2003 defended the position of the ceasefire, 'There is no change in Hamas' strategy, that is based on resistance, but the resistance takes different tactics and methods, and the method of the resistance are varied'. [380] 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'.[381]

Seemingly, Abu Shanab's assumptions had come true. The expected three-month ceasefire that only lasted for six weeks was renounced by Hamas after the assassination of Abu Shanab on 21st August. Abu Shanab's

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[378] See Palestinian Center for policy and survey Research, 'PSR Survey Research Unit: Results of Poll 8,' (19-22 June 2003). <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/247> (accessed on 21 October 2013).

[379] 'Texts: Palestinian truce,' *BBC*, (29 June 2003). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3030480.stm>.

[380] 'Ismail Abu Shanab, Member of Hamas political Bureau,' *Al-Jazeera* (23 July 2002).

[381] 'Interview with Hamas's Abd Al-'Aziz Rantisi and Ismail Abu Shanab,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 33, No.1 (Fall 2003), p.167.

death was due to the Israeli reprisals for the suicide bombings in Jerusalem by a Palestinian on 20th August. This individual incident was not authorized by Hamas officials, but Khalid Mishal defended this operation as a natural response. He pointed the finger at Israel in violation of the ceasefire beforehand; Israel had not abided by the ceasefire to stop aggression and to release Palestinian prisoners, but continued killing Palestinians and demolishing Palestinians' houses during the period of ceasefire. [382]

The breakdown of the ceasefire discredited the Road Map and seemed to result in a vicious circle: Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas resigned, Israel vowed to assassinate the Hamas political leaders, Hamas returned to its original uncompromising military discourse. In spite of this statistically, the number of Israeli deaths in suicide bombings were dramatically decreased in comparison with the period 2000 to 2003.[383] Apart from two suicide bombings in September, there was no record of a suicide bombing being carried out by Hamas until 14th January 2004.[384]

After the collapse of the ceasefire, Hamas continued to reiterate the significance of resistance and rejected any peace initiative to the public. In October, the track two channel which is the non-official diplomacy, was established between Israel and Palestine. A new peace initiative called The Geneva Accord was launched in December. However, neither Israeli officials nor Palestinian factions such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad accepted it.[385] It seemed that Hamas had returned to the old path before the ceasefire in June 2003; however it could be argued that Hamas was more active in Palestinian domestic affairs than in military resistance at the end of 2003. Hamas tried to

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[382] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal speaks about the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority,' (August 25 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222417/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/kalide.htm> (accessed on 21 October 2013).

[383] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Suicide and other bombing attacks in Israel since the declaration of Palestine (Septmber 1993),' <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/suicide%20and%20other%20bombing%20attacks%20in%20israel%20since.aspx> (accessed on 21 October 2013).

[384] See Rashmi Singh, Appendix B in *Hamas and suicide terrorism, Multi-causal and multi-level approaches*, *op.cit,* pp.138-142.

[385] Meital Yoram, *Peace in Tatters: Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2006), pp.171-174.

persuade Fatah and the PA officials not to adhere to the framework of the Oslo Process. By doing this, the Hamas leadership had dialogue with the new Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei and also had a meeting with Fatah in Cairo in December. During this period, Qurei proposed a political reform including the planned presidential, municipal and legislative elections; Egypt also persuaded Hamas to accept a new ceasefire. Hamas was not interested in this appeal. Rather, Hamas wanted to raise a brand-new political project in order to get rid of the shackle of the Road Map and the Oslo Process. For Hamas, the principle of the political project should not sell out Palestinian rights. Thus, Hamas was very attentive to the issues of corruption, security, the national unity and reform in Palestine.[386] It is noted that Hamas started to question the organizational structure of the PLO that could not reflect a reality of Palestinian politics and it also criticized the PA's inability. It seems that Hamas regarded itself as an alternative to Palestinian politics after the failure of the ceasefire in June 2003.[387]

3.2. A call for political reform in response to the initiative of Israeli disengagement plan

The ceasefire in 2003 lasted for only six weeks. However, this period could be regarded as the initial stage in Hamas's search for a solution within itself, in order to effect Palestinian reform rather than stressing armed resistance against Israel. This trend became clearer in early 2004 since Hamas did not emphasize the necessity of sacrifice and the martyrdom operation. Instead, in January, Hamas' leadership offered a 10-year truce in a proposal of co-existence with Israel. Rantisi stated that, 'We accept a state in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. We propose a 10-year truce in return for Israel's withdrawal and the establishment of a state.' [388]

The 10-year truce known as *hudna* in Arabic has a religious implication. In Islamic history, Muslim leaders called *hudna* for opponents when the

[386] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with al-Zahar,' (13 November 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222431/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/zahaar22.htm>(accessed on 1 December 2013).

[387] *Ibid.*

[388] 'Israel summarily rejects Hamas offer of 10-year truce,' *The Independent*, (27 January 2004).

balance of power was on the opponents' side. The classic example is the Hudabiyya Treaty in the 7th century between the Prophet Muhammad and the Quraysh tribe of Mecca when Muhammad attempted to perform a pilgrimage there.[389] Nowadays, Islamists adhere to this concept when they are in a defensive position. The *hudna* is considered sacred and a commitment to seek co-existence with the opponent. Azzam Tamimi states that theoretically, once each hostile party reaches the *hudna*, a Muslim should take it as a religious duty and fulfill the commitment, otherwise from the Muslim point of view that is, in accordance with Islamic faith, breaking the *hudna* is a grave sin in the Islamic jurisprudence.[390] On the other hand, the application of *hunda* is not rigid. According to the various contexts, flexible interpretations can be allowed.[391] Usually, the average duration of *hudna* is 10 years.[392] When the *hudna* has expired, it can be renewed by mutual consent.[393]

The principle of *hudna* is the one that Hamas presented as an alternative solution to the existing conflict.[394] *hudna* is another option to armed resistance in order to obtain Palestinian basic rights and freedoms in the West Bank and Gaza. But the proposal is unlike the existing Peace Process which is based on the concept of a two-state solution. Even if Israel withdraw to the 1967 border, the recognition of Israel would never be the acceptable option due to the insistence of Islamic faith that the ownership of Palestine belongs to God as well as the historical memory that Israel usurped Palestinian land in 1948.

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[389] Alastair Crooke and Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Waving, not drowning: Strategic Dimensions of Ceasefires and Islamic Movements,' *Security Dialogue*, *op.cit*., p.295.

[390] Tamimi, Azzam, *Hamas, Unwritten Chapters*, *op.cit*., p. 159.

[391] Paul Scham and Osama Abu-Irshaid, 'Hamas' ideological rigidity and political flexibility', *Special Report 224* (Washington: United State Institute of Peace, 2009), p.7. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/Special%20Report%20224_Hamas.pdf> (accessed on 3 December 2013).

[392] Mustafa Abu Sway, 'The Concept of Hudna in Islamic sources,' *Palestinian Academic Society for the study of International affairs (PASSIA)*, (6 August 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20070105070236/http://www.passia.org/meetings/2006/Hudna.doc> (accessed on 3 December 2013).

[393] *Ibid*., p.159.

[394] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Secretary-General of the Islamic Group in Lebanon,' (30 January 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222550/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mawlawy.htm> (accessed on 3 December 2013).

This is not the first time that Hamas proposed a 10-year truce to Israel. Hamas leaders had called for this initiative in early 1988 and again in 1994.[395] However, Israel was suspicious and rejected Hamas' initiative. Once again, Israel regarded Hamas' truce proposal as a 'smokescreen' for a new round of military preparations.[396]

Apart from the truce proposal, Hamas focused more on political elections and reform agendas than on military rhetoric even though Hamas lost two significant political leaders, Ahmed Yassin on 22nd March and Abdel Aziz Rantisi on 17th April due to the Israeli assassinations. This abrupt change could be attributed to the effect of the unilateral disengagement plan proposed by the Sharon government. The disengagement plan had been a decisive factor in Hamas' change of discourse since Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon disclosed this plan at the annual Herzliya Conference in December 2003.

As for Israel, settlers and members inside the Likud opposed the plan. In order to carry out his unilateral plan, Sharon aligned with the Labour party to obtain majority support in the Cabinet. Besides, the majority of the Israeli population supported this plan, which gave credit to Sharon.[397] The plan was to withdraw all settlements in Gaza and four settlements in the West Bank; and the initiative was crystalized and approved by the Israeli cabinet on 6th June 2004 and was implemented in August 2005. The unilateral plan was seen as a breakthrough in the dilemma of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, scrutiny of the motivation behind it, shows it to be conflict management rather than a peace offer.[398] Since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel distrusted the PA as a reliable partner in negotiation. At the same time, several Israeli military operations and the policy of assassination were

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[395] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, *op.cit*., pp.74-76.

[396] 'Israel summarily rejects Hamas offer of 10-year truce,' *The Independent*, (27 January 2004).

[397] Galia Golan, *Israel and Palestine: peace plans from Oslo to disengagement* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), p.125.

[398] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Ephraim Lavie, Kobi Michael, and Daniel Bar-Tal, 'The Israeli-Palestinian violent confrontation: an Israeli perspective,' in Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *The Israeli-Palestinian conflict from conflict resolution to conflict management* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.261-263.

insufficient to curb the violence and activity of Palestinian militias. In this context, all Israeli strategies seemed to have failed. Therefore, the unilateral disengagement plan seemed to offer an alternative in managing the conflict.[399]

The problem with this plan however was the term 'unilateral' which meant that Israel would complete the mission without negotiating with the PA. Furthermore, the wall of separation was being constructed along with the expansion of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. In this respect, the plan hindered the Road Map which specified, an 'independent, democratic and viable Palestine' based on the 1967 borders.[400] To settle this controversy, Sharon sought an understanding from the U.S administration. In April, President Bush met Sharon in the White House, endorsing this unilateral disengagement plan in accordance with the principle of the Road Map.[401] From this point of view, it seems that the plan might end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But in an interview with *Haaretz*, Dov Weisglass, Sharon's senior adviser and an initiator of the plan, indicated that it, 'is the freezing of the Peace Process',[402] which is clearly against the spirit of the two-state solution promoted by the United States.

Regarding the disengagement plan, Hamas considered that Sharon had not made a concession to Palestinians and the real problem, that is, of occupation, had not been addressed. Hamas believed that Sharon only wanted to find an exit that disposed of the security burden in Gaza due to the Palestinian resistance and later, to intensify Israel's domination of the West

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[399] Baruch Kimmerling, *Clash of identities: Explorations in Israeli and Palestinian Societies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p.264.

[400] 'The Roadmap: full text', *BBC*, (30 April, 2003). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2989783.stm> (accessed on 5 December 2013).

[401] Bush asserts, 'the plan will mark real progress toward realizing my June 24, 2002 vision, and make a real contribution towards peace…this plan, consistent with my vision, will remind all states and parties of their own obligations under the roadmap.' See 'Letter from President Bush to Prime Ministe Sharon,' *The White House*, (14 April 2004). <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-3.html> (accessed on 5 December 2013).

[402] 'Top PM aide: Gaza plan aims to freeze the peace process,' *Haaretz*, (6 October 2004). <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/top-pm-aide-gaza-plan-aims-to-freeze-the-peace-process-1.136686> (accessed on 7 December 2013).

Bank.[403] On the other hand, Hamas also worried that this disengagement plan might create a power vacuum in Gaza and accelerate Palestinian internal division. This concern seemed to have materialized with the power struggle within Fatah and the PA. The internal clash within Fatah and the trend of opposition to the PA was a serious challenge for Palestinian society as a whole before the death of Arafat. Apart from the appeal to reform, Palestinian factions were dissatisfied with Arafat's nepotism and the corruption of the PA. From 16th July 2004 for over two weeks, discontent turned into violence; PA officials were abducted, a police station was burned and the governor's office in Khan Yunis was, for a brief time, controlled by an armed group.[404] Hamas took a neutral stance on this deteriorating situation, but called for unity and dialogue. Khalid Mishal stated that internal fighting that was bound to drown the Palestinian national ship was not permissible. At the same time, the Israeli unilateral disengagement plan ought to be blamed for the internal chaos that benefited Israel itself.[405]

It could be seen that since the initiative of the disengagement plan in December 2003, Hamas gradually changed its discourse discernibly, from an uncompromising military resistance to a concern about domestic affairs. Even though Israel continued targeting Hamas leaders and stormed Palestinian areas, Hamas restrained military reprisal and suicide bombings. During 14th May to 20th 2004, nearly 40 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army in Rafah, causing outrage amongst Palestinian society.[406] However, from May to August, no suicide bombing was reported.[407] In 2004 it seems that the need for political integration had overwhelmed the suicide bombings. In an interview

[403] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Quds Press,' (19 February 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221937/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mesh3al.htm> (accessed on 7 December 2013).

[404] Jonathan D. Halevi, 'The Palestinian Rebellion in Fatah: Foreshaowing the politics of the Post-Arafat era,' *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, (2 August 2004). < http://www.jcpa.org/brief/brief3-30.htm> (accessed on 7 December 2013).

[405] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal, the Jordanian newspaper Glory,' (26 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20051109164133/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2004/26_7_04.htm> (accessed on 8 December 2013).

[406] Ramzy Baroud, *The Second Palestinian Intifada: A chronicle of a People's struggle* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), pp.99-100.

[407] Rashmi Singh, *Hamas and suicide terrorism, Multi-causal and multi-level approaches*, Appendix B, p.142.

in June 2004, Ismail Haniyeh, one of political leaders of Hamas in Gaza stated that Palestinians should not sacrifice their blood and Hamas' military group would decide when to respond to Israeli attacks in due course.[408]

It is noted that apart from the ceasefire in June 2003, the Israeli unilateral disengagement plan played a crucial role in determining Hamas' attitude toward Palestinian national unity and political integration. The Israeli unilateral disengagement plan that emerged from an initiative in December 2003 to the actual implementation in August 2005 took twenty months. This interval gave Hamas more time and space for the consideration of the next step in dealing with the reality of the occupation as well as Palestinian domestic affairs. To a large extent, the plan affected Hamas' order of priority. Hamas saw that the disengagement plan would either bring hope or trigger uncertainty in Gaza. In order to cope with the possible scenarios after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas appealed to other Palestinian factions with suggestions of how to manage it. For the first time since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas stated that it was preparing to participate in the municipal elections and articulated the political project that seemed not to be just an empty slogan as it was in the first two years of the al-Aqsa Intifada. In spite of the fact that the disengagement plan was considered to be a trap and that Gaza would be a large detention camp monitored by Israel,[409] it can be argued that ironically, the plan changed Hamas' tactics from its focus on a military dimension to political engagement. In mid-2004, Hamas made a strong attempt to integrate Palestinian politics, and by raising the concept of reform, Hamas can be seen to have been replacing Fatah in the political arena.

When it decided to participate in the elections in mid-2004 Hamas' main goal was to fight corruption. That is to say that the purpose of the reform was to remove the widespread corruption that was a chronic problem in Palestinian society. In several interviews, Khalid Mishal diagnosed prevalent

[408] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Haniyeh: The withdrawal plan is a big deception,' (10 June 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222934/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/haneyah1.htm> (accessed on 9 December 2013).

[409] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Sheikh Raed Salah speaks from the prison,' (27 October 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095352/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/sala7.htm> (accessed on 9 December 2013).

corruptions in Palestinian society and he mentioned several, on different levels. As far as moral corruption was concerned, Palestinian steadfastness had been weakened by Israel. As for financial corruption, it was no secret that it had existed in the PA since the Oslo Process.[410] Mishal mentioned that there were clear indications of corruption in the flour trade, which was the staple food of the poor, and in the cement business which was involved in the Israeli separation wall.[411] Regarding political corruption, Fatah monopolized decision-making, rejecting other participations, which posed a problem for moving forward. Finally, as far as security corruption was concerned, many Palestinian fighters were assassinated or arrested by the co-operation between the PA and Israel.[412] All these kinds of corruptions hindered Palestinians' capacity of resisting the Israeli occupation. On the other hand, the internal conflict among Palestinians was dangerous to this process of reform. In order to address these problems and put Palestine on the right track, Mishal further elucidated the principles of reform. Firstly, reform should be comprehensive instead of focusing on one side or another. Secondly, reform should come from the wishes of Palestinians instead of intervention by foreign forces such as the United States and Israel. Thirdly, all Palestinian factions should participate in the reform against corruption. Fourthly, the approach to reform should be peaceful and not violent. Finally, reform should build a unified national leadership from all Palestinian factions through the democratic approach.[413]

The emphasis of reform from mid-2004 is a clear indication that Hamas was inclined towards political integration. It should be noted that this shift to

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[410] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Al-Hayat,' (28 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222141/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal.htm> (accessed on 10 December 2013).

[411] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal, the Jordanian newspaper Glory,' (26 July 2004). < http://web.archive.org/web/20051109164133/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2004/26_7_04.htm > (accessed on 10 December 2013).

[412] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Al-Hayat,' (28 July 2004). < http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222141/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal.htm > (accessed on 10 December 2013).

[413] The Palestine Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal: Reform must be a comprehensive reform, including financial, security, political reform and stop the monopoly of Palestinian decision,' (28 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222511/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal1.htm> (accessed on 1 February 2014).

reform was for the sake of resistance and Hamas had no intention of abandoning its military means when it entered the political domain.[414] Instead, Hamas looked forward to political integration and democratic elections as an opportunity to reach national consensus and the restoration of social order for the protection of its resistance work. However, Hamas had not decided whether it would participate in the PLC election which was the design of the Oslo Process. Until the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004, the change of the political landscape in Palestine accelerated Hamas' final decision to integrate politically.

4. The path to political integration

Two events appear to have played major parts in Hamas' determination to participate in the PLC election in 2006. The first was the initiative of the Israeli disengagement plan in December 2003 that triggered Hamas to consider the possibility of a political integration as mentioned in the last section. The second event was the death of Yasser Arafat on 14th November 2004 which made Hamas' political integration irreversible. In the post-Arafat era, even though Hamas had no intention of abandoning armed resistance, it could be said that Hamas' political stance was more subtle than before. This section will analyze the implications of Arafat's death for Hamas' political integration, and how Hamas prepared and participated in the elections in accordance with its resistance project.

4.1 The implications of the post-Arafat era for Hamas' political integration

Arafat's death, on 14th November 2004 left a power vacuum; and this could be seen as the turning point for Palestine. A few days later, Khalid Mishal when interviewed by a Jordanian newspaper stated that after Arafat, Palestinians were entering a new stage. However Mishal strongly doubted the cause of the death of Arafat; and he argued that Israel was to be blamed for poisoning Arafat.[415] Reflecting on the post-Arafat era scenario, Mishal warned

[414] The Palestinian Information Center, '(Israeli) withdrawal pretexts,' (11 October 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095400/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/siam.htm>(accessed on 1 February 2014).

[415] The Palestine Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal's statement in Jordanian Newspaper Glory about the death of Abu Ammar,' (22 November 2004).

that in their own interests the United States and Israel would seize the opportunity to end the al-Aqsa Intifada and stop resistance in terms of seeking new Palestinian partners.[416] To prevent this eventuality, national unity against the Israeli occupation and aggression was required. To reach this goal, Mishal suggested that a free, fair and comprehensive democratic election was the way to appointing a unified national leadership.[417] It could be argued that this statement seemed to have become the guideline for the ensuing period during which Hamas integrated into Palestinian politics.

In the post-Arafat era, shaping a new Palestinian leadership became the priority for Palestine as well as for international society. Mahmud Abbas was expected to be the next PA president and was later elected on 9th January 2005. Hamas declared that this election was meant to match the expectation of the United States and Israel while it could not represent the legitimacy of a Palestinian representative including the diaspora; and also that the election accorded with the occupation which continued restrictions on the Palestinians.[418] In spite of this criticism, the role of Abbas seemed to accelerate the process of Hamas' political integration although Hamas was fully aware that the United States and Israel wanted to pressurize Abbas into disarming Hamas.

After Arafat's death, the relations between Israel and Palestinian Authority made a breakthrough. The summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh on 8th February symbolized the end of the mutual confrontation between Israel and Palestine. Ariel Sharon stated that, 'Israel will cease all its military activity against all Palestinians anywhere' and Palestinians and Israelis should, 'act together, determinedly, to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, to disarm and subdue it once and for all. Only by crushing terror and violence will we build

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095338/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal2.htm> (accessed on 1 February 2014).

[416] *Ibid.*

[417] *Ibid*.

[418] The Palestine Information Center, 'Speech from Muhammad Nazzal in the ninth anniversary for martyrdom Engineer Yahya Ayyash,' (7 January 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095251/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/nzaal.htm> (accessed on 1 February 2014).

peace.' [419] It is obvious that Sharon was suggesting that those terrorists were Hamas and other Palestinian militants. On the other hand, Abbas said that this summit, 'is also an important step representing a new chance for the peace process to regain momentum and to get back on track, so that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples might regain hope in the possibility of achieving peace.' Furthermore, Abbas also implied that the PA had the authority to collect weapons from Hamas in this summit. [420]

Hamas had mixed feelings about this summit. It argued that the summit had repeated the same mistake of the previous talks with Israel and indicated the defeat of Palestinians. But evaluating the whole situation Hamas made compromises by offering a temporary ceasefire (*tahdiya*).[421] Unlike the *hunda* (ceasefire) in June 2003, this time, Hamas used the term, '*tahdiya'* to cool off its armed resistance provided that Israel stopped its military operation. For this reason, Hamas stated that if Israel continued targeting Palestinians, they would respond in the same way, although *tahdiya* had been offered. In spite of this uncompromising position toward Israel, it is noted that Hamas had more options and flexibility in articulating its resistance discourse in the post-Arafat era. Abu Marzuq, the deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, explained why Hamas accepted the *tahdiya* and political integration at this moment. Arafat's death was the crucial factor that had changed the Palestinian internal structure and motivated Hamas to adopt broader options such as the participation of the municipal and PLC elections to protect its resistance work.[422]

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[419] 'Full text of Sharon declaration,' *BBC*, (8 February 2005). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4247233.stm> (accessed on 2 February 2014).

[420] 'Full text of Abbas declaration: The full text of Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas's declaration of a ceasefire with the Israelis at the Sharm al-Sheikh summit,' *BBC*, (8 February 2005). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4247327.stm> (accessed on 2 February 2014).

[421]The Palestine Information Center,' Interview with Muhammad Ghazal,' (11 February 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095251/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/nzaal.htm> (accessed on 2 February 2014).

[422] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Dr. Moussa Abu Marzuq, dialogue with the Palestinian Information Center,' (14 June 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095148/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mousa.htm> (accessed on 2 February 2014).

As well as refraining from armed resistance, Hamas also sought national consensus regarding its bid to participate in elections. Through the coordination and the mediation of both Abbas and Egypt, the 'Cairo declaration' was agreed ultimately by a consensus of 13 Palestinian factions and announced on 17th March 2005. This declaration is considered to be a breakthrough for the later development of Palestine. One of its achievements was that after the breakdown of the ceasefire in August 2003 all Palestinian factions had agreed to halt armed resistance against Israel. Secondly, Hamas had been willing to integrate with the PLO and participate in the PLC election for the first time. In terms of this declaration, President Abbas hoped that the tension between Palestine and Israel would calm down to enable the PA to resume its negotiations with Israel.[423]

Many believed that Hamas' acceptance of the Cairo declaration indicated its pragmatic and moderate approach to adapt to a new reality. Some argue that this declaration marked the evolvement of a 'New Hamas'.[424] Others state that Hamas made a leap towards a political role rather than a military one.[425] Indeed, Hamas had committed to reduce its military option as well as veering away from the military rhetoric when it determined to participate in political integration. But the question is whether this behaviour change really meant that Hamas had already compromised its principle of resistance or had gradually become distant from its goal of the liberation of Palestine.

As for Hamas itself, the Cairo declaration had another implication. To a large extent, the Cairo declaration favoured Hamas rather than Fatah due to the fact that Hamas did not need to compromise its principle.[426] On scrutinizing the contents of this declaration it appears that, 'the right of resistance' was guaranteed as well as: the formation of a Palestinian state

[423] Graham Usher, 'The Palestinians after Arafat,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.34, No.3 (Spring 2005), p.49.

[424] Chrystic Flournoy, *Ideological and Behavioural metamorphose: A new charter for a new Hamas*, Master of Philosophy thesis, University of Oxford, 2007, p.16.

[425] Khaled Hroub, 'Hamas in and out of power,' *EuroMesco Papper,* 65, January 2008, p.6.

[426] Also many Fatah members believed that Abbas made too much compromise with Hamas. See Graham Usher, 'The democratic resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Elections,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.35, No.3 (Spring 2006), p.24.

with full sovereignty with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of refugees to return.[427] The other issues such as: the danger of Jewish settlement, the separation wall, release of Palestinian prisoners, the reconstruction of the PLO, the democratic elections and the forbidden Palestinians' internal conflict also matched Hamas' anticipation. In other words, this declaration did not contradict Hamas's resistance work at all.

It can be said that the Cairo declaration legitimated the right to resistance against the Israeli occupation, which was Hamas' priority when it came to political integration. Prior to this Cairo declaration, Hamas had agreed to halt the military attack on Israel while at the same time it was not willing to abandon a military tactic. Khalid Mishal restated the reasons why Hamas would not give up its armed resistance and further elaborated on the principle of the resistance, describing it as a strategic option of a political integration. The main content was as follows:[428]

1. Even though Hamas had committed to a reduction in the amount of military resistance at that moment, Palestine was still under Israeli occupation and aggression; Palestinians were being targeted. Therefore the military resistance was without doubt, legitimate.

2. Armed resistance was not everyone's duty. Israeli aggression comes in many forms in terms of the occupation of lands and the demolition of Palestinian culture and spirit. In response to this comprehensive aggression, the resistance should be integrated into daily life and ought to be comprehensive forms including peaceful resistance.

3. People should remain steadfast, a characteristic which comes from the trust of God in facing a long-term battle.

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[427] MIFTAH, 'Text of the (Cairo) Declaration by Palestinians,' (21 March 2005). <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=6938&CategoryId=5> (accessed on 3 February 2014).

[428] The Palestine Information Center, 'Speech from Khalid Mishal, the chairman of the political bureau of Hamas in the opening of the conference of the Global Campaign for resisting the aggression,' (28 February 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095234/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mesh3al05.htm> (accessed on 3 February 2014).

4. The most dangerous thing would be that the ethos of Palestinian resistance was defeated by the enemy; however this would not happen. Gaza was a model of successful due to the fact that resistance and sacrifice forced the enemy out of Gaza.

5. Resistance was a strategic choice which aimed at liberation, freedom, pride and dignity. By declaring *tahdiya* (calm), Palestinian fighters could take a breath in the preparation for the enemy's aggression.

6. Palestinian resistance was not a problem for international society. Rather, it was a problem for Sharon and Zionism. As long as the occupation existed, Palestinians had no choice but to resist.

From this statement, one can see that resistance was always the principle that Hamas addressed to the public. From this perspective, the Cairo declaration could be seen as consistent with, and an extension of, its resistance discourse since 2002.

Indeed, the Cairo declaration symbolizes the starting point from where Hamas officially declared its intention to participate in the PLC election. The decision to participate in the PLC election came after deep deliberation, since it took more than four months of discussion and debate within Hamas's circle. One of the political leaders, Usama Hamdan, stated that around 25-30 per cent of members were against political integration while the final decision was taken by the majority through the Consultative (*Shura*) Council.[429] In fact, the sign of Hamas's joining in the PLC election could be traced back to the middle of 2004. After Sharon's announcement of the disengagement, Hamas's leadership had intensive discussions about the future of management in Gaza and worried about the disorder within Palestinian factions. Therefore, in view of the forthcoming elections, a call for a comprehensive reform and the

[429] 'Hamas Foreign Minister Usama Hamdan talks about National Reconciliation, Arafat, Reform and Hamas's presence in London,' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.40, No.3 (Spring 2011), pp.64-65.

establishment of a unified government was required.[430] But the decision to the participation of the PLC election was finalized after the death of Arafat.

4.2 Participations in the municipal and the PLC elections

In the post-Arafat era, Hamas' discourse had obviously tended to focus on the Palestinian domestic affairs, particularly the issues of democracy, the election and a united national leadership. It seemed that the military confrontation had been prolonged. The context of Palestine in 2005 had been quite different from the period between 2002 and 2004. In particular, the Israeli disengagement plan that was implemented in August 2005 boosted Hamas' confidence and determination to integrate politically. For Hamas, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza symbolized the defeat of Zionism over the occupation of Palestine. It also reinforced the impression that the disengagement plan generated by Palestinian resistance was seen as a victory and achievement for all Palestinians. [431] A Palestinian public poll conducted before the eve of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza reflected this atmosphere. The overwhelming majority (84 per cent) believed that an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza represented a victory for the armed resistance; Hamas also received credit from 40 per cent of the Palestinians for its achievement.[432] In this sense, Hamas highly expected that Gaza could be a role model of resistance for the rest of the occupied territories to the completion of liberation and the restoration of Palestinian rights.[433]

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[430] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Al-Hayat,' (28 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222141/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal.htm> (accessed on 4 February 2014).

[431] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Chairman of the political bureau of Hamas, an interview with the newspaper "The way"', (20 August 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226094458/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mesh3aal.htm> (accessed on 4 February 2014).

[432] Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey research, 'Palestinian Public Opinion Poll 17,' (7-9 September 2005). <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/438> (accessed on 4 February 2014).

[433] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Abu Marzuq after the meeting with the PA Prime Minister,' (22 August 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226094205/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/marzooq.htm><http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/438> (accessed on 5 February 2014).

However the poll also showed that the majority (around 60 per cent) were worried about Palestinian infighting.[434] Hamas was aware of the public expectation after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and was afraid that the constant internal conflict within Fatah could pose a threat to Palestinian society and was destructive to its resistance project. Therefore Hamas prioritized the order in its resistance project: the management of Palestine, the prevention of social chaos, the issues of democracy, and pluralism.[435] Fighting Israel was not the first pressing concern at the moment.

Although Hamas and the Palestinians were celebrating the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas was mindful of the motivation behind the disengagement plan. On several occasions, Khalid Mishal warned that it was a tactic and a deception and that Sharon was covering up his failure to destroy the will of Palestinian resistance.[436] On the other hand, Sharon had intensified his control of the West Bank in terms of the Judaization of Jerusalem, the expansion of Jewish settlements and the construction of the wall of separation. Furthermore, the disengagement plan was not exhaustive. Gaza looked like a big prison that was going to be monitored by Israel in airspace and territorial waters after the withdrawal.[437] The metaphor that Gaza looks like a prison is not an exaggeration. Gaza could also be seen as a laboratory as Darryl Li argues. In his article 'The Gaza Strip as Laboratory: Notes in the wake of disengagement,' he observes that the Israeli experiments on Gaza has three main features: closure, buffer and use of airpower. These experiments on Gaza are for the management of conflict with

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[434] *Ibid*.

[435] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Sami Khater, Member of the Political Bureau of Hamas,' (11 August 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226094539/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/sami_khater.htm> (accessed on 5 February 2014).

[436] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Speech from Khalid Mishal, Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the press conference held in Beirut on Wednesday morning, commenting on the start of the withdrawal from Gaza,' (17 August 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226094220/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mesh3al.htm> (accessed on 5 February 2014).

[437] *Ibid.*

Palestinians, as well as affording time for further colonization of the West Bank.[438]

Indeed, Israel had taken a new approach in dominating Gaza; it was watching any hostile act there. In response to mortars launched from Gaza in September, Israel dispatched aircraft attacking a school building in the residential area of Gaza and returned to the policy of assassinations on Palestinians after the disengagement plan.[439] In spite of the Israeli military attacks, it is noted that retaliation was not Hamas' major concern. The formation of a national consensus and managing Gaza were more pressing issue than the option of armed resistance since participation in the municipal and the PLC elections preoccupied Hamas at that time.

4.2.1 Municipal elections and disputes

2005 could be seen to be the decisive year for Hamas' preparation of elections. The municipal elections were the first trial, testing Hamas' popularity in the political arena. There were four stages of the elections: 23rd December 2004, 5th May 2005, 29th September 2005 and 15th December 2005. In the first round of the municipal election, Hamas did well, winning 7 of 9 councils in the Gaza Strip and 7 of 26 against 12 for Fatah in the West Bank. In the second round in May, Hamas captured most seats in major cities such as Qalqilya and Bethlehem and other refugee camps,[440] which indicated that Hamas had the ability to end the Fatah rule.[441] The third round of municipal election held on 29th September seemed to reflect Hamas' popularity and lifted its spirit, although Fatah claimed that they had also won. In the West Bank, Hamas declared its victory, winning more than 40 municipal councils in the West Bank.[442] In the final round on 15th December, Hamas captured the

[438] Darryl Li, 'The Gaza Strip as laboratory: notes in the wake of disengagement,' *Journal of Palestine*, Vol.35, No.2 (Winter 2006), pp.38-39.

[439] Tanya Reinhart, *The Road Map to nowhere: Israel/Palestine since 2003* (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 138-140.

[440] International Crisis Group, 'Enter Hamas: The Challenges of political integration,' *op.cit.,* p.8.

[441] As'ad Ghanem, *Palestinian politics after Arafat* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.117.

[442] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Sheikh Yasser Mansour, leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the West Bank,' (5 October 2005).

Fatah's traditional basement in the West Bank, such as Nablus, Jenin and El Bireh.[443]

Throughout the several rounds of the municipal elections, it seems that Hamas became more confident regarding participation in the PLC election. Managing Palestinian affairs in terms of the participation of the democratic elections was one of Hamas' tactics. Particularly after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, it is estimated that for Hamas, elections did more good than harm. With the changing political environment in 2005, the intensity of confrontation between Israel and Palestinians had dramatically dropped. The majority of Palestinians did not want to get entangled with this endless conflict. On the other hand, municipal and legislative campaigns were under way. For Hamas, its previous slogan of sacrifice and armed resistance gradually lost its market since the majority of Palestinians sought calm. Hamas was afraid that its resistance project might not be fulfilled and that it would lose its influence in Palestinian society if it did not participate in the process of political integration. Thus, the best way to protect its resistance project seemed to be via elections.

Hamas's good performance in the municipal elections worried others. Hamas was accused of either attempting to replace Fatah in self-interest or of plotting a coup against the PA. Facing this pressure, Hamas leadership clarified its position that pursuing power was not its goal and that participation in elections satisfied God, served people, and improved the political atmosphere since it aimed to fight corruption and correct the long-term monopoly of decision-making by Fatah.[444] Hamas hoped that through the democratic elections a national consensus could be reached and the

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20110226093844/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mansoor.htm> (accessed on 6 February 2014).

[443] International Crisis Group, 'Enter Hamas: The Challenges of political integration,' *op.cit.,* p.8.

[444] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Said Siyam, a member of the political leadership of Hamas,' (19 December 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226093559/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/seyaam.htm> (accessed on 6 February 2014). Palestinian Information Center, 'Speech from leader Khalid Mishal, Chairman of the political bureau of Hamas,' (2 January 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226093345/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/khalid_meshel/khalid1.htm> (accessed on 6 February 2014).

resistance project could be guaranteed as well. At the same time, Hamas hoped to insert itself into the political arena in order to serve people, share political responsibility and strengthen its resistance foundation to end the Israeli occupation in the long run.[445]

For many observers, another concern was that that Hamas would impose its 'Islamized agenda' in politics after the elections. This is because during the elections, the issues of Islamization and the formation of the 'Islamic state' had been contentious debates. The terms 'Talibanism' and 'Islamization' were often used by critics to describe Hamas' character. Some Palestinians even feared that they might be deprived of their personal freedom if Hamas held political power. For example, the Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish criticized the ban on the music and dance festival in Hamas-ruled Qalqiliya as, 'signs of Talibanism and dangerous indications against the educated classes and the artists.' [446] Another Palestinian columnist, Mohammed Abd Al-Hamid was worried that the future of Palestine would follow the Algerian and Afghani model: and that, 'religious fanatics destroyed every cultural symbol, shattered statues and rare works of art and liquidated intellectuals and artists, reporters and authors, ballet dancers and singers.'[447] Beverley Milton-Edwards who has researched Hamas over two decades implied that Hamas might enforce its Islamic version upon Palestinians due to past experience when Hamas clashed with Palestinian secularists and imposed cultural codes in Gaza throughout the early 1980s. These included the closure of cinemas and liquor stores and strict dress codes.[448] These arguments, to some extent, reflect the tension between secularism and Islamism in Palestine. But the real question is whether

[445] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Chairman of the political bureau of Hamas, an interview with the newspaper "The way"', (20 August 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226094458/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mesh3aal.htm> (accessed on 7 February 2014).

[446] Zvi Bar'el, 'Afghanistan in Palestine,' *Haaretz*, (26 July 2005). <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/leisure/afghanistan-in-palestine-1.165006> (accessed on 7 February 2014).

[447] *Ibid*.

[448] Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Prepared for power: Hamas, Governance and Conflict,' *Civil Wars*, Vol.7, No.4 (Winter 2005), p. 325.

Palestinian society could be clearly classified as the dichotomy between the secular and Islamist trends.

Loren Lybarger argues that the term 'Islamization' is too simplistic a description and the dichotomy of secularism and Islamism does not neatly apply to Palestinian society.[449] He added that Palestinian identity is, 'highly fluid, hybrid and multiplex, open to diverse horizons.' In this context, it is likely that Hamas will not enforce its version upon other Palestinians even if it reiterates Islamic message to the public.[450] Indeed from the 1980s onwards, the majority of women in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, have conformed to the Islamic dress code as a sign of Islamization. However this trend could be seen as a natural process in Gaza instead of an enforced policy. Inevitably, as a contemporary Islamic movement, it is natural that Hamas appeals to Islam as a motivation for unifying and awakening Palestinians against Israeli occupation. The revival of Islam is the consistent theme in the perspective of Palestinian Islamists but the way to revive Islam is not by government enforcement and *Shari'a* legislation. Hamas's ultimate goal is the liberation of Palestine. To reach the goal, the most important thing is to lift one's spirit in relation to God as a first step to resist the Israeli occupation. A Hamas supporter said, 'This neglect of Islam was the root of Palestinian weakness and suffering. If Palestinians had been true Muslims, then they would have been powerful and this disaster of Israel. But very few Palestinians really knew what Islam was really practiced it.'[451]

Criticism of Hamas regarding the issue of 'Islamization' was not only restricted to the Palestinian circle but it had also spread in the international community. Many believed that Hamas' ultimate goal was to destroy Israel and to establish an Islamic state or theocracy according to its charter. That is to say, that if Hamas had power, Palestine would turn into a country that discriminated between the non-Muslim resident and non-affiliated Palestinians. As a matter of fact, the 'Islamic state' or theocracy is a rather ambiguous

[449] Loren Lybarger*, Identity and religion in Palestine: The struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the occupied territories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.236.

[450] *Ibid.,* pp.234-245.

[451] Quoted from Loren Lybarger. *Ibid*., p.210.

concept that could not exactly correspond with Hamas thoughts. Although Hamas' charter is often criticized as anti-semitism when Hamas involve in political elections, by scrutinizing its clauses the charter could be considered to be a pre-modern idea dating back to the history of Palestine under Muslim rule for over a thousand years. In article 6 of this charter, 'Hamas strives to raise the banner of God over every inch of Palestine' and 'In the shade of Islam it is possible for all followers of different religions to live in peace and security in their person, property, and rights.' [452] This then reflects the traditional Muslim view of a Muslim-led state rather than the modern concept of the nation-state.[453] Furthermore, Hamas did not resort to its charter for the political mobilization. Ahmed Yousef, a political advisor to the former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, claims that the charter was drafted in the specific context of the early days of the first Intifada. He adds that not every Hamas member endorses this charter. The charter is only an inspirational document but was never to be a guideline for Hamas' political vision.[454] A scholar, Khaled Hroub, made a similar observation. Indeed there are several sections in this charter referring to 'anti-Jewish' sentiment but he stated that the charter was written by an individual in 1988 without obtaining Hamas' consultation, revision and consensus.[455] Due to the fact that charter contains anti-semitism phrases, Hamas leaders have been aware that these phrases may hinder their work or cause confusion to the West; therefore from 1990 onwards, Hamas leaders and spokespeople have seldom mentioned the charter and quoted from it.[456]

Before the election, Hamas had elaborated the concept of the Islamic state in an effort to clarify the West's misunderstanding of Islam. For example, in an interview in 2003, Ahmed Yassin shed light on that Islam is not just a religion but also a system, 'Islam is an ideal and practical system that was

[452] 'The Hamas Charter,' quoted in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political thought and practice*, *op.cit*., p.270.

[453] See Ahmed Yousef, 'Judge Hamas on the measures it takes for its people,' *The Guardian*, 14 November, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/14/judge-hamas-measures-people-charter-governing-instrument> (accessed on 7 February 2015).

[454] *Ibid.*

[455] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p.33.

[456] *Ibid*, p.34.

implemented and applied for hundreds of years through Prophet Mohammed, his caliphs, the Umayyad Islamic state, and then the Abbasid Islamic state. History has proven Islam as a successful system at building and maintaining good societies, the system that succeeds once can succeed many more time.'[457] Therefore should an Islamic state be established, non-Muslims would be free to worship and their private rights would not be interfered with, as in Islamic history.[458]

In spite of holding the concept of an Islamic state, Hamas leaders did not ostensibly inform the public about it during the al-Aqsa Intifada and the electoral campaign. In practice, Hamas is open to the topic of an Islamic state. Ahmed Yassin said that being an Islamic state 'should be left for the democratic process. Let the people select the kind of state they want, in the same way that the United States is a state for all its people and they solve their differences democratically as equals.' [459] Furthermore, it is noted that as Hamas engaged in political elections, the language it used disclosed a more modern viewpoint than the traditional Islamic one. Hamas leaders often elaborated the value of democracy, citizenship and considered rectifying the charter in response to the prospect of the international community.[460] This move which came closer to the Western standard without harming its principle of resistance demonstrates Hamas' pragmatism. It can be said that 'Islamization' and the 'Islamic state' were still marginal issues in Hamas' resistance project. All Hamas had to do was to raise Palestinian awareness of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

Following Hamas's good performance in the municipal elections and since the PLC election was approaching, Israel became anxious about the advance of Hamas' political integration. Israel took a series of measures to disrupt the process of the elections. Prior to the implementation of the Israeli

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[457] 'An Interview with Ahmad Yassin: Human misery comes from human mistakes,' (31 July 2003). *Bitterlemons*, <http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/inside.php?id=13> (accessed on 10 February 2014).

[458] *Ibid*.

[459] Roger Gaess, 'Interviews from Gaza: What Hamas wants,' *Middle East Policy*, Vol.9, No.4 (Dec 2002), pp.106-107.

[460] Azzam Tamimi, Hamas, *Unwritten Chapters*, *op.cit.,* pp.148-149.

disengagement from Gaza there was an indication that Sharon was preparing another military operation in Gaza in July. But this potential scenario was interrupted by the U.S. Israel was asked, 'to continue humanitarian gestures toward the Palestinians … to fulfil its commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh on 8th February.'[461] Eventually, with pressure from the U.S. Israel gave up and carried out the disengagement plan in August.[462] But Israel was not satisfied with the position of the U.S. Sharon had shown his intention to exclude Hamas' participation in the PLC election. From September to October, around 700 Palestinians were arrested, including elected candidates, Imams of local mosques, journalists, school personnel and civil servants.[463] In spite of this, the U.S administration wanted this election held as scheduled without Israeli intervention.[464] It seems that the U.S's role helped to facilitate Hamas' political integration. The U.S was in no hurry to demand the PA to disarm Hamas before the election.[465] Regarding the shift of the U.S, Tanya Reinhart, an Israeli scholar, had an explanation. She highlighted that due to the negative effect of the war on Iraq and the increasing sympathy in the world towards Palestine, the Bush administration changed its tone from outright support of the Israeli policy to the encouragement of the Palestinian election.[466]

4.2.2 Hamas and the PLC election

As mentioned above, Hamas' determination to participate in the PLC election was its commitment to the Cairo declaration on 17th March 2005. But on many occasions, Hamas leaders were asked why they did not participate in the PLC election in 1996. In response to this question, Abu Marzuq stated

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[461] Tanya Reinhart, *The Road Map to nowhere: Israel/Palestine since 2003*, *op.cit.*, pp.102-104.

[462] *Ibid.*,pp. 124-130.

[463] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Sheikh Jamal Tawil, the extension of administrative detention or deportation from Palestine,' (18 October 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226093741/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/taweel.htm> (accessed on 10 February 2014).

[464] On 3rd January 2006 before the three weeks of the elections, the US administration reminded that Israel should not bar Palestinians from voting in East Jerusalem and reaffirmed that Palestinians have the right to vote. See Arnon Regular, 'U.S pushes for PA election to be held on schedule,' *Ha'aretz*, (4 January 2006). <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/u-s-pushes-for-pa-election-to-be-held-on-schedule-1.61799> (accessed on 10 February 2014).

[465] Tanya Reinhart, *The Road Map to nowhere: Israel/Palestine since 2003*, *op.cit.*, p.104.

[466] *Ibid.,* pp.111-114.

that Hamas did not reject the concept of election in principle but the PLC election in 1996 under the framework of the Oslo Peace Process was in violation of Palestinian interests.[467] Said Siyam also added that the Peace Process was removed due to the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada so that Hamas' participation in elections did not contradict the principle of the resistance project; rather, political integration could fulfil it and serve people.[468] It could be said that Hamas always connected its resistance concept to its participation in the PLC election. For Hamas, participation in the PLC election was aimed at the removal of the Israeli occupation and the restoration of all Palestinian rights such as: the Palestinian refugees' right to return, the release of Palestinian prisoners, the status of Jerusalem and the elimination of the Jewish settlements.[469]

Hamas leaders realized that after the election, they would meet several challenges such as the pressure of demilitarization, the negotiation with Israel, the security coordination between the Palestinian security apparatuses and Israel, and possible cuts of foreign aid. In spite of these foreseeable challenges, Hamas was optimistic that its resistance project would lift Palestinian society out of crisis without partnership with Israel. One of Hamas political leaders Mahmud al-Zahar stated that Hamas would draw a new map, the map of liberation, to replace the Road Map.[470] Hamas' rhetoric strongly opposed any foreign intervention and declared that it would not extend the ceasefire due to the fact that many Israeli violations against Palestinians had

[467] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Dr. Moussa Abu Marzuq, dialogue with the Palestinian Information Center,' (14 June 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226095148/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/mousa.htm> (accessed on 11 February 2014).

[468] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Said Siyam, a member of the political leadership of Hamas,' (19 December 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226093559/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/seyaam.htm> (accessed on 10 February 2014).

[469] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Ismail Haniyeh: Questions before the Zionist defeat?' (3 August 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226094946/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/haneyah.htm> (accessed on 10 February 2014).

[470] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Mahmud al-Zahar, a member of the political leadership of the movement (Hamas). One of the candidates of the legislative elections on the list,' (15 January 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226044722/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/zahar/15_1_06.htm> (accessed on 11 February 2014).

been recorded.[471] al-Zahar's statement looked tough. As a matter of fact, this statement could be considered to be an electoral tactic. On the one hand, Hamas kept its promise to its die-hard supporters, indicating that there was no contradiction between politics and resistance. On the other hand, Hamas showed its pragmatism in trying to convince non-Hamas constituencies that the resistance project was a feasible alternative since it was in the national interest and it was instrumental in obtaining lost rights. By doing this, Hamas had an informal alliance with Christian and independent candidates. al-Zahar elucidated that this alliance was not tactical but based on past political and historical heritage.[472] He added that Muslims had experienced good relationships with non-Muslims in Egypt, Spain and other places throughout Islamic history. In addition, in the case of Palestine, Hamas itself had experiences of cooperating with Palestinian Christians in the civil association and municipal elections.[473] The make-up of the list of candidates was another indication of Hamas' pragmatism. Most of its candidates were not traditional religious scholars but professionals in various fields such as: charity, culture, social and educational institutions, and the media.[474] Women were not excluded from this list of candidates. Of sixty-six candidates in the list of proportional representation, thirteen were women, a move which could be viewed as pragmatic.[475]

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[471] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Speech from Muhammed Nazzal, a member of the Political Bureau of Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)' in honoring martyr Engineer Yahya Ayyash in his tenth anniversary,' (6 January 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226044734/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/nazzal.htm> (accessed on 12 February 2014).

[472] The Palestinian Information Center, '"Mahmud al-Zahar," a member of the political leadership of the movement (Hamas). One of the candidates of the legislative elections on the list,' (15 January 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226044722/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/zahar/15_1_06.htm> (accessed on 12 February 2014).

[473] *Ibid*.

[474] The Palestinian Information Center, '"Mahmud al-Zahar," a member of the political leadership of the movement (Hamas). One of the candidates of the legislative elections on the list,' (15 January 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226044722/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/zahar/15_1_06.htm> (accessed on 12 February 2014). Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence, op.cit.,* pp.162-163.

[475] Khaled Hroub, *A Beginner's Guide*, *op.cit.,*pp.75-77.

Before the twelve days of the PLC election, on 14th January, 2006, the electoral programme was published. The electoral programme could reflect how Hamas interpreted its resistance work in the context of Palestine and how it presented its vision toward the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational fields. Hamas believed that the electoral programme, 'is a means to rebuild the society that has been destroyed by occupation and to protect its resistance.' It also believed that, 'this programme is a course toward bolstering Islamic-national unity along the path of full liberation.'[476] For Hamas, this electoral programme was workable and that it would reform Palestinian society due to their experience in the municipal councils.[477]

The electoral programme seemed to relieve foreign observers' anxiety. Some believed that Hamas had experienced a process of ideological transformation towards moderation and de-radicalization.[478] Khaled Hroub, who is believed to be the first scholar to undertake an exhaustive analysis of this electoral programme argued that Hamas stressed the comprehensive issue of governance including the rule of law and the fight against corruption. The language referring to the 'destruction of Israel' and the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine, had no place in this programme.[479] It is true that Hamas avoided language that included religious and military phrases and pragmatically addressed various issues. Yet, scrutinizing the details in the programme, it could be argued that it is based on Hamas' concept of resistance, which has been neglected by scholarly literature.

That is to say, this electoral programme could be seen as a synthesis of Hamas' resistance project but it was expressed in a moderate form. In this way, the electoral programme could be analyzed in four dimensions. Firstly, Hamas' principle had never been changed or compromised. The electoral

[476] 'Change and Reform List: Electoral programme for the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006,' translation from Azzam Tamimi, *Unwritten Chapters*, Appendix VI, p.316.

[477] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Said Siyam, a member of the political leadership of Hamas,' (19 December 2005). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226093559/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/seyaam.htm> (accessed on 12 February 2014).

[478] Are Hovdenak, 'Hamas in transition: the failure of sanctions,' *Democratization,*Vol.16. No.1 (February 2009) p.62.

[479] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, *op.cit*., p. 141-142.

programme did not refer to the establishment of an Islamic state; however, the participation in the PLC election was for the sake of, 'the liberation of Palestine, the return of the Palestinian people to their lands and homes, and the establishment of the Palestinian independent state with Jerusalem its capital.' [480] Therefore this programme could still be viewed as the continuation of the resistance project, which aimed to end the occupation. Secondly, this programme was firmly founded in the Islamic reference that says, 'Islam as a way of life and religious guidance with all its political, economic, social, and legal dimensions'. Islam is the fundamental motivation and inspiration for Hamas' political campaign.[481] Thirdly, although Hamas deliberately decreased its militant tone towards Israel there is no indication that Hamas was inclined to accept Israel as a political partner when it engaged in Palestinian political affairs. Finally, since Israel was treated as an enemy of Palestine regarding the issue of the security collaboration, and economic dependence on Israel, an alternative option had been offered to dispose of Israeli existing domination. In Hamas' vision, the way to put Palestine on the right track was: to reform Palestinian security agencies, to promote solidarity and support from the Arab and Islamic masses against occupation, to reject normalization with Israel, and to encourage the development of economic and trade relations with the Arab and Islamic world.[482]

To summarize, the electoral programme inherently served the resistance against Israeli occupation. To reach the aim, the unity of Palestine was imperative. By raising the flag of 'change and reform' in addressing the current political and economic dilemmas effected by the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas provided a comprehensive guideline to articulate how to reform and change Palestinian society, particularly in the aspects of: the judiciary, education, social service, media, housing, environment, agriculture, and economics. On the other hand, several articles in this programme connected to the ideas of modernity that Hamas did not usually mention in public during

[480] 'Change and Reform List: Electoral programme for the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006,' translation from Azzam Tamimi, *Unwritten Chapters*, Appendix VI, p.292.

[481] Article 1 and Article 8. *Ibid*., p.292 and p.303.

[482] Article 2, 3 and Article 16. *Ibid*., p.295, p.297 and p.312.

the al-Aqsa Intifada such as the concepts of political pluralism, citizenships with the guarantee of the rights of minorities, the emphasis of the separation of the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.[483] Although it could be said that many articles looked innovative and creative, as an Islamic resistance movement, Hamas considered itself to be in the right path of God. As this programme concluded, 'Islam is the solution',[484] which means that Hamas was convinced that they were doing right things for the benefit of Palestine and the Islamic *ummah*.

This electoral programme reflects Hamas' political thought and its way of dealing with Israeli occupation. In reality, this programme was hardly enforced under the existing structure of the Palestinian society. That is to say, the principle of the liberation of Palestine contradicted the notion of the two-state solution promoted by the Quartet. Furthermore, it did not allow for Hamas to keep its weapons after the election. Regarding economics, Hamas aimed to establish a 'resisting economy' but it seemed to be unrealistic in that it suggested that only the restoration of relations with the Arab and Islamic *ummah* was a possible solution for Palestine, which did not consider the fact of Israel's economic domination over the occupied territory, and the influence of the Western countries as the biggest donor at the time. Hamas' leaders were fully aware of the reality that Hamas would not be allowed to put this electoral programme into practice. As the electoral programme said, 'we do not claim to create miracles and we do not possess a magic wand.'[485] It can be argued that Hamas did not expect that there would be a fundamental change after its political integration but attempted to turn its resistance project into one of national consensus in a gradual way. By doing this, the democratic election and dialogue seemed to be a pragmatic approach.

At that time, being a ruling party in the PLC was beyond Hamas' imagination. Hamas leaders only calculated the possibility of being a strong opposition or part of the formation of a coalition government. Mahmud al-Zahar argued that after the election, Hamas would align with other factions to

[483] Introduction, Article 2 and Article 5, *Ibid*., p.293, p.296 and p. 299.

[484] Conclusion, *Ibid*., p.316.

[485] Conclusion, *Ibid*., p.315.

address the financial, executive and judicial issues,[486] while the outcome of the PLC election on 25th January 2006 stunned all the parties concerned including Hamas itself. Winning 74 seats of the total 132 seats in the PLC signified that Hamas could form a government alone without a coalition with other Palestinian factions. This victory brought an unexpected development and uncertainty for Hamas. Before the evaluation of how Hamas responded to this victory and its practices after the PLC election, it would be useful to recap the implication of Hamas' political transformation during the period 2003 to 2006.

5. Conclusion: The implication of Hamas' political transformation during 2003 to 2006

There are many ways of interpreting Hamas' political transformation from 2003 to 2006. In general, this transformation was based on the background to ways that Hamas responded to various challenges, such as the launch of the Road Map, the Israeli disengagement plan and the death of Yasser Arafat. Many articles have dealt with this topic from this angle. But regarding the, 'resistance discourse' or the, 'resistance project' that Hamas elaborated and constructed during this period, it seems that this perspective has not been fully addressed. This research argues that the way that Hamas addressed resistance to the public and constructed the resistance project could be understood as Hamas' justification for its military actions and its later political integration during the al-Aqsa Intifada.

Hamas' transformation is not unprecedented. This phenomenon could be seen as the context in which Hamas resides. To a large extent, Hamas' ideas and behaviour might be grasped in a specific context. Reviewing history, it could be found that its predecessor, the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza in 1970s adhered to a similar pattern. At that time the Brotherhood was incapable of involvement in an armed struggle. Therefore it engaged in the social movement as its basis of resistance. The preaching of Islam (*dawah*)

[486] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Mahmud al-Zahar, a member of the political leadership of the movement (Hamas). One of the candidates of the legislative elections on the list,' (15 January 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20110226044722/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/zahar/15_1_06.htm> (accessed on 12 April 2014).

and the provision of social service was the Brotherhood's major concern. This moderation applied to Hamas in the late 1990s when it dramatically reduced the numbers of suicide bombings and returned to an emphasis on its social service. However, it is undeniable that the end of the Israeli occupation remains the ultimate goal for Hamas.

The construction of Hamas' resistance project was not out of context. It could be comprehended under the background of the al-Aqsa Intifada. The failure of the Peace Process, the role of Ariel Sharon and the breakdown of the PA fueled and strengthened Hamas' determination in resistance. This resistance project could be considered as an alternative option in competition with Fatah as well as an agenda showing the world that the end of the Israeli occupation and the restoration of Palestinian rights were Hamas' irrefutable principles. However in spite of this resolute commitment, it is noted that Hamas was willing to keep a moderate profile and sought understanding from other concerned parties, with the exception of Israel.

In general, the issue of Hamas' armed resistance to Israel seemed to be an overemphasis. This one-way dimension tends to blur the whole picture of its resistance project. Indeed, armed resistance was an inseparable part of the resistance project. Furthermore, armed resistance was not a form of terrorism but a means of self-defense and the restoration of Palestinian rights from Hamas' perspective. The only condition that would remove the option of armed resistance was the end of the Israeli occupation rather than by means of another external pressure or threat. In addition to the main tactic of armed resistance, a large amount of stress is given to addressing the significance of dialogue with other Palestinian factions, and Arab and Western countries. It is believed that to end the Israeli occupation, Hamas could not unilaterally implement the resistance project. Rather, the project needed to be coordinated with the various parties. With the changing political landscape after the death of Yasser Arafat, the elections during 2004-2006 provided an opportunity for Hamas to officially raise the resistance project in the political arena for the first time. In general it is considered that the victory of the PLC election or its participation in elections reflected Hamas' political

transformation while this research argues that the transformation was a gradual process in the period between 2003 and 2006.

After the breakdown of the ceasefire in June 2003, rhetoric on military action remained strong in Hamas' resistance discourse. There was no indication that political integration was a possible option for Hamas. In late 2003, Hamas leaders were asked whether they would participate in the PA presidential, municipal and legislative elections. Hamas leaders did not have a positive response because they thought there was no room for holding elections under the Israeli occupation. However their position changed around February 2004 as the issue of the Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza became a heated debate in Israeli politics. This plan could be considered as a turning point for pushing Hamas' political integration. Hamas evaluated that the Israeli disengagement plan was attributed to the success of the Palestinian resistance. Therefore prior to the implementation of the disengagement plan, Hamas leaders had often highlighted the political appeal of managing Gaza. In terms of the disengagement plan, Hamas leaders called for the unity of Palestinian factions in addressing various problems.[487] This posture seems to reveal Hamas' political ambition. In other words, Hamas began challenging the hegemony of Fatah in the Palestinian political landscape.

As the disengagement plan was approved by the Israeli cabinet in June 2004, it could be noted that Hamas' discourse on armed resistance was gradually overlapped by the discourses of election, pluralism and democracy even though it lost two significant leaders, Ahmad Yassin in March and Abdel Aziz Rantisi in April. Hamas had decided to participate in the municipal elections at that time. In addition, Hamas raised many questions within the Palestinian public because the comprehensive corruption in Palestinian society was an urgent problem that Hamas wanted to deal with. Through the democratic election and the establishment of a unified national authority, it seems that Hamas had wanted to raise its resistance project as a national

[487] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Quds press agency,' (19 February 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220221937/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/mesh3al.htm> (accessed on 13 April 2014).

agenda. But, no clear response had yet been received with regard to the PLC election.[488]

The process of Hamas' political integration matured after the death of Yasser Arafat. The Cairo declaration that was announced in March 2005 reflected that 13 Palestinian factions decided to suspend armed resistance with Israel and to rebuild Palestinian society, yet, this declaration seemed to be in favour of Hamas' resistance project rather than Fatah's traditional approach of negotiation with Israel. After that Hamas paid attention to its political campaign. Serving people and protecting the rights of Palestinians were the topics that Hamas leaders frequently addressed to the public. By participation in elections, Hamas looked forward to its resistance project being an alternative approach to protect Palestinians and against Israeli occupation. For Hamas, the result of the PLC election in January 2006 might have been an approval of this conviction.

Whilst tracing interviews carried out with Hamas leaders since 2002, it is noticeable that Islam, as a belief system, inspires Hamas' work on resistance. As an Islamic resistance movement, Hamas leaders put their trust in God, believing that the end of the occupation would materialize even though a large number of leaders and members were targeted by Israel and there was an absence of significant leaders during the al-Aqsa Intifada. Because of this faith, Hamas believed that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza could be seen as a victory blessed by God and a sign of the end of Israeli occupation. It might be difficult to grasp this conviction in the modern world, particularly when the idea of the separation of politics and religion has become 'common sense'. The idea that Hamas stuck to its principle, makes the liberation of Palestine seem like an unrealistic expectation but it could also be noted that Hamas tried to strike a balance between the ideal and the reality. The ceasefire and its political integration could be considered to be postures in which Hamas demonstrated its resilience in protecting its resistance project

[488] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Haniyeh: The withdrawal plan is a big deception,' (10 June 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222934/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/haneyah1.htm> (accessed on 13 April 2014). The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal by Al-Hayat,' (28 July 2004). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222141/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2004/mishal.htm> (accessed on 13 April 2014).

from the changing environment. In addition, it could be argued that the concept of modernity has been integrated into Hamas' resistance project. The adoption of the language of democracy and elections had been a clear indication of its intention when Hamas began its political integration since 2004. The electoral programme in 2006 further demonstrated how Hamas addressed the issues of citizenship, political pluralism and the value of democracy to the public. Nevertheless, Hamas' discourse on modernity is not fully appreciated by the West which is often suspicious of Hamas' illiberal outlook and its violent approach. Hamas leaders took a lesson from Hizbullah, [489] claiming that they would not give up the right of military resistance until the end of the Israeli occupation. Armed resistance against the occupation is inspired by Islamic history and principle. In short, Islam empowers Hamas' resistance project. Hamas believes that as long as it sticks to faith, any difficulties would be resolved, for example, the Israeli disengagement from Gaza plan. But after the victory in the PLC election in 2006, Hamas leaders faced a new dilemma and unprecedented pressures from Israel and the United States. Furthermore its commitment to the electoral programme seemed to be questionable when it took over Gaza in June 2007. In the next chapter, we shall see how Hamas promoted its resistance project in various ways and justified the need for resistance in government.

[489] Israel's security force withdrew from South Lebanon in May 2000. Hizbullah claimed a victory of resistance. This Israeli withdrawal made Hamas believe that resistance is the effective way to force Israel out of the occupied territories. See Kim Cragin, Palestinian *Resistance through the eyes of Hamas*, PhD thesis, *op. cit.,* pp 71-72.

Chapter Four: Evaluation of Hamas' political engagement (2006-2013)

After 2006 Palestine entered a new stage. Due to the unexpected victory in the PLC election, Hamas was no longer in opposition and for the first time, it was able to fulfill its commitment to resistance in politics. Many believed that Hamas had changed its profile in response to huge challenges imposed by the international community. Indeed there was a new dimension: In government, Hamas incorporated the issue of governance further into its resistance project. That is to say, Hamas' new strategy after the electoral victory in 2006 was a combination of resistance and governance in order to adapt itself to meet challenges from Western, Arab, and Muslim countries and Palestine's opponents. In order to explore this development, Chapter Four will analyze and evaluate how Hamas enforced and defended the necessity for resistance in governance from 2006 to 2013.

1. The tenth Palestinian government and the unity government

Hamas' electoral result had not been anticipated. It attracted almost 60 per cent of the votes which resulted in a gain of 74 seats out of the 132 seats in the PLC, which meant that Hamas had the capacity to form a new government by itself. It is believed that Hamas' victory was attributed to corruption in Fatah. However, for Hamas leaders and supporters, there were other implications. The victory demonstrated that the resistance project was workable rather than acting as a compromise project in terms of negotiations with Israel.[490] Hamas leaders were convinced that over the previous ten years Palestinians had gained nothing from these negotiations. The resistance project alone had succeeded in driving Israel out of the Gaza Strip, an achievement that the negotiation project had not brought about. Secondly, this election was symbolic in that people voted for Islam because Hamas' essence

[490] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Newspaper Interview with the deputy of the political bureau, Dr. Moussa Abu Marzuq,' (2 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110813113310/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/marzooq.htm> (accessed on 3 June 2014).

was based on an Islamic reference.[491] One of the elected MPs, Umm Nidal Farhat felt that Islam had been victorious and the victory was attributed to a desire of the martyrs, prisoners, fighters and mothers for change and reform. [492] Thirdly, people voted for Hamas because of its electoral programme and its characteristics such as, integrity and an image of incorruptibility. Finally, the factor that people sought to change was due to the long-term problems of corruption within Fatah and the way that it monopolized decision-making.[493]

In spite of its stunning victory, Hamas did not intend to form a new government alone but kept a low profile when seeking cooperation with other political parties, particularly with Fatah. After the election Khalid Mishal proposed the concept of a 'national project' to the public that could be seen as an upgrade of Hamas' resistance project. The national project was a new model that combined resistance and politics, authorized by the people. From Hamas' perspective, the success of the national project would be based on a national coalition as well as the reform of the PLO.[494] However, this initiative seemed to be unattractive to Fatah and in the long run, the division between Fatah and Hamas was inevitable.

1.1 From the tenth Palestinian government to the polarization of Palestinian politics

Although Hamas believed that the electoral victory boosted its confidence in spreading its resistance project, it also paid a high price for

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[491] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Newspaper Interview with the deputy of the political bureau, Dr. Moussa Abu Marzuq,' (2 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110813113310/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/marzooq.htm> (accessed on 3 June 2014).

[492] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The MP Umm Nidal Farhat, an exclusive interview with the Palestinian Information Center,' (2 February 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226044650/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/fara7at.htm> (accessed on 3 June 2014).

[493] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Newspaper Interview with the deputy of the political bureau, Dr. Moussa Abu Marzuq,' (2 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110813113310/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/marzooq.htm> (accessed on 3 June 2014).

[494] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Transcript of the press conference by Mr. Khalid Mishal in the Egyptian Press Union Centre, Cairo,' (9 February 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20131123003740/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/mash3al.htm> (accessed on 3 June 2014).

being a new government. The major challenge was that Israel and the Quartet considered Hamas' victory as a threat to peace. Israel announced that it would not negotiate with a new government that called for, 'the destruction of the State of Israel'.[495] On the other hand the Quartet set three preconditions for dealing with it: the renunciation of violence, the recognition of Israel and the acceptance of previous agreements signed by the PA.

Among the three preconditions, the recognition of Israel was a pivotal one. During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas had been in communication with the European Union but with the resumption of suicide bombings in 2003, this connection was suspended. After the PLC election, Hamas' political leaders grasped the opportunity to express their views in the influential western newspapers such as *The Washington Post*[496] and *The Guardian.*[497] These arguments stressed the reasons why the recognition of Israel was not an option for Hamas. It is interesting to note that Hamas tried to eschew controversial language to the Western audience. This behaviour could be considered as Hamas' tactic in an effort to seek understanding from the West. Therefore, instead of focusing its discourse on resistance and liberation, it highlighted the reality of Palestinian society on the ground. Hamas' leaders made two points to the West. Firstly, the people had chosen Hamas in a democratic election; therefore, Western countries should not intervene or ignore the people's decisions.[498] Secondly, it was unreasonable to force Hamas to recognize Israel when Palestinians were under attack and deprived of their rights.[499] The only possible scenario for the recognition of Israel would

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[495] Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* p.261.

[496] Mousa Abu Marzook, 'What Hamas is seeking,' *Washington Post* (31 January 2006). 'A conversation with Ismail Haniyeh, ''We do not wish to throw them into the sea,'' *Washington Post* (26 February 26 2006).

[497] Khaled Mish'al, 'We will not sell our people or principles for foreign aid', *The Guardian* (31 January 2006).

[498] *Ibid.*

[499] 'A conversation with Ismail Haniyeh, ''We do not wish to throw them into the sea,'' Washington Post (26 February 2006).

be that Israel acknowledged the Palestinian people's rights and then allowed Palestinians to establish their country within the 1967 borders.[500]

Indeed, being in government had huge repercussions for Hamas. Its rejection of Israel put Hamas in an awkward situation. The only possible way for Hamas to deal with the impasse was to form the national unity government. In response to international pressure and the Palestinians' expectations, Hamas adopted the slogan of, 'building with one hand and resisting with the other.' (*yad tabnī wa yad tuqāwim*).[501] To put it another way, the ideal unity government was based on a combination of politics and resistance. Politics and governance did not contravene the principle of resistance since this was a strategic option that underwrote the aim of liberating Palestinians and restoring their rights. In Hamas' vision, the unity government had to take responsibility for changing and reforming Palestinian society for the purpose of resistance. This concept corresponded to Hamas' resistance project but Fatah was not interested in it due to division within Fatah's ranks as well as pressure from the U.S government.[502]

Hamas formed a new government without Fatah's participation, and on 29th March, the tenth Palestinian government was sworn in. Before the inauguration on 27th March, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh addressed the cabinet platform. This platform indicated several challenges that the new government would tackle such as: the problem of occupation, the issues of security, economy, and financial and administrative reform. In order to seek the support of the international community, this platform was distinct from Hamas' previous electoral programme. The terminology, 'the liberation of Palestine' and 'armed resistance' were absent here although Haniyeh still referred to, 'the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with full

[500] *Ibid*.

[501] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with the Jerusalem MP Muhammad Abu Teir,' (2 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226044321/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/2_3_06.htm> (accessed on 4 June 2014).

[502] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh,' (11 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226044223/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/ismael_haneya/ismael_haneya.htm> (accessed on 4 June 2014).

sovereignty and with Jerusalem as its capital'.[503] The other distinction was that Haniyeh skirted around any resistance language that might trigger a reaction from the international community. He assured the West that 'the new Palestinian government will deal with the agreements signed by the PLO and the PA in order to serve the interests of Palestinian peoples'.[504] At the same time he appealed to the international community not to cut financial aid and to respect the democratic choice of the Palestinian people.[505]

Khaled Hroub argues that the concept of the two-state solution was implicit in Haniyeh's speech and the new government operated under the Oslo accords.[506] Indeed the moderate tone of this cabinet platform moved away from Hamas' unyielding stance. It is believed that its purpose was to target the West because three days later, resistance language and the term 'liberation' re-emerged and was used extensively in another political leader's speech. In Beirut, Khalid Mishal addressed Arab audiences with a theme of resistance that was in line with the experience of Lebanon and Iraq. He stated that Hamas had not changed its principles at the expense of Palestinian interests. Hamas' effort was aimed at working on the liberation of the land with the right of return, the demolition of the separation wall and settlements, and the release of all prisoners from Israeli jails.[507] This is not to say that Hamas played tricks on the West since the way that Hamas dealt with it was consistent with its tactics during the al-Aqsa Intifada.[508] Hamas did not expect the West to identify with Palestinian resistance but at least to sympathize with

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[503] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh delivered the speech in the Legislative Council for confidence in his new government,' (27 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226044042/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/ismael_haneya/27_3_06.htm> (accessed on 4 June 2014).

[504] *Ibid*.

[505] *Ibid*.

[506] Khaled Hroub, 'A ''New Hamas'' through its new documents'*, op.cit.,* p.22.

[507] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Transcript of Khalid Mishal in the Arab Conference for supporting the resistance in Beirut,' (30 March 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20131116102044/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/khalid_meshel/mash3al30_3_06.htm> (accessed on 4 June 2014).

[508] The author's observation was confirmed by a Palestinian intellectual who is familiar with Hamas. Interview in Exeter, 17 November, 2014.

the Palestinians since they were victims under occupation, rather than troublemakers.

Because Hamas did not accept the Quartet's three conditions, the international sanctions immediately took effect on the tenth Palestinian government. These international sanctions were the first and most serious problem that the Hamas-led government had to overcome. Hamas realized that it would not be an easy task to lead the new government but as usual it stuck to the resistance option and promised the Palestinians that it would bring dignity and justice to them without submission to the foreign forces.[509] However, the international sanctions had comprehensive effects on the new government in terms of economic, political and social aspects. Economically, the huge financial burden of a $1.2 billion debt inherited from the previous government as well as the cut in foreign aid incapacitated the new government. The first impact was that approximately one hundred and fifty thousand public servants did not receive salaries, [510] which affected governmental administration. Further, the approximately $60 million tax that Israel was supposed to hand over to the Palestinian government was withheld.[511] Furthermore, the financial support from the Arab countries that Hamas expected was dropped due to a warning from the United States. The economic blockade rapidly led to an increasing poverty rate and unemployment as well as the deterioration of social development and political polarization. With the worsening economy, a sense of insecurity increased when robbery, theft, murder and violence among armed groups became prevalent. In order to bring social order back on the right track, the Interior Minister, Said Siyam guaranteed that the government would enforce the law against these crimes. In April, Siyam created a new security force, 'the executive force'.

The creation of an executive force created a huge dispute in Palestinian politics as it was considered to be Hamas' force. Critics said that

[509] *Ibid*.

[510] Beverley Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* pp.267-271.

[511] *Ibid*., pp.261-262.

the executive force was loyal to Hamas in order to counter the expansion of the Presidential guards under the authority of the PA President Abbas.[512] But it is noted that unlike the Al-Qasaam Brigade, that is, Hamas' military branch, the executive force was not solely Hamas' force. This new force has 5,550 members. Apart from original members from Hamas (2,500), it was also composed of previous members of Fatah (1,100), the Popular Resistance Committees (900), and the Popular Front for the liberation of Palestine (250), several small groups and unaffiliated Palestinians (540).[513] In order to defend the formation of the executive force within the framework of the government, the Interior Minister Said Siyam indicated that it was formed to improve the security apparatus and to refrain from cooperating with Israel. He also added that the formation of the executive force was not to provoke Fatah but the problem was that some Palestinian groups with a special agenda supported by foreign forces attempted to create chaos, which was in violation of the law and Palestinian national interest.[514] However, President Abbas did not recognize the creation of the executive force; instead, he overruled the authority of the Interior Minister to supervise other security forces exclusively.[515] It was expected that confrontation between Hamas and Fatah would erupt and the ideal of the unity government began to fade until the release of the 'Prisoner document' on 11th May, by five Palestinian prisoners.[516]

The Prisoner document was not officially authorized by Palestinian factions but was signed by five Palestinian prisoners who had prominent and

[512] See International Crisis Group, 'After Mecca: Engaging Hamas.' *Middle East Report* (28 February 2007), p.11.

[513] *Ibid.,* p.11.

[514] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with the Interior Minister Said Siyam,' (24 May 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226042705/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/24_5_06.htm> (accessed on 6 June 2014).

[515] Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter*, *op.cit.,* p.233.

[516] JMCC, 'The full text of the National Conciliation Document of the Prisoners,' (11 May 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20080516101156/http://www.jmcc.org/documents/prisoners.htm> (accessed on 6 June 2014).

senior roles in Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP and DFLP respectively.[517] The Prisoner document consisted of 18 articles that could be considered to be an attempt to reconcile Hamas and Fatah toward the formation of the unity government as well as to lift the international sanctions. The main points of this document dealt with various issues such as the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital which took into account all territories occupied in 1967, the legitimacy of resistance, the role of negotiation by PLO and the PA president, the formation of a national unity government, the right of return and reform in Palestinian security forces.[518] Initially, Hamas praised this document but had reservations about some of the articles such as the acceptance of the, 'Arab initiative', the submission to 'international legitimacy' and the recognition of the PLO as the 'sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people' which implied the recognition of Israel since this was not consistent with its resistance project.[519]

Hamas' reluctance made President Mahmud Abbas impatient. Abbas asserted that the new government should recognize Israel and cease all armed resistance. [520] On 25th May 2006, he asked Hamas to accept the prisoner document within ten days, otherwise the document would be determined by referendum. Hamas leaders rejected this proposal outright, claiming that a referendum was illegal and against the new government elected by two thirds of the people.[521] By calling for a referendum, Abbas hoped to oblige Hamas to concede in order to lift the international sanctions. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh stated that the cause of the current predicament was not Hamas itself but the international community engaged in

[517] Marwan Barghouti from Fatah, Abdul Khalid al-Natshah from Hamas, Bassam al-Sa'di from Islamic Jihad, Abdul Rahim Mallouh from the PFLP and Mustafa Badarnah from DFLP. Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter*, *op.cit*., p.237.

[518] JMCC, 'The full text of the National Conciliation Document of the Prisoners,' (11 May 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20080516101156/http://www.jmcc.org/documents/prisoners.htm> (accessed on 7 June 2014).

[519] Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter*, *op.cit*., p.237.

[520] Graham Usher, 'Hamas risen,' *Middle East Report 238*, *op.cit.,* pp.2-11.

[521] JMCC, 'Five factions reject the referendum,' (8 June 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20070820130528/http://jmcc.org/new/06/jun/referendum.htm> (accessed on 7 June 2014).

thwarting the elected government.[522] The dispute concerning the referendum was finally settled through several rounds of dialogue between Hamas and Fatah when the national conciliation document that had been based on a revision of the prisoner document was signed on 25th June.[523]

Overall, although the national conciliation document does not explicitly meet the three conditions set by the Quartet, it is clear that for the first time Hamas accepted the clause that called for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders.[524] Additionally, Hamas agreed to restrict its resistance to the territories occupied in 1967. This indicated that Hamas was willing to soften its tough stance without violation of its fundamental principle.

The most noticeable clauses in this document, as far as Hamas was concerned, was the formation of the national unity government and the integration of Hamas into the PLO before the end of 2006. By the inauguration of this unity government and the reform of the PLO, Hamas hoped to end the current crisis so that the resistance project would be reinforced. However, the prospect of a unity government was immediately shattered because Palestinian armed groups had attacked an Israeli military camp in Kerem Shalom, resulting in the death of two Israeli soldiers and the abduction of Corporal Gilad Shalit on 25th June. Shalit's abduction was not without context. Before this incident, the tension between Hamas and Israel had increased. On 9th June, Israel assassinated the chief of the executive force, Jamal Abu Samhadana and bombed the coastline of Gaza, causing the deaths of seven in a family as well as the wounding of a dozen others. In response, al-Qassam

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[522] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh,' (4 June 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20120712091532/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/ismael_haneya/haneya_4_6_06.htm> (accessed on 7 June 2014).

[523] JMCC, 'The full text of the National Conciliation Document of the Prisoners,' (28 June 2006). <http://web.archive.org/web/20070511002331/http://www.jmcc.org/documents/prisoners2.htm> (accessed on 7 June 2014).

[524] *Ibid*.

Brigade had declared the end of the ceasefire that had been in place since March 2005 and had launched rockets into Israeli territory.[525]

The abduction of Shalit had two implications for Hamas. One was that it strengthened Hamas' determination to resist when Israel launched 'Operation Summer Rains' on 28th June. During the period between 28th June and 18th July, one hundred Palestinians and one Israeli solider were killed.[526] Apart from the attempt to rescue Shalit, it seems that Israel took this opportunity to weaken Hamas' governance. In Gaza, the power plant, bridges and government buildings were bombarded. Israel also arrested thirty-seven Hamas PLC members in the West Bank in order to disturb the function of the PLC.[527] The Israeli onslaught did not frustrate Hamas. On the contrary, it boosted the ethos of its resistance. As in the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada, the terminology of sacrifice, steadfastness, patience and the honour of the Palestinian fighters again became the central points of Hamas' resistance discourse.[528] Another factor that lifted Hamas' spirit was the war between Hizbullah and Israel during the period between July and August 2006. Hamas considered that the loss of Israel was attributed to Hizubllah's resistance. One of Hamas' members, Ahmed Bahr praised Hizbullah as a role model for Palestinians saying that faith in resistance was the only way to liberate Palestine.[529] The rhetoric Hamas addressed to the public was similar to that used during the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada. The more Israel intensified its operation, the more resistance messages Hamas reinforced.

Another implication of Shalit's abduction for Hamas is that there was an incentive to elaborate on the significant prisoner issue. The prisoner issue had previously appeared in Hamas' resistance discourse during the al-Aqsa Intifada. On this occasion, the abduction of Gilad Shalit enabled Hamas to

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[525] International Crisis Group, 'Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing out of the Abyss,' *ICG Middle East Report* (25 July 2006), pp.5-6.

[526] *Ibid.,* p.6.

[527] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Ahmed Bahr,' (19 August 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226041408/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/baher_19_8_06.htm> (accessed on 8 June 2014).

[528] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Ahmed Bahr,' (19 August 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226041408/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/baher_19_8_06.htm> (accessed on 8 June 2014).

[529] *Ibid*.

articulate the issue: Hamas put the prisoner issue on the national agenda, insisting that the only condition of Shalit's release was a prisoner exchange. In a press conference, Khalid Mishal complained that the world had paid attention to the abduction of one Israeli solider but had kept silent about a situation in which ten thousand Palestinians were in Israeli prisons, including four hundred children and one hundred and twenty women. He stated that those prisoners were heroes and fighters and Palestinian society yearned for their release. 'If people forget these prisoners, they are not Palestinians, not Muslims, not Arabs, not even humans… Freeing these prisoners is the topic agenda.'[530]

The military expression that Hamas addressed was less intense as Israel reduced its military operation. Hamas rapidly turned to its main concern, that of forming the unity government. But this did not go well. Due to the Israeli attack on Gaza accompanied by international isolation, there was a question as to whether Hamas had the capability of coordinating resistance and governance.[531] On the other hand, although Hamas and Fatah came to a compromise by signing the National conciliation document, and strove to minimize mutual discrepancies in the formation of the unity government after the Israeli attack on Gaza, the predicament remained due to the fact that both held entirely different views in connection with Israel.

On 12th September 2006, Abbas announced that he had reached an agreement with the Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh to form the national unity government before he attended the U.N General Assembly session in New York. The attempt to form the new government was almost successful. Nevertheless, the expectation rapidly fell when Khalid Mishal stepped in and pressured Haniyeh to retract his commitment. The failure of the formation of the unity government embarrassed Ismail Haniyeh. The intervention of Mishal

[530] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal talks about the recent situation in Palestine in the press conference,' (10 July 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226041712/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/khalid_meshel/12_7_06.htm> (accessed on 8 June 2014).

[531] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq, the deputy of Hamas political bureau,' (14 September 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226041225/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/musa_abo_marzooq/14_9_06.htm> (accessed on 8 June 2014).

seemed to reflect a rift between Hamas' leadership in Gaza and abroad, as critics claimed. The reason why Hamas prolonged the political process was that it had not accepted the Arab peace initiative which was one of the conditions of forming a unity government. [532] The Arab peace initiative that was proposed in the Arab League in 2002 considered the normalization of relations with Israel under a specific condition: that Israel withdrew from the occupied Arab lands, including the Golan Heights and an agreement to form a Palestinian state based on the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital.[533] According to the procedure of decision-making in Hamas, major decisions had to be made through the Shura council. In this respect, the Arab peace initiative had not been authorized in this council. Abu Marzuq, the deputy to Hamas' political bureau, considered that this peace initiative had given the wrong perception of the way Arab countries dealt with Israel. He added that compromise with Israel was harmful to the Palestinian cause and Israel itself had no intention of accepting this initiative.[534]

President Mahmud Abbas was disappointed with this abrupt development. He expected Hamas to compromise its resistance project or at least to meet the Quartet's standards in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.[535] However, there was no sign of a change in Hamas' language of resistance. Abu Marzuq stated that the current government was based on resistance with the aim of ending the occupation. [536] It is noted that Hamas did not want to monopolize the resistance project exclusively but

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[532] Azzam Tamimi thought that the Prime Minister's political advisors, Ahmad Yusuf and Ghazi Hamad may have given President Abbas the wrong message that Hamas accepts Fatah's condition to form a unity government. See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter*, *op.cit*., p.249.

[533] 'Beirut Declaration,' *BBC*, (28 March 2002). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1899395.stm> (accessed on 9 June 2014).

[534] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq,' (20 May 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93423> (accessed on 9 June 2014).

[535] JMCC, 'Freezing the process of forming a unity government,' (17 September 2007). <http://web.archive.org/web/20060926231345/http://www.jmcc.org/new/06/sep/govrn2.htm> (accessed on 9 June 2014).

[536] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq, the deputy of Hamas political bureau,' (14 September 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226041225/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/musa_abo_marzooq/14_9_06.htm> (accessed on 9 June 2014).

wanted to share with other Palestinian factions. Hamas firmly believed that the only way to resolve the problems of social disorder, and economical and diplomatic isolation was to form the national unity government instead of negotiating with Israel.[537] In addition to the issue of the unity government and difficulties between Hamas and Fatah, the Hamas led-government dealt with multiple internal crises in the period from September 2006 to February 2007. The government encountered general strikes by public servants and security forces due to the delay in the payment of salaries. Small-scale clashes occurred between the supporters of Hamas and Fatah: government buildings were attacked and Hamas officials were kidnapped.

Hamas lost confidence in President Abbas. On the one hand, Hamas considered that Abbas had violated the previous agreement due to the fact that he declared to the United Nations that the unity government would recognize Israel, which symbolized that Abbas had retreated from the commitment in the national conciliation document.[538] On the other hand, Hamas was suspicious of Abba's intentions and his ability to manage the security forces. On 1st October 2006, members of the security force belonging to the President went on strike, calling for the dissolution of the executive force directed by the Interior Minister. As a result, two people were killed and fifteen wounded as Fatah's security force confronted the executive force.[539] This clash was not accidental. It is noted that the day before this conflict, violence along with demonstrations had spread in Gaza and the West Bank leaving nine dead and a hundred injured, which was the worst day since the inauguration of the new government in March.[540] The executive force was blamed for these incidents but Hamas rejected this accusation by saying that

[537] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq, the deputy of Hamas political bureau,' (14 September 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226041225/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/musa_abo_marzooq/14_9_06.htm> (accessed on 9 June 2014).

[538] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Usama Hamdan, the representative of Hamas in Lebanon,' (4 October 2006). <http://tinyurl.com/m4tw2an> (accessed on 9 June 2014).

[539] Avi Issacharoff, 'Two killed and eighteen hurt in fresh Hamas-Fatah fighting in Gaza,' *Haaretz*, (1 October 2006). <http://www.haaretz.com/news/two-killed-and-18-hurt-in-fresh-hamas-fatah-fighting-in-gaza-1.200293> (accessed on 10 June 2014).

[540] *Ibid*.

the security forces' protest on the street was illegal and President Abbas should take full responsibility for this conflict.[541]

Many local Palestinians were worried that the discord between Hamas and Fatah would escalate into a comprehensive confrontation particularly in the aftermath of the incident of the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Haniyeh in December and the call for an early election by President Abbas.[542] Hamas was also aware that a certain group that was supported by the U.S and Israel intended to overthrow the government. It was unusual for Hamas to condemn a specific person in public. Hamas leader Muhammad Nazzal reprimanded Muhammad Dahlan, a senior member of Fatah, for assassination attempts and the failure of the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas.[543] There is no evidence that Dahlan was the mastermind of the assassination but he may be involved in the power struggle between Hamas and Fatah. Beverley Milton-Edwards, a scholar specializing in Hamas analyzed various sources, indicated that Dahlan was supported by Israel and the United States financially and militarily in order to remove the elected Hamas-led government.[544] There was also a report that the security forces under the PA President had been aided by the United States since October 2006. The United States planned to give aid amounting to $26 million to President Abbas and its presidential guards.[545]

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[541] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Usama Hamdan, the representative of Hamas in Lebanon,' (4 October 2006). <http://tinyurl.com/m4tw2an> (accessed on 10 June 2014).

[542] On 16th December, Abbas declared to hold early elections but Hamas considered this act as an attempted coup toward the government led by Hamas. See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter*, *op.cit.,* pp.252-253.

[543] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Muhammad Nazzal,' (25 September 2006). <http://tinyurl.com/m4tw2an> (accessed on 10 June 2014).

[544] Milton-Edward cited a confidential document obtained from an American magazine *Vanity Fair* that the U.S President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams 'provoke a Palestinian civil war'. This plan would be implemented by Muhammad Dahlan with the weapon supplied by the US. See Beverley Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit*., pp.283.

[545] See Steven Erlanger, 'U.S. Plan Would Expand Palestinian Leader's Security Force,' *The New York Times*, (5 October 2006). <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/05/world/middleeast/05crossing.html> (accessed on 11 June 2014).

Hamas was cautious about the deteriorating scenario that would possibly collapse the government; and since it was afraid that the continuous infighting among Palestinians only benefited Israel it asserted that it was not against all Fatah members.[546] In spite of the fact that Hamas leaders claimed that national unity was a pressing matter for both Hamas and Fatah, the expansion of the executive force planned by the Interior Minister Said Siyam, from 3,000 to 12,000 members seemed to re-trigger Fatah.[547] The reconciliation was shaky since Fatah and Hamas blamed each other. That is, Fatah accused Hamas of complicity with Iran and Syria while Hamas criticized some Fatah members of creating chaos in order to topple the government. In early 2007, it is estimated that more than eighty Palestinians were killed due to the social disorder and the intense confrontation between Hamas and Fatah.[548] Many Palestinians sensed that civil war was looming but this crisis calmed down temporarily due to Saudi Arabia's mediation.

1.2 The Mecca Agreement: From a temporary reconciliation to total division

On 8th February 2007, the Saudi royal family invited Hamas and Fatah leaders to Mecca. Two days later, both sides reached an agreement known as, 'The Mecca Agreement'.[549] Many believed that this agreement saved Palestinians from the brink of civil war. Some Palestinians compared it to the Taif Agreement in Lebanon 1989 as it served the same function: the protection of national unity.[550] Another consequence of this agreement was that the national unity government was formed for the first time. According to

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[546] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Said Siyam,' (31 December 2006). <http://tinyurl.com/oavyp7o> (accessed on 13 June 2014).

[547] Usama Amer, 'Palestinian Executive Force and the current debate,' *Palestinian Information Center*, (13 January 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=89755> (accessed on 13 June 2014).

[548] International Crisis Group, 'After Mecca: Engaging Hamas,' *op.cit.,* p.16.

[549] The Mecca Agreement mainly deals with three major issues: the forbidden fighting among Palestinians, the formation of a national unity government and the reform of the PLO. See JMCC, 'The text of the Mecca Agreement,' (9 February 2007). <http://web.archive.org/web/20090426090248/http://www.jmcc.org/new/07/feb/meccaagree.htm> (accessed on 13 June 2014).

[550] Rashid, 'Reading the Mecca agreement,' The Palestinian Information Center, (10 February 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=86692> (accessed on 13 June 2014).

the allocations of the cabinet, Hamas obtained nine and Fatah obtained six, portfolios. Ismail Haniyeh remained the Prime Minister but the Interior Ministry was assigned to an independent figure.[551]

It seems that after the Mecca agreement Hamas had the upper hand. On 17th March, the first national unity government was formed. The 'Programme of the National Unity government' did not specify the condition of the recognition of Israel. It confirmed that resistance was a legitimate right of Palestinians and explicitly rejected the concept of an independent Palestinian state based on the temporary borders referred to as the 1967 borders.[552] On the other hand, regarding the issues of the international agreements and the negotiation, there was no indication that Hamas had to compromise its resistance principle. Hamas only expressed its intention to, 'respect the international legitimacy resolutions and the agreements that were signed by the PLO'.[553] Hamas hoped that the new unity government would lift the international sanctions and facilitate its work on the resistance project. Nevertheless, the deep distrust between Hamas and Fatah would hardly be resolved via this document alone.

The problem of security issues and the resentment of some Fatah members persisted after the Mecca agreement. On the day after the formation of the unity government, President Abbas appointed Muhammad Dahlan as national security adviser. This appointment frustrated Hamas, as it believed that essentially, Abbas was opposed to reconciliation with Hamas.[554] By mid-May, the national unity government existed in name only. Many people were confused and terrified by the clashes and insecurity they endured. The new Interior Minister Hani Al-Qawasmi resigned since he could not implement the security plan embedded in the principle of the Mecca agreement.[555] In vain,

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[551] International Crisis Group, 'After Mecca: Engaging Hamas,' *Middle East Report No.62*, *op.cit.*, pp.18-19.

[552] JMCC, 'The program of the National Unity Government,' (15 March 2007). <http://web.archive.org/web/20081121062336/http://www.jmcc.org/politics/pna/nationalgovprog.htm> (accessed on 14 June 2014).

[553] *Ibid.*

[554] International Crisis Group, 'After Gaza,' *Middle East Report No.68* (2 August 2007), p.8.

[555] Beverley Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.*, pp.279-280.

Prime Minister Haniyeh attempted to reconcile with Fatah in terms of calling for ceasefires.[556] Hamas' military wing, al-Qassam Brigade felt humiliated and was afraid that its existence was under threat by Fatah who received funds and ammunition from the United States.[557] On 10th June, Hamas' military wing initiated an operation against Fatah's military force in Gaza. By 14th June, Hamas had completely dominated Gaza.[558] President Abbas declared a state of emergency and the dissolution of the unity of Government. Since then, Gaza and the West Bank have been ruled by two political entities.

1.3 Evaluations of the Palestinian government: The consequence of its refusal to recognize Israel and the dysfunction of the resistance project

The Hamas-led government including the unity government only survived for one year and two months with the end of the clash between Hamas and Fatah. The collapse of the government was not simply due to tensions between Hamas and Fatah but was also attributable to both Hamas' refusal to acknowledge Israeli legitimacy and the international sanctions.

Hamas paid a high price for refusing to recognize Israel. Some observers argued that Hamas' refusal was due to moral and religious dogma. They indicated that it was possible that in the long run Hamas might follow Fatah's footsteps and distance itself from the struggle for national liberation.[559] To some extent, this argument was valid. The liberation of Palestine 'from the river to the sea' remains a dogmatic issue.[560] In practice, Hamas has demonstrated its flexibility in dealing with Israel. With regard to the daily issues such as the provision of water, electricity and the passage of Palestinians, Hamas, as a government, announced that it would coordinate with the Israeli administration. In other words, being in government restrained Hamas' available options and led to a scenario of compromise with Israel to a

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[556] Paola Caridi, Andrea Teti (transl.), *Hamas from resistance to government*, *op.cit*., p.257.

[557] *Ibid.,* p.256.

[558] The 5-days of fighting in Gaza led to 140 deaths and 1,000 injuries. International Crisis Group, 'After Gaza,' *op.cit*, p.1.

[559] As'ad Ghanem, *Palestinian Politics after Arafat*, *op.cit.,* pp.149-150.

[560] The Palestinian Information Centre, 'Interview with the MP Said Siyam, a member of the political leadership of Hamas,' (16 February 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226044538/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/seyam.htm> (accessed on 13 July 2014).

certain extent. Yet, it is hard to say that Hamas experienced an essential transition from a resistance movement to a political party at this time in the way that Fatah had. Moreover, the rejection of any political engagement with Israel still remains Hamas' fundamental principle.[561] The reason for this is that Hamas' resolve was not just a dogmatic issue, as many have argued, but it was also associated with Hamas' resistance project.

Before the election, Hamas never thought that it would be forming a new government by itself. Previously, the recognition of Israel was not an urgent for Hamas, whereas after the election, it was compelled to tackle the problem immediately. It should be noted that one of reasons why Hamas participated in the elections was to protect the resistance as Abu Marzuq claimed 'we want to enter the elections to keep the rights of our people, to maintain the resistance option and to support the steadfastness of the people'; 'the current negotiation with Israel was not a real negotiation but meant the surrender of Palestinian rights'.[562] In this sense if Hamas had yielded to pressure, the resistance work it had gradually constructed during the al-Aqsa Intifada would have completely collapsed and this would have been tantamount to political suicide and harmful to Palestinian national causes.

Furthermore, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the electoral victory in 2006 reinforced Hamas' conviction that the resistance project was the best option for Palestinians. Thus, Hamas had no choice but to reject Israel as a legitimate entity in spite of the risk of international sanctions. Another reason to reject Israel seems to be a practical one. Hamas was afraid of repeating Fatah's fate since it had been trapped at the negotiation table since 1993 at the expense of the fundamental principles and goals, such as Palestinian independence and the right of return. Muhammad Nazzal foresaw that Israel and the United States would manipulate the issue of recognition as an initial step to asking for more concessions of Hamas as they had with

[561] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with the Hamas deputy of the political bureau,' (1 May 2006). <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226043751/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/2006/musa_abo_marzooq/1_5_06.htm> (accessed on 13 July 2014).

[562] *Ibid*.

Yasser Arafat and Fatah.[563] From Hamas' perspective, this form of negotiation with Israel was problematic and had proved to be a failure. Israel has no real intention of compromising with Palestinians, therefore, negotiation with Israel at this moment could not be of benefit to Palestinians since their rights would not be restored.

In government, Hamas strove to strike a balance between governance and resistance and it was proud and confident that it would run the government well in accordance with its resistance project but the attempt did not reach its ideal expectation. On the contrary, its resistance project was questionable during period. Firstly, the resistance project was challenged from within. After the take-over of Gaza in June 2007, Ghazi Hamad, a former political advisor to Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, stated that Hamas did not provide, 'a clear strategic vision' since their slogan, 'resistance is its strategy' was empty.[564] People in Gaza also had mixed feelings about the Hamas-led government. Most people did not want Hamas to recognize Israel while they worried that the international sanctions made their life unbearable.[565]

Secondly, from the regional perspective, the resistance project did not resonate with Arab and Muslim countries either. Although Iran and Syria stood behind Hamas, the tactic of seeking solidarity with Islamic *ummah* was unsuccessful due to the role of the United States in the Middle East. The U.S government wielded political and economic influences to prevent Arab countries from assisting a Hamas-led Palestinian government. As far as finance was concerned, Arab banks froze assets related to the PA government.[566] Politically, the U.S encouraged Arab countries to normalize

[563] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Muhammad Nazzal,' (25 September 2006). <http://tinyurl.com/m4tw2an> (accessed on 14 July 2014).

[564] Quoted from Paola Caridi, Andrea Teti (transl), *Hamas from resistance to government*, *op.cit,* p.263.

[565] Beverley Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* pp.275-276.

[566] For example, Arab banks in Jordan froze the PA's Single Treasury Account. It is estimated that $347 millions were frozen by Arab banks. See International Crisis Group, 'Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet: Pulling back from the brink,' *Middle East Report No.54*, (13 June 2006), pp.23-24.

with Israel. Hamas was disappointed in the Arab countries' weakness which resulted in their inability to support the Palestinian cause.[567]

Finally Hamas' attempt to promote the resistance project as a national agenda led to the inevitable division with Fatah. In Hamas' original plan, the resistance work also needed Fatah's cooperation but Hamas was unable to provide a feasible way of assuring Palestinian unity.[568] Hamas was hoping that the purpose of the national unity government was to lift the international sanctions but this was not achieved. The real problem was that Hamas did not know how to persuade Fatah that resistance was the only effective way to relieve the Palestinians' pain. To make matters worse, Hamas was accused of creating chaos and disorder in Gaza for the sake of its interest but it is worth noting that social disorder and clashes had appeared before Hamas formed the tenth Palestinian government. [569] It was necessary for the Hamas led government to maintain social order; but the creation of the executive force did not achieve this.

In fact, the decision to create the executive force infuriated Fatah. The breakdown of the national unity government in June 2007 revolved around the controversial security issue. The executive force was blamed for attacking other security forces under the domination of President Abbas [570] while some unaffiliated observers asserted that this executive force had, to some degree, built up a reputation for protecting civilians and maintaining order.[571] But it is irrefutable that the fighting between Hamas and Fatah in June clearly contradicted Hamas' principle that, 'Palestinian blood is taboo within

[567] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq,' (20 May 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93423> (accessed on 14 July 2014).

[568] For example, Hamas considered the reform of the PLO was an essential step for the national unity, but this issue only existed on the level of dialogue, with no sign of any concrete action. The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq,' (20 May 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93423> (accessed on 14 July 2014).

[569] International Crisis Group, 'After Mecca: Engaging Hamas,'*op.cit.,* pp.9-10.

[570] *Ibid*., p.13.

[571] International Crisis Group, 'After Mecca: Engaging Hamas,' *op.cit.,* p.11-12. And Usama Amer,'Palestinian Executive Force and the current debate,' *The Palestinian Information Center,* (13 January 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=89755> (accessed on 14 July 2014).

Palestinian society'[572] in spite of the fact that Hamas leaders had an excuse.[573] It is believed that Hamas' political leaders had no idea about the pre-emptive strikes made by its military wing. Due to the organizational structure of Hamas, the political bureau and military wing were sometimes inconsistent. al-Qassam Brigade has not always abided by the instructions of political leaders. The breakdown of the ceasefire in August 2003 was a clear example of this. In addition, this conflict did not reach the scale of the civil war in Iraq and the Lebanon. Several sources indicated that confrontations took place only between Hamas' military wing and Fatah forces loyal to Muhammad Dahlan in acquiescence to the United States and Israel.[574] Not every member of Fatah joined the fighting but in spite of this, the infighting tarnished Hamas' reputation with respect to its resistance project.

Overall, Hamas' resistance project was not workable, and furthermore, Fatah and the international sanctions imposed during the period had thwarted it. But ironically after Fatah no longer had a role in Gaza, Hamas gained more space to elaborate and enforce its resistance project. This project seems to work and to stabilize Gaza even under the international sanctions and the Israeli strikes. In the following three sections, the way that Hamas dominated Gaza, reinforced its resistance project and its evaluation of the events will be analyzed.

2. Governing Gaza

After Hamas' takeover of Gaza as a result of infighting between Hamas and Fatah in June 2007, Gaza and the West Bank turned into two distinct

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[572] 'Change and Reform List: Electoral programme for the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006,' translation from Azzam Tamimi, *Unwritten Chapters*, Appendix VI, p.295.

[573] Ahmad Yusuf, the political advisor to the Prime Minister Haniyeh stated that Hamas did not decide to take over Gaza. It started to strike the Fatah-led security forces because there was information that Fatah was prepared to do something'. Another Hamas member Ismail al-Ashqar shared the same view; however, he spoke frankly that Hamas's take over of Gaza 'was not its choice but there was no other choice.' Quoted from International Crisis Group, 'After Gaza,' *op.cit*, p.13. And quoted from Beverley Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* p. 289.

[574] Paola Caridi, Andrea Teti (transl.), *Hamas from resistance to government*, *op.cit,* pp.255-257. Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter*, *op.cit*., p.264. International Crisis Group, 'After Gaza,' *op.cit*, p.14. Beverley Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* p.287.

models. Hamas' prospects for promoting its resistance project as a national consensus failed in the West Bank when the PA President Mahmud Abbas declared a state of emergency and dismissed the Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh by appointing Salam Fayyad as head of an emergency cabinet without PLC endorsement.[575] On the other hand Hamas reshaped Gaza on the basis of its resistance project which sustained adverse conditions of the intensification of the blockade and Israeli military bombardment. This section analyzes how Hamas institutionalized its resistance project in Gaza as well as the reasons why this project seemed to work from June 2007 to the outbreak of the 'Arab Spring' in December 2010. Before this analysis we shall deal with Hamas' reflections on the takeover of Gaza and the development of the West Bank.

2.1 Hamas' reflections on the takeover of Gaza

After its takeover of Gaza, Hamas faced a perilous situation. There was no optimistic view of Hamas' domination of Gaza as the international sanctions on Gaza intensified.[576] In addition, Hamas' organization and its people in the West Bank encountered comprehensive repression by the PA. There was no place for Hamas to wield its considerable political, military, social and cultural clout; and because of the takeover, the political disputes and stalemate between Hamas and Fatah were deepened. There seemed to be no resolution to achieve mutual reconciliation as the new rounds of negotiations began between Israel and the PA. President Abbas who was infuriated by the unprecedented takeover thought Hamas' action constituted a coup and asked it to apologize for what it had done during the infighting and to restore the status quo. However, Hamas' leadership contended that it was

[575] International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank Model,' *Middle East Report*, No.79 (17 July 2008), p.1.

[576] International Crisis Group indicates that apart from the Israeli closure of Gaza, the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority also attempted to undermine Hamas' ruling in Gaza. International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine I: Gaza under Hamas,' *Middle East Report*, No.73 (19 March 2008), pp.1-15.

not a coup against Abbas but an anti-coup against the people who had terrorized Gaza in the name of Fatah.[577]

On reflection, the takeover could be understood as the preservation of the resistance project. Hamas' leaders detailed the reasons why it reluctantly took over Gaza in June 2007 and justified the action. They argued that some Palestinians who were enraged by Hamas' electoral election had planned to topple the Hamas-led government from the outset. Hamas' MPs and supporters were intimidated and targeted by those people while Hamas demonstrated great flexibility and compromise in spite of the skirmishes.[578] Sami Khater stressed that Hamas was willing to cooperate with other political partners for the sake of national unity against Israeli occupation. Nevertheless, the people who were afraid of national unity at the expense of their own interests grabbed the interval of the Mecca agreement in order to prepare to spoil it.[579] As for people who wanted to topple the Hamas-led government, Khater clearly pointed out that Muhammad Dahlan and Abu Shabak were responsible for this coup. In particular, Abu Shabak without authorization from the Interior Minister and President Abbas, deployed his security force in Gaza by targeting Hamas' fighters, civilians, PA and various institutions during the dialogue between Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmud Abbas. To stop this vicious circle, Hamas had no choice but to fight back to save people from danger and restore order in Gaza.[580] Despite this apology, Hamas members were accused of using excessive force against opponents during the infighting. It

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[577] Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas, unwritten chapter, op.cit.,* p.264. Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Sami Khater,' (24 June 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93424> (accessed on 10 September 2014).

[578] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Hamas leader Muhammad Nasr,' (14 July 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93460> (accessed on 10 September 2014). Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Abu Marzuq about the Palestinian development and the conference in Autumn,' (29 October 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93428> (accessed on 10 September 2014).

[579] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Sami Khater,' (24 June 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93424> (accessed on 10 September 2014).

[580] *Ibid*.

was reported that some Fatah members were executed and mutilated.[581] Hamas leaders apologized for this abuse and insisted that this behaviour was exceptional and perpetrated by individuals who did not share Hamas' values and ethics.[582]

From Hamas' perception, the anti-coup campaign was in response to the American-Zionist plot.[583] Khater indicated that Muhammad Dahlan masterminded the coup in coordination with the foreign forces in order to remove Hamas from government.[584] Furthermore the blockade of Gaza and the boycott of the Hamas-led government could be seen as an extension of an American-Zionist conspiracy[585] designed to pressurize Hamas into giving up the principle of resistance and military operations. Hamas blamed the U.S General Keith Dayton for pushing this coup. Dayton was appointed as U.S security coordinator for the Palestinians in November 2005. According to *Palestine Papers* leaked by Al-Jazeera,[586] Dayton considered Hamas' new government to be a threat to the regional stability; therefore on 2 April 2007, Dayton chaired a meeting with delegations from Israel, Palestine and Egypt to discuss the possibility of weakening Hamas' military capacity in Gaza.[587] Dayton's aim was to restructure Palestinian security apparatus and marginalize Hamas. During the period of the Hamas-led government and later, the national unity government, Dayton had intensive meetings with Dahlan

[581] Milton-Edward & Farrell Stephen, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, *op.cit.,* p.290.

[582] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Sami Khater,' (24 June 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93424> (accessed on 11 September 2014).

[583] *Ibid.*

[584] *Ibid.*

[585] *Ibid*.

[586] The Palestine Papers leaked by Al-Jazeera is a collection of confidential documents related to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The Palestine Papers includes thousands of pages of diplomatic documents from 1999 to 2010. For the details of the Palestine Papers, please refer to *Al Jazeera*, <http://www.aljazeera.com/palestinepapers/> (accessed on 1 September 2015).

[587] 'Meeting Minutes: 2nd Quadrilateral security meeting,' *Palestine Papers* (2 April 2007). <http://transparency.aljazeera.net/en/projects/thepalestinepapers/20121822533171669.htm> (accessed on 1 September 2015).

who seemed to be the appropriate person to carry out this mission.[588] Ostensibly this plan was contrary to Hamas' resistance project. From Hamas' perspective the reform of the Palestinian security apparatus was meant to resist Israel while Dayton's plan was just the opposite, that is, to eliminate Hamas from the security apparatus. This was unacceptable as it jeopardized Hamas' resistance project. In this context, it was only a matter of time before there was a showdown between Hamas and Fatah.

2.2 The setback to the resistance project in the West Bank

Regarding the takeover of Gaza, Hamas leaders felt confident that this political dispute was temporary and that normalcy would return through dialogue with Fatah. Hamas adopted a cautious approach to avoid provoking Abbas and Fatah. On the one hand Hamas honoured President Abbas's legitimacy and asked him to return a national dialogue on the basis of the Cairo Agreement in 2005, the National conciliation document in 2006 and the Mecca agreement in 2007.[589] On the other hand, Hamas made diplomatic efforts by requesting Arab states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Syria to mediate disputes between Hamas and Fatah.[590]

Hamas was eager to seek reconciliation with Fatah due to the fact that national unity is an indispensable step toward national liberation. However, it seemed that Abbas had no interest in listening to what Hamas had to say. For Abbas, the takeover of Gaza symbolized the failure of co-option. When Abbas was elected in 2005, he expected that co-option would lead to Hamas' disarmament in accordance with the Oslo framework and the Road Map.[591] But the unanticipated electoral outcome disrupted his plan. There was no indication that Hamas was committed to disarmament. On the contrary,

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[588] David Rose, 'The Gaza Bombshell,' *Vanity Fair* (April 2008). <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804> (accessed on 13 September 2014).

[589] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Hamas leader Muhammad Nasr,' (14 July 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93460> (accessed on 13 September 2014).

[590] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Sami Khater,' (24 June 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93424> (accessed on 13 September 2014).

[591] Alvaro de Soto, 'End of Mission Report,' (May 2007). <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2007/06/12/DeSotoReport.pdf> (accessed on 13 September 2014).

boosted by its electoral victory, Hamas argued that the majority of Palestinians chose its resistance project rather than negotiation, as proposed by Fatah. This is not to say that Hamas attempted to dominate Palestinian politics according to its political vision or excluded Fatah and other Palestinian factions. Although the Hamas-led government created the executive force, which was considered to be a most controversial policy, dialogue was always necessary for Hamas in its efforts to convince other Palestinian factions to accept its resistance project as a national agenda. The National conciliation and the Mecca agreement could be considered to be a compromise in that Hamas was willing to share power with Fatah in order to lift the international blockade as well as reach a national consensus. However its takeover of Gaza put Hamas in an awkward position, and strengthened the image that it was more eager to monopolize politics than to serve resistance.

The dismissal of the national unity government seemed to give President Abbas a free hand to practice his original plan in the West Bank. Salam Fayyad was appointed as Prime Minister in charge of security reform and economic development and Abbas himself was to engage in negotiations with Israel. The situation in the West Bank looked stable and on the right track. As far as Hamas was concerned it was no such thing. Worst of all, Hamas members and sympathizers were arrested and also a large number of its affiliated civil institutions were banned or monitored in the West Bank. The reconciliation stalled as new rounds of peace talks between Israel and the PA were launched. For Hamas, this was an unprecedented setback to its resistance project. The next section will analyze ways in which Hamas viewed Abbas and the Fayyad-led government as obstacles to its resistance project in respect of security issues and negotiation.

2.2.1 Security reform

The security situation in the West Bank had improved under the Salam Fayyad-led government since the restoration of law and order was Salam Fayyad's first concern. Within a short time, militia activity declined and public order was rebuilt. Many were glad to see this change, including Hamas

members. [592] With U.S. financial and technical assistance, Fayyad implemented a security reform, aiming to transform security into a professional, de-factionalized and national force.[593] Hamas was not pleased with this, particularly regarding the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank; and it considered this to be a heavy blow to its resistance project. It can be said that this crackdown was far-reaching. Hamas' activities were prohibited. Fatah and the PA security force dismantled Hamas' armed cells and arrested affiliated members.[594] It is estimated that from 14th June to 30th September 2007, around 1,500 Hamas members and sympathizers were under arrest.[595] The Human Rights group said that many arrests were in violation of Palestinian basic law and without a court order. There were also accounts of torture and ill-treatment of these suspects.[596] Furthermore, this crackdown not only targeted Hamas but also aimed at civil institutions that may have direct or indirect connection with Hamas. In terms of enforcing a new law, around 150 people in charge of NGOs and charities were dismissed by the interior minister.[597] Mosques and other religious organizations were also regulated. Preachers and staff had to have licenses from the PA and their speech in Friday sermons had to be checked.[598]

This crackdown reminded Hamas of a similar painful experience during the Oslo Process. In mid-1990s Hamas' members were imprisoned and their weapons collected by the PA. However, the Islamic civil institutions did not face this type of clampdown. This time, unlike during the Oslo period, the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank was comprehensive and unprecedented. Hamas leaders were frustrated with their severe suppression in the West Bank. Some leaders were angry and said that the people who

[592] International Crisis Group, 'Squaring the circle: Palestinian Security Reform under occupation,' *Middle East Report*, No. 98 (7 September 2010), p.8.

[593] *Ibid*., p.3.

[594] *Ibid*., p.6.

[595] International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank model,*'op.cit*., p.2.

[596] International Crisis Group, 'Squaring the circle: Palestinian Security Reform under occupation,' *op.cit.,* p.30.

[597] International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank model,' *op.cit.,* p.25.

[598] International Crisis Group, 'Squaring the circle: Palestinian Security Reform under occupation,' *op.cit,* pp.29-30.

planned a coup in Gaza had moved to the West Bank, killing their people, storming their houses and burning institutions and charities to indicate war on Hamas.[599] Other leaders argued that this crackdown on Hamas indicated that the Fayyad-led government dictated by Zionist-American strategy criminalized the armed resistance and dismantled the structure of resistance. [600]

Abu Marzuq, the deputy of Hamas' political bureau, observed this excessive crackdown on Hamas from two angles. The crackdown was in accordance with the first stage of the Road Map, 'ending terror and violence, normalizing Palestinian life,' in order to start negotiation with Israel.[601] By getting rid of the burden of Hamas, the PA could freely engage with Israel on negotiation and security cooperation. Secondly, the closure of civil institutions that used to play an important role in sustaining Israeli aggression led to another type of siege for Palestinians in the West Bank. People did not enjoy real freedom and could not seek moral and material support from those civil institutions. [602] It is noted that even though Hamas was annoyed at the situation in the West Bank, fighting with the PA was not an option for Hamas. [603] Conversely, Hamas' leaders felt confident that this crackdown would not crush Hamas but would strengthen its popularity and its commitment to resistance.[604]

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[599] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Sami Khater,' (24 June 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93424> (accessed on 15 September 2014).

[600] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Usama Hamdan about the recent Palestine,' (2 September 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93488> (accessed on 15 September 2014). Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Bardawil,' (9 December 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93451> (accessed on 15 September 2014).

[601] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Abu Marzuq about the Palestinian development and the conference in Autumn,' (29 October 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93428> (accessed on 15 September 2014).

[602] *Ibid.*

[603] A Hamas leader in the West Bank said 'Not to respond is itself a response. We are restraining ourselves from a position of strength, not weakness, so as to avoid a conflict with the PA that would create chaos and weaken Hamas as a movement'. Quoted from International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank model,' *op.cit.,* p.5.

[604] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Abu Marzuq about the Palestinian development and the conference in Autumn,' (29 October 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93428> (accessed on 15

2.2.2 Negotiation

Apart from the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank, President Abbas was also eager to carry out his initial negotiation approach encouraged by the U.S administration. The negotiations between Israel and the PA started again in the shape of the Annapolis Conference held on 27th November with an attendance of representatives from 49 countries and international organizations.[605] During this conference, President Abbas and the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert signed a 'Joint Understanding' that specified that by the end of 2008 Israel and Palestine would conclude a peace treaty to end the mutual hostility on a basis of a two-state solution.[606] Prior to this conference, Abbas had intensive meetings with Olmert to discuss final status issues such as Jerusalem, borders, settlements, refugees, security and water.[607] In view of this negotiation process, Hamas was disappointed with Abbas's pursuit of negotiations with Israel, which contradicted the principle of national consensus. Khalid Mishal said, 'No one is authorized to offer any concessions or downside the Palestinian national stand that was agreed upon by Hamas and Fatah in 2006. The message is clear… in the light of the Palestinian division, the absence of national accord and the role of the legitimate Palestinian institutions, no one in the Palestinian arena is authorized to run negotiations of this type.'[608]

There was a sense of anxiety among Hamas leaders during the resumption of the negotiations between Israel and the PA. They were worried that if these negotiations were ongoing, there would be negative consequences for the Palestinian national cause. Usama Hamdan saw that the rapprochement between Israel and the PA would not help reconciliation

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September 2014). The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Abu Zuhri about Gaza considered as a hostile entity,' (23 September 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93475> (accessed on 15 September 2014).

[605] Carol Migdalovitz, 'Israeli-Palestinian peace process: The Annapolis Conference,' *CRS Report for Congress* (7 December, 2007), p.2.

[606] *Ibid.,* p.1.

[607] *Ibid*, p.2.

[608] Quoted in International Crisis Group, 'The Israeli-Palestinian conflict Annapolis and after,' *Middle East Briefing*, No.20 (20 November, 2007), p.10.

between Hamas and Fatah but it would be at the expense of the Palestinian national project, including the liberation of Palestine, the restoration of rights and the establishment of the state. Furthermore, he was afraid that Israel would ask more concessions of Abbas. In that case, Palestinians would face a disaster worse than that after the Oslo Peace Process.[609]

In short, the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank and the resumption of negotiation between Fatah and Israel was a big blow to Hamas. Meanwhile many foresaw that Hamas could not tolerate the unbearable circumstances in Gaza with the intensified closures and Israeli strikes. However, quite the opposite occurred; to a large extent, in reality Hamas stabilized Gaza and incrementally institutionalized the resistance project that it had not been able to materialize during the period between 2006 and 2007.

2.3 Towards an institutionalized resistance project in Gaza

Since Hamas' takeover of Gaza, the U.S, Israel, the PA and Egypt attempted to undermine Hamas' rule with the strategy of isolation. They were hoping that people in Gaza who had suffered and were frustrated by the economic blockade would stand up against Hamas.[610] However, this scenario did not take place even though the closures and the Israeli irregular strikes did deepen their hardship and cause high unemployment rates in Gaza. On the contrary, Hamas had shown its capacity to survive and to institutionalize its resistance project, which seemed to stabilize Gaza as a quasi-state, a quite different model in comparison to the PA in the West Bank. To a large extent the institutionalization of the resistance project was precipitated by challenges from outside and within; and this could be observed from the security, social, media, economic and diplomatic aspects.

2.3.1 Security and social aspects: For the sake of stability

Like the Abbas and Salam Fayyad-led government in the West Bank, the first priority for the Ismail Haniyeh-led government was to restore law and

[609] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Usama Hamdan about the recent Palestine,' (2 September 2007).
<http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93488> (accessed on 17 September 2014).

[610] International Crisis Group, 'Round Two in Gaza,' *Middle East Briefing*, No.24 (September 11 2008) p.1.

order after the takeover of Gaza. al-Qassam Brigades and the executive force campaigned against militias and criminal acts such as drug-dealing, immoral activities and weapon-smuggling.[611] It is worth noting that for the sake of stability, Hamas started to collect weapons from individuals and banned the public display of weapons. One Hamas security force said, 'anyone who fires a weapon will be arrested, and his weapon removed. We will impose a solution for Gaza's chaos by force. This is the age of sovereignty and law.' [612] Indeed, in a short period, apart from sporadic clashes with clans or radical Salafists, the crime rate in Gaza had been rapidly reduced. The public welcomed this improved security.[613] It could be argued that for the first time, Hamas was free to manage its resistance force without hindrance.[614]

With order restored, Hamas became involved with security reform. A renowned scholar, Sayigh Yezid commented that the Gaza security forces imposed by Islamized policy had undergone a considerable evolution.[615] To be precise, Hamas indeed enforced its Islamic version in the issue of security but this Islamized policy was to serve its resistance project. The concept of security reform basically abided by its electoral programme in January 2006: 'correcting and rationalizing the role of the security agencies in protecting the security of the citizen, ending erroneous and arbitrary practice'. [616] The 'Security collaboration with the occupation is a crime against the homeland and against religion; it should be severely punished'[617] and 'protecting the resistance and vitalizing its role in resisting the occupation and accomplishing

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[611] International Crisis Group, 'Inside Gaza: The challenge of clans and families,' *op.cit.,* p.13.

[612] Qutoe from International Crisis Group, 'Inside Gaza: The challenge of clans and families,' *op.cit*., p.15

[613] *Ibid*., p.20.

[614] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Usama Hamdan about the recent Palestine,' (2 September 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93488> (accessed on 17 September 2014). Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Siyam,' (26 November 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93485> (accessed on 17 September 2014).

[615] Sayigh Yezid, 'We serve the people: Hamas policing in Gaza,' *Crown Paper 5* (Crown Center for Middle East Studies, April 2011), p.6 and pp.90-94.

[616] 'Change and Reform List: Electoral programme for the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006,' translated by Azzam Tamimi, *Unwritten Chapters*, Appendix VI, p.295.

[617] *Ibid.,* p.295.

the mission of liberation.'[618] Based on this principle, this security reform could be attributed to two main characteristics. Firstly, unlike the PA in the West Bank that only possessed partial ownership of security, operated freely in certain cities and had to share information with the Israeli force,[619] Hamas enjoyed a great autonomy in managing and constructing its forces and Hamas was proud of this achievement. Even under limited resources and closure, Hamas was still able to implement its vision with levels of coordination, information sharing and mutual support.[620] al-Qassam Brigades had been transformed from being an underground group to a uniformed military force. As for the executive force, it was divided into three branches: the civil police, the internal security force and the national security force.[621] Another feature of Hamas' security reform was its Islamic training, that is, Hamas instilled Islamic values into its security forces. For example, members of security forces were requested to memorize the Qur'an, learn Islamic history, practice daily prayers and attend Islamic scholars' lectures. Given these Islamic values, the security forces had molded into a cohesive unity.[622]

Obviously, Hamas' security reforms were not without obstacles and challenges. The policy also incurred criticisms and clashes in Gaza and from outside. Clans and Salafists were both major challenges that Hamas had to deal with. Before the PLC election in 2006, clans in Gaza had common interests with Hamas. Both rejected the monopoly of the PA on the use of force as well as the collection of weapons[623] while after Hamas' takeover of Gaza and the enforced security reforms, the tensions between Hamas and some of the large clans emerged. In early August 2008, in response to a bomb explosion the week before, which had led to the deaths of five of Hamas' military leaders, Hamas launched a massive campaign against the

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[618] *Ibid.,* p.295.

[619] Some Palestinian security officer in the West Bank confessed that a security cooperation with Israel was the asymmetric relationship and furthered the image of a 'form of collaboration. See International Crisis Group, 'Squaring the circle: Palestinian Security Reform under occupation,' *op. cit.,* p.23.

[620] Sayigh Yezid, 'Hamas rule in Gaza: Three years on,*' op.cit.,* p.2.

[621] International Crisis Group, 'Ruling Palestine I: Gaza under Hamas,' *op.cit.,* pp.6-9.

[622] Sayigh Yezid, 'We serve the people: Hamas policing in Gaza,' *op.cit.,* p.91.

[623] International Crisis Group, 'Inside Gaza: The challenge of clans and families,'*op.cit.*, p.13.

Hillis family which was affiliated with Fatah. One Hamas leader claimed that this operation was to put an end to the family rule. Twelve of the Hills family, and two members of al-Qassam Brigades were killed and over one hundred people were wounded in this incident.[624]

As for radical Salafists in Gaza, Hamas had an intensive fight with a Salafist group, 'Jund Ansar Allah' on 11th August 2009, ending in the death of twenty-eight and more than one hundred injured when the group declared an Islamic Emirate in Palestine and defiantly rejected Hamas' order of surrendering guns.[625] In general, most Salafists in Gaza were apolitical and undertook missionary work.[626] The emergence of the radical Salafists with a revolutionary vision was the result of their disillusion with Hamas. Some individuals were defectors from al-Qassam. They condemned Hamas for their participation in the PLC election in 2006, the failure to apply *sharia* in Gaza and a unilateral ceasefire with Israel.[627] Regarding this incident, Ismail Haniyeh's legal advisor Mazen Haniyeh argued that this group was a form of extremism, which became a phenomenon in this region and was a threat to the Islamic *ummah*. He said this kind of ignorant extremist who was full of hatred misunderstood and misused *sharia* by blowing up the Internet Café and targeting a wedding party.[628] He compared this group to the *Khawarij* who assassinated Caliph Ali in early Islamic history and stressed that only moderation, the principle of Islam, was the only way to treat this type of extremism.[629]

Ostensibly, Hamas' urgent concern was the stability of social order after the takeover of Gaza but its way of governing Gaza was described as an

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[624] International Crisis Group, 'Round Two in Gaza,' *Middle East Briefing*, *op.cit*., p.2.

[625] International Crisis Group, 'Radical Islam in Gaza,' *Middle East Report*, No.104 (29 March, 2011), pp.12-13.

[626] Khaled Hroub, 'Salafi formations in Palestine: The Limits of a de-Palestinianized Milieu,' in Meijer Roel (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp.227-232.

[627] International Crisis Group, 'Radical Islam in Gaza,' *Middle East Report*, *op.cit*, p.19.

[628] The Palestine Information Center,' Dr. Haniyeh: Extremism factor is the internal weakness, which is the most destructive threat to the nation than external factors,' (25 August 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70418> (accessed on 18 September 2014).

[629] *Ibid*.

authoritarian rule.[630] This form of the authoritarian rule could be characterized as a crisis management of the public services and consolidation of its political power in Gaza. Regarding the crisis management, after the takeover, the division between Hamas and Fatah also extended to the public sectors in Gaza. Many staff from the educational, health and judicial sectors who received orders from the PA in Ramallah launched prolonged strikes and stayed at home in protest against Hamas' takeover of Gaza.[631] To prevent the public services from collapsing, Hamas took a reactive measure in terms of hiring new staff loyal to Hamas. In this way, the education, health, finance, water and judicial aspects were under Hamas' dominance.[632] No group and factions had the ability to challenge Hamas.

Regarding the consolidation of its political power, Hamas faced many criticisms from within and outside of Gaza. It seemed that personal freedom was restricted. Civil police patrolling public places such as beaches and cafes cautioned against the mixing of males and females and smoking.[633] Regarding this trend, Mahmud al-Zahar had an explanation. He said that freedom, based on lies, misinformation and fabrication was not allowed. As for the patrol on the beaches, he argued that it was a mechanism for protection from thieves and transgressors.[634] Another criticism of Hamas' authoritarian rule was its violation of human rights. Some Fatah members were arrested in Gaza. Humanitarian organizations documented many violations of human rights and abuses by the Hamas police.[635] Regarding this dispute, Abu Marzuq provided a different account. He argued that Fatah enjoyed full freedom in Gaza unlike Hamas' situation of repression in the West Bank. The

[630] Sayigh Yezid, 'Hamas rule in Gaza: Three years on,' *op.cit*., p.3.

[631] Are Hovdenak, 'Hamas in Gaza preparing for long-term control,' *PRIO Policy Brief* (November 2011), pp.1-3.

[632] International Crisis Group, 'Round Two in Gaza,' Middle East Briefing, *op.cit.,* pp.8-11.

[633] Nicolas Pelham, 'Ideology and practice: The legal system in Gaza under Hamas,' (June 2010). <https://www.academia.edu/2984906/Ideology_and_Practice_The_Legal_System_in_Gaza_under_Hamas> (accessed on 18 September 2014).

[634] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mahmud al-Zahar in Al-Jazeera Talk,' (11 June 2007). <http://tinyurl.com/q4hf98b> (accessed on 17 September 2014).

[635] Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 'Annual Report 2008,' <http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/Reports/English/pdf_annual/annual2008-E.pdf > (accessd on 6 November 2014).

arrest and detention of people with an affinity to Fatah in Gaza was because of their criminal acts rather than their political affiliations.[636]

The other dispute regarding Hamas' authoritarian rule was whether Hamas imposed its vision of Islamization in Gaza, that is, the implementation of *sharia* or the creation of 'Talibanization' in Gaza away from the domination of the PA in Ramallah; also this Islamization was considered to be the major cause of the violation of human rights and a form of oppression.[637] al-Zahar did not agree with the descriptions of, 'Islamization' or 'Islamic emirate' as he stated that, 'We are not in need of an Islamic emirate. We live in the Islamic reality since centuries ago. This is not a coup for secularism and for Christians.'[638] Mazen Haniyeh further stressed that *sharia* was not connected with blood or a tool of punishment for people. On the contrary, *sharia* as a way of life and mercy protects human rights and their interests.[639] It can be said that Hamas leaders did not consider *sharia* to be, as described by critics, negative or having evil implications. According to some researchers' observations, Hamas did enforce *sharia* in Gaza and there were incidents in which female students were asked to wear hijab in school.[640] But, to a large extent Hamas did not revolutionize the rule of law when it practiced *sharia* in the public domain. Nicolas Pelham indicates that the way that the Hamas government in Gaza constructed Islamic legal applications in executive, judicial and legislative branches conformed to the existing PA system. In addition to this, formal sectors, and informal sectors such as conciliation committees, the Muslim scholars league, and mosques also supplement the

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[636] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Abu Marzuq,' (14 January 2008). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93477> (accessed on 18 September 2014).

[637] Jonathan Schanzer, 'The Tablibanization of Gaza: A liability for the Muslim Brotherhood,' *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol.9 (19 August, 2009), pp.110-119.

[638] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Dr. Mahmud al-Zahar in Al-Jazeera Talk,' (11 June 2007). <http://tinyurl.com/q4hf98b> (accessed on 18 September 2014).

[639] The Palestine Information Center, 'Dr. Haniyeh: Extremism is a destructive internal factor of weakness, causing more danger to the nation than the external factors of weakness,' (25 August 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70418> (accessed on 19 September 2014).

[640] Mkhaimar Abusada and Fakhr Abu-Awwad, 'Case study II: The education sector,' in Are Hovdenak (ed.,) *The Public Services under Hamas in Gaza: Islamic Revolution or Crisis Management? PRIO Report,* p.51.

legitimacy of Hamas' ruling and mitigated social unrest in Gaza.[641] Are Hovdenak also has a similar observation. He concludes that Hamas did not design a grand blueprint of Islamization in governmental institutions in association with Islamic principles although there were Islamic manifestations such as Islamic dress and the segregation of the sexes in some schools and public institutions.[642] Overall, Hamas continued the structure of the governmental institutions, adhered to the Palestinian basic law and coordinated with the PA in Ramallah in non-political levels, such as education, health and other daily issues.[643]

Regarding 'Islamization' or the act of the implementation of *sharia*, these topics seldom appeared or were highlighted in Hamas' public speaking and interviews. This thesis argues that in an analysis of Gaza's situation after its takeover, Islamization was not Hamas' focus. Islam, essentially, is an intrinsic value which inspires and guides Hamas and many Palestinians. Hamas practiced Islam based on its understanding of the social context of Palestine. Dr. Nafez Al-Madhoun stated that most Palestinian laws have been compatible with Islamic law. He did not see a radical change of laws imposed by Hamas.[644] Therefore, the focus should be on how and why Hamas constructed its political agenda in Gaza instead of the intensive and endless debates as to whether the essence of 'Islamized policy' carried with it intolerant or brutal implications, which misses the point.

It can be argued that the way that the Hamas consolidated its presence and governance was basically according to its electoral programme in early 2006. The aim of the electoral programme was to provide a comprehensive approach for 'the liberation and the establishment of the Palestinian independent state with Jerusalem its capital'.[645] Initially Hamas hoped that

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[641] *Ibid*.,pp. 12-17.

[642] Are Hovdenak (ed.), *The Public Services under Hamas in Gaza: Islamic Revolution or Crisis Management?, op.cit.,* p.5.

[643] *Ibid.,* p.71.

[644] Hani Albasoos, 'Case study I: The Judicial Sector,' in Are Hovdenak (ed.), *The Public Services under Hamas in Gaza: Islamic Revolution or Crisis Management?, op.cit.,* p.42.

[645] 'Change and Reform List: Electoral programme for the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006,' translation from Azzam Tamimi, *Unwritten Chapters*, Appendix VI, p.292.

sharing power with other Palestinian factions, particularly Fatah, would work towards a phase of liberation. But with the political divisions and the siege of Gaza, Hamas had no choice but to advance its political project early. For Hamas, the integration of politics was irreversible as this electoral programme notes, 'this participation (of the election) is intended to be an act of support for the programme of resistance and intifada to which our people have happily resorted as a strategic option to end the occupation.'[646] Lacking a trustworthy political partnership and in protection of its political programme, Hamas unwillingly retreated from its political achievement since 2006 and consolidated Gaza by institutionalizing its resistance project.

2.3.2 The Media aspect: A transmitter of the resistance message

In addition to the security and social arenas, the media also facilitated Hamas' governance and served to transmit its resistant message. When Hamas won the PLC election in 2006, the state-owned TV did not obey and it even attacked the Hamas-led government. Therefore, Hamas decided to create its own media in terms of transmitting its resistance message after the takeover of Gaza. [647] Hamas' media included two satellite channels, a TV station, radios, media production companies and electronic online media. [648] In the deteriorating situation, these media played a crucial role in mitigating the negative image of Hamas as well as its policy failure in Gaza. One of the most remarkable aspects of the media was al-Aqsa TV, which was the second most watched in Gaza after Al-Jazeera.[649]

Al-Aqsa TV broadcasts regular programmes that discuss comprehensive social issues such as: poverty, unemployment, education and political corruption.[650] Hamas officials or pro-Hamas guests were invited to Al-Aqsa TV to reflect their views and to justify why Hamas could not fulfil its policy and did not meet the demands of the people as the siege of Gaza and

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[646] *Ibid*, pp.292-293.

[647] Wael Abdelal, *From the Mosque to Statellite Broadcasting: A historical perspective of Hamas media strategy*, *op.cit.*, pp.183-184.

[648] *Ibid.,* p.5

[649] *Ibid*., p.179.

[650] *Ibid*, p.148.

the occupation were often blamed for Hamas' inability to apply its policy.[651] This is not to say that al-Aqsa TV always defended Hamas. Sometimes, it criticized Hamas for wrong practices and policies.[652] Furthermore, al-Aqsa TV could be regarded as a resistance media for the purpose of national liberation since Hamas believed that resistance was the only way out of the Israeli occupation. As analyzed in Chapter Three, Hamas incrementally constructed its resistance project during the al-Aqsa Intifada. This project had a holistic perspective towards national liberation. Armed resistance was only part of this project. The founder of the al-Aqsa media network Fathi Hamad described the role of al-Aqsa TV as being to promote culture, Jihad and resistance.[653] In other words, an invisible element of resistance could be shaped and reinforced through Hamas owned media network.

2.3.3 The Economic and Diplomatic aspect: A means to withstand the siege of Gaza

Although Hamas could effectively stabilize Gaza by exploiting its security, administration and media means, Hamas was unable to lift the siege. After the takeover of Gaza, Israel treated it as a hostile entity and closed crossings along Israeli borders. On the other hand, the Rafah crossing was closed by Egypt. Gaza looked like a large prison with no access to the outside world. In January 2008, Gaza faced fuel shortages and a looming humanitarian crisis. To cope with the severe economic decline and high unemployment rate under the siege, Hamas looked for alternatives through economic and diplomatic efforts.

Hamas sought various ways of alleviating the huge economic burden, such as tax deduction and the creation of job opportunities[654] as well as aid

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[651] *Ibid*, pp.188-190.

[652] *Ibid*, pp.191-192.

[653] The Palestine Information Center, 'An exclusive interview with Fathi Hamad, Hamas leader, and the head of al-Aqsa media network,' (14 December 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70498> (accessed on 21 September 2014).

[654] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Bardawil,' (9 December 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93451> (accessed on 21 September 2014).

from Arab and other Muslim countries.[655] But in reality these measures did not help. The siege almost suffocated the Gazan economy. Under this context, Hamas looked to the tunnel as an alternative. Although the U.S. Israel and Egypt regarded the tunnels as a means of arms smuggling, to a large extent, the tunnel was a lifeboat that sustained the economy and Hamas' rule and as the siege tightened, Hamas relied on the tunnel more intensely. The Tunnel Affairs Commission (TAC) as an official institution was set up for regulating and monitoring the tunnel trade. By 2010, it was estimated that there were 5,000 tunnel owners and 25,000 workers in tunnels.[656] The tunnel became a new growing industry in Gaza. By taking a series of measures and issuing guidelines, TAC formalized the tunnel trade such as the regulation of working conditions, the issuing of tunnel-licenses, the establishment of arbitration system and tax collection.[657] Most importantly, as far as Hamas was concerned, the tunnel economy brought considerable revenues and reduced prices of goods in the market. It can be said that under the siege the role of the tunnel economy in Gaza partially corresponded to Hamas' commitment to its economic policy: 'economic independence and disengagement with Israel' and 'endeavour to establish a resisting economy and encourage self-dependency'.[658] Hamas was gradually less dependent on the Israeli economy and created an informal new market with Egypt but it realized that the tunnel economy was not the ultimate remedy for Gaza development.[659] As long as the siege continued, the economic problem was hardly resolved. Therefore Hamas hoped that a diplomatic approach was the way to ease the siege.

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[655] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with the Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh,' (10 June 2008). <http://tinyurl.com/n9w5tpv> (accessed on 21 September 2014).

[656] Nicolas Pelham, 'Gaza's tunnel phenomenon: The unintended Dynamics of Israel's siege,' *op.cit.,* p.18.

[657] *Ibid*, p.11.

[658] 'Change and Reform List: Electoral programme for the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006,' translation from Azzam Tamimi, *Unwritten Chapters*, Appendix VI, p.312.

[659] In spite of the fact that Gaza has informal trade with Egypt, the Egyptian authority considered the tunnels to be a threat to its national security and planned to destroy them. See Nicolas Pelham, 'Gaza's tunnel phenomenon: The unintended Dynamics of Israel's siege,' *op.cit.,* pp.22-24.

Hamas leaders always hoped that the Palestinian cause would be the focal point of the Islamic *ummah*, and sought understanding from the West. Prior to the takeover of Gaza, this tactic had proved to be a failure. The resistance message had hardly been conveyed to the region and international society due to Hamas' political dispute with Fatah and the international blockade. Nevertheless, when Hamas controlled Gaza, it gradually obtained solidarity and moral support from Arab and Muslim countries such as Yemen and Turkey that traditionally, had not been involved in the Palestinian issue. Yemen attempted to mediate the dispute between Fatah and Hamas by proposing, 'The Sanaa declaration' on March 2008.[660] On the other hand, Turkey rebuked the Israeli strikes on Gaza in late December 2008 and froze its official relationship with Israel due to the Mavi Marmara incident in May 2010.[661] These acts of solidarity did not really help to ease Gaza, but diplomatically, it boosted Hamas' confidence in its resistance approach. As for Egypt, which is considered to be the most important strategic player in the Palestinian cause, Hamas had no intention of provoking it. In spite of the fact that Egypt closed the Rafah crossing Hamas leaders refrained from showing its displeasure and officially applauded Egypt's indispensable role in the mediation effort between Hamas and Fatah[662] as well as the ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel in mid-2008.[663] It can be said that Hamas adopted a neutral position towards Arab and Muslim countries in order to obtain a comprehensive diplomatic support.[664]

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[660] The Sanna declaration was an initiative by Yemen Ali Abdullah Salih. This declaration was accepted by Hamas and Fatah 'as a framework to resume dialogue and to return the Palestinian situation to what it was before the Gaza incidents.' International Crisis Group, 'Palestine Divided,' *Middle East Briefing*, No.25 (December 17 2008), p.5.

[661] Carol Migdalovitz, 'Israel's blockade of Gaza, the Mavi Marmara Incident, and its aftermath,' in Samuel Wilkes and Cynthia Jackson (ed.), *Hamas in the Middle East a closer look* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), pp.79-97.

[662] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Hamas leader Muhammad Nasr,' (14 July 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93460> (accessed on 21 September 2014).

[663] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with a member of the political bureau of Hamas, Muhammad Nazzal,' (17 December 2008). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70396> (accessed on 21 September 2014).

[664] The Palestine Information Center, 'al-Zahar in the 21st anniversary of Hamas: Hamas succeeded the balance between the government and the resistance and became the national hope,' (11 December, 2008).

As for relations with the West, due to its view of Israel and its violent record against Israeli civilians, Hamas was listed as a terrorist group officially forbidden to talk to the West. In spite of this, there were several secret meetings between Hamas and European countries that were not covered by the media.[665] It was reported that Mahmud al-Zahar visited Switzerland in June 2009 and met the Minister of Foreign Affairs but there was no clear information about this meeting.[666] It is also interesting to note that the former U.S. President Jimmy Carter met Hamas leaders in Gaza and Damascus after 2008 and appealed to the U.S administration to engage with Hamas. Carter believed that dialogue, not isolation, would moderate Hamas and that it would silence the emerging radical Islamists in Gaza.[667] Hamas appreciated Carter's effort and his active role.[668] As for its view on the U.S administration, when Barack Obama was elected, Hamas changed its previous hostile tone. Hamas did not deliberately emphasize the complicity of Israel and the U.S on Gaza. Muhammad Nazzal expected that President Obama would change the negative image of the U.S in the Middle East created by the Bush administration.[669]

On the whole, under the siege of Gaza, Hamas illustrated that it could withstand internal and external challenges by institutionalizing its security, social, media, economic and diplomatic aspects. To a large extent, Hamas

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<http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93417> (accessed on 22 September 2014).

[665] The Palestine Information Center, 'The Syrian Baath newspaper, interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq,' (11 November 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/o53q96h> (accessed on 22 September 2014).

[666] Paola Caridi, Andrea Teti (transl.), *Hamas from Resistance to Government, op.cit.,* p.279.

[667] Deborah Hakes, 'The Carter Center Calls for Ceasefire and dialogue in Gaza,' *The Carter Center,* (26 January 2008). <http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/palestine_012608.html> (accessed on 21 September 2014). Nathan Stock, 'Talk to Hamas now or fight new radicals indefinitely,' *'The Christian Science Monitor*, (9 October 2009). <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2009/1009/p09s02-coop.html> (accessed on 22 September 2014).

[668] The Palestine Information Center, 'The Syrian Baath newspaper, interview with Dr. Mousa Abu Marzuq,' (11 November 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/o53q96h > (accessed on 22 September 2014).

[669] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with a member of the political bureau of Hamas, Muhammad Nazzal,' (17 December 2008). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70396> (accessed on 22 September 2014).

had committed to these policies in its electoral programme in early 2006 which indicates that Hamas did not deviate from its fundamental principle. That is to say, all actions served its resistance project. However, an unexpected incident, Operation Cast Lead, the biggest trial for Hamas' governance had a great impact on its resistance effort.

2.4 A trial of the resistance project: Operation Cast Lead

As analyzed above, Hamas attempted to break the siege of Gaza by economic and diplomatic efforts but in reality the siege remained. On the other hand, the hostility between Israel and Hamas was still high. Hamas intensified its rocket attacks on Israel as the main tactic in its resistance project; and Israel also targeted Palestinians. From July 2007 to June 2008, Hamas launched around 400 rockets and mortars per month.[670] This tactic did not cause huge fatalities in Israel, but Israeli society was horrified.[671] By contrast, during this period, Israeli targeting of Palestinians caused high fatalities, of up to 590 Palestinian deaths. [672] To avoid the escalation of casualties, a ceasefire seemed to be a plausible option for Hamas and with Egypt's mediation Hamas reached a ceasefire with Israel in 19th June 2008. According to the ceasefire, both sides had immediately to cease any hostile action and Israel should allow the opening of the crossing for materials entering Gaza.[673] Hamas had longed for the ceasefire and committed to it in exchange for the ease of Gaza but it also warned that if Israel did not abide by it and continued to target Palestinians, Hamas felt no obligation to refrain from armed resistance.[674]

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[670] The Carter Center, 'The June 2008 Gaza ceasefire,' < http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/Gaza_movement_and_fatalities_report%20FINAL%201%2022%2009.pdf> (accessed on 5 March 2014).

[671] Jim Zanotti, Carol Migdalovitz and Jeremy Sharp, 'Israel and Hamas: Conflict in Gaza (2008-2009),' Samuel Wilkes and Cynthia Jackson (ed.), *Hamas in the Middle East a closer look*, *op.cit.,* p.114.

[672] B'Tselem, 'Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the Gaza Strip, before Operation Cast Lead,' <http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/before-cast-lead/by-date-of-death/gaza/palestinians-killed-by-israeli-security-forces> (accessed on 5 March 2014).

[673] International Crisis Group, 'Ending the war in Gaza,' *Policy Briefing*, No.26 (5 January 2009), p.3.

[674] The Palestine Information Center, 'Al-Hayat: The ceasefire is for the purpose of practicing our people right in terms of resistance and defence,' (28 June 2008).

Prior to November 2008, the ceasefire effectively reduced tensions between Hamas and Israel. To a large extent, Palestinians were free from the Israeli military strikes. On the other hand, with the commitment of this deal, it was reported that Hamas suppressed non-Hamas militias for attacking Israel.[675] Statistically, rockets from Gaza to Israel dramatically dropped by 97 per cent.[676] In spite of this relative calm, Hamas was disappointed that the ceasefire did not achieve its aspiration for the ease of the blockade. Although some goods were imported to Gaza, the quantities were far below the level before Hamas' takeover of Gaza.[677] Khalid Mishal blamed Israel for its partial commitment to the ceasefire. The condition of siege did not improve. Less than 10 per cent of basic needs were allowed to pass through the crossings.[678] In November, the relations between Hamas and Israel worsened and 15 Palestinians died in an Israeli attack.[679] In response, Hamas intensified the numbers of its rockets and declared the end of the ceasefire on 19th November.[680] On the days of 24th and 25th December, Hamas accelerated the rocket attacks on Israel. From the beginning of 27th December, Israel launched a three-week military operation known as Operation Cast Lead.[681]

<http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93442> (accessed on 25 September 2014).

[675] Jim Zanotti, Carol Migdalovitz and Jeremy Sharp, 'Israel and Hamas: Conflict in Gaza (2008-2009),' Samuel Wilkes and Cynthia Jackson (ed.), *Hamas in the Middle East a closer look*, *op.cit.,* p.110.

[676] The Carter Center, 'The June 2008 Gaza ceasefire,' <http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/Gaza_movement_and_fatalities_report%20FINAL%201%2022%2009.pdf> (accessed on 5 March 2014).

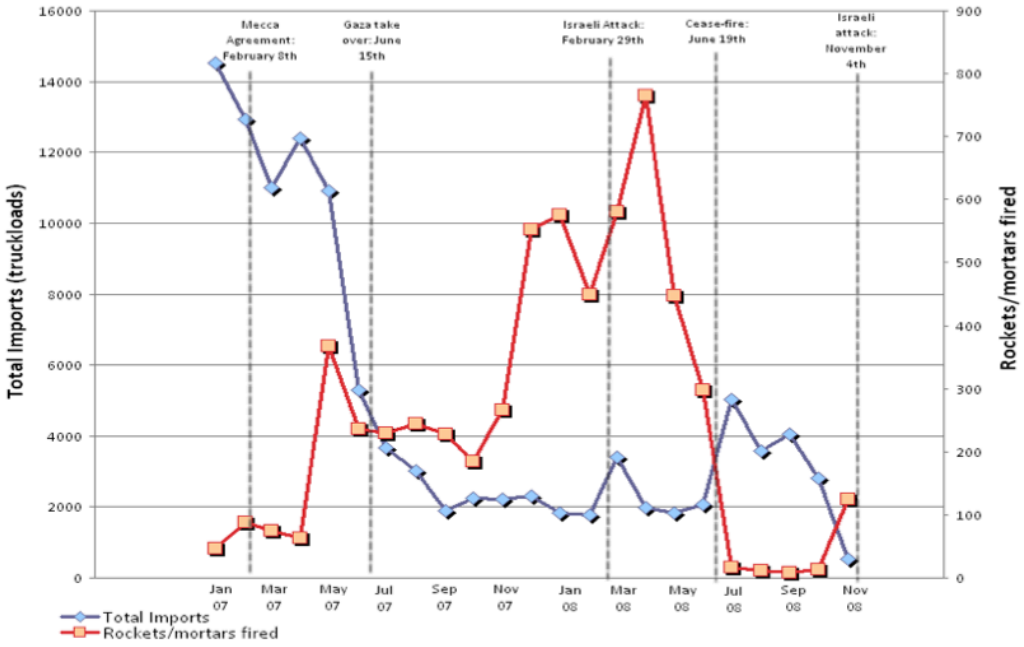
[677] *Ibid.*

[678] Ken Livingstone, 'Exclusive: Hamas leader interview,' *New Statesman*, (17 September 2009). <http://www.newstatesman.com/middle-east/2009/09/israel-palestinian-hamas> (accessed on 25 September 2014).

[679] B'Tselem, 'Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the Gaza Strip, before Operation Cast Lead,' <http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/before-cast-lead/by-date-of-death/gaza/palestinians-killed-by-israeli-security-forces> (accessed on 5 March 2014).

[680] Jim Zanotti, Carol Migdalovitz and Jeremy Sharp, 'Israel and Hamas: Conflict in Gaza (2008-2009),' in Samuel Wilkes and Cynthia Jackson (ed.), *Hamas in the Middle East a closer look*, *op.cit.,* p.111.

[681] *Ibid.,* p.111.



Import of goods into Gaza – Rockets and mortars fired from Gaza

(Diagram for 'import of goods into Gaza and Rockets and mortars fired from Gaza,' Source: The Carter Center, <http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/Gaza_movement_and_fatalities_report%20FINAL%201%2022%2009.pdf>

Compared to previous confrontations between Hamas and Israel, the war on Gaza had distinguishing features and impacts. Firstly, Israeli and Palestinian casualties were extremely disproportionate. 13 Israelis were killed and 523 were wounded,[682] while on the Palestinian side, 1,417 were killed, 5,303 wounded.[683] The ratio of fatalities between Israelis and Palestinians were around 1:100, far more than 1:3 in the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada. Israel launched this military operation in two stages. From 27th December 2008 to 3rd January 2009, Israel struck Gaza by air. Israeli air strikes accelerated the number of Palestinian fatalities in a short period. Abu Ubayda, a spokesman for al-Qassam Brigade, said that Israel intended to create a large number of losses of civilians. In the first five minutes of the war, more than 200 Palestinians were killed by Israeli air strikes.[684] Within 8 days,

[682] *Ibid.,* p.108.

[683] Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist social sector*, *op.cit.*, p.226.

[684] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Ubayda speaks for "the Palestinian Information Center about "Criterion" battle and beyond,' (8 February 2009).

Palestinian casualties reached to 430 killed and 2,000 injured. From 3rd January 2009, with backing from the majority of Israelis and politicians, Israel launched a ground operation on Gaza. [685] With the intensive strikes and military operations, many people in Gaza realized that this war did not target Hamas alone but was a collective punishment to Gazan society as a whole.[686]

The second feature is that the Israeli attack on Gaza was indiscriminate. Around 50 per cent of casualties were civilians.[687] It was hard for Gazan ambulance crews to take wounded people to hospitals and more than 20 employees died because of the Israeli fire.[688] Apart from the losses in the population, Israel targeted civilian houses, mosques, schools, radio stations and tombs. Hamas Minister of Awqaf Dr. Taleb Abu Shu'ar argues that Israel committed a war crime, which disclosed 'the real face of the Zionist entity.' [689] He added that during this war, 45 mosques were completely destroyed; 50 mosques were partially damaged. [690] Mosques played an invaluable role in Gazan society for the preservation of faith, for education and as a place for enhancing steadfastness of Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. Therefore, the Israeli attacks on mosques symbolized a religious war against Islam and Muslims.[691] As for the Israeli accusation that mosques were places for storing weapons and hiding fighters Abu Shu'ar said this was a lie which lacked evidence. Mosques were places of refuge for women,

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<http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70496> (accessed on 26 September 2014).

[685] International Crisis Group, 'Gaza's unfinished business,' *Middle East Report*, No.85 (April 2009), p.18.

[686] International Crisis Group, 'Ending the war in Gaza,' *op.cit.,* p.4.

[687] 1,417 Palestinian deaths, including 926 civilians; 5,303 wounded, of whom were 1,606 children and 828 women. Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist social sector*, *op.cit.,* p.226

[688] The Palestine Information Center, 'Na'yim: 1450 martyrs and six thousand wounded as a result of the Zionist aggression on Gaza,' (6 April 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70336> (accessed on 26 September 2014).

[689] The Palestine Information Center, 'Minister of Awqaf Dr. Talib Abu Shu'ar talks about Israel targeting at mosques during the aggression to Gaza,' (1 February, 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93447> (accessed on 26 September 2014).

[690] *Ibid.*

[691] *Ibid.*

children and the elderly when their houses were bombed by Israel.[692] Facing this systematic attack, Gaza seemed to be a laboratory or a prison. Compared to the West Bank where Israel could easily control, Gaza was regarded as a hostile and dangerous place. It could be said that the Israeli military operation in Gaza was not a random act. In 2004, a dummy city in the Negev desert was constructed by the Israeli army for a possible military preparation.[693] The Operation Cast Lead reflected this idea. In violation of the international law, Israel used new and experimental weapons in the battlefield, particularly shells containing white phosphorus and toxic elements against Palestinian civilians.[694]

Israel's indiscriminate killing resulted in large scale global demonstrations. A scholar, Norman Finkelstein observed that the Israeli invasion of Gaza marked a turning point in public opinion.[695] Solidarity with Palestine had resonated with the civil society of the West. Unlike the Western governments, many people in the West do not take a neutral stance or stand with Israel during this war. On the contrary, they condemned the Israeli carnage in Gaza and raised public awareness of the reality of Gaza under the blockade. In addition to this unprecedented solidarity from the West, there were also massive demonstrations, sit-ins and other types of solidarity in Arab and Muslim countries. There were strong demands from the streets and parliaments in Jordan and Egypt to halt economic cooperation with Israel and to expel Israeli ambassadors.[696] Furthermore, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan came into the spotlight and was portrayed as a new 'hero' in

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[692] *Ibid.*

[693] Ilan Pappe, 'The killing fields of Gaza, 2004-2009,' in Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappe, *Gaza in Crisis* (London: Penguin Group, 2010), p.175-176

[694] Jonathan Cook, 'Is Gaza a testing ground for experimental weapons?' *The Electronic Intifada*, (13 January 2009). <http://electronicintifada.net/content/gaza-testing-ground-experimental-weapons/7969> (accessed on 27 September 2014).

[695] Norman Finkelstein, *This time we went too far: Truth and Consequences of the Gaza invasion* (New York: OR books, 2010), pp.103-104.

[696] 'Jordan reconsidering Israel ties,' *Al-Jazeera*, (5 January 2009). <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2009/01/2009154531941584.html> (accessed on 27 September 2014). Adam Morrow and Khaled Moussa al-Omrani, 'Egypt bends on Israel gas deal,' *The Electronic Intifada*, (18 June 2008). <http://electronicintifada.net/content/egypt-bends-israel-gas-deal/7571> (accessed on 27 September 2014).

the Muslim world when he rejected a claim of 'self-defense' by the Israeli President Shimon Peres in the World Economic Forum, at Davos.[697] In this seemingly global solidarity movement and moral support from Muslim political leaders, Hamas paid tribute to those people who stood with Gaza and felt that Palestinians were not alone in their journey toward victory and liberation.[698]

This war had devastated Gazan society and Hamas itself. Israel considered the war on Gaza had been a successful victory.[699] Surprisingly, Hamas also claimed that it won the greatest military victory even though it lost thousands of lives and suffered the destruction of its homeland. Hamas leaders argued that the victory was due to the fact that Israel could not achieve the following objectives through war: the overthrow of the Hamas government in Gaza, the rescue of Gilad Shalit, the prevention of rockets fired from Gaza and the smuggling of arms.[700] That is to say, a victory for Hamas was measured by whether or not its resistance project was damaged. One of Hamas' leaders Salah Bardawi argues that victory was the preservation of Hamas' resilience and reliability as it did not succumb to Israeli military power.[701] To a certain extent, Hamas' argument makes sense. Gaza gained a

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[697] 'Turkish PM given hero's welcome,' *BBC*, (30 January 2009). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/davos/7859815.stm> (accessed on 28 September 2014).

[698] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Ubayda speaks for "the Palestinian Information Center about "Criterion" battle and beyond,' (8 February, 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70496> (accessed on 28 September 2014). Palestine Information Center, 'Bahar: The Zionist aggression on Gaza failed and the resistance prevailed. Our resolution will not be broken, and dismissed,' (18 February 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70474> (accessed on 28 September 2014).

[699] International Crisis Group, 'Gaza's unfinished business,' *op.cit.*, p.19.

[700] The Palestine Information Center, 'Al-Bardawil: Resistance is our choice and "Hamas" has become stronger after "the Criterion battle,"' (24 December, 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70342> (accessed on 28 September 2014). The Palestine Information Center, 'Bahar: The Zionist aggression on Gaza failed and the resistance prevailed. Our resolution will not be broken, and dismissed,' (18 February 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70474> (accessed on 28 September 2014). The Palestine Information Center, 'Sheikh Yunus al-Astal: what happened recently in Gaza was a clear military victory. It must be an investment in achieving political victory,' (5 February 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70289> (accessed on 28 September 2014).

[701] The Palestine Information Center, 'Al-Bardawil: Resistance is our choice and "Hamas" has become stronger after "the Criterion battle,"' (24 December 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70342> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

certain amount of public sympathy globally. The fact that Western delegations met Hamas leaders together with the scale of the international solidarity movement was an indication that the oppression of Palestinians and the adverse conditions of the siege of Gaza had been heard. But it is not the case that western civil society fully endorsed Hamas' resistance project, particularly armed resistance. Moreover, this war seemed to unite the circle of Arab and Muslim countries. As a matter of fact, the support for Hamas was on a moral level as well. Turkey froze its official relationship with Israel but this did not mean that Turkey unconditionally supported Hamas' resistance. As for Egypt, after the war, the Rafah crossing remained closed only for an exceptional case of allowing patients and humanitarian workers in.[702]

Overall the war on Gaza tested Hamas' capacity to resist and govern and it did not shake its determination to carry out its resistance project. In addition, international solidarity and the moral support from many Arab and Muslim countries made Hamas confident of its commitment to resistance. Hamas' rule in Gaza was still intact after the war. In terms of the ceasefire, Hamas exploited its advantage of ministerial coordination in reconstruction and relief work for those people who lost homes, families, and business.[703] Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh raised a slogan, 'partners in the reconstruction and partners in steadfastness,' by stressing that the reconstruction was an urgent need of Gazan society.[704] Even under siege, the economy in Gaza recovered with the function of the tunnel economy. By October 2011, Hamas claimed that half of the destroyed factories returned to production. The price of most goods fell to the level before the siege by Israel.[705] In other words, the

[702] 'Egypt reseals Rafah crossing with Gaza,' *The Palestine Chronicle*, (5 February 2009). <http://www.palestinechronicle.com/egypt-reseals-rafah-crossing-with-gaza/#.Uxjp0-d_tS4> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

[703] The Palestine Information Center, 'Haniyah speaks to "Fatah": There is no solution except through dialogue. Our compass is for Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the rights of the Palestinian people,' (12 July 2009). <https://web.archive.org/web/20140713021522/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93473> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

[704] The Palestine Information Center, 'Haniyeh: National dialogue is a way for salvage. It is not just a political tactic and our priority is to achieve reconciliation,' (26 February 2009). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70455> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

[705] Pelham, Nicolas, 'Gaza's tunnel phenomenon: the unintended dynamics of Israel's siege,' *Journal of Palestine Studies, op.cit.,* p.16.

war on Gaza did not weaken Hamas' governance but reflected its sustainability and reliability.

After the postwar period the scenario in Palestine had slightly changed in favour of Hamas. Fatah and Hamas began their official dialogue under the auspices of Egypt. The national dialogue was ongoing. In November 2010, the process of reconciliation had largely improved although both Hamas and Fatah could not reach a final agreement on the election, the PLO and the security issues.[706] At any rate, Hamas gradually emerged as an indispensable non-state actor in the region. Resistance for Hamas was not only a slogan or vision but a practice and model in Gaza. As Ismail Haniyeh said, 'the resistance is not just a gun or an explosive device but is the thought, culture and identity.'[707] Khalid Mishal argued that during the three years of the takeover of Gaza, Hamas gained new experiences in getting to know what people needed under the occupation; and it also looked at the political reality of how to deal with other countries, without losing its principle. He added the combination of resistance and governance was tough for Hamas but it was optimistic that its resistance project was going to be popular in the future.[708] Mishal further foresaw that the Middle East would experience a positive change to the benefit of Islamic *ummah* within five years.[709] This prediction was partially true. With the outbreak of the 'Arab Spring,' Hamas sensed that a new scenario, in Hamas' favour, appeared in the region. The opening of the Rafah crossing, the prevailing Islamic parties in Tunisia and Egypt, the prisoner exchange deal and the active roles of Qatar and Turkey greatly lifted Hamas' spirit but with the ousting of the Egyptian President Muhammad Mursi in July 2013, the high expectation rapidly declined. The next section will

[706] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Muhammad Nazzal, a member of the political bureau of Hamas, with Sham Press,' (14 November 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/mzte9cz> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

[707] The Palestine Information Center, 'Haniyah speaks to "Fatah": There is no solution except through dialogue. Our compass is for Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the rights of the Palestinian people,' (12 July 2009). <https://web.archive.org/web/20140713021522/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=93473> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

[708] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 29 September 2014).

[709] *Ibid*.

analyze how Hamas perceives the overall impact of the Arab Spring and the evaluation of its resistance project.

3. The repercussions of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring had a huge impact on Hamas. Following the fall of the authoritarian regime and the rise of Islamists in Tunisia and Egypt, Hamas sensed that the structure of the Middle East had gradually changed and was now in favour of its resistance project. Indeed, during this period, several events such as the reconciliation deal, the prisoner exchange and the easing of the Gaza blockade boosted Hamas' faith in resistance and the Palestinian cause in a remarkable way. On the other hand, an informal alliance appeared; Egypt, Turkey and Qatar provided moral or financial support to Hamas' governance in Gaza. These countries also played a significant role in mediating the Israeli war on Gaza in November 2012. For the first time, Hamas felt that it had achieved the aspiration that it had held for a long time that Palestine would become the centre of the Islamic *ummah*. However this sense of optimism did not last long. After President Muhammad Mursi was ousted from Egypt in July 2013, Hamas faced an unprecedented predicament. With the return of the authoritarian regime in Egypt, Hamas' aspiration for a change in this region failed. Everything seemed to be back to the old order that had been in place before the Arab Spring. Gaza's isolation continued and was intensified. To make matters worse, Hamas was treated as an enemy by Egypt because of the accusation of having collaborated with the Muslim Brotherhood and threatening its stability. The national unity with Fatah was also suspended because Hamas blamed Fatah for provoking the disturbance in Gaza.

Since it had degenerated from high expectation to complete loss, this period proved to be a roller-coaster ride for Hamas. To grasp this intricate process, three topics must be addressed. Firstly, in the context of the Arab Spring we should examine Hamas' satisfaction with the political change. Secondly, we shall analyze the positive and negative impacts of the Arab Spring on Hamas and its governance in Gaza. Finally, the resistance project espoused by Hamas during this period shall be evaluated.

3.1 The context of the Arab Spring and its features

The eruption of the Arab Spring came from an incident of self-immolation of a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, in Tunisia on 17th December 2010, which unexpectedly, triggered nationwide mass protest and caused the exile of President Ben Ali who had ruled Tunisia for 24 years. The wave of revolution promptly spread to the rest of the Arab countries, especially Egypt. President Hosni Mubarak's 29-year rule had ended by 11th February 2011. The fall of the authoritarian regime and the people's aspiration for freedom, dignity and social justice became the distinguishing features at the beginning of the revolution. Since the Tunisian revolution in December 2010 many have used the terminology 'Arab Spring', and some, the 'Arab awakening', or the 'Arab uprising' to describe or analyze the phenomenon of uprising. This section does not interrogate the implications of these terminologies; it only adopts the phrase, 'Arab Spring' since the Hamas leadership often referred this term during this period.

Furthermore, this section does not delve into the deep and complex cause and effect of the Arab Spring as this has been much discussed and debated. It only provides a framework for a discussion of: why it happened, its main features, and how Hamas responded to dramatic changes in this region. The span of the Arab Spring is calculated from the Tunisian revolution in December 2010 to the ousting of President Muhammad Mursi in June 2013.

3.1.1 The context of the Arab Spring

It is hard to explain why the revolution initially took place in Tunisia, and Egypt, which used to be considered a successful model of economic reform[710] and also, its success in overthrowing the authoritarian regimes, at least in the short term. Many explanations for the outbreak of these mass demonstrations and the reasons why they toppled the regime came as an afterthought. In spite of this, two main features of the revolution may be observed. One is the repressive and violent character of the authoritarian

[710] Hamed El-Said and Jane Harrigan, 'Globalization, International finance, and political Islam in the Arab world,' *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No.3 (Summer 2006), p.446. Shadi Hamid, 'Tunisia, Birthplace of the revolution,' in Keeneth Pollack (ed.), *The Arab awakening: America and the transformation of the Middle East* (Washington. D.C: Brookings Institution press, 2011), p.111.

regime.[711] The repression of individual liberties, the prevalence of corruption and nepotism had been long-term political and social problems before the revolution. Another is the economic deterioration. The authoritarian regime failed to meet the basic needs of the people. The rising food prices and high unemployment rate, especially among the young who made up around 65 per cent of the total population caused social grievance and anxiety.[712] The slogan chanted by people on the streets during the revolution, 'Bread, Freedom, social justice and human dignity', reflects their disillusion with the status. The elements for revolution were there, so that a single incident could instantly ignite the flame of uprising across the region.

The nature of an authoritarian regime and social and economic grievances were common features in these countries. Nevertheless, the revolution in each Arab country has a specific context and therefore the wave of each revolution should be examined on a case-by-case basis.[713] For example, Tunisia and Egypt shared similar experiences of revolutions but each revolution's success had a specific context.[714] On the other hand, other Arab countries, such as Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, shared common traits with Tunisia and Egypt but their revolutions turned into large scale riots, civil wars or were quelled by the regime. In other words, we can identify that people in the Middle East were asking for change in politics, economics and society but the wave of revolution in each country presented differently; and depending on the specific domestic scenario, ended mainly in uncertainty.

3.1.2 The features of the Arab Spring: The rise of Islamists

There are many distinctive features in the post-revolution of the Middle East. One of the most striking of the discussions and debates concerns the rise of Islamists in the region. Here, the term Islamists refers to the

[711] Kamal Eldin Osman Salih, 'The roots and causes of the 2011 Arab uprisings,' *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol.35, No.2, p.184.

[712] *Ibid.*, p.187.

[713] Tariq Ramadan, *The Arab Awakening: Islam and the New Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.31.

[714] *Ibid.*, pp.189-191. Lisa Anderson, 'Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the differences between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya,' *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2011), pp.2-7. Shadi Hamid, 'Egypt: The prize' and 'Tunisia, Birthplace of the revolution,' in Keeneth Pollack (ed.), *The Arab awakening: America and the transformation of the Middle East*, *op.cit.,* pp.102-110 and pp.111-116.

mainstream Islamist movement associated with the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood.[715] After the collapse of the authoritarian regime, Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and al-Nahda in Tunisia won land-side victories in the elections. Both obtained most of the seats in parliament. In May 2012, Muhammad Mursi was elected as the first Egyptian President after the revolution. The media called Mursi the first elected 'Islamist President' in Egyptian history.[716] Afterwards, the rise of Islamists or the threat of Islamists was a highly contentious topic in the Western media as well as for academics. The arguments surrounding 'Islamization', 'the restriction of freedom', 'the oppression of minorities' and the 'security threat' to Israel and the interests of the U.S in this region seem to have become the dominant narrative when the western media described the phenomenon of the rise of Islamists. So, what do we make of the emerging Islamism and its features in the post-revolution? And how did Hamas evaluate this growing trend? Both questions are addressed in the following section.

It should be noted that the Islamists did not play a prominent role at the beginning of the revolution. In Egypt and Tunisia, Islamists did not dominate the streets. On the contrary, the mass demonstrations were of a rather secular or non-religious orientation. The Brotherhood leaders were cautious about this massive protest and the uncertainty of the revolution but its young members, against the advice of the senior leadership took to the streets, and worked together with the liberal, leftist, Coptic minority.[717]

The rise of the Islamists became an issue when they won a series of victories in the elections. In Egypt, the Brotherhood won five successive elections between 2011 and 2012.[718] In Tunisia, the al-Nahda that had been eradicated by Ben Ali in the early 1990s participated in the election in early 2011. They won the election by 37 per cent of votes which was more than the

[715] Shadi Hamid, 'The rise of the Islamists: how Islamists will change politics, and vice versa,' *Foreign affair,* Vol.90, No.3 (May/June 2011), p.41.

[716] 'Profile: Egypt's Mohammed Morsi,' *BBC*, (18 December 2013). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18371427> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

[717] Tariq Ramadan, *The Arab Awakening: Islam and the New Middle East*, *op.cit*., p.10.

[718] Nicholas Wade, 'Egypt: What poll results reveal about Brotherhood's popularity,' (13 August 2013). *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23846680> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

second largest party, Congress for the Republic which had obtained only 8.7 per cent of the votes.[719]

There are multiple interpretations as to why Islamists won a land-slide victory in the elections. Pragmatism could be considered to be the main cause of their prominence in the political arena. Before the revolution, the Brotherhood in Egypt kept a low profile and refrained from provoking the government even though they were repressed. To keep the organization intact, they demonstrated an image of moderation, showing that they were ready to embrace the value of democracy, freedom and pluralism. [720] Moreover, in spite of the fact that the ideology of Islamists remained firm and in public, they believed that Islam and *sharia* were crucial, in practice they were flexible, not radical and did not impose their will on others. Realistically, they addressed issues such as: good governance, economic reform and the fight against corruption during the election campaign rather than pursuing an ideal Islamic state.[721]

The rise of Islamism is also attributed to its strong social network and mobilization in terms of its sustainable social welfare service. On the other hand, there is no denying that the local social structure, which is conservative and religious, may also contribute to the rise of the Islamists after the revolution. Compared to the rest of the world, Arab society is quite religious and people believe that religion should play a role in politics even when they are not affiliated with these Islamist groups.[722] A survey reveals that the majority of Egyptians prefer Islamic law to be the principle or the only source of legislation. In addition, they are also in favour of the application of the

[719] Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit.,* p.28.

[720] Shadi Hamid observed that when Arab regimes increasingly called for a crackdown on the mainstream Islamists in 1990s, these Islamists did not restore to violence or be radicalized. Instead, they were inclined to moderation for the sake of survival. See Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit*., pp.38-60.

[721] Khalil Al-Anani, 'Islamist parties post-Arab Spring,' *Mediterranean politics*, Vol.17, No.3 (November 2012), p.469.

[722] Shadi Hamid, 'Islamists and the brotherhood: Political Islam and the Arab Spring,' in Kenneth Pollack (ed.), *The Arab awakening: America and the transformation of the Middle East*, *op.cit*., p.30.

hudud, the Islamic criminal law that is a highly controversial to the West.[723] In this respect, the prominence of Islamists could be seen as a natural aspiration of society.

The rise of the Islamists not only shaped a new outlook of politics across the region but it also brought uncertainty. The real pressing issues such as economic reform, democratic transition and social justice seemed to have been marginalized by a contentious dispute surrounding 'Islamization' and the polarization between Islamism and secularism in Egypt and Tunisia. Strikingly, this type of debate rapidly faded after the coup d'état in Egypt, which indicated the fall of Islamism.

3.1.3 Hamas' perception of the Arab Spring and the rise of Islamists

After the fall of the authoritarian regime in Tunisia and Egypt, it could be said that Hamas highly expected that the change would be in favour of the Palestinian cause and it believed that the fall of the dictatorship was a natural consequence.[724] Abu Marzuq argued that the Arab Spring reflected the people's determination against corruption, dictatorship and tyranny as well as their aspiration for democracy, human rights and freedom of expression.[725] Khalid Mishal stressed that the, 'Arab Spring is the choice of the people in favour of Palestine and the people of the *ummah*. It is the renaissance of the *ummah* at all levels.'[726] Hamas' perception of the change in this region stems from the traditional concept of the *ummah* (the Islamic community). As Chapter Three mentioned, seeking solidarity from the *ummah* was always a main feature of Hamas' resistance project. Prior to the Arab Spring, although

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[723] Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East*, *op.cit*., p.17.

[724] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with the Youth, Sport and Culture Minister,' (29 March 2011). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70390> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

[725] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: Zionist war on Gaza and the inevitability of revenge,' (3 February 2011). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70395> (accessed on 2 November 2014). The Palestine Information Center, 'Mishal: Reconciliation is necessary and national and we want a state without occupation,' (11 May 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/opqswvc> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

[726] The Palestine Information Center, Mishal: It is a duty to work together in common spaces and to serve the country within the national agenda, (5 August 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/l87ppbh> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

Hamas sometimes complained about the Arab countries' passive attitude to the Palestinian cause, it still reiterated the significance of the *ummah* in relation to its resistance project. Khalid Mishal said that the, 'Palestinian issue is not merely conflict between Palestinians and Israelis but is the conflict between *ummah* and the Zionist project that targets the whole *ummah*. Therefore the danger is not limited to Palestine alone.'[727] For Hamas, the fall of the dictatorship and the rise of the Islamists symbolized a major strategic change in this region in helping Palestinians against the Zionist project and towards the liberation of Palestine.[728]

Among the Arab countries that broke up the revolution, Egypt has significant implications for Hamas. Geographically, Egypt is of strategic importance to Palestine and it has been a key player in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, to a certain degree, prior to the revolution the Egyptian authority had been hostile to Gaza, where Hamas had dominated since 2007. Egypt's closure of the Rafah crossing aggravated the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza and in addition, Egypt used to be part of the 'axis of Arab moderates', sharing a common interest with Israel and the United States against Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hizbullah.[729] But this scenario seemed to change after the fall of Mubarak and was followed by the rise of the Brotherhood.

Hamas sensed a change in Egypt. 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.'[730] When the Brotherhood

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[727] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

[728] Khalid Mishal, 'Political thought and strategies of Hamas in light of the Arab uprisings,' *Afro-Middle East Centre*, (1 April 2013). <http://www.amec.org.za/articles-presentations/palestineisrael/452-real-targets-of-operation-brother-s-keeper-are-hamas-and-unity-government> (accessed on 2 November 2014). International Crisis Group, 'Light at the end of their tunnels?' Hamas and the Arab uprisings, *Middle East Report*, No.129 (14 August 2012), p.2.

[729] 'Strengthening the moderate,' *Haaretz,* (25 October 2006). <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/strengthening-the-moderate-axis-1.203391> (accessed on 2 November 2014).

[730] 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). <http://tinyurl.com/pmxw4uy> (accessed on 7 November 2014).

won a land-slide victory in the parliamentary and presidential election, Hamas felt boosted by the overwhelming wave of Islamists that might change policy-making in Egypt towards Gaza and facilitate the unity of Palestinians.[731] For Hamas, Egypt played a crucial role in deciding the future direction of Palestine and other Arab countries. Another Hamas leader, Ahmed Bahr stressed that, 'The strength of Egypt is the strength of the Arab and Islamic *ummah* while the weakness of Egypt is the weakness of the Arab and Islamic *ummah*.'[732]

Ostensibly, Hamas had high expectations of Egypt and also aspired to see the ascendancy of Islamists across the region. For Hamas, the prominence of Islamists is a natural phenomenon or a return to normality, and it is a demonstration of the popular choice.[733] Indeed in the early period of the post-revolution, the overall structure of the Arab Spring was inclined towards the direction that Hamas expected. It seems that ultimately, the resistance project it espoused had been fruitful.

3.2 The repercussions of the Arab Spring on Hamas

The early development of the Arab Spring made Hamas confident that the Middle East region was shifting in favour of the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, in less than three years from the eruption of the Tunisian revolution to the ousting of Mursi in Egypt the ethos of the revolution had evaporated. This period brought unprecedented opportunities and predicaments for Hamas' work on resistance.

3.2.1 The Opportunities

Reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas seemed to be the first breakthrough for Hamas in the early period of the Arab Spring. Since the takeover of Gaza in June 2007, reconciliation had been the main agenda that

[731] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: Firmly ending the division and "Hamas" will be more pleased with the changes in Egypt,' (5 June 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/peyyfag> (accessed on 7 November 2014).

[732] The Palestine Information Center, 'Bahr: We need a real unity and free and fair elections,' (18 July 2012). <http://web.archive.org/web/20120724172419/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=118745> (accessed on 7 November 2014).

[733] The Palestine Information Center, Mishal: It is a duty to work together in common spaces and to serve the country within the national agenda, (5 August 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/l87ppbh> (accessed on 7 November 2014).

Hamas leaders often addressed, but under the siege of Gaza, the resumption of negotiations between Israel and Fatah as well as the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank hindered attempts to reconcile. The revolution in Egypt and the stalled negotiations between Israel and Fatah changed this impasse. With Egypt's mediation Hamas reached reconciliation with Fatah on 4 May 2011, symbolizing the end of the four-year political division. Although this reconciliation was regarded as a symbolic gesture since Hamas and Fatah did not compromise on crucial issues such as security, election and the formation of the unity government,[734] Hamas leaders were convinced that the reconciliation deal was a necessary and sustainable step in corresponding to the new development across the region.[735]

Another event that boosted Hamas was the exchange of prisoners. The release of Gilad Shalit was in exchange for the release of 1,027 Palestinian Prisoners on 18th October 2011. Hamas claimed that this was another significant achievement and victory.[736] When Shalit had been abducted in June 2006, Hamas had asserted that the release of the Palestinian prisoners, as a national agenda, was the only condition for his release. The negotiations for the prisoner exchange was a long process mediated by Egypt and Germany.[737] There had been no positive result and the mediations were suspended several times. After the outbreak of the revolution in Egypt in 2011, work on the prisoner exchange was accelerated. This deal further

[734] International Crisis Group, 'Palestinian Reconciliation: Plus ça change…' *Middle East Report,* No. 110 (20 July 2011), p.23.

[735] The Palestine Information Center, 'Mishal: Reconciliation is necessary and national and we want a state without occupation,' (11 May 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/opqswvc> (accessed on 8 November 2014). Palestine Information Center, 'Haniyeh: Hamas succeeded in the balance between resistance and governance and wage the largest war,' (11 May 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/o7s4mfe> (accessed on 8 November 2014).

[736] The Palestine Information Center, 'Hamdan: Abbas call for the release prisoners in the exchange deal is flawed and unacceptable,' (23 October 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/npz8v54> (accessed on 8 November 2014).

[737] The Palestine Information Center, 'Hayat: The deal had been renounced because of the Israeli intransigence and its response to the resistance condition,' (17 October 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/karppmh> (accessed on 8 November 2014).

strengthened Hamas' conviction that its insistence on resistance was capable of restoring Palestinian rights in a way that negotiation could not achieve. [738]

Hamas not only effected the prisoner exchange deal but its relations with other Arab and Muslim countries had also been improved and strengthened, although there was no denying that Hamas' relationship with Syria and Iran was strained. From late 2011 to early 2012, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh paid an official visit to the Arab and Muslim countries. In particular, the UAE that used to support Hamas' opponent Muhammad Dahlan with money and weapons welcomed Haniyeh's visit.[739] On the other hand, with the mediation of Qatar, Khalid Mishal visited Jordan and met King Abdullah in January 2012. This could be regarded as a symbolic rapprochement between Jordan and Hamas since Hamas' political leaders were expelled from Jordan in 1999.[740] The countries such as the UAE and Jordan that did not have an official connection or who had been hostile to Hamas started to pay attention to its activities in the post-revolutionary era. More importantly, Qatar, Egypt and Turkey seemed to form a new alliance with Hamas by replacing the traditional 'resistance axis': Iran, Syria and Hizbullah. Qatar and Turkey who already had a good relationship with Hamas provided further financial aid and moral support after the revolution.[741] In October 2012, the Qatari Emir, Sheikh Hamad, visited Gaza for the first time. He pledged to donate $400 million for the reconstruction of and investment in,

[738] The Palestine Information Center, 'Hamdan: Abbas call for the release prisoners in the exchange deal is flawed and unacceptable,' (23 October 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/npz8v54> (accessed on 8 November 2014).

[739] International Crisis Group, 'Light at the end of their tunnels?' Hamas and the Arab uprisings, *Middle East Report*, *op.cit.,* p.4.

[740] 'Jordan's king receives Hamas leader,' *Al-Jazeera*, (30 January 2012). < http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/201212913331475819O.html> (accessed on 8 November 2014).

[741] International Crisis Group, 'Light at the end of their tunnels?' Hamas and the Arab uprisings, *Middle East Report*, *op.cit.,* p.4; Khalid Hroub, 'Qatar and the Arab Spring,' in Jenan Amin (ed.), *Qatar: Aspirations and realities* (Heinrich Böll foundation 2012), p.36.

Gaza.[742] This diplomatic engagement symbolizing Hamas' rule in Gaza was recognized and legitimated.[743]

Another observation of the way that this new alliance interacted with Hamas was the outbreak of the Israeli war on Gaza in November 2012 shortly after the Qatari Emir's visit to Gaza. The cause of the conflict between Israel and Hamas was similar to the Operation Cast Lead in late 2008. Prior to this conflict, there were low-scale confrontations on the Gaza-Israel border[744] until the assassination of Ahmed al-Jabari on 14th November, which triggered Hamas' intensive retaliation by launching rockets towards Israel. In response, Israel launched air strikes on Gaza. The Israeli strike could be regarded as a signal to Hamas or other Arab countries that Israel was not afraid of the effects of the regime change in the Arab countries followed by the ascendancy of Islamists.[745]

Unlike the Operation Cast Lead, from late 2008 to early 2009, this war embarrassed Israel. The result was not what Israel expected. Although during the Israeli war on Gaza, there were 162 Palestinian deaths and over 1,000 injuries,[746] Hamas' governance in Gaza remained intact and it attracted unprecedented attention from the Arab and Muslim countries. The Egyptian Prime Minister and the Tunisian foreign minister respectively visited Gaza during the war, demonstrating solidarity with Palestinians and condemning the Israeli aggression.[747] More than that, for the first time, the Qatari and Turkish

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[742] 'Qatar emir calls for Palestinian unity on visit to Gaza,' *BBC*, (23 October 2012). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20037203> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[743] Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Hamas and the Arab Spring strategic shifts?' *Middle East policy*, Vol.XX, No.3 (Fall 2013), p. 67.

[744] International Crisis Group, 'Israel and Hamas: Fire and ceasefire in a new Middle East', *Middle East report,* No. 133 (22 November 2012), p.1.

[745] International Crisis Group, 'Israel and Hamas: Fire and ceasefire in a new Middle East', *Middle East report,* No. 133, *op.cit.,* p.i.

[746] Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 'The total numbers of victims of the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip,' (24 November 2012). <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9052:1&catid=145:in-focus> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[747] 'Egypt PM decries Israeli aggression on Gaza,' *Al-Jazeera*, (16 November 2012). <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/201211166273719642.html> (accessed on 9 November 2014). 'Foreign Affairs Minister denounces attack on Tunisian school in Gaza,' *Tunisialive*, (19 November 2012). <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/11/19/foreign-minister-denounces-attack-on-tunisian-school-in-gaza/> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

leaders gathered in Cairo with the Egyptian President Mursi to discuss the war on Gaza and to attempt to stop the confrontation between Hamas and Israel.[748] Because of this solidarity and the prompt reaction from the Arab and Muslim countries, Hamas was full of confidence and contentment. Unlike the past when the Arab countries had been indifferent to Israeli aggression, this time, Hamas' leaders were highly appreciative of the Arab countries' and Turkey's efforts to stand with Palestinians. Hamas also hoped that these countries would take the further step of reconsidering their relationship with Israel and support Palestinian resistance at financial, military and political levels.[749]

Under Egyptian mediation, Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire on 21st November. Hamas leaders claimed that the ceasefire was a victory because it would stipulate the opening of the crossing and the stop of the Israeli aggression via land, sea and air. In other words, the closure of Gaza that lasted for over 5 years seemed to be lifted. People in Gaza were joyful and celebrated this victory on the street.[750] Indeed, after the 8-day war on Gaza, it seemed that Hamas was at the peak of its popularity and it was aware that the Middle East region was gradually inclined to accept its resistance principle. The exiled Hamas' political leader, Khalid Mishal's visit to Gaza on 7th December created a sense of excitement and aspiration for national unity. This visit was also considered to be an indication of the right of return. Another Hamas leader, Izzat al-Rishq said that 'The return of the Hamas leadership in the light of the victory paved the way for the activation of the right of return, for the return of all Palestinian refugees to their towns and villages…. Today we are in the freed Gaza. Tomorrow will be Jerusalem and

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[748] 'Israel will pay price for Gazans' tears, Erdogan says in Cairo,' *Today Zaman*, (17 November 2012). <http://web.archive.org/web/20150316032344/http://www.todayszaman.com/news-298471-israel-will-pay-price-for-gazans-tears-erdogan-says-in-cairo.html> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[749] The Palestine Information Center, 'Bardawil: Israel will discover if it enters Gaza that it will fall in a big trap,' (19 November 2012). <http://web.archive.org/web/20130201195044/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=124756> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[750] International Crisis Group, 'Israel and Hamas: Fire and ceasefire in a new Middle East', *Middle East report,* No. 133, *op.cit.,* p.20.

the day after tomorrow will be in Haifa and Jaffa.'[751] However, this high expectation was ephemeral. With the deteriorating situation of the civil war in Syria, the polarized politics in Egypt and the instability of Sinai, it was hard for Hamas to cope with the uncertain scenario in the late Arab Spring.

3.2.2 The Predicaments

Hamas' high expectation that the Palestinian cause would come to the fore in the Middle East gradually faded as Arab countries became preoccupied by domestic affairs.[752] The aspiration to ease the Gaza blockage did not materialize due to the fact that Egypt did not dramatically change its policy regarding Palestine in the post-revolution era. The Egyptian policy towards the border issue with Gaza was cautious and conservative.[753] The number of Palestinian passengers through the Rafah crossing increased while there were strict regulations and restrictions for their movement.[754] Apart from that, the tunnels that sustained livelihoods in Gaza were demolished by the Egyptian security force, for the management of security in Sinai.[755] Overall, essentially, the economy in Gaza did not improve. The movement of goods, people and humanitarian aids were still under restriction. To Hamas' leaders it was clear that the Palestinian issue had been sidelined and diverted because other Arab authorities were preoccupied with their internal affairs but they believed that this was a temporary phenomenon.[756]

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[751] The Palestine Information Center, 'Rishq: Hamas was ready to dialogue with any countries in the world with the exception of "Israel" and reconciliation is a priority and necessary for us,' (11 December 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/pqxgd8q> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[752] Basem Ezbidi, 'Arab Spring: Weather forecast for Palestine,' *Middle East Policy,* Vol.20, No.3 (Fall 2013), p.100.

[753] Rashid Khalidi, 'The Palestine question amid regional transformations,' *Journal of Palestine studies*, *op.cit.,* p.73.

[754] 'Egypt eases Palestinian border restrictions,' *Al-Jazeera*, (23 July 2012). <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/07/201272316421517244 7.html> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[755] Mohannad Abdel Hamid, Sahar Ghoussoub (transl.), 'Gaza tunnel demolitions increase as Hamas seeks free trade zone,' *Al-Monitor*, (2 October 2012). <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/10/egypts-demolition-of-gaza-tunnels-worse-than-under-mubarak.html> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[756] The Palestine Information Center, 'Mishal: We hope to accomplish the reconciliation project as soon as possible for our people and our cause,' (24 November 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/oddk5x7> (accessed on 9 November 2014). Khalid Mishal, 'political thought and strategies of Hamas in light of the Arab uprisings,' *Afro-Middle East Centre*, (1 April 2013). <http://www.amec.org.za/articles-presentations/palestineisrael/452-real-targets-

During the Arab Spring Hamas reaffirmed its position that it did not intervene in the domestic affairs of any Arab countries. However the policy of neutrality that Hamas espoused seemed to be defunct. The civil war in Syria was a discernible case. Hamas' exiled political leaders that had been situated in Damascus since 2001 faced a dilemma during the outbreak of revolution in Syria. As a long-term ally of Syria, Hamas leaders were cautious not to directly take sides with the people or the regime in public. Hamas' leaders officially claimed that the bloodbath needed to be stopped but they did not explicitly condemn the Syrian regime.[757] This ambiguous language gradually changed in February 2012 when Hamas' exiled political leaders left Syria and Ismail Haniyeh addressed a speech in the Al-Azhar mosque in Cairo, that praised, 'the heroic Syrian people'.[758] Furthermore the time was difficult for the exiled Hamas leaders living in Syria as the number of casualties increased and people were displaced or massacred, including Palestinian refugees. Khalid Mishal asserted that they appreciated the Syrian regime's support in the past but it did not mean that Hamas was loyal to this regime. He added that 'what was happening in Syria was a big crime against the people and country,'[759] and 'Hamas were with people in Syria who aspired for freedom, dignity, reform and democracy'.[760]

The crisis in Syria affected Hamas' other allies in the 'axis of resistance,' Iran and Hizbullah. In particular, because of its support of the

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of-operation-brother-s-keeper-are-hamas-and-unity-government> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[757] The Palestine Information Center, 'Haniyeh: Hamas respect the Doha Declaration and we have high flexibility for the prime minister,' (12 February 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/nzz4jck> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[758] Khalid Mishal moved to Doha; Abu Marzuq moved to Cairo. On 24 February 2012, Haniyeh talked to masses in Al-Azhar mosque, 'I salute the heroic Syrian people, who are striving for freedom, democracy and reform.' The masses responded that 'No Iran, No Hizbullah, Syria is Islamic' and 'Leave, Leave Bashar. Leave, leave Butcher.' Quoted in International Crisis Group, 'Light at the end of their tunnels?' Hamas and the Arab uprisings, *Middle East Report*, No.129, *op.cit.,* pp.11-12.

[759] The Palestine Information Center, 'Called for unified Arab strategy. Mishal: the big weight for President Mursi is to enhances the chances to the reconciliation success,' (29 January 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/oomutkt> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

[760] The Palestine Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal talks to "the Monitor",' (5 May 2013). <http://web.archive.org/web/20130507181530/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=134241> (accessed on 9 November 2014).

Syrian revolution, Iran suspended $23 million aid to Hamas as a warning.[761] But this did not indicate that Hamas had fundamentally broken its relationship with Iran. As Mishal clarified, although Hamas held a different view from Iran and Hizbullah on the crisis of Syria, it still maintained relationships with them based on the principle of resistance against the Zionist occupier.[762] On the whole, the axis of resistance did not work during the Arab Spring. On the contrary, as noted before, a new alliance with Turkey, Qatar and Egypt seemed to emerge for the Palestinian cause. Hamas attempted to seek these countries' support in compensation for the loss of the axis of resistance but this aspiration was obscured by Egyptian domestic politics.

Traditionally, Egypt had been more of a key-actor in Palestinian issues than any other Arab countries. For example, since late 1995, Egypt had mediated the dispute between Fatah and Hamas.[763] During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Egypt made efforts to deal with Hamas and other Palestinian factions for a ceasefire in 2003 and the Palestinian unity in 2005. However, Egypt was more concerned with its national security than Hamas' resistance project. After the division between Hamas and Fatah in 2007, the Egyptian authority deemed Hamas' governance in Gaza was a potential threat to its national interest. Hamas did not want to provoke Egypt but only reaffirmed its position of neutrality concerning Egyptian affairs. But the Egyptian authorities seemed to ignore this call; it intensified the closure of the Rafah crossing and took a passive stance on the Israeli war on Gaza.

With the outbreak of the revolution in Egypt and the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Hamas was confident that the Palestinian cause would be central to Egypt, especially when the Brotherhood won the consecutive elections and Muhammad Mursi was elected as Egypt's president. As a matter of fact, the

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[761] Robert Tait, 'Hamas loses Iran funds for backing Syria rebels,' *Gulfnews*, (1 June 2013). <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/palestinian-territories/hamas-loses-iran-funds-for-backing-syria-rebels-1.1191194> (accessed on 10 November 2014).

[762] The Palestine Information Center, 'Khalid Mishal talks to "the Monitor",' (5 May 2013). <https://web.archive.org/web/20130507181530/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=134241> (accessed on 10 November 2014).

[763] Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, 'Egypt and Hamas (1/2): The nature and development of their relation,' *Al-Zaytouna Centre for studies and consultations*, <https://eng.alzaytouna.net/2009/01/15/egypt-and-hamas-12-the-nature-and-development-of-their-relation/> (accessed on 24 May 2014).

rise of the Brotherhood would not truly benefit Hamas. President Mursi reaffirmed that Egypt would abide by the peace treaty with Israel[764] and maintained its relationship with the US. Although during the Israeli 8-day war on Gaza Mursi had mediated the confrontation between Israel and Hamas, there was no indication that Egyptian foreign policy had been dramatically changed in favour of Hamas. During Mursi's term the Egyptian authority demolished parts of the tunnels and restricted the movement of people and goods through the Rafah crossing.

Furthermore, after the revolution and the Brotherhood's victory in the elections, the Egyptian media was suspicious of Hamas' special relationship with the Brotherhood by portraying Hamas as its overseas branch. In response to this allegation, Hamas claimed that they were not affiliated with the Brotherhood in Egypt but they did not deny that Hamas' thought was inherited from the school of the Brotherhood.[765] To make a distinction between Hamas and the Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas' political leader, Abu Marzuq articulated that Hamas was the Palestinian national liberation movement operating within Palestinian territory only. In other words, Hamas did not intend to become involved in Egyptian internal affairs.[766]

The Egyptian media's allegations against Hamas intensified, along with the polarization of secularism and Islamization in Egyptian politics. Hamas was blamed for: the turmoil in Egyptian society, including the attacks on the Egyptian soldiers in Sinai, assistance to the Brotherhood members' jail-break during the revolution, funding Mursi, the smuggling of oil from Egypt, the attacks on Egyptian Christians and the sending of al-Qassam fighters to Egypt. Hamas could not accept this series of charges and felt that a certain party and the media had deliberately disseminated inaccurate information in order to

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[764] 'Egyptian President Mursi reassures Israel that peace treaty is safe,' *Haaretz*, (28 August 2012). <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/egyptian-president-morsi-reassures-israel-that-peace-treaty-is-safe-1.461123> (accessed on 10 November 2014) .

[765] 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). <http://tinyurl.com/pmxw4uy> (accessed on 10 November 2014).

[766] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: We expect the revolution on 25 January. At least it can break the siege,' (18 August 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/p6hbxz5> (accessed on 10 November 2014).

discredit Hamas.[767] Hamas underpinned its policy of neutrality, that is, it respected Egyptian politics and did not become involved in the dispute between the Brotherhood and the opposition parties.[768] However, this assertion did not convince the Egyptian media and the opposition.

After the ousting of the President Mursi, the Egyptian authority shaped an atmosphere of anti-Brotherhood through the media. Initially, Hamas reiterated that its relationship with Egypt would not be affected by Mursi's fall.[769] However, when the Brotherhood was described as a terrorist organization and the Egyptian authority cracked down, Hamas was faced with a crisis in its governance of Gaza that was unprecedented since the division with Fatah in 2007. According to Egyptian media's coverage, Hamas became a national enemy of Egypt.[770] The Egyptian authority closed the Rafah crossing and systematically demolished the tunnels, severely affecting livelihoods in Gaza.[771] The numbers of exits and entrances of people via the Rafah crossing dramatically dropped by 70 per cent in July 2013.[772] Hamas did not explicitly condemn the Egyptian authority but blamed Fatah for providing false information to the Egyptian media and provoking a coup

[767] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Zuhri: Hamas respects the Egypt regardless of the ruling regime. Our policy is the non-interference in the Egyptian affairs,' (7 March 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/ksabmh6> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

[768] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: Palestinians refused the resettlement in the Sinai in 1954 and there are no negotiations between Hamas and the Zionist entity,' (25 February 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/mxh6owd> (accessed on 11 November 2014). The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: There is no conflict within Hamas. Israel is interested in deepening the Palestinian division,' (13 April 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/oqcsdpz> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

[769] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: Negotiations between the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and Israel is "a risk without calculation." Hamas is committed to the Palestinian reconciliation,' (27 July 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/qdqumtw> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

[770] Asmaa al-Ghoul, 'Is Egypt Media inciting hatred against Palestinians?' *Al-Monitor*, (17 July 2013). <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/egypt-media-incitement-palestinians.html#ixzz2ZPp1tgQ7> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

[771] Lena Odgaard and Lazar Simeonov, 'Wasting away in the Gaza Strip,' *Al-Jazeera*, (20 November 2013). <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/wasting-away-gaza-strip-201311209331283991 6.html> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

[772] In June 2013, 55,995 people were via the Rafah crossing for the exits and entrances but in July the numbers decreased to 16,295 people. See 'Movement of people via Rafah crossing,' *Gisha*, <http://gisha.org/graph/2399> (accessed on 27 May 2014).

against Hamas.[773] The aspiration of Palestinian unity declined as the coup in Egypt created a rift between Fatah and Hamas.

The failure of national unity was not simply the dispute between Fatah and Hamas. Tensions within Hamas' leadership were another factor for the postponement of the reconciliation deal from May 2011.[774] The tension within Hamas seemed to widen when Khalid Mishal unilaterally reached a new deal with Abbas in Doha in February 2012. Leaders in Gaza were surprised that Abbas was to take the position of the Prime Minister in the future technocratic government;[775] and they criticized Mishal for not consulting with other leaders beforehand. This tension is often described as a competition between hardliner and moderate leaders.[776] To be precise, there were different calculations among Hamas' leadership regarding the reconciliation deal.

There can be no doubt that Hamas' leaders in the occupied territories and abroad all supported national unity but the question that taxed them was the timing of the reconciliation. Hamas leaders in Gaza considered that the Arab Spring had gradually changed the regional structure in favour of Gaza and weakened the PA in the West Bank. As a result, there was no urgent need to reach a reconciliation at that moment.[777] In contrast, Hamas' leaders in exile took another view, considering that Egypt would not provide sustainable financial and political support for Hamas in the short-term as Mursi and the Brotherhood were preoccupied with domestic issues. Therefore they thought it would be better to have reached reconciliation in the first place.

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[773] The Palestine Information Center, 'Bardawil: Hamas is strong with the Arab states and the popular support,' (26 August 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/lrbkfum> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[774] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: I do not nominate myself for the chairman of Hamas. The reconciliation is a strategic and essential for the benefit of our people,' (2 October 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/kvjx444> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[775] International Crisis Group, 'Light at the end of their tunnels? Hamas and the Arab uprisings' , *op.cit.,* pp.21-22.

[776] Barry Rubin, 'The Hamas split and the Palestinian political mess,' *The Jerusalem Post*, (19 February 2012). <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/The-Hamas-split-and-the-Palestinian-political-mess> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[777] International Crisis Group, 'Light at the end of their tunnels? Hamas and the Arab uprisings,' *op.cit.,* p.27.

For the exiled leaders, simply waiting for things to change in Hamas' favour seemed passive and unrealistic. [778]

Hamas' internal disagreement concerning reconciliation remained unresolved. Apart from that, Hamas members in the West Bank were not allowed to hold activities in public, which hindered the reconciliation as well.[779] In February 2013, Abu Marzuq conceded that the schedule for the reconciliation deal was only 30 per cent complete.[780] After four months, the ousting of Mursi and the fall of the Brotherhood made the reconciliation impossible. Hamas' aspiration that the siege of Gaza would be lifted and for national unity, had failed again. For the time being, it seemed that the resistance project that Hamas firmly espoused was in question.

3.3 Has the resistance project failed?

The Arab Spring had offered hope and opportunities for Hamas. Since the collapse of the authoritarian regime and the rise of Islamism, Hamas believed that the Middle East was going in the right direction, that is, in favour of Palestine. But Hamas and many others could not imagine that the rise of Islamists across the region would be short-lived; and they could not foresee that the fall of the Brotherhood in Egypt would have a far-reaching and negative impact on Hamas.

It could be said that essentially, the Arab Spring did not change the structure of the Middle East. Instead, the Islamic *ummah* that Hamas hoped would support the Palestinian cause was more fragmented and polarized than it had been before the revolution. Hamas seemed to be in total isolation in this region. Despite the fact that it reiterated its non-interventionist policy, because of the ideas it inherited from the Brotherhood, some Arab countries firmly believed that Hamas was part of the Brotherhood in Egypt. Through the coverage of certain parts of the media, Hamas was not described as a

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[778] *Ibid.,* pp.28-29.

[779] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: The continuation of political arrests in the West Bank closes the door to reconciliation and elections,' (5 February 2012). <https://web.archive.org/web/20120304145023/http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70389> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

[780] The Palestine Information Center, 'Abu Marzuq: Palestinians refused the resettlement in the Sinai in 1954 and there are no negotiations between Hamas and the Zionist entity,' (25 February 2013). <http://tinyurl.com/mxh6owd> (accessed on 11 November 2014).

movement resisting the Israeli occupation but as an enemy or a 'terrorist' that threatened national security in Arab countries.[781]

Furthermore, an anti-Brotherhood or anti-revolution trend spreading across the region shattered Hamas' aspiration of the unity of Islamic *ummah*. In Egypt, the Brotherhood experienced an unprecedented crackdown. Most leaders were arrested and a large number of members that protested against the military coup were killed on the street. The affiliated civil institutions were closed as the Egyptian authority's policy seemed to eradicate the roots of the Brotherhood.[782] As for the Gulf countries, the U.A.E. arrested hundreds of citizens that claimed to be members of the Brotherhood;[783] Saudi Arabia fully supported the Egyptian authority in its fight against 'terrorism'[784] as well as providing funds of $5 billion to Egypt.[785] The fall of the Brotherhood also created tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Qatar in March 2014 as a sign of the deterioration between the two sides. [786] As for Qatar and Turkey, even though they sympathized with Hamas and attempted to alleviate the blockade of Gaza, since they were allies of the United States in this region, it was impossible for them to do what

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[781] Haidar Eid, 'Why is the Egyptian regime demonizing Palestinians?' *Al-Shabaka*, (13 August 2013). <http://al-shabaka.org/why-egyptian-regime-demonizing-palestinians> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[782] Louisa Lovelcuk, 'Egypt court bans Muslim Brotherhood, eliminating its critical social services,' *The Christian Science Monitor*, (23 September 2013). <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/0923/Egypt-court-bans-Muslim-Brotherhood-eliminating-its-critical-social-services-video> (accessed on 12 November 2014). Michael Georgy and Tom Perry, 'Special report: As Egypt's Brotherhood retreats, risk of extremism rises,' *Reuters*, (28 October 2013). <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/28/us-egypt-brotherhood-special-report-idUSBRE99R0DU20131028> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[783] Christopher Davidson, 'The last of the Sheikhs,' (18 October 2013). <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/opinion/sunday/down-with-the-king.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[784] 'Saudi King Abdullah declares support for Egypt against terrorism,' *Al-Arabiya*, (16 August 2013). <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/08/16/Saudi-King-Abdullah-declares-support-of-Egypt-against-terrorism.html> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[785] Patrick Werr,'UAE offers Egypt $3 billion support, Saudis $ 5 billion,' *Reuters*, (9 July 2013). <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/09/us-egypt-protests-loan-idUSBRE9680H020130709> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

[786] Madawi Al-Rasheed, 'Saudi-Qatar tensions divide GCC,' *Al-Monitor*, (6 March 2014). <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/saudi-qatar-gcc-tensions-islamist.html> (accessed on 12 November 2014). 'Saudi, UAE, Bahrain withdraw Qatar enyoys,' *Al-Jazeera*, (6 March 2014). <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/saudi-uae-bahrain-withdraw-qatar-envoys-20143591141945753.html> (accessed on 12 November 2014).

Hamas expected: to end their diplomatic relationship with Israel and to offer unconditional support for the resistance project.

It can be said that, fundamentally, Hamas' resistance strategy had its limitations. The struggle to uphold the Palestinian cause needs, as a prerequisite, the unity of the Islamic *ummah*. But in reality, Arab countries were concerned about their domestic affairs and national interests more than the Palestinian cause during this period. As we can see from the way that the Arab countries actively competed in the issue of the Brotherhood and intervened in the civil war in Syria, it was inevitable that Palestine was marginalized. However, even under these adverse circumstances, Hamas still waited for the appearance of a strong *ummah*, a crucial factor in the facilitation of its resistance project even though many claimed 'the end of the political Islam' after the coup in Egypt.[787] In October 2013, Ismail Haniyeh delivered a speech calling for reconciliation with Fatah, stressing the message of liberation from the Zionist occupation and appealing for the support of Arab and Muslim countries.[788] It can be argued that Hamas would not alter its insistence on a resistance project because Fatah's adoption of a negotiation approach did not restore Palestinians' rights, alleviate the Palestinians' suffering and stop the expansion of the Jewish settlements. In this respect, Hamas still believed that the resistance project was the raison d'être for the Palestinian cause regardless of different scenarios in the future.

Overall, the concept of resistance remained a central theme that Hamas highlighted during the Arab Spring. Hamas kept this principle for seeking support from Arab and Muslim countries as well as responding to various incidents. It is noted that compared to the period between 2003 and 2006, Hamas articulated its resistance project further with a level of nuance on: the condition of negotiation, the reason for the rejection of the two-state

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[787] Even though many say the Political Islam comes to an end, some scholars believe that Islamists may rise in different way. See Borzou Daragahi, 'Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood may rise again, history suggests,' (18 December 2013). *Financial Times* <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1f8f7140-5204-11e3-8c42-00144feabdc0.html#axzz32vvPPYK6> (accessed on 13 November 2014).

[788] 'Haniyeh reaffirms resistance in speech marking second anniversary of prisoners swap,' *Middle East Monitor*, (19 October 2013). <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20140211-haniyeh-reaffirms-resistance-in-speech-marking-second-anniversary-of-prisoners-swap/amp/> (accessed on 13 November 2014).

solution and its relations with Israel. The final section will address this topic and an overall evaluation of Hamas' political transformation from 2006 to 2013 will be provided.

4. Conclusion: The Overall evaluation of Hamas' political engagement

Following the PLC election in January 2006 Hamas further engaged in politics and became an indispensable actor in Palestine, and in the rest of the region as well, that is, in terms of its participation with the PA. However, throughout this period, although Hamas experienced many setbacks such as the political division in Gaza and the West Bank, the closure of Gaza, and the Israeli wars on Gaza, Hamas leaders did not regret this political engagement. Khalid Mishal argued that the participation of the PA was not at the expense of Hamas' resistance project; on the contrary, their experience in the PA enhanced and protected this project. He added that if Hamas did not participate in the PA, the resistance project would be at risk in the same way that had occurred in the West Bank when Hamas' force was suppressed and stopped by Abbas and Israel after the political division in June 2007.[789] The participation of the PA was definitely a new experiment for Hamas for example, in its formation of the Palestinian government, its rule in Gaza as well as its positive diplomatic relations with Qatar and Turkey. Mishal admitted that Hamas made some mistakes in its participation with the PA but he stressed that this political engagement provided Hamas with the opportunity to further realize the people's needs under the Israeli occupation.[790]

It should be noted that Hamas' participation in the PA is not at the expense of its ideology; nevertheless it is true that Hamas' behaviour underwent a remarkable change in comparison with its practice in the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005). The suicide bombings had disappeared and Hamas leaders seldom called for sacrifice after 2006. But the vision of the 'liberation of Palestine' still pervaded Hamas' discourse. For Hamas, the participation of the PA was to protect its vision and political ideas such as, the

[789] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 14 November 2014).

[790] *Ibid.*

restoration of Palestinian rights, the right of return and Jerusalem as capital. Prior to 2004, Hamas did not consider participating in the PA. As Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi stated, 'it is not the time to have ministries in the PA. It is time for liberation and resistance'.[791] But since 2004, Hamas had gradually changed its rhetoric regarding political participation because of the effects of the Israeli disengagement plan. Hamas sensed that the Israeli evacuation from Gaza created an unprecedented possibility of their participation in Palestinian politics. Afterwards, Hamas actively stressed the necessity of the elections, political reform and democracy.

Hamas' participation in the PA could be understood against this background. Its political agenda was straightforward: the end of the occupation. By doing this, Hamas called for: political partnership, comprehensive reform in the PA and the restructuring of the PLO, and Hamas' electoral manifest and the cabinet platform had articulated details of how to proceed. Through the participation of the PA it hoped to promote the resistance project for inclusion in the national agenda. However the combination of resistance and governance was a new trial for Hamas that raises questions such as: to what extent had Hamas fulfilled its commitments when in government? Was Hamas's resistance project really applicable or was it harmful to the Palestinian cause? Would Hamas compromise with Israel in the foreseeable future?

It is possible to evaluate Hamas' experiment of balancing resistance and governance in two phases. The first phase, when Hamas formed the tenth Palestinian government independently and then cooperated with Fatah in the unity government before the political division in June 2007, was unsuccessful. At this stage, the Hamas-led government was under international sanction from the outset. It was extremely difficult for a Hamas-led government to implement its political programme. The Quartet, mainly led by the U.S. asked Hamas to recognize the legitimacy of Israel as a precondition for the lifting of the international sanction. It was unimaginable for

[791] The Palestinian Information Center, 'Interview with Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi,' (30 March 2003). <http://web.archive.org/web/20041220222833/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/rantesi(1).htm> (accessed on 14 November 2014).

Hamas to accept this condition because it would be political suicide; and also the resistance project that it had been constructing since 2002 would collapse overnight. In addition, Fatah's political agenda that was in fundamental contradiction with Hamas was incompatible with Hamas' expectation for the unity government. Abbas was hoping that Hamas had been distanced from armed resistance and able to accept the principle of negotiation with Israel. As for Hamas, to accept Abbas' request was also against the foundation of its resistance project. In spite of this, Hamas attempted to persuade Abbas and Fatah of the significance of the Palestinian unity but the executive force that the Hamas-led government created had caused huge controversy and paved the way for the division between Hamas and Fatah later, in June 2007. At this stage, Hamas was unable to promote its resistance project into the national agenda as it had expected and what was worse for Hamas was that it broke its commitment not to fight with Fatah.

The second phase was the period when Hamas ruled Gaza independently, as the Palestinian national unity had been shattered. Compared to the PA's governance in the West Bank, Hamas had created an alternative model in Gaza. The institutionalized resistance project was the main feature of Hamas' government in Gaza. In the absence of a political partner, for the first time Hamas had partially materialized its commitments according to its political programme in 2006. In terms of security, unlike the PA in the West Bank that had to cooperate with Israel, Hamas had a free hand to reform and to manage security affairs. As for the economic aspect, Hamas also partially sustained economic independence in Gaza through the 'tunnel economy'. Overall, Hamas stabilized Gaza and kept its governance intact even under the blockade and during the Israeli war on Gaza. But this form of governance did not reflect the spirit of its political programme: democracy, freedom and pluralism. Hamas' rule of Gaza was based on the soft authoritarianism that allowed opposition, with certain limitations.[792]

At any rate, there is no denying that since it had governed Gaza alone, what made a huge difference for Hamas was that it had gradually become a

[792] Nathan J. Brown, 'Gaza five years on Hamas settles in,' *The Carnegie Papers*, *op.cit.*, pp.1-23.

significant actor in Palestine and the Middle East. In particular, it incrementally played an influential role in the outbreak of the 'Arab Spring' from the late 2010 to mid-2013. As the authoritarian regime in Tunisia and Egypt collapsed and there was a prevalence of Islamists in politics, Hamas was thrilled with the new phenomenon and felt for the first time, that the tide was turning in its favour. Hamas was convinced that the Arab and Muslim countries would unite in the Palestinian cause. The Israeli war on Gaza in November 2012 was a clear indication of this as Egypt, Turkey and Qatar actively coordinated the ceasefire. However, the phenomenon was transient. The coup in Egypt shattered Hamas' aspiration. Hamas' governance in Gaza was severely affected by the repercussion of the breakdown of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In spite of this, it was expected that Hamas would adhere to its principle of resistance and call for reconciliation and national unity as a priority, irrespective of any circumstance.

It is hard to believe that Hamas would renounce resistance or recognize Israel in the foreseeable future. It is clear that after Hamas' participation with the PA, its view and reaction to various incidents and challenges did not derail the ideal of the resistance project. Hamas' response to popular resistance raised by the PA president Abbas is an example. In 2011, Abbas called for popular resistance, stressing that it must be, 'unarmed popular resistance so that nobody misunderstands us.' [793] Hamas accepted this but it claimed that popular resistance should not be at the expense of armed resistance since, in a state of occupation, it is indispensable.[794]

A response to the two-state solution is another typical example. At present, the two-state solution is still considered to be a supportive option for the West for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Before its political participation in the PA, Hamas was not interested in a discussion as to why it

[793] 'Abbas tells Palestinians: Step up Arab Spring-style protest against Israel,' *Haaretz,* (27 July 2011). <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/abbas-tells-palestinians-step-up-arab-spring-style-protests-against-israel-1.375589> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[794] The Palestinian Information Center, 'The armed resistance is the pivotal pillar for Hamas,' (27 November 2011). <http://tinyurl.com/n93b9fc> (accessed on 14 November 2014). Palestine Information Center, 'Rishq: Hamas was ready to dialogue with any countries in the world with the exception of "Israel" and reconciliation is a priority and necessary for us,' (11 December 2012). <http://tinyurl.com/pqxgd8q> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

did not accept the two-state solution. It often argued that liberation comes first and the state second while after the political engagement in 2006, Hamas further elaborated on why the two-state solution is not a possible option. Although Hamas offered its agenda for peace to Israel: the creation of the Palestinian state within the 1967 borders based on a ten-year truce, there was no sign that Hamas was willing to recognize Israel's legitimacy. The reasons are as follows. If Hamas recognized Israel, it would mean that it accepted the reality that Palestinian refugees expelled by Israeli force in 1948 would no longer be able to return to their homeland.[795] Another critical factor for Hamas' refusal to recognize Israel is its essence. As Zionism is the founding principle underpinning the creation of the state of Israel Hamas leaders consider Israel as 'racist, hostile and expansionist based on murder and terrorism'.[796] For Hamas and many Palestinians, Zionism reflects a form of occupation and colonization and not the 'national liberation movement' that Zionists claim. Khalid Mishal's criticism was that the secular Zionist leaders exploited Judaism and applied it to politics.[797] This concept corresponded to a speech made by the Israeli historian Ilan Pappe in which he said, 'Most Zionists don't believe that God exists but they do believe that he promised them Palestine.'[798]

Here it is also worth noting that Hamas' fight for Israel is not from a purely religious consideration but mainly from the conception of national liberation. After forming a government and ruling Gaza alone, Hamas has clearly distinguished Jew from Zionist. Hamas' charter has been criticized for its anti-Semitism and some Hamas leaders viewed the Israeli-Palestinian

[795] The Palestine Information Center, 'Al-Hayat: Interview with Mr. Khalid Mishal,' (1 June 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/n3tw6ba> (accessed on 14 November 2014).

[796] Khalid Mishal, 'Political thought and strategies of Hamas in light of the Arab uprisings,' *Afro-Middle East Centre*, (1 April 2013) <http://www.amec.org.za/articles-presentations/palestineisrael/452-real-targets-of-operation-brother-s-keeper-are-hamas-and-unity-government> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[797] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[798] Ilan Pappe, 'From the ''Arab Center'' to the Palestine Solidarity Committee: The Campaign for Palestine in Britian, 1932-1938,' BRISME 2014 Conference, University of Sussex (16 June 2014).

conflict as the clash of civilizations.[799] As a matter of fact, most of the time Hamas leaders have reiterated that the conflict is associated with the Israeli occupation and aggression, and is nothing to do with religious conflict. Khalid Mishal stated that, 'Our struggle against Israelis is not because they are Jews, but because they invaded our homeland and dispossessed us. We do not accept that because the Jews were once persecuted in Europe they now have the right to take our land and throw us out.'[800]

The final reason why the two-state solution is unacceptable to Hamas is that Hamas has a strong conviction that Zionism has no future in Palestine. It seems that this conviction is tantamount to a prophecy of Islam. Currently, Israel remains the political and military strength and the balance of power is on the Israeli side; nevertheless, what Mishal observed is that Israel is declining, that is, because of Hamas' resistance. He argued that, 'the great Israel is ended, because Israel is not able to achieve (what it wants) and Israel follows the same path of the end of the racist South Africa in the past.'[801] He also added that, 'Now security is not the main concern in Israeli public opinion but is about their future and destiny. When the Israeli society is doubtful of their existence, it is inevitable that the countdown has begun.'[802]

From the above analysis, it is clear that Hamas definitely would not accept the two-state solution, nor would it compromise with Israel in the foreseeable future. The concept of the 'liberation of Palestine' and the necessity of armed resistance has often been raised since its participation in the PA. The liberation of Palestine and its striving for the restoration of Palestinian rights since 1948 is still Hamas's unshakeable conviction.

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[799] The conflict between Israel and Palestine was considered a clash of civilization particularly when Israel intensified its military operation or threatened the Islamic identity such as attacking mosques and the Judaised Jerusalem. Palestinian Information Center, 'Dr. Ali Ibn Umar Badahdah: Hamas balances the resistance and Governance,' (5 February 2007). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=87633> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[800] Ken Livingstone, 'Exclusive: Hamas leader interview,' *New Statesman*, (17 September 2009). <http://www.newstatesman.com/middle-east/2009/09/israel-palestinian-hamas> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[801] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[802] *Ibid.*

However, Hamas does not elaborate on what the next step is if Palestine were to be liberated, or what the character of the state would be in the future. At present, there is no clear indication that Hamas is attempting to transform Palestine into an Islamic state as many argue; ending the occupation is still the pivotal task for Hamas. Regarding the future of Palestine and the essence of the state, Mishal says that Hamas would respect the decision of the majority of Palestinians in Palestine and abroad even if the majority view contradicted Hamas' opinion.[803]

Regarding the possibility of negotiation with Israel, there is also no indication that Hamas is willing to talk to Israel directly in the foreseeable future even though Hamas has contacted Israel through Egyptian mediation in the ceasefire in 2009 and the prisoner exchange in 2011. Negotiation with Israel seemed to be taboo for Hamas before it formed the government, however since then Hamas has raised the possibility. In general, Hamas does not deny the concept of negotiation as Mishal said, 'Negotiation is not a *halal* or *haram* issue.'[804] As to why Hamas refuses to negotiate with Israel at this moment, there are two main reasons. Firstly, Hamas argues that currently the PA treats negotiation as the only option, which is dangerous for Palestinian unity and cannot protect Palestinian rights. Muhammad Nazzal stressed that negotiation should be to end Israeli occupation rather than to allow Israel to stay.[805] Secondly, for Hamas, negotiation itself is a tactical tool for managing the conflict with Israel not just a strategy and it depended on the balance of power. Hamas considers that nowadays, negotiation does not serve the Palestinians. In the light of the imbalance of power, Israel exploited the negotiation as a tool to polish its image, to try to normalize with the Arabs and to buy time for the expansion of the Jewish settlements, the Judaization of Jerusalem and displacement of the Palestinian population. In this context,

[803] The Palestine Information Center, 'Al-Hayat: Interview with Mr. Khalid Mishal,' (1 June 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/n3tw6ba> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[804] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

[805] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with a member of the political bureau of Hamas, Muhammad Nazzal,' (17 December 2008). <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=70396> (accessed on 15 November 2014).

negotiation with Israel is equal to surrender.[806] In short, Hamas does not deny the concept of negotiation but it must conform to two conditions: Palestinians should benefit from it and the balance of power should incline towards the Palestinians.

To summarize, Hamas' participation with the PA was to promote its resistance project towards a national agenda. It was a partial success since Hamas institutionalized its resistance project in Gaza. In addition, Hamas gradually played an important role in this region and attracted the considerable attention of the world, particularly during the Israeli war on Gaza. However, Hamas also paid a high price at the expense of national unity as well as the Israeli blockade and intimidation. In the future, it is expected that we cannot rule out the possibility that Hamas adjusts its practice or rhetoric in response to the Israeli occupation or that it talks to Israel, but this change will not contravene its fundamental principle: the liberation of Palestine and its refusal to recognize the Israeli legitimacy.

[806] The Palestine Information Center, 'Interview with Khalid Mishal,' (2 August 2010). <http://tinyurl.com/osqmlyo> (accessed on 16 November 2014).

Part III Conclusion

1. Summary and Findings:

This research aims to explore the process of Hamas' transition in politics between 2003 and 2013. It also attempts to interpret the implications of the transition. In general, conventional scholarship on Hamas examines its political transition in terms of radicalism or moderation. Hamas' insistence on violence and its refusal to accept Israel's legitimacy could be seen as an indication of radicalism while Hamas' political participation in the PA and the implicit recognition of Israel together with the proposed ten-year ceasefire could be seen to display a more moderate stance. This thesis argues that neither the feature of radicalism nor moderation captures the implications of Hamas' political transformation and engagement over the ten years under discussion. Based on the analysis of interviews with Hamas leaders as its primary source, the research discovers that Hamas' political transition is related to its concept of resistance in the political field between 2003 and 2013. Hence, the research employs Hamas' concept of resistance to examine Hamas' political transition.

The key findings and Conclusion of the research are summarized as follows:

1.1 Hamas' political transition is attributed to its perception of resistance

This research asserts that Hamas' political transition can be attributed to its perception of resistance. After the election in 2006 Hamas expected to promote the concept of resistance in its bid to put it on the national agenda to end the Israeli occupation. To understand Hamas' perception of resistance one has to trace it back to the course of modern history in Palestine. That is to say, the history of resistance in the name of Islam and the features of Palestinian resistance between the 1920s and 1987 shaped Hamas' perception of Zionism as well as the principle for the liberation of Palestine. Since its inception in 1987, the liberation of Palestine has been Hamas' ultimate aim. It is noted that Hamas does not indicate its plans for the future of the Jewish community after the liberation and it does not clearly propose

the future of an ideal Palestinian state. Rather, the liberation of Palestine could be seen as an aspiration that motivates Hamas to fight for the deprived Palestinians' rights. The concept of liberation is not tantamount to the destruction of Israel which implies hatred and revenge. It reflects a mood, a dream, and the hopes of Palestinians who lost their fundamental rights after 1948 when Israel declared independence at their expense. Hamas firmly believes that resistance is the key to achieving Palestine's liberation but it is cautious about putting the concept of resistance into politics. Hamas often addressed the topic of resistance in relation to non-political fields in the 1990s and until the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas had started to rethink the possibility of political participation.

1.2 Hamas constructed and employed the concept of resistance in its resistance project in the political field from 2003 to 2013

The research also finds that the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2006) prompted Hamas to consider the possibility of political participation. To reach its goal of liberating Palestine, Hamas gradually constructed the concept of resistance known as 'the resistance project' in the political field between 2003 and 2006 and employed it during government in 2006. The resistance project was originally designed to end the Israeli occupation of historical Palestine, but in practice, Hamas' work on resistance is mainly restricted to the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, the concept of resistance does not always refer to violence. During the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas changed gradually its resistance discourse from one centred on armed resistance against the Israeli occupation to one that saw the need for Palestinian political reform and integration. Hamas believes that the integration of Palestinian politics is beneficial to its resistance project. Following the process of Hamas' transition in politics, two events were crucial. The first event was the Israeli plan to disengage from Gaza between December 2003 and August 2005 which prompted Hamas to consider the possibility of political integration with the PA. The second event that further triggered Hamas' decision to participate in the PLC election was Yasser Arafat's death in November, 2004. Hamas sensed that Palestinian politics was heading towards a new stage in the post-Arafat era. The Cairo

declaration, launched in March 2005, finalized Hamas' commitment to political integration.

Boosted by an overwhelming vote in the PLC election in 2006, Hamas was convinced that most Palestinians chose its political agenda: that resistance was better than negotiation with Israel. However, Hamas faced difficulties in promoting its resistance project as a national agenda due to the international boycott and the animosity of certain Fatah members. The enforcement of the resistance project, paradoxically, started after Hamas' takeover of Gaza in June 2007. For the first time, Hamas had a free hand in governing Gaza according to its political agenda. From 2007 to 2013, Gaza seemed to be a quasi-state under Hamas' tight control even though Gaza was closed and during the time when there were two major Israeli wars on Gaza.[807] Hamas demonstrated its capacity to stabilize Gaza and gradually became an indispensable actor in this region. It should be noted that Hamas' domination of Gaza does not refer to the creation of an Islamic emirate or permanent separation from the PA in the West Bank. From Hamas' perspective, resistance is its fundamental principle as long as Israel continues its occupation. Under the closure of Gaza and the failure of reconciliation with Fatah, Hamas leaders felt they had no other choice but to advance the resistance project in many aspects. The model Hamas employed to govern Gaza was distinct from that of the PA in the West Bank. Hamas expected to create a resistant society in Gaza and attempted to transfer this experience to the West Bank.

1.3 Hamas' political transition represents its shift in tactics instead of its ideology change

From the analysis above, the research confirms that Hamas' political transition does not involve a shift in its ideology but a tactical change that is the third finding of this thesis. A refusal to legitimize Israel and to end the

[807] Israel launched another war on Gaza between 8 July and 26 August 2014, which caused unprecedented destruction and loss of human life in Gaza. It is estimated that one-third of Gaza was destroyed by the Israeli strikes. See International Crisis Group, 'Toward a lasting ceasefire in Gaza,' *Middle East Briefing,* No.42 (23 October 2014), p.4. And Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 'Statistics: Victims of the Israeli offensive on Gaza since 08 July 2014,' (16 September 2014) <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/statistics-victims-israeli-offensive-gaza-08-july-2014> (accessed on 3 December 2014).

Israeli occupation remains Hamas' fundamental principles. But, in order to fulfill its commitment to end the Israeli occupation, Hamas attempts to seek assistance and solidarity from various actors. As far as the Palestinian factions are concerned, Hamas emphasizes the necessity of national unity and reconciliation as the key to strengthen the cause of resistance. Regarding the role of the Muslim communities, Hamas avoids intervention in the affairs of any other Muslim country and political party in order to seek comprehensive support from all sides. On the other hand, in order to seek understanding from the West, Hamas strives to: articulate its discourse on the necessity of resistance, the rationale of non-recognition of Israeli legitimacy, the precondition of negotiation with Israel and the distinction between Jew and Zionist. In this respect, Hamas sought help from various actors in order to end the Israeli occupation.

1.4 The overall implications of political transition for Hamas

Finally the research concludes that Hamas' transition aims to adapt to changing conditions in order to protect its resistance project and keep its organization intact. Although Hamas' political transition shares common features with other Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan that accept the concepts of modernity and are inclined towards political participation, the main difference between Hamas and other Islamists is that Hamas developed a specific concept of resistance as Palestine is still under the Israeli occupation. It is noted that resistance remains the unshakable doctrine that Hamas never compromises in spite of the fact that Hamas has demonstrated its pragmatism in politics. After the takeover of Gaza, Hamas' works concerning resistance has been thwarted by many incidents such as the collapse of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the fragmentation of the Arab states and the suspense of the reconciliation process between Hamas and Fatah. But it would have been hard to imagine Hamas leaders give in or renounce the principle of resistance in the foreseeable future irrespective of any circumstances as they hold a strong belief that resistance is the only way to fight against the deprivation of the rights they had lost since 1948. Based on the conviction, Hamas' leaders and

their constituencies are waiting for another opportunity to continue the resistance work.[808]

2. Challenges and Limitations

This thesis has examined how Hamas legitimated and constructed its resistance project in its political transition over a period of ten years. However, some specific limitations encountered during the research must be acknowledged. The major factor was the geographic and physical obstacles that limited the collection of various data. Due to the closure of Gaza and the potential risk to personal safety, it was difficult to conduct interviews and to personally observe the situation in Gaza. The deficiency was partially resolved by interviews with Palestinian intellectuals in the UK who are familiar with Hamas' resistance discourse. In addition, this research mainly relied on the texts of Hamas leaders' and members' interviews from Hamas' affiliated websites. Through the text analysis, Hamas' motivation for the political transition and its process of the construction of the resistance project could be grasped. As for the second limitation, this research largely highlighted one side of Hamas' resistance project but the relationship between Hamas and other Palestinian factions, such as Fatah, PFLP and the Islamic Jihad and independent figures was beyond the scope of this topic and therefore I was unable to elaborate on how those Palestinian factions and individuals reflected on the resistance project that Hamas promoted.

The third limitation was that there is no adequate information about Hamas' work on resistance in the West Bank. Since Hamas' takeover of Gaza in June 2007, the PA in Ramallah prohibited Hamas by every available means. Also, due to the security cooperation between the PA and Israel, it was hard to detect Hamas' presence in the West Bank. Despite these difficulties, the current situation in the West Bank perfectly explains why Hamas insists on resistance rather than negotiation. A fieldwork trip to the West Bank in October 2014 demonstrated in many ways how deeply the Israeli occupation

[808] Ibrahim Hewitt, 'Exclusive Interview with Khaled Meshaal, the head of the Hamas political Bureau,' *Middle East Monitor*, (6 November 2014). <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/resources/interviews/15120-exclusive-interview-with-khaled-meshaal-the-head-of-the-hamas-political-bureau> (accessed on 3 December 2014).

affects every Palestinian; and how the PA in Ramallah was unable to effectively protect Palestinians from Israeli aggression. As for the final limitation, Hamas often highlighted the role of *ummah* in the Palestinian cause and its popularity is strong in the civil society across the Middle East but this research was unable to obtain statistics and reports on how Arab and Muslim societies supported Hamas' resistance project.

3. Prospects for Future Research

It has become clear that Hamas has built Gaza as a stronghold for resistance. It is impossible for Hamas to yield military power to the PA in Ramallah either in the reconciliation process or under the pressure of the closure of Gaza. Nowadays many Palestinians in Gaza believe that resistance is the only effective way to defend against Israeli closure and bombardment. The recent war launched by Israel and the 51-day attacks on Gaza in the summer of 2014 attests to this argument. According to a poll conducted in Gaza and the West Bank after the war, Hamas' popularity reached a peak for the first time since the PLC election in 2006. It is expected that if the new PLC and Presidential elections take place, Hamas will win both.[809] It is also interesting to note that armed resistance as an effective option is not only popular in Gaza, but the majority of Palestinians in the West Bank also support the option of transferring to the West Bank.[810] However, if the closure of Gaza remains and the reconciliation process is slow, Hamas' high popularity and the overwhelming support for resistance among Palestinians may decline.

This is not to say that Hamas' work on resistance has reached an impasse. There are two possible scenarios which may enhance or harm Hamas' resistance discourse that deserve to be reserved for future research. One is the future development of the West Bank. There is a call for the third Intifada as the negotiation between the PA and Israel has failed to resolve the chronic problems of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank, the closure of Gaza and the process of Judaization of Jerusalem. The third Intifada is not

[809] See Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 'Special Gaza War Poll,' (2 September 2014), <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/489> (4 December 2014).

[810] *Ibid*.

impossible in the West Bank and Jerusalem even if the security cooperation between Israel and the PA prohibits and monitors any hint of an armed struggle. It is known that apart from armed struggle, resistance in many forms has already been exhibited in the West Bank; it is usual for demonstrations to occur across the cities of the West Bank. Many young Palestinians who are tired of the incompetent PA are considering the possibility of an armed resistance.[811] Anticipation for the third Intifada is growing and the fuel for the potential intifada is ready. If the third intifada actually takes place, the negotiation approach that Fatah insists on will collapse and Hamas would definitely seize the opportunity to lead a resistance campaign.

The second scenario that may determine the strength of Hamas' resistance depends on the overall development within the Arab States in the near future. The role of *ummah* plays the crucial role in supporting the Palestinian cause and Hamas' work on resistance. But at this moment the Arab region is on the brink of disunity, fragmentation and militarized confrontations. Furthermore, the Arab nation-states based on the Skyes-Picot agreement have been threatened by the rise of ISIS across Syria and Iraq. In a sense, Palestine is not a major concern for these Arab states. The political map of the Arab world is hurtling towards uncertainty. It is hard to tell whether this uncertainty will lead to more chaos or towards unity. Any major change in the Arab world will essentially affect Hamas' calculations regarding resistance.

[811] Adnan Abu Amer, 'Hamas eyes armed resistance from West Bank,' *Al-Monitor*, (9 September 2014) <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/gaza-hamas-pa-west-bank-arms-israel.html#ixzz3D1cR5Dat> (3 December 2014).

List of Glossary

a'ayan	noble families
al-Mujamma' al-Islami	Islamic centre
al-Jam'iyah al-Islamiyah	Islamic society
caliphate	a form of Islamic political-religious leadership
dawah	preaching of Islam
haram al-Sharif	the noble sanctuary
hunda	ceasefire
hudud	limit or prohibition, refers to Islamic punishments
ijtihad	independent reasoning
ihya'	revivification
islah	reform
khawarij	a group of Muslims who assassinated Caliph Ali
nahda	revival
maslaha	public interest
mujtahid	Muslim scholars who have ability to use *ijtihad*
tahdiya	ceasefire
tajdid	renewal
taqlid	legal precedent
ummah	Islamic community
ulama	Muslim scholar
waqf	charity endowment
wasatiyyah	moderation

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