

## Hamas's ascension and its international relations : literature review

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This paper focuses on a literature review and summarizes the international relations in which Hamas or its preceding Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine has been situated. Its relations with Israel, the U.S., Russia, Iran, and other Arab countries are overviewed based on previous studies. The diplomatic policy of Hamas is also investigated regarding its own approach and relations with other countries.

**Keywords:** Hamas, International relations, Muslim Brotherhood, Election, Diplomacy

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# Hamas's Ascension and its International Relations

## Literature Review

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on a literature review and summarizes the international relations in which Hamas or its preceding Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine has been situated. Its relations with Israel, the U.S., Russia, Iran, and other Arab countries are overviewed based on previous studies. The diplomatic policy of Hamas is also investigated regarding its own approach and relations with other countries.

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## *Introduction*

This paper consists of a literature review of previous research that focuses especially on Hamas and its international relations.<sup>1</sup> Hamas's presence attracted attention as one of the Islamic parties that became prominent after the Islamic revival in the 1970s and as a rival movement to Fatah—the secular dominant faction of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Front)—in Palestinian politics. There have been many books and articles published on Hamas as a prominent political actor, and several ways exist to categorize those preceding studies, such as: Gunning pointing out the difference between those focusing on “terrorism” compared to those focusing on Islamism studies<sup>2</sup>; Tamimi sharing common traits within his own categories and indicating political bias in some studies compared to a few exceptions<sup>3</sup>; and Shimizu listing numerous studies and categorizing them into five groups—studies of thought, history, political actors, social movements, and field research.<sup>4</sup>

This paper, written as a preliminary study for further research, points out the relevant essential debates provided by previous studies rather than adding additional classifications for them. Hamas is an organization that has its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, and its relationship will be summarized with its original organization in Egypt, Israel, Arab countries, and within the international community. In previous studies, Hamas's relations with the outside world have been focused on against the backdrop of several historical stages and topics. Therefore, the following sections deal with topics according to these stages and indicate the general trend of Hamas's international relationships.

The first section deals with the stage of its inception by the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. Its origins and the commitment of Egypt in the wake of Israeli independence are summarized. The second section deals with the period after the First Intifāda in which Hamas was established. Its controversial platform and the implications for its relations with Israel are pointed out. The third section focuses on another topic in the same period: Hamas's relationship with other Arab and Islamic countries. The developing relations with other countries such as Iran and Syria will also be investigated. The fourth section deals with the stage after the PLC election in 2006. In this election, Hamas won the position of the dominant party, and its stance toward peace negotiations attracted further attention. In this section, the reaction by the international community will be focused on, as the economic sanctions imposed on Hamas had great impact in Palestinian politics, leading to the current division into two separate governments.

### *1. The Muslim Brotherhood, born in Palestine*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was drafted in March 2014. It is supported by the research project, “Society of Muslim Brothers and International Linkage of Islamic Movements,” in 2013, under the Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Gunning sub-categorizes further categories and emphasizes his position of adopting a “critical” approach in the usage of field research. Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 4–14.

<sup>3</sup> Tamimi raises an example of the Western point of view depicting Hamas as a terrorist organization, in work by Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, along with controversy seen in various citations over its review, for instance, in work by Steven Erlanger and Barry Rubin: Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*. Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2007, p. 1–3.

<sup>4</sup> These categories are based on both themes and methodologies, thus there are several that overlap. Shimizu Masako, “Hamas as the “Change and Reform”: An Analysis of the Palestinian Resistance Movement's Electoral Participation.” *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, 27-2, pp. 57–81. p. 60.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine was established in the 1940s under the full commitment of its original organization in Egypt. From a very early period, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was very concerned about the developments in Palestine and supported the Arabic rebellion against the Jews. In response to the Great Arab Revolt in 1936, the Muslim Brotherhood convened a special conference in March and established the General Central Committee in Aid of Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood even wrote a letter to the British ambassador in Egypt on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, saying “The cause of Palestine is the cause of every Muslim.” Their delegation met with Haj Amin al-Husseini, the pivotal Palestinian leader of the rebellion in that period, and an exchange of letters followed between al-Husseini and Hassan al-Banna, the founding father of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

There are different years advocated as the beginning of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, whereas a documental record can be confirmed for the inauguration of its central branch at the West Bank. The celebration was made in Sheikh Jarrāh, in Jerusalem on May 6, 1946, and ‘Abdel Mu’iz ‘Abdel Sattar, the official delegate of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, came to attend the ceremony.<sup>6</sup> The existence of a few other documents is pointed out regarding the preceding activities in other cities. During 1948, war erupted in the wake of the establishment of the state of Israel, and this included participants from the Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt. However, Hroub reminds us that the multitude of records about said participation intends “to demonstrate the extent of the Muslim Brotherhood’s involvement in the war, a topic that has received increased attention in response to a stream of criticism directed at the Muslim Brotherhood for its greatly reduced involvement in the Palestinian issue.”<sup>7</sup>

After defeat in the war of 1948, the land left unoccupied in Palestine was divided into areas controlled either by Egypt or Jordan. This division resulted in a change of the characters and the temporary subsidence of the movement. The Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank was incorporated into the Brotherhood of Jordan, and this limited its activities to modest political and educational activities. The branch in the Gaza Strip maintained its militarism in the initial years because of its lack of organic links with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan. However, the ban of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt under pressure by Jamal Abdul Nasser still caused a devastating blow to the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza, and caused a decreasing of members engaged in its limited missions of education and social welfare services until the establishment of Hamas.<sup>8</sup> While there were no local universities in the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian government permitted Palestinian students from Gaza to study in Egypt and allocated a specific quota for students from Palestine, but the coordination was suspended after occupation by Israel in the war of 1967.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hasan al-Banna, *Mudhakarāt al-da‘wa wal-da‘iyya*, n.d. pp. 240, 259 cited in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000, pp. 12–14.

<sup>6</sup> Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikra wa al-Mumārāsa al-siyasiyya*. Bayrūt: markaz dirāsāt Filas’īniyya, 1997, p. 342.

<sup>7</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., pp. 19–25.

<sup>9</sup> Tamimi, op. cit., p. 22.

## 2. Controversy over the charter

Evolving from the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, Ḥaraka al-Muqāwama al-Islāmīya (Islamic Resistance Movement), or “ Hamas,” was established in 1987. Hamas designates December 8, 1987—the first day the First Intifāda (national uprising)—as its official date of emergence, while its first communique appeared several days later. At all events, its establishment was deeply rooted in the development of the First Intifāda. The senior leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, including its charismatic leader, Sheikh Aḥmad Yāsīn held an emergency meeting following the eruption of the first massive demonstration at the Jabaliya refugee camp and took the decision to set up a resistance movement based on the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>10</sup>

On August 18, 1988, less than nine months after the foundation of the movement, Hamas published its charter (al-Mīthāq) as a manifestation of its political and ideological principles. The language of the text in no time began invoking debate and criticism, as it was considered to be proof of its inflexibility and militarism. It declared a jihad that would continue until Palestine was liberated in its entirety and until the State of Israel was eliminated.<sup>11</sup> Based on this charter, not only the Israeli government but even several scholars judged Hamas as a religious organization and its ultimate goal to be “Islamizing Palestinians.”<sup>12</sup> The charter was considered to be “anchored in religious principles of holiness, divinity, and eternity, with no option for amendment.”<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, as is often pointed out by other scholars, the charter did not literally bind the behavior of Hamas members and has hardly ever been quoted or even referred to by Hamas leadership or its official spokesmen.<sup>14</sup> It was written by Abdul Fattāḥ al-Dukkhān, a head master of a school at the Nuseirat refugee camp, and he was one of the founders but not one of the important ideologues for Hamas.<sup>15</sup> As the following documents and statements by Hamas officials show, the notion of liberating Palestine has assumed greater importance in Hamas’s principles, rather than its religious achievements. Be that as it may, its use of religious discourse appealed to the broader Islamic world beyond the borders of Palestine.

Toward Israel, apart from its outlook of militarism, Hamas has indicated the possibility for negotiations based on its own logic. This appeared as a short-term resolution that was first proposed by Mahmoud al-Zahhar in March 1988. The proposals to Israel’s then-foreign minister, Shimon Peres, included that: 1) Israel’s withdrawals from the territories occupied in 1967; 2) the occupied territories fall under the custody of the United Nations; 3) the Palestinians choose their own representatives for the peace talks both from inside and outside Palestine, and 4) negotiations begin at the agreed-upon time covering all issues regarding all rights.<sup>16</sup> Some of the points follow a vein similar to the resolutions of the United Nations, which Hamas is repeatedly required to recognize for its

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<sup>10</sup> Tamimi, op. cit. pp. 10–11; Hroub, op. cit. pp. 36–41; Zaki Chehab, *Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*. New York: Natin Books, 2007, pp. 23–27.

<sup>11</sup> For reference, see the Article 3 of the Hamas Charter.

<sup>12</sup> Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2010, p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 45

<sup>14</sup> Tamimi, op. cit. p. 147;

<sup>15</sup> Paolo Caridi, *Hamas: From Resistance to Government?* Jerusalem: PASSIA, pp. 97–98; Tamimi, op. cit. p. 150.

<sup>16</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., pp. 69–75.

condition to join peace negotiations after the 1990s.

In a more practical way, the prolonged *hudna* (truce) with Israel has been offered by Hamas from its early years. It is one of the options that allow a situation similar to the proposed ceasefires of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This offer was first made by Sheikh Yāsīn in the mid-1990s and has regularly been repeated by Hamas political leaders. The objection to the idea of *hudna*, however, points out that the “prolonged” offer is defined to be 10 years, and the proposal was meant to include East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, demand the dismantling of settlements and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. These are conditions that are repeatedly refused by the Israeli side.<sup>17</sup>

### *3. Building relations with Arab and Islamic countries*

The relationship between Arab states and Hamas as well saw difficulty in the beginning. Hroub indicated four obstacles derived from Hamas’s political and historical legacy: Its origin in the Muslim Brotherhood, the existence of the PLO, the peace process, and the discourse of “Islamic fundamentalism.”<sup>18</sup> First, because of its mother organization, Arab regimes were concerned about Hamas’s ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. It was “more of a psychological than a practical impediment,”<sup>19</sup> however, some of the regimes, such as Syria, held strong disbelief in the Muslim Brotherhood, due to its own experience in bloody clashes with the movement.

Second, the widespread recognition of the PLO position hindered Hamas in developing its relations with Arab regimes. At the Arab League summit in Rabat in 1974, the PLO gained the recognition of being the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Its discourse established the PLO’s position as an exclusive power, and the PLO had thus consolidated its position in the Arab and Islamic world. Therefore, no Arab states endorsed Hamas setting itself up as an alternative to the PLO.

Third, the peace negotiations ensuing since the Madrid Conference in 1991 produced a general Arab consensus regarding the process, shifting away from the mood of a military option for which Hamas was mobilizing support. Following the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in 1994, informal ties emerged between Israel and other countries as well and further disturbed Hamas in gaining support for the resistance movement.

Forth, and finally, the discourse of “Islamic fundamentalism” hampered developing relations with Arab countries. This was mainly advocated by the United States and Western countries after the end of the Cold War as a substitute for any potential threat. The definition of “terrorism” was expanded, and Hamas was placed on their lists of “terrorist organizations.” This appointment deterred many states and institutions from contacting Hamas as a diplomatic partner.

A chance to overcome these conditions happened before long. The Gulf War in 1991 changed the tide for the PLO,

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<sup>17</sup> Milton-Edwards and Farrell, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Hroub 2000, op .cit., pp. 147–152.

<sup>19</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., p. 148.



and Hamas could take advantage of this occasion to develop its relations with Arab and Islamic countries. In its response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the PLO supported Iraq inevitably because of the linkage strategy of Saddām Ḥussein: He linked the Iraqi occupation to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and demanded its withdrawal in exchange for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. The strong grassroots support of Ḥussein compelled Yasser Arafat to take his position in favor of Iraq. In contrast, Hamas as a nascent organization had more free choice and tried to keep a balanced position in order to avoid the following problems.<sup>20</sup> It “attempted to stay within the general rhetoric of condemning the intervention of Western forces in the region” and responded in tune with development.<sup>21</sup> Hamas appointed an official representative headed by Ibrahim Ghosheh for the first time and joined the delegation team formed by several Islamic movements in the Gulf countries.

As a result, Hamas was not strongly affected by the bilateral Arab disputes and maintained contact both with Iraq and Kuwait. It succeeded in achieving its position among Arab and Islamic countries, in contrast to the PLO, which suffered from not only diplomatic but also fiscal problems deriving from its severed ties with several Gulf countries. The post-war situation urged Arafat to step into the peace talks of the Madrid Conference. He tried to regain international recognition of its position by being a partner to negotiations with Israel. However, this decision again favored Hamas to some extent. Apart from the majority of Arab countries, Iran condemned the move from their position as a supporter of the Islamic cause in Palestine and preferred to build relations with Hamas rather than Fatah. The Hamas office was opened in Tehran in February 1992.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the PLO representative office was broken into in 1994 by students and demonstrators who belonged to the Revolutionary Guard, and the PLO was described as “agents of Israel and the Americans.”<sup>23</sup> The Iranian leadership decided to terminate its stale relationship with the PLO and started a fresh relationship with Hamas and Islamic jihad.

Another country that has built a strong relationship with Hamas was Syria. Syria's President, Ḥāfīz al-Asad, had tense relations with Arafat from the 1970s, and after the PLO's forced departure from Lebanon, Syria began to show sympathy toward his rivals in Fatah such as Saīd Mūsā Maragha and Nimr Sāliḥ.<sup>24</sup> They opened their independent office for Fataḥ al-Intifāḍa in Damascus in 1983. Similarly, Hamas opened its information office in Damascus and moved some of its members in the political bureau to Syria, so as to let them join an “Alliance of the 10 Palestinian Factions” against the peace process.<sup>25</sup>

While Hamas was added to the list of terrorist organizations by the U.S. State Department on January 24, 1995, Syria had been criticized for hosting them in their capital. After each attack, Tel Aviv made accusations against Syria and sometimes even applied pressure by flying Israeli warplanes near the palace of the President. In response,

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-François Legrain, “A Defining Moment: Palestinian Islamic Fundamentalism,” in ed. James Piscatori, *Islamic Fundamentalism and the Gulf Crisis*. Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991, pp. 70–88.

<sup>21</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., pp. 145, 162–165.

<sup>22</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., pp. 176–177; Chehab, op. cit., pp. 140–143.

<sup>23</sup> Chebab, op. cit., pp. 140–141.

<sup>24</sup> Saīd Mūsā Maragha is better known by *nom de guerram* “Abū Mūsā,” and Nimr Sāliḥ is better known as “Abū Ṣliḥ. They founded Fataḥ al-Intifāḍa in 1983 under sponsorship by Syria.

<sup>25</sup> Chebab, op. cit., p. 145.

Syria maintained that the organizations—including Hamas, Islam Jihad, and PFLP-GC—and its leaders stay in Syria for media and political purposes, not to carry out military operations. In his conversation with Dennis Ross, U.S. special Middle East coordinator under President Bill Clinton, Syrian President Ḥāfīz al-Asad, explained the reason why he accepted their refuge, saying “Because I owe it to the Palestinians.”<sup>26</sup> This relationship came to an end in January 2012 after the eruption of turmoil in Syria following the successive revolts known as the “Arab Spring” in 2011.

#### *4. After the PLC election in 2006: Resumed fighting over the charter and international reactions*

On January 25, 2006, the second national election was held in Palestine for the Palestinian Legislative Council. For the first time, Hamas participated in the national election, though its success was expected to be limited. The voting turnout was high enough to cover 77%, and the procedure was assured to be fair by international observers. The results were surprising however, showing Hamas’s victory, gaining a majority of seats in the parliament (74 out of 132).

In Gaza City, a stronghold base of Hamas, the sounds of victory songs and gunshots punctuated the air, competing with the high-pitched ululating of the refugee camps’ elderly women—a traditional scene of celebration in the Middle East. On the other hand, Fatah supporters were unable to contain their shock and anger, while some of them turned into mobs storming the parliamentary buildings in Gaza.<sup>27</sup> However, international reactions brought the most devastating results, as their decision to enforce economic sanctions on the Hamas government disabled the normal handling of its budget.

The second day after the election, the Israel government declared its intention not to negotiate with the Hamas government. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice confirmed the U.S. policy of demanding that Hamas halt its violence. On January 31, a quartet mediator team for the Middle East peace process—consisting of U.S., the U.N., the EU, and Russia—required that Hamas recognize three conditions: The recognition of Israel, the renunciation of violence, and adherence to previous diplomatic agreements, and suggested the possibility of suspending their one billion dollars of aid to the Palestinian Authority.<sup>28</sup> At any rate, these were all expected developments, as judged from the preceding process regarding peace negotiations and Hamas. Moreover, what caused direct damage to the Hamas government was the suspension of VAT,<sup>29</sup> as this effectively froze a substantial part of its government revenue, for a moment. The suspended funds amounted to around 5.5 million dollars, and the government could not help suspending the payment of governmental employee salaries.

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<sup>26</sup> Chebab, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> Chebab, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–12.

<sup>28</sup> Graham Usher, “The Democratic Resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Elections,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 35-3 (Spring 2006), pp. 30–32.; “Chronology January 16, 2006–April 15, 2006,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 537–568.

<sup>29</sup> VAT (Value Added Tax) is a consumption tax levied on goods and services. “Under the operation of the quasi-customs union, Israel collects a duty on foreign imports entering the West Bank and Gaza, as well as a VAT for Israeli products destined to the Palestinians.” “Indirect taxes like VAT are collected and transferred to each side after the reconciliation of accounts.” Middle East and North Africa Region Social and Economic Development Group, World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza Public Expenditure Review Volume 2: From Crisis to Greater Fiscal Independence*. Report No. 38207-WBG, 2007, p. 7.

Expecting these reactions, Hamas had presented an electoral platform in fall of 2005, indicating their intention to follow the due process of parliamentary democracy. After the election, it also invited Fatah to form a coalition government and suggested a draft program.<sup>30</sup> This was a performance intended to show their readiness to join the political process while sustaining a military struggle. In other words, Hamas tried to pursue the strategic combination of “the bullet and ballot.”<sup>31</sup> However, these offers were totally ignored, and the international community shunned this method of dealing with this newly formed government.

As the sanctions caused severe economic conditions, Hamas was compelled to pursue its own diplomacy with countries other than Europe and the U.S. Among the aforementioned quartet, Russia was the only country that sustained its relationship with the Hamas government. Invited in February, Hamas officials visited Moscow on March 4 and got their promise of official aid from Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. In addition, the Hamas government sent delegations to South American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela, asking for their cooperation.

In addition, Gulf countries, such as Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, showed their support of the Hamas government and pledged 200 million dollars in donations. Qatar was one of the most willing supporters and covered most of the money allotted in their first remittances. However, the pledged funds failed to reach the government because of the predetermined framework of the economic sanctions; the Arab League’s bank account in Cairo was already frozen and could not send money to the Palestinian Authority.

The general trend in the international community remained critical of the Hamas government, and its isolated position compelled them to seek another support network. Iran became one of its most trusting partners, giving substantial financial and moral support at the same time. Iran’s support of Hamas reflected Iran’s opposition to the peace process after the Madrid Conference—since which the Iranian government severed its ties with the PLO and looked for an alternative Palestinian party. A Hamas office was opened in Tehran in 1992, just several months after the beginning of the peace process.<sup>32</sup> After the secession of aid by the U.S. and EU, Iran reacted with its pledge of 50 million dollars in aid to the Hamas government. As was condemned by European countries, Iran also exported weapons to the Gaza Strip, among which several cargoes were detected.<sup>33</sup> In comparison, concerning the link with international terrorism organizations, Hamas has denied any institutional connections. Hamas also repeated verbal disagreements with global jihadi organizations, such as al-Qaeda. There have even been armed clashes with jihadist groups since 2009 in the Gaza Strip.<sup>34</sup>

In June 2007, Hamas fighters swept through the Gaza Strip, seizing Fatah-controlled security headquarters and government offices. The clashes incurred many fatal injuries. This drew worldwide condemnation and led President

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<sup>30</sup> Khaled Hroub, “A ‘New Hamas’ through its New Documents,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 35-4, (Summer 2006), pp. 6–27.

<sup>31</sup> Milton-Edwards and Farrell, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>32</sup> Hroub 2000, op. cit., pp. 176–180.

<sup>33</sup> Chebab, op. cit., pp. 167–172.

<sup>34</sup> Milton-Edwards and Farrell, op. cit., p. 13.

Abbas to dissolve the Hamas-led government and to swear-in another administration in the West Bank. The split of government then continued for more than six years. These developments basically derived from the internal conflict of Palestinians. However, it cannot be denied that pressure from the international community played a significant role in the split, as was shown by the denial of the recognition of the elected government. The denial meant the paralysis of international relations for Hamas, and it urged them to seek an alternative relationship with countries other than those in the EU and the U.S.

### *Conclusion*

This paper reviews Hamas's international relations from its pre-historical background as the Muslim Brotherhood until the results of the PLC election in 2006. As is shown, Palestinian internal politics were developed consistently in interaction with the international community. The interventions by other Arab countries as well as the U.S. and other European countries affected this and set the framework for political development.

In 1940, the British mandate controlled daily life in this region, and the independence movement of Israel shook the preceding stability of coexistence among religions and ethnicities. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was greatly concerned with Palestine as well and sent a delegation and opened its branch in Palestine even before the war in 1948. After the war, Palestine was split into areas controlled by Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. The Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine pursued its activities under the influence of these powers.

Hamas was established in 1987 in reaction to the eruption of the First Intifāda. Its charter, issued in the subsequent year, was extremely controversial for the international community because of its strong basis in religious principles. Among them, Hamas's militarism and its possibility of peace talks with Israel attracted substantial attention. Hamas itself has indicated the possibility of a situation conducive to ceasefire and negotiation, but this has neither been recognized nor appreciated because of typical vague expressions.

In the beginning, Hamas saw difficulty in developing its relations with Arab countries as well. This was a result of the historical background of Palestinian politics, which had evolved around the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The situation changed after the Gulf War and after the beginnings of the peace process since the Madrid Conference in 1991. The PLO lost its political leverage because of its choice to align itself politically with the Iraqi government. The negotiations with Israel promoted support from the U.S., Europe, and most Arab countries, while there were several countries such as Iran and Syria that opposed the process, providing alternative support to Hamas.

In January 2006, Hamas joined the second PLC election and won with unexpected results. It then became the dominant party of parliament and formed a new government. However, the international community reacted severely, as initiated by Israel, the U.S., and European countries. They suspended the planned financial aid and required that Hamas recognize Israel, renounce terrorism, and adhere to the previous diplomatic agreements.

Suffering from its fiscal predicament, the Hamas government began to pursue its own diplomatic relations. Russia, Iran, and Qatar came to be pivotal partners and continued financial aid to the Gaza Strip. The following split of the government lead to the bilateral diplomacy of Palestinians: One side by Fatah with the U.S. and European countries, with the other by Hamas with Russia and several Middle Eastern countries.

This study is positioned as preliminary research regarding Hamas's international relationships in contemporary periods. The basic conditions of its organization and in developing relations with other countries are investigated. Further study is required based on this framework and will be pursued by documental and field research.