The Future Geopolitical Legitimacy of Islamism:
The Case of Hamas

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"The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil."

-Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, page 32.

"The Palestinians are the first people in the history of humanity to embrace terror and genocide as a way of life. Palestinian schools train kindergarteners and first graders to aspire to murder innocent Jews by blowing themselves up alongside them, and then tell the children that if they're lucky enough to have male genitalia they will go to heaven and be rewarded with 72 virgins to attend their every whim. Palestinian parents murder their own children by telling them to kill Jewish children so that Allah can receive them. This is the sickest culture on the face of the earth, and the fact that it is supported by secular leftists in Europe and America reveals the terminal sickness, as well, of those who crusade in the name of 'social justice'."

—David Horowitz from Atlas Shrugs 2000 website
http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/pales
tine_peacemakers_spit/index.html

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The January 2006 democratic election of the Islamist organization Hamas to the Palestinian parliament took many, including most Palestinians, by surprise. Though this election was not a result of U.S. involvement, American hopes of democratizing the Middle East seemed to be bearing some fruit. In fact, at the outset, several western governments firmly supported the idea of democratic elections in the Occupied Territories, seemingly unmoved by Hamas's participation. Heralded as one of the first democratically elected Islamist parties, Hamas promptly came under international scrutiny. Western nations demanded that Hamas renounce its violent rhetoric and practice against Israel and adopt a framework unified within the Palestinian Authority.

As a result of their refusal to recognize Israel, reject violence, or respect past agreements with Israel, and ultimately due to the categorical description of Hamas as a terrorist organization, international donors and actors in the peace process suspended all economic aid to the Occupied Territories. The aid boycott continued even after February 2007, when, by invitation from the Saudi Arabian King Abdullah, Abbas and the Hamas backed Prime Minister, Ismail Haniya, signed a unity deal in Mecca. The "Arab Unity Government" deal stipulated that Hamas formally

resign its dominant position in parliament and merge into the Palestinian Authority. Hamas complied, yet the international economic boycott continues, drastically worsening the already impoverished condition of the Occupied Territories.

A significant root of this predicament—that the Palestinians and the peace process now face—stems from the fact that several western governments have viewed Hamas strictly as a terrorist group. This view persists even though now Hamas is politically legitimate for many in Palestine, where they received 76 out of 132 parliamentary seats. Considering the US has been the key player in negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is no surprise that their view of Hamas as a terrorist organization holds the most sway in international discourse. Nevertheless, the recent American proclamation that the critical absence of democracy is a major source of regional repression and unrest seems hypocritical when the United States rejects the results of democratic elections.

Another crucial aspect maintaining the categorical view of Hamas as a terrorist group is a product of the post-9/11 geopolitical environment. Particularly in the rhetoric of the Global War on Terror, simplifications thrive in popular analyses of Islamism. One expression

associates territorial political struggles conducted through acts of terrorism with the real global threat of the decentralized terrorist network of al-Qa'ida. Another expression interprets Islamist terrorism as a manifestation of inherent Muslim antipathy.

Certainly, in any type of causal examination, some simplification is indeed necessary. In the words of Max Weber,

> an exhaustive causal investigation of any concrete phenomenon in its full reality is not only practically impossible—it is simply nonsense…what is really going on in a society is more like interpreting a constellation of symptoms than tracing a chain of causes. (Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 70)

In a manner of speaking, the "symptoms" of Islamist "society" appear uniform: jihadist terrorism conducted against established states, the rejection of western ideals such as democracy, and the establishment of Islamic based government, to name a few. While these sensitive themes superficially formulate Islamist "ethos", critical distinctions must be made. The simplification of Islamism into a monolithic enemy of western values ignores the distinct practice of groups like Hamas evident in its political participation and democratic success. The continued marginalization of Islamists unconcerned with "eliminating the West" will impede their deradicalization.

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It is my purpose in the following pages to show that the efficient categorization, as opposed to deliberate comprehension, of the Islamist Other, filtered through shortsighted political voices and popular Western images, neglects the empirical reality of political and socio-cultural fragmentations and multiplicities. I first examine and synthesize what I consider to be the two major theoretical approaches to understanding the modern phenomenon of Islamism with its paired phenomenon of terrorism.

In the following chapter, I provide a short history of modern Palestine. I discuss the necessary historical and political developments. I provide an outline of the development of the Palestinian identity of resistance, or Palestinian nationalism: from Pan-Arabism to particular Palestinian secular nationalism, and from secular to Islamic nationalism. Lastly, I sketch the evolution of Palestinian society and politics into the environment it is in today.

In the next chapter, I trace the origins and development of Islamism. Starting with a short account of the three ideologues typically associated with the modern emergence of Islamism, I then portray the distinctions between the concepts of fundamentalism and religious

nationalism. Next, I discuss prominent historical developments that have influenced the increasing appeal of Islamism. Ultimately, I show that even though there may be assorted 'Islamist trends' that comprise anti-imperialist, anti-western, and anti-Israeli sentiments, these are a result of material and geopolitical factors rather than deep history or a clash of civilizations.

Chapter four focuses on the creation, establishment and legitimacy of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. The first section of the chapter looks at Hamas's mother organization, the Muslim Brotherhood. The chapter then traces the development of its Palestinian members up to the outbreak of the first uprising, or *Intifada,* when Hamas came into political and military existence. The following sections traces the development of Hamas as an Islamist resistance organization through increasing politico-military pragmatism and ideological validation provided by its social network. In the last section, I provide an outline of its search for and limited achievement of local, regional and international legitimacy.

In the concluding chapter, I address the future geopolitical legitimacy of Islamism. I do this by examining the Global War on Terror, American efforts of democratization and the possibility of Islamist inclusion.

Chapter 1: Establishing *a* Theoretical Perspective

In the wake of post-September 11 furors, geopolitical discourse thrives on the real and imaginary nemesis of Islamist terrorism. In efforts to provide the answer as to "why they hate us", the current of identifying terrorist organizations shifted to include more causal examinations of Islamism. In the post-traumatic phase following 9/11, western academics and political pundits broadcasted largely simplified analyses of this increasingly disenchanted constituency of geopolitics.

In this chapter, I explore the two main theoretical approaches to understanding Islamism. I first present the characteristic view of Islamism as considered through widely held political and academic accounts. This view interprets the Islamist phenomenon as either normative behavior of an inherent Muslim enmity or unified antipathy toward the West. In response to this "accepted view", often termed *essentialism*, or *Neo-Orientalism* by its detractors, I offer explanations based on an approach that sees the phenomenon as a result of modern, more material processes. Finally, by utilizing the concepts of *Third Worldism* and *Neo-Third Worldism*, I disaggregate the 'terrorist underworld' by distinguishing between territorially limited and globally fixated Islamisms.

The Essentialist Model

The emergence of academic and popular analyses focused on political Islam came after the Iranian revolution in 1979. Following this modern reinvention of Islam, standard explanations of Islamism rely heavily on such issues as the future of this East-West geopolitical relationship. In this respect, the "accepted view" of Islamist movements consists of identifying their potential threat to both Western values and institutions, and categorizing the movements according to their relation to terrorism.

The foundation of this theoretical framework rests on two assumptions: the concept of cultural stasis and the perception of a canalized Islamist trend (i.e., Islamists are indistinguishable). This approach can be defined as essentialism, for within this framework there is little mention of the influence of modern processes, such as: colonialism, economic instability, geopolitical inconsistency, or other less quantifiable current stimuli. Rather, the problem of Islamism springs from either Arab Muslim culture or the religion of Islam.

The "Clash of Civilizations"

In this model, the most prominent examinations of Islamism emanate from the "Clash of Civilizations" hypothesis. Some advocates of this model include Bernard

Lewis (2001), Samuel Huntington (1993), Robert Kaplan (1994), Patricia Crone (2003), Sam Harris (2005), and Daniel Pipes (1990; 2002). Bernard Lewis and others see Islam and especially Islamism as adversaries to "western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, the rule of law [and] democracy" (Khashan 1997: 10). Moreover, Islam has been culturally and historically central to the clash between Middle Eastern and western civilizations.

To support this view, some claim that Muslim and Islamist attitudes toward western ideals of modernity and the secular state can be traced to the early years of Islam. One of Patricia Crone's critical points is that the *ulama* (Islamic jurists) codified their tribally defined identity into the *shari'ah* (Islamic law), thus creating an antagonism to political authority (Tuastad 2003: 594). For these authors, this deep-rooted conflict with state sovereignty explains the weakness of Arab states and the antagonism Muslims have toward western ideals. The western ideal said to be the antithesis of Islam and Islamism is democracy. Daniel Pipes provides the empirical proof; he states "Muslim countries have the most terrorists and the fewest democracies in the world" (Sadowski 1993: 14).

For much of the 20th century, Islamic civilization had been restrained by Europe and the United States, first as a result of the colonization of the Middle East by European powers and later by the Cold War. Following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, Islamic civilization reassumed its adversarial position toward the West. For Huntington and others, Muslim civilization is now the main adversary in this ongoing "tribal conflict [now] on a global scale" (Tuastad 2003: 593).

In order to trace the development of this deep animosity, essentialist historians disregard modern geopolitical processes, especially colonialism, for "in the Middle East the impact of European imperialism was late, brief, and for the most part indirect" (Sadowski 1993: 20). Describing the outcome of the Iranian Revolution, Bernard Lewis said that the revolution was caused by a "historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judaeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both" (Lewis 2001: 26).

Essentialist analyses see Islamist terrorism as a manifestation of primitive aggression pinned against Western civilization (Tuastad 2003: 593). According to Robert Kaplan, an influential lecturer for the U.S. military,

> [i]n places where the Western Enlightenment
> has not penetrated and where there has always
> been mass poverty, people find liberation in
> violence…Physical aggression is part of being
> human. Only when people attain a certain
> economic, educational and cultural standard
> is this trait tranquilized. (Tuastad 2003:
> 593)

The fact that this viewpoint carries authority in popular political opinion can be seen in the manner in which western politicians and media interpret certain radical Islamist movements. Popular portrayals of Islamism suggest that certain groups characterize the whole of the Islamic world or Islamist trend. In the Middle East and North Africa, the prominence and apparent popular appeal of such groups as al-Qa'ida, especially following September 11, seems to indicate that a global coalition of Islamists are rising to confront the Western way of life.

These scholars assert that Islamists are all apart of the "terrorist underworld", which seeks a global jihad and the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate. Ultimately, Islamism is presenting western civilization with an insoluble clash. Also, because this antipathy is an historical remnant encoded in the formative years of Islam, there is no notion that the individual organizations should be seen as products of distinct contexts. The fact that the war following 9/11 is called the War on Terror, rather than

a war against al-Qa'ida, illustrates the simplistic western perception of political Islam.

Significantly, though, Daniel Pipes revises the idea of a "Clash of Civilizations" per se, by stating that it is more likely to be a clash within civilizations, between Islamism and moderate Arabs and/or Muslims (Pipes 2002). This is a critical distinction that divides good Muslims from bad Muslims. According to Mahmood Mamdani, this distinction is evident

> [in] the pages of the *New York Times* [which] now include[s] regular accounts distinguishing good from bad Muslims: good Muslims are modern, secular, and Westernized, but bad Muslims are doctrinal, antimodern, and virulent. (2004: 24)

He further states that this has "become the driving force of American foreign policy [in the Middle East] (2004: 23).

Nevertheless, the more popular works on political Islam and its terrorism do not often distinguish between good and bad Muslims. As stated by a more popular thinker, Sam Harris,

> [t]he response of the Muslim world to the events of September 11, 2001, leaves no doubt that a significant number of human beings in the twenty-first century believe in the possibility of martyrdom. [Thus, our problem is with Islam,] not merely with 'terrorism'. (2005: 28)

A Contextual Model

In reaction to essentialism, some scholars assert that exaggerating the significance of culture or religion in examinations of Islamism fails to recognize intricate modern historical and political relationships and processes. These simplified analyses, asserts Lisa Wedeen, have

> downplayed the heterogeneous ways people experience the social order within and among groups, while exaggerating the commonality, constancy and permanence of group beliefs and values. (2003: 60)

She proposes that essentialist explanations normalize Islamist identity by affixing the category with permanency, "rather than exploring the conditions under which such experiences of group identity come to seem natural when they do" (2003: 60).

Interestingly, both radical Islamists and those in the West who give some credence to the "Clash of Civilizations" worldview interpret history in deterministic terms, wherein one action or set of events sets in motion the future outcome of already determined behavior. This claim can be seen through the lens of the Iranian revolution. For the West, this event proved that Muslims are incapable of accepting western values; for Iranians and Muslims, the US coup deposing Mohammed Mosaddeq and reinstating the Shah

revealed western disdain for Iranian self-determination.

Moreover, ironically, Strindberg and Warn argue that al-

Qa'ida represents the "inverse version" of the

deterministic "Clash of Civilizations" theory:

> [t]o *al-Qa'ida* and its affiliates, the West
> and Islam represent fundamentally
> irreconcilable values that are pitted against
> each other in a struggle for cultural and
> religious supremacy and survival. (2005: 31)

According to an Israeli historian, Shaul Mishal

(2003), the essentialist account of Islamism can be defined

as a categorical, as opposed to a network approach, for it

> utilize[s] binary classifications that mark
> real or imaginary social attributes rather
> than relational patterns…[those using this]
> perspective typically depict social and
> political realities as two mutually
> exclusive, diametrically opposed categories,
> characterized by "either/or" relations.
> (2003: 569-70)

In other words, the reality that Islamists or Muslim

societies in general might be composed of webs of intricate

networks and complex systems with no discernible "whole"

escapes essentialist accounts that only seek to catalog

enemies in opposition to allies.

In Mishal's terms, the categorical approach interprets

Islamism as a self-imposed circumscribed phenomenon, not a

various and inconsistent reaction to modern processes. He

states that by overestimating the division between secular

liberalists and Islamists, categorical analyses depict enshrined antipathetic relationships, which fails to represent the empirical reality of divided loyalties and identities (Wedeen 2003: 59). As stated by Wedeen, the simplification of the supposed global threat

> [reifies] "Islam" [which] not only denies the empirical world of plurality and diversity, it also proves politically dangerous by making "Islam" into an object. (2003: 59-60)

"Neo-Orientalism" and "New Barbarism"

Other critics claim that the essentialist approach is a perpetuation of Colonial era Imperialist thought. Their critiques focus on the conception of Neo-Orientalism, and are based on the work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1979). Said asserted that popular depictions of the Middle East during the 18th and 19th centuries portrayed exotic, yet irrational societies wholly devoted to tradition and ritual. He claimed that these portrayals were a powerful construction of imperialist thought toward Orientals, whom Said termed as Europeans' Other. For Said, this constructed romantic image of Others allowed for and even justified imperialist exploitation of Arab and Asian communities, as they were seen as unable to accomplish either modernity or economic stability without European influence.

Critics of Huntington and company assert that the

essentialist approach should be termed Neo-Orientalism because it persists in portraying Arab and Muslim societies as unable to become modern pluralistic states and unable to contribute on equal footing to international processes. Perhaps most crucial is that the Neo-Orientalist approach also interprets Islamism as a fused manifestation of either deep historical or modern religio-cultural antipathy toward Western institutions. In the same manner that Orientalists interpreted Others beginning in the age of Colonialism, the Neo-Orientalists posit reductionist accounts of the new power struggle between the West and Islamism (Sadowski 1993; Strindberg and Warn 2005; Tuastad 2003).

One of the foundations of Neo-Orientalist thought is the assertion that Muslims, particularly Islamists, have been persistently antagonistic to western institutions, such as democracy. This, again, is nothing new. According to Sadowski, "[t]he thesis that Middle Eastern societies are resistant to democratization had been a standard tenet of Orientalist thought for decades" (1993: 14).

Another aspect of the new Orientalism involves descriptions of a 'terrorist underworld' that often lack criticism of Western involvement in the region. Neo-Orientalist jihad discourse portrays Islamist violence as if it had arisen out of a pre-programmed cultural response

mechanism. In the context of the Global War on Terror, the Neo-Orientalist analyses circulate the conception of a globally threatening Islamist "terrorist underworld" by simplifying all Islamist movements into the categorical definition of terrorism, which tautologically reinforces the "Clash of Civilizations" theory. Dag Tuastad argues that the negation of political motivations in Neo-Orientalist descriptions of Islamist terrorism should be analyzed under what Paul Richard calls "New Barbarism", which is defined as

> presentations of political violence that omit political and economic interests and contexts when describing that violence, and present the violence as resulting from traits embedded in local cultures. (Tuastad 2003: 592)

Although more reasonable essentialists make distinctions between Islam and Islamism, claiming Islam is a religion of peace that Islamists have usurped for their own sadistic purposes (Pipes 2002). All the same, their analyses of the "culture" of Islamism are still markedly reductionist as they suggest that Islamist terrorists share transcendent goals, what Strindberg and Warn call a "terrorist code of ethics". This, they say, is

> grafted onto the equally ingrained Orientalist ideas of "the Arab mind" and "the nature of Islam." The result is a range of interlocking neo-Orientalist imaginings of a

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global Arab-Islamic terrorist cabal, a
monolithic and evil Enemy Other, and the
negation of "Western" culture and values
confirming Samuel Huntington's clash of
civilizations theory. (Strindberg and Warn
2005: 24-25)

Third Worldism versus Neo-Third Worldism

As mentioned previously, one of the crucial factors
overlooked in Neo-Orientalist accounts is the disparity
between Islamist organizations. To be sure, there are some
ideologically united, though structurally decentralized,
under the banner of a genuine global jihad against western
ideals, interests and institutions. These largely operate
within the disturbed and unstable network of Osama bin
Laden and al-Qa'ida. However, some of the most prominently
vilified Islamists such as Hamas are devoted to a
territorial jihad and are therefore linked to forms of
religious nationalism, a concept that is not unique to
Islamism. These Islamists are more concerned with states
and governments than with ideals or theoretical
institutions.

Although the discrepancy between territorial and
global jihad is quite conspicuous to some, most
geopolitical support and justification for the GWOT, in
contrast to a territorially limited war on terror, subsists
on the categorization of all Islamist movements as if they

all shared a "code of ethics". For Strindberg and Warn, "the neo-Orientalist narrative…can only survive if *removed* from the local and specific," when the "nature and agendas" of these two distinct Islamisms are compared the "image of a homogeneous and monolithic terrorist enemy loses all credibility" (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 26).

To distinguish between the two types of terrorists in general, Abrahams (2006) concentrates on the disparity between groups that have limited objectives versus those with maximalist objectives. For Abrahams, the limited demands are either to:

> evict a foreign military from occupying another country, or (2) win control over a piece of territory for the purpose of national self-determination. (2006: 53)

The demands of the maximalist group are based on ideology, not territory:

> in this scenario, the group is attacking a country to either (1) transform its political system (usually to either Marxist or Islamist), or (2) annihilate it because of its values. (2006: 53)

In agreement with Abrahams' distinctions, Strindberg and Warn distinguish between territorially limited Islamism and globally fixated Islamism. The former is sited in the context of postcolonial, anti-imperialist Third Worldism while global Islamism is sited in what some have called

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neo-Third Worldism.

Third Worldism, according to Robert Malley, is a "specific ideological and political construct linked intimately to colonialism and its overthrow" (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 27). These movements are sited in the "space in which the oppressed (colonized and poor)…[are] able to reappropriate precious means of discourse and of action (Strindberg and Warn 2005:27). For the Islamists of Hamas, in addition to defining themselves within and explicitly against the Israeli occupation, have "adopted…and incorporated themselves into…a national project, consistent with the "outreach" approach of [T]hird Worldism" (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 29). Critically, for Hamas, "[b]ecause the struggle is territorially defined and politically limited, it can be *brought to an end.* (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 33)

In contrast, Neo-Third Worldism, as formulated by Vedi R. Hadiz, "define[s] non-Islamist counterparts as enemies that must be confronted regardless of any commonalities within a 'national dimension'" (Strindberg 2005: 26). These movements offer a "more inward-looking version" to Third Worldism. Neo-Third Worldism is further

> characterized by indigenism, reactionary populism and strong inclination towards cultural insularism…nostalgia for a

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> romanticized, indigenous, pre-capitalist
> past. (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 28)

For al-Qa'ida, not only do they define their struggle as global and eternal, they also interpret western institutions and ideals, rather than states or governments, as their profaned enemies. In other words, they do not define good versus bad westerners or desire to amend their antipathetic view of the "West". The most crucial elements distinguishing Third and Neo-Third Worldism, according to Strindberg and Warn, are that the

> struggles of the former are territorially based, against a *specific enemy*, and rooted in the needs and aspirations of *specific peoples*. The *specific national projects* of these movements aim at developing institutions and empowering their constituents; they stand accountable to those they represent; and they form part of, and cooperate within, a pluralistic spectrum of ideologies and creeds. In sharp contrast… al-Qa'ida's struggle is rooted in Wahhabi theology…and the cumulative experiences of Afghanistan, the Balkans, Somalia… Bin Laden's movement stands accountable to *no specific constituency* because it limits its struggle to *no specific territory*; it seeks to create an *alternative* to the institutions and thought of modernity; and it rejects, other than on tactical grounds, political and religious pluralism. (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 26)

In the end, the distinctions between Islamists defined in the context of territorial jihad and those espousing a universal or global jihad is difficult to portray in

popular accounts because it cannot be easily reduced to a political slogan or media sound bite. Even so, the distinction between these two should be a first step toward increasing awareness of the immediate threats posed by the universal-maximalist decentralized Islamists such as al-Qa'ida.

Chapter 2: A Short History of Modern Palestine

Introduction

Any examination of the developments in the current environment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires an understanding of its context and history. This is crucial due to the nature of combating nationalist narratives; the Palestinian-Israeli accounts are equally polemical. The Israeli account of the 1948 war depicts the outcome as independence, while the Arabs consider it the Disaster, or *al-Nakba*. This foundation has enshrined a mutual stigmatization of the Other: independence versus disaster, defense versus Occupation, or terrorism versus resistance, etc. This construction of antithetical identities obscures the complexities of both societies.

A large portion of the tension has arisen from geopolitical precedence. The cause of Israel is championed by the United States who continues to provide economic, military, and political support. Before the end of the Cold War, support for the Palestinians was a matter of political geography. Since the US and its allies supported Israel, the Soviets and their allies aligned with the Palestinians. Following the end of the Cold War, support of this kind disappeared. As a result, discussions of a settlement are now heavily dependent on American involvement.

History of Modern Palestine

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the Allied powers partitioned the Middle East. This materialized out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which established British and French Mandates within the region. France took Syria and Lebanon, while Britain gained control of Palestine. Apart of the British mandate was the rising population of Zionist settlers, who had begun fleeing Russian and Eastern European pogroms starting in late 19th century. In 1917, prior to the end of the World War I, Lord Balfour declared Britain's full support of the Jewish settlement of Palestine.

However, this commitment to the Zionist movement came at a cost to the British as numerous militant organizations sought the overthrow of the Mandate and the establishment of an independent Israel. As Zionist activities became more damaging to the security of the Mandate, Britain issued the 1936 Peel commission proposing a partition of Jewish and Arab areas. Both sides quickly rejected this. Palestinians converged to put and end to the Mandate's policy of supporting Jewish settlement and land purchases. This came to be known as the Great Arab Revolt. It marked the first concentrated Palestinian resistance to Zionism, and thus

the beginnings of Palestinian nationalism. In the next ten years, though Britain had attempted to limit Jewish settlement following the Great Arab Revolt, tension increased.

The most significant event to affect the outcome of this growing conflict took place in World War II. International outrage over the Holocaust has had lasting significance in both perceptions of and negotiations between Jews, Palestinians, and other interested parties. In the post-war period there was increased Jewish immigration that produced further tension with the Mandate. As a result of these converging factors, Britain issued a statement announcing the end of the Mandate by May 1948.

Following the end of the Second World War with an outlook on the approaching expiration of the Mandate, the newly formed United Nations created a special committee to determine the future of Palestine. The outcome was the United Nations Partition Plan of November 1947 that called for two independent states, Arab and Jewish. The Arab community rejected this partition plan, which they saw as conceding national rights to Western supported Jewish immigrants. The Zionist community accepted it. The product of the May 1948 inauguration of the State of Israel was the first Arab-Israeli War.

However, most Arab leaders felt no severe threat from the Zionist community, thus the military support sent by the Arab states remained weak and inconsistent. In the end, no Arab state sent a great number of troops to aid the Palestinians, and those that did send were often under armed, unprepared, and in many cases cut off from replenishment and intelligence. The Zionists, although initially weaker, succeeding in bypassing a British imposed arms embargo and eventually gaining a stronger force than the Arab states. The end of the war commenced with an armistice agreement between Israel and Egypt in February 1949; within the year, other Arab countries followed suit. As a result of its victory, Israel gained control of much more land than the UN partition plan had allocated.

The material, socio-cultural and political devastation to the new Palestinian community was substantial. The most enduring consequence of the Arab-Israeli war was the creation of nearly a million refugees, who either fled or were forced to neighboring countries; primarily Jordan, where they quickly made up a majority of the population. The Palestinians in the north transferred to nearby Lebanon. Some were fortunate enough to remain in what became Israel and later acquired Israeli citizenship. Those still inside the Palestinian territories remained in one of

three regions: Gaza Strip, West Bank or the Golan Heights, which came under the administration of Egypt, Transjordan, and Syria, respectively.

In any case, Palestinians began to define themselves in entirely new terms, mostly as refugees in opposition to the Zionist entity—as they refused to recognize Israel. Even today, refugees make a large percentage of the population in the Territories. The community of refugees with the most force throughout this ongoing conflict is found in the Gaza region. In 1949, the international community united to offer support to the refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). This relief organization created specifically for Palestine has provided educational, medical care, and other social services throughout much of the second half of the 20th century.

While the material and psychological results of the 1948 are certainly far-reaching, the most polemical disputes over territorial legitimacy and international recognition came as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War. In line with regional aspirations of the President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt invaded and overtook the Suez Canal, effectively cutting Israel off from its main shipping harbor and forcing UN peacekeeping forces out of the

neutral territory of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel made counterattacks against Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. In six days time, Israel advanced well beyond its 1948 borders: for a short time annexing the Sinai Peninsula, and beginning the forty-year Occupation of the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the West Bank.

Again, though Palestinians began to define themselves distinctly in opposition to Israel following the 1948 war, it is primarily the result of the 1967 war that shapes the continual struggle for identity and international legitimacy for the Palestinians. From 1967 forward, Palestinians began to understand their identities as framed by resistance. The next forty years of the struggle witnessed several phases in the evolution of Palestinian nationalism.

Identity of Resistance: Palestinian Nationalism

The rise of Arab nationalism following the Arab defeat of 1948 was based on the ideology rather typical of Third Worldist movements. That is to say, the movements that overtook colonial state structures in the Arab world defined themselves on the basis of ethnic rather than religious identities. In addition, the political objectives of Pan-Arabism arising in the early 1950s promoted transnational ethnic solidarity and diluted the role of

religion. Gamal Abdel Nasser and his initiated Egyptian Free Officers Revolution of 1952 brought the whole region into the Third Wordlist movement. Nasser, the instigator of the first conspicuous form of Pan-Arab nationalism, or Nasserism, also established Palestine as a central question to the whole region.

After the dissolution of regional support following the Six-Day war, Palestinians began formulating their own, distinctly Palestinian, nationalist movements (Khashan 1997: 13). The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in 1964, but its birth pangs came out of the 1967 war. For both the PLO, an organization originally composed of various resistance groups, and Fatah, the organization that came to dominate the PLO, the initial diaspora and the later occupation of the Palestinian people were critically defining contexts.

Much like Hamas, Fatah originates from the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian controlled Gaza Strip (Hroub 2000: 24-25). The presence of Fatah, and later of Hamas, in Gaza is particularly important because for the following forty years, Palestinians inside the Occupied Territories largely identified themselves as refugees. It is in the refugee camps, especially in Gaza, that most forms of Palestinian nationalism thrive as a means of coping with

the material circumstances of occupation and poverty. Since 1967, the issues of refugees and displacement have been key in Palestinian nationalist movements, both secular and Islamist.

The proclamation of Fatah's armed struggle platform transformed the organization from reviled refugees to esteemed Third Wordlist revolutionaries and allowed it to dominate the PLO. Fatah matured at a time when there was worldwide appeal of revolutionary struggle. Therefore, Arafat, along with others later, succeeded in linking the Palestinian struggle with other liberation movements such as those in Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam (Baumgarten 2005: 33).

Over time, this mantra of armed struggle both defined and circumscribed the PLO and Fatah. The paradigmatic focus on revolution, liberation and the exiled Palestinian community frustrated possibilities of developing a viable civil society crucial for the development of state structures (Abu-Amr 1994: 80). This was revealed by the lack of practical political programs implemented when the PLO actually achieved legitimacy following the early 1990s peace process.

The real culmination of external Arab support took place during the third Arab-Israeli war in 1973, when Arab

members of OPEC set an oil embargo directed at western supporters of Israel. After the eventual failure of these events, Yasir Arafat, the leader of the PLO, began to accommodate the idea of diplomacy and politics. From 1973 until the outbreak of the first uprising, the PLO, even though it continued to conduct what it called symbolic acts of violence that were internationally recognized as terrorism, it nevertheless made considerable reductions in its violent rhetoric and practice in regards to Israel.

In terms of their local support, the most disastrous blow to the PLO came as a result of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, where they had been based since 1970. This invasion and eventual occupation of Lebanon forced them further abroad to Tunisia, isolating them from their Palestinian supporters. This event had further consequences for PLO's maximalist demands. Thus, each successive year brought more and more pragmatism to PLO's violent rhetoric of armed struggle at all costs (Baumgarten 2005: 35-36).

In 1988, at the Algiers meeting of the Palestinian National Congress, Arafat made the PLO's last revolutionary proclamation by calling for an independent Palestine. Interestingly, Arafat moved away from the PLO's former stance of the liberation of historic Palestine—from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River—by stating that the

new Palestinian state would be located in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as the capital. In this declaration, the PLO implicitly recognized Israel and accepted the Palestinian state of affairs before 1967 (Baumgarten 2005: 43).

Intifada I

The PLO's move away from the revolutionary struggle created a suspicious and frustrated Palestinian community, who had, since the Six Day War, also seen the gradually erosion of Arab support. In addition, due to the pervasive nature of the Occupation and Israeli intelligence, any revolutionary groups in Palestine had to conduct tactics in secrecy, which tended to factionalize the resistance. Also, the Occupation continued to wear down Palestinian society and economy, creating an environment of increasing hostilities toward Israel. In December 1987, an Israeli vehicle accidentally ran over four Palestinian teenagers at an Israeli checkpoint, sparking the first uprising.

The outbreak of the uprising, or *Intifada*, in 1987 came as a surprise to the exiled leadership of the PLO, though they did take advantage of their somewhat esteemed image as revolutionary leaders. However, the PLO cannot claim the *Intifada* as its own, for it emerged out of a new generation of young educated Palestinians who had grown up

in the Occupation.

The mass mobilization of the *Intifada* set off democratic traditions that were unforeseen; as a result of diverse participation there was enormous credit given to political and military pluralism. (Nusse 1998: 75; Abu-Amr 1996: 87-88) In short, the struggle became just what the PLO and others at least nominally envisioned all along, a truly national struggle.

The outbreak of the *Intifada* also brought the evolution of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood into Hamas. Their paradigm of resistance in the midst of the uprising and beyond is ideologically fused with the Islamic ethos of jihad. The influence of Islam provided sacred weight to Hamas's violent popular resistance. This became more obvious a year later in its Covenant, which called jihad a national duty.

Oslo Peace Process

During the latter years of the uprising, a mixture of factors in the region and the territories led to the framework for the first international peace process. For one, the successful mass mobilization of the *Intifada* was critical in establishing a voice for the Palestinians in Western media coverage. As the initially non-violent uprising escalated against repressive and largely

reactionary Israeli measures, media coverage offered a glimpse of the cruel reality of the Occupation.

Another crucial factor came as a result of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. During the Gulf War that followed, the American campaign to achieve stability in the region provided motivations to resolve the growing escalation of violence in the *Intifada*. Commencing in the 1991 Madrid Conference, the cosponsored American and Russian platform of objectives encouraged Palestinians, the Arab states, and Israel to adopt a framework for the peace process. The framework laid out in Madrid concluded in the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles.

One of the underlying objectives of Oslo was to end the *Intifada*. Another important objective of Oslo was the creation of a legitimate Palestinian government, the Palestinian Authority. Until Palestinian elections could be held, the PLO became interim leaders of the PA. In essence, Oslo was not a peace treaty but a Declaration of Principles designed to elicit future negotiations between the PLO and Israel (Abu-Amr 1994: 79-80). Many Palestinians and Israelis were expectedly hopeful of these first steps toward an end to the conflict.

The supporters of Oslo were therefore frustrated by the rejectionist organizations devoted to spoil the

process. Many of these rejectionists saw Oslo as concessionary as it ceded Palestinian rights and dignity. According to Ziad Abu-Amr, many opposed Oslo because it did not mention the illegality of continued Israeli settlements in proposed Palestinian land, the issue of a future capital in East Jerusalem, nor the right of return or reparations for Palestinian refugees (1994: 79-80).

The most enduring issue brought up by the rejectionists is the issue of the settlers, an indication of the ongoing military and civilian occupation. One scholar of the Palestinian question even claimed that Oslo not only failed to recognize the contentious reality of settlers, but during and after Oslo, "land confiscation and settlement expansion continued" (Zreik 2004: 73). Israeli settlement on Palestinian land is an international issue of great concern to those involved in putting an end to the conflict. The CIA puts the current figure of settlers in the Gaza Strip somewhere between 5,000 and 7,000, while other sources say it is much more (Miskel 2004: 52). Most of the settlers reside in the West Bank, where some 350,000-400,000 live in circumscribed communities in close range to the Green Line (sovereign Israel) and are guarded by either Israeli forces or militant settlers.

Many rejectionists blamed the PLO for the continued

Occupation and ultimately for failing the Palestinian cause. In the words of the late Palestinian-American, Edward Said,

> [t]he PLO has the distinction of being the first national liberation movement in history to sign an agreement to keep an occupying power in place. (Said and Rabbani 1995: 62)

Thus, even though Oslo created the Palestinian Authority to govern and protect the Territories, the Palestinians witnessed a paralyzed PA in regards to Israeli policies. According to Abu-Amr, in the wake of this agreement

> Israel and the PA were in exactly opposite positions: Israel post-Oslo continued to enjoy the benefits of sovereignty without bearing the burden of responsibilities, while the PA was given the responsibilities of statehood without being given any of the authority or powers of a state. (Zreik 2004: 73)

In the seven years that followed Oslo, Israel advanced the Occupation. This took place through increase settlement of the Territories, but also through Israeli military encroachments. The military initiatives were defined by Israel as "defense" measures conducted to suppress terrorist activities; to the Palestinians, they were seen as collective punishment (Miskel 2004: 52-54).

Al-Aqsa Intifada

Due to increasing settlers, collective punishment, and the creation of numerous checkpoints and secured highways

inside and between the Territories, there was a growing awareness in the public that Oslo had been a failure. In this setting, one rather isolated incident proved that Oslo had in fact been ineffectual. In September 2000, Ariel Sharon, the future Israeli prime minister, visited the *Haram al-Sharif*, the third holiest site of Islam. This act set off the second uprising.

During the initial stages of the a*l-Aqsa Intifada*, the few leaders and perpetrators realized the departure of type of broad support that had sustained the first uprising (Mansour 2002: 8). This uprising, in contrast, was primarily composed of poorer segments of the community and not cohesively maintained by any organization. Furthermore, as a result of Israeli defenses against the violent aspects of the uprising, the territories were effectively cut off from each other, deepening the already impoverished socioeconomic condition and fragmenting the organizations in the *Intifada*. According to Camille Mansour, these defense measures consisted of:

> the destruction of hundreds of homes and tens of thousands of fruit-bearing and other trees that happen to be located near colonies, bypass roads, or military checkpoints; the use of live ammunition against unarmed demonstrators; preplanned assassinations that kill not only the targeted individuals…; disproportionate use of war equipment... against men armed with ordinary rifles; the

bombing, including by F-16 fighter planes, of
buildings belonging to the Palestinian
Authority. (2002: 6)

Within the first year of *al-Aqsa*, the September 11
attacks occurred. Initially, Palestinian leaders, including
Hamas, aligned themselves with American efforts to track
down the perpetrators of 9/11 (Seitz 2001: 4-6). This
happened partly due to the perception that America's War on
Terror, if gone awry, could backfire for the Palestinians;
in their muddled counterterrorism efforts, America and
Israel could continue to categorize resistance to the
Occupation as terrorism. In addition, according to Mansour,
the Palestinian leadership realized their part in

America's need for calm in the Middle East
and for Arab support. By lining up behind
Washington at this delicate juncture, the
Palestinian leadership wanted to show that it
held one of the keys for American access to
the Middle East. (Mansour 2002: 15)

In other respects, as Israel was facing increasingly
chaotic suicide violence and relatively less international
criticism as a result of 9/11, Prime Minister Sharon was
briefly able to redefine their counterterrorism within the
framework of the GWOT. According to Miskel,

Israel…succeeded in depicting the suicide
bombers as terrorists…[thus drawing] the eyes
of the media, and hence of the Israeli and
American publics, away from Israel's
repressive measures. (2004: 54)

However, the US condemned Israel's heavy-handed measures

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against the Palestinians as exploitation of the real tragedy of the September 11 attacks (Mansour 2002: 13-14).

Still, the cycle of violence continued between Israel, Hamas and others, while Arafat and the PA remained nominal in either quelling the violence for Israel or conspicuously joining the uprising (Mansour 2002: 8). Though the *al-Aqsa Intifada* never formally ended, several factors contributed to its gradual dissolution. These were the death of Yassir Arafat, the targeted assassination of Shaykh Yassin, both in 2004, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's forced withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza, and the election of Mahmoud Abbas to replace PA President Arafat.

Under Abbas, the PA initiated a series of programs aimed at incorporating the several armed resistance groups that once threatened the stability of the Palestinian Authority, and its relations with Israel. In sharp contrast to his predecessor, starting in 2005, Abbas promoted an election process in order "to regulate Palestinian politics but also to ensure that a divergence of views [could] be expressed through legitimate political channels rather than violence" (Malka 2005: 44). The elections were initially scheduled for 2005, but due to a fear among Fatah leaders that Hamas may gather more support, Abbas postponed for a year in efforts to build its own image.

Chapter 3: Origins and Development of Political Islam

<u>Origins</u>

The three influential figures typically associated with the construction of political Islam framed their ideologies in opposition to the secularization and westernization of Egypt. The ideologues were Jamal al-Afghani, Hassan al-Banna, and Sayyid Qutb. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) is often credited with the first proclamation of a public return to Islam. Al-Afghani framed his ideology on the concept of Islamic nationalism and modernism (Boroumand and Boroumand 2002: 7). His ideology is usually defined as Pan-Islamism.

In 1928, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) formed the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in order to develop a religious civil society and to reject the westernization and secularization of Egypt (Boroumand and Boroumand 2002: 7). The brotherhood has been the most organized and consistent in respect to its provision of social services in much of the Middle East. In Egypt, as in other societies, these services were funneled through the social network of the mosque and distributed through hospitals, schools, and charities.

Initially the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood was seen as a benign force in Egyptian society, but eventually it began to face a more hostile secular government.

Following the end of World War II, the assassination of al-Banna in 1949, and the Free Officer's Revolution from 1952-54, the Egyptian brotherhood met even greater secularization measures from the ruling communist elite organized around Nasser and his successor, Anwar Sadat. Nasser banned the MB in 1954 after an assassination attempt allegedly organized by some of its members.

In the 1950s, a contentious addition to the ideological responses to Nasser's secularization programs constructed by al-Banna came from the Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). The totalitarian ideology of Sayyid Qutb defined secular individuals in his own society and in Western societies as belonging to the state of ignorance, or *jahiliyya*, which, for most Muslims, refers to the pre-Islamic past. For Qutb, the answer to this pervasive state of *jahiliyya* could only be found in an Islamic vanguard devoted to jihad against those ignorant in Muslim society and ultimately a global jihad against the ignorance of the West.

Although heavily inspired by his predecessors, Qutb's ideology diverged in his use of entirely modern concepts. This is due to his informed knowledge of "Marxist and fascist critiques of modern capitalism and representative democracy" (Euben 2002: 16). According to Boroumand and

Boroumand, the Marxist influence is further illustrated in that

> [h]is ideal society was a classless one where the "selfish individual" of liberal democracies would be banished and the "exploitation of man by man" would be abolished. God alone would govern it through the implementation of Islamic law *(shari'a).* (2002: 8)

For Qutb and others, the creation of a global jihad marked what Emmanuel Sivan saw "as a sea-change in jihad mythology, a massive inward turning in the postcolonial era" (Euben 2002: 14). Ascribing jihad with this new dimension meant ending the long held view that it was primarily a defensive action. Many scholars and pundits have asserted that the ideologies of modern global jihadists originate from the teachings of Sayyid Qutb (Boroumand and Boroumand 2002: 7-8). Nasser imprisoned Qutb and others following the attempt on his life. When Anwar Sadat came to power, the members were released for a short time.

Though both Qutb and al-Banna envisioned a revolution, Qutb's under the auspices of jihad, there are distinctions between them because the formulations of their ideologies are contextually distinct. Al-Banna defined his ideology within the colonial era, while Qutb focused strictly on the postcolonial, secular nationalist regime. The outcome of

these disparate environments is their contrasting interpretations of Islamic community and civil society. For al-Banna, civil society formed the bedrock of the Muslim Brotherhood and any revolution was an aspect of the *national* struggle. Al-Banna sought grass-roots political and/or military action as a means, not an end, and only in context of Colonialism. In distinction, Qutb did not promote the civil society aspect of the Muslim Brotherhood. He also envisioned a program of expansionist war between consciousnesses conducted on both national and international fronts in order to spread *da'wa*, or Islamic preaching (Nusse 1998: 70).

Egyptian Sunni Radicalism, as the Brotherhood after the involvement of Qutb is often classified, has only produced miniature movements following the contentious polemics of Qutb. However, Qutbian philosophy did diffuse into some parts of the Middle East, particularly Iran, where the would-be revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, was influenced by his writings. In fact, Khomeini was the first to institutionalize Qutb's ideology in a broad sense and politically legitimatize Islamism for the first time. Another remnant of Qutbian ideology survives with one of Qutb's disciples, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the effective leader of al-Qa'ida.

Limited Islamism as Religious Nationalism

Recent references often associate political Islam with the concept of fundamentalism. However, this association fails to account for the this-worldly nationalist dimension of some described as Islamic fundamentalists. In fact, the nationalist aspect of Islamism is generally avoided in Western discourse. According to Munson, this is not entirely new, for

> [j]ust as the West overlooked the nationalist resentment of foreign domination that once fueled many Marxist movements, so too it now often overlooks the nationalistic resentment of foreign domination that fuels many militant Islamist movements. (2003: 51)

For the sake of precision, then, Hamas and other territorial Islamists should be described under the concept of religious nationalism. The primary difference between fundamentalism and religious nationalism is that followers of fundamentalist movements often remove themselves from state political participation, aspire to a golden past, and seek to create a global religious movement. In contrast, religious nationalists seek to redefine their state's boundaries in religious terms through political practices. Also, though they may allude to a golden past and symbolically relate their ideology to a global religious movement, they are circumscribed, both politically and

militarily, by their territory or state. In a sense, religious nationalism is a public, while fundamentalism is a private return to religion (Friedland 2002: 389).

Religious nationalism is similar to other forms of nationalism, which provide collective representation to the social group unified territorially and culturally. However, without religion, there is no lasting or metaphysical support under which the movement is defined (Friedland 2002: 387). According to Friedland, the collective representation of nationalism defined by religion provides "a basis of identity and a criterion of judgment that cannot not be chosen" (2002: 387).

As stated by Max Weber, nationalism, coupled with the cohesive power of the "media of religion," comprises a "pathetic pride in the power of one's own community" (Friedland 2002: 387). To include the concept of nationalism within Islamism helps to elucidate the latter's creation of an alternative welfare state (Friedland 2002: 383), given in the context of the religious civil society. In religious nationalism, the popular legitimacy of the civil society increasingly transforms the national identity through a more religious orientation by making space sacred and then by politicizing that sacredness (Friedland 2002 387-90).

Though many Islamist movements have explicitly rejected the nationalist framework because of its supposedly secular nature, it has been a significant influence. From Khomeini to bin Laden, much of the Islamist rhetoric is riddled with nationalist concepts. Khomeini, after returning from fourteen years of exile, said, "our triumph will come when all forms of foreign control have been brought to an end and all roots of the monarchy have been plucked out of the soil of our land" (Munson 2003: 43). Even many of bin Laden's demands paradoxically reflect nationalist challenges to foreign occupation, particularly Israeli-Occupied Palestine and the American troops in Saudi Arabia (Ayoob 2004: 4).

Identifying the nationalist aspect of Islamists conducting a limited territorial jihad allows one to see religion as a motivating factor and not a formational one (Milton-Edwards 1992: 50) The nationalism of the Palestinian Islamist organizations is even more explicit, calling jihad a national duty. Moreover, Hamas and other Palestinians Islamists interpret Palestine as an endowed Islamic holy land, or *waqf.* Interestingly, because Israel is perceived of as a purely religious state based upon religious laws, it serves as an implicit model of the future Islamic Palestinian state (Nusse 1998: 71-73).

Recent Historical Developments

The fact that most Islamisms exhibit subterraneous nationalist dimensions could perhaps lead some to draw numerous comparisons among them. However, the varying development and relative success of these movements cannot suit them for easy categorizing, for each organization has arisen out of context-specific circumstances. Furthermore, without several geopolitical developments the appeal of Islamism overall would be insignificant.

In order, the most influential geopolitical developments are the decolonization process, the construction of the state of Israel, the failure of secular pan-Arabism to affect socioeconomic development or the creation of Israel, the assassination of Anwar Sadat, the overwhelming success of the Iranian revolution, the CIA-sponsored *mujahedeen* program to oust Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent rise of American unilateralism. Lastly and most significant, yet nearly ignored in causal examinations of Islamism, is the ongoing Global War on Terror.

First, the British backed creation, and later American support of Israel established a Western proxy in the region that for the Palestinians and Arab neighbors was a clear sign of contention. Second, the failure of the pan-Arabism

took place largely because Nasser was not capable of affecting sustainable socioeconomic development but also because the Egyptian leader did not allow the Islamic community a political voice. Pan-Arabism was further discredited because of its negligible effect on the Palestinian issue, which was a major source of its identity.

Third, Western outrage over Sadat's assassination by Islamist extremists emanated from his decisive steps toward peace with Israel and signaled to America and Israel that a new threatening power was developing in the region. Fourth, though perhaps first in importance, the Iranian Revolution brought this new power to a head with western interests. This success confirmed that Islamic societies could reinvent themselves (geo) politically. Following the Iranian revolution in importance is the CIA-sponsored Afghanistan Theater of war. After the forces succeeded in driving out the Soviet forces, the newly desolated country proved to be an ideal base of operations for the victorious Wahhabi radicals and the nascent al-Qa'ida movement (Ayoob 2004: 4).

The next major development came as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. For the Third World, nearly the whole Cold War era involved balancing the demands and

interests of the rivaling superpowers. In much of the Arab and Muslim world, Cold War support came from the Soviets. With its collapse, many of these countries were compelled to reassess American interests. With no alternative to US foreign policy, some states were seemingly polarized into either the westernized elite or the Islamists.

This polarization has led many to claim that a unified Islamist trend has developed and is pursuing a clash with Western civilization. Nevertheless, the identification of an Islamist trend and the clash of civilizations are not *entirely* imaginary. However, these processes commenced during the decolonization process, not in ancient Islamic society. In the postcolonial period, much of the third world witnessed the emergence of secularized liberation movements that later became ruling military elites. In the Arab world, these regimes, along with Western backed economic liberalization measures, resulted in an insecure political and economic situation unrecognizable until the Six Day War of 1967, when Arab regimes began to falter.

More recently, as these states further incorporate their economies into the globalized market, which is effectively devaluing state sovereignty and social service institutions, Islamists are instituting their own religious civil societies in response to the state's neglect of the

impoverished population. In Kashan's terms, Islamic radicalism filled a niche created by

> mismanagement of public assets by the existing elites, eschewal of serious political reform, and marginality in the new world order…As a result, Islamic nationalism is supplanting territorial nationalism and becoming the basis of political opposition and future promise. (1997: 20)

Cultural and religious trends in the Arab world are increasing the attraction of Islamism. However, underneath these trends are material conditions that reflect modern historical failures of secularized states. Due to the economic instability, Islamists are establishing alternative religious social networks (Hafez 2006: 177-8). In some cases, where participation is not banned, Islamists are incorporating themselves into the political system, proving to the state and the global community that they are committed to establishing Islamic institutions at the national level.

After the end of the Cold War brought the rise of American unilateralism, along with recent economic globalization efforts, there has been an emerging new global order. Much of the only resistance to this new order is coming from Islamism. Though the end of the Cold War supposedly brought with it the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1993), maximalist and restricted Islamist organizations

alike, though distinctly segmented, are now propagating their own "alternative paradigm" (Wedeen 2003: 57). The extended Global War on Terror is the most recent example of American unilateralism. Horrified at the atrocities of September 11, the international community united in their support of the American-led invasion of Afghanistan, but rejected the plans for the invasion of Iraq. This recent form of unilateralism has been the most damaging to both America's image abroad and for embracing potential "good Muslim" support for America's legitimate causes.

Chapter 5: Emergence and Evolution of Hamas

<u>Introduction</u>

The Islamic Resistance Movement, *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*, or Hamas, is but one of many Palestinian Islamist organizations created under Israeli occupation and given revolutionary credibility during the *Intifada* of 1987. Like other Islamist organizations, Hamas has substantial roots in the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) who has had lasting influential support particularly in the Palestinian refugee camps in the territories and neighboring countries.

The extensive social institutions administered through the mosque network legitimatized the MB as a reliable advocate of the Palestinian cause. Without the establishment of these social institutions along with the evolution of the Palestinian MB into a more militant organization, Hamas's role in the liberation struggle might not have been as distinct. Hamas derives its unique credibility in the Palestinian community from its administration and successful development of these social institutions. Thus, while other strictly militant groups have ephemeral support in periods of broad acceptance of the peace process, Hamas, though also devalued during these times, has had lasting support.

Origins of the Islamic Resistance Movement

Shortly after the Great Arab Revolt (1936-1939), members of the Egyptian MB migrated to Palestine where they provided social services and preached to the local population (Baumgarten 2005: 37). The movement's attitude toward the increasing Zionist settlement and its escalating conflict with the British Mandate is difficult to determine. However, once it became apparent that Britain would withdraw and mitigate authority to the Zionist community in part of historic Palestine, the Brotherhood linked politico-military with its religious and social movement. In time, their

> political awareness and nationalistic spirit grew to such an extent that its involvement in political issues overshadowed its initial preoccupation with proselytizing and social activities." (Hroub 2000: 17)

This was further demonstrated in 1947 at a Haifa convention, when the MB declared its intention to work alongside other nationalist groups in order to efface the imminent Zionist victory. (Hroub 2000: 18) Following the failure of regional Arab efforts to counteract the establishment of the state of Israel, much of the brotherhood, alongside three quarters of a million Palestinians, were forced into exile in neighboring countries.

The distinct creation of refugees following the 1948 war has had influence in the growth of Palestinian Islamism and secular nationalism. Those most affected by the displacement were in Gaza, where the large makeup of refugees, in addition to their greater freedom in relation to Egyptian administration, provided the Brotherhood more incentives to continue the proto-national struggle against Israel. In contrast, the West Bank brothers, along with being closer to Jerusalem, Israel's main center, were considered Jordanian citizens after 1950 and consequently under more scrutiny from the Hashemite Kingdom (Hroub 2000: 20).

In 1954, Nasser declared the Muslim Brotherhood illegal. The Brothers who were not imprisoned went into hiding. (Hroub 2000: 23) This had a particularly damaging effect on the Gaza brothers, but not so much for those in the West Bank. Nevertheless, a year later, the MB in Gaza reemerged along with several Ba'athists and Communists to protest an Israeli policy that aimed to forcibly resettle Palestinian refuges in the Sinai Peninsula. However, lack of popular support frustrated this attempt (Hroub 2000: 24).

Following this, from 1957 to the early 1980s, the MB re-adopted its formative role of providing social services

and preaching through the mosque network. They interpreted
their role as providing an Islamic foundation so that a
future generation could properly engage in the liberation
struggle. In their eyes, the method of indirect resistance
was equally legitimacy for the future liberation.

Some members began to confront the priority of
establishing a viable Islamic vanguard before the struggle
to liberate Palestine. These members broke off and formed
the first Palestinian secular nationalist group known as
al-Fatah. The Brotherhood banned the revolutionary group,
marking the first time the secular resistance movement and
the Islamists split, "originating a rift that would
continue to grow over the course of the following years"
(Hroub 2000: 27). The defeat of Nasser's Egypt in the 1967
war broke the sway of Pan-Arabism for many, especially the
Palestinians. Yet, the outcome of this war did not motivate
the brotherhood to reinvest in the military campaign. This
direct resistance was left for the secular nationalist
organizations such as Fatah and the PLO.

Shortly after the Six-Day War, the MB in the Occupied
Territories developed the *Mujamma'*, or the Islamic Center,
an overseeing institution for all its services, which was
headed by the future spiritual leader of Hamas, Shaykh
Ahmad Yassin. In 1979, the *Mujamma'* was legalized by the

Israeli Military Administration. According to an International Crisis Group report on Hamas, this was something then "impossible for a PLO organization of similar magnitude" (2006: 16). As a result, the Islamic program in the territories flourished into a multifaceted social and religious network, including schools, hospitals, and charities.

In 1982, the PLO was forcibly exiled from Lebanon. Following this event, it appeared to many that the PLO might become "militarily and politically bankrupt" (Mishal 2003: 575). Therefore, the *Mujamma'* leadership considered replacing the secular group in politico-military programs. This became more obvious in 1984, when Israel arrested members of the *Mujamma'*, including Shaykh Yassin, for possessing arms and planning military attacks (Hroub 2000: 34).

Intifada and the Emergence of Hamas

The most conspicuous sign that the indirect resistance phase was over came as a result of the first *Intifada*, which brought the political and military emergence of Hamas. Yassin and other in the *Mujamma'* situated their new movement bluntly in the popular uprising. Though Hamas credits the MB for their ideological paradigm it diverged when they gave supremacy to the national cause during the

Intifada. From early on, Hamas attempted to "straddle…both intellectually and ideologically… nationalist and Islamic approaches to the nature of the Palestinian uprising" (Milton-Edwards 1992:50). Hamas also contrasted with the older members of the MB because they were composed of youthful educated activists unaffiliated with either Jordan or Egypt (Budeiri 1995: 92-93).

The Covenant of Hamas

One year following the outbreak of the *Intifada*, Hamas formally outlined its religious nationalist ideology and political objectives through the Covenant. In the beginning of the Covenant, Hamas claims long historical and social roots in the Territories, stretching back to the movement responsible for the Great Arab Revolt in 1936. (Budeiri 1995: 93) Among other issues, the Covenant also contains overtly symbolic anti-Semitism, which is conflated with the Prophet Muhammad's antagonistic relationship with the Jewish community of the Hijaz. (Crisis Group 2006: 19) This aspect of echoes the colonial era Islamic concepts of imperial objectives. According to Munson, in the Covenant,

> [t]he distinction between virtuous Muslim and evil Jew is fused with the dichotomies of occupied and occupier, colonized and colonizer, oppressed and oppressor. (2003: 45)

The Covenant also states that the will of the people

will determine the jihad against the Israeli occupation. This is in sharp contrast to the Qutb's view that "popular sovereignty cannot be the basis of legitimate authority because all sovereignty belongs to God" (Nusse 1998: 75). The divergence from the foundations of Qutbian ideology is further illustrated by the fact that Hamas did not and still does not include democracy within the Western ideals opposed by Islam.

The Oslo Peace Process

Though the PLO was initially active, toward the end of the third year of the uprising, it took a more diplomatic approach. By 1991, the PLO stepped down from its involvement while Hamas and others continued. The PLO revealed that it was willing to make concessions to their revolutionary stance by accepting Israel and adopting the international framework for peace. After the framework for Oslo was set forth in the 1991 Madrid conference, Hamas began adopting one of its fixed images as a prolonged spoiler to the peace process.

The intensity of Hamas's objective increased in the first years of the Oslo negotiations. Like other rejectionists, they regarded Oslo as concessionary for it surrendered Palestinian rights to the western justified continuation of Israeli occupation. Moreover, any

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negotiations for a settled coexistence did not fit with Hamas's vision, or with the PLO's early view, that the armed struggle would continue until all of historic Palestine was liberated. Because Hamas interpreted the peace process as a de facto continuation of Israeli occupation, terrorist violence was their "last means" to spoil it. Paradoxically, all of their hostilities were national and not religious. According to Abu-Amr, Hamas and other rejectionists stated that Oslo did not contain an

> explicit or implicit reference to the Palestinian right to self-determination or statehood. It does not give the Palestinians full sovereignty over Gaza and Jericho. It does not define a specific time frame for the conclusion of the final-status negotiations. It does not contain a shared agreed-upon interpretation of the UN Resolution 242, which is to be the basis of the final settlement. It does not commit Israel to the Geneva Conventions, or to the return of the Palestinians who have been forced out from their country (1994: 78)

In 1992, just as the PLO, the US and Israel were beginning to articulate the OSLO negotiations, Israel exiled 490 Islamist rejectionist leaders. This action spurred international condemnation, which, at least temporarily, advanced a more complete image of Hamas. However, international objections to Israeli policies subsided when the leaders returned with a new method of resistance.

The exiled Islamist leaders spent a year in Southern Lebanon refugee camps where Hizbullah instructed them in the efficient act of political violence, suicide bombing. This destructive addition to Hamas's ideologically justified national resistance, along with the apparent static nature of its Covenant, has largely defined the movement ever since. Yet, until the leaders' were exiled to Southern Lebanon, much of the operational tactics of Palestinians Islamists, with the exception of the Islamic Jihad, emphasized nonviolent means; when their tactics turned violent, they were directed almost exclusively against the Israeli military. (Mishal and Sela 2006: 48-59; Hroub 2000: 242-246)

The fist suicide bombing committed by Hamas militants came in retaliation to the February 1994 Hebron mosque massacre committed by an American-born Israeli settler. After this point, Hamas adopted a retaliatory program in addition to its spoiler tactics to the peace process. Ultimately, "at the height of its [spoiler and retaliatory] campaign, Hamas pushed Oslo to the breaking point" (Crisis Group 2006: 17). Since this first suicide attack, Hamas largely confined its martyrdom operations to two periods: 1994-1997 and 2001-2003, referred to as the post-Oslo and *al-Aqsa* periods, respectively.

Al-Aqsa Intifada

While the *Intifada* with its popular appeal, both regionally and internationally, established Hamas as a legitimate resistance organization, its spoiler role in the Oslo era greatly reduced that support. This was primarily because many in the region were initially hopeful of the road to peace. However, the ineffectiveness of the peace process and the incapacity of the PA unfolded within a few years. Frequent Israeli enclosures of the territories and continued settlement in the Palestinian state produced bitter perceptions of peace. As touched on earlier, the stimulus of the second uprising was an immediate result of the unsanctioned visit of Ariel Sharon to the *al-Aqsa* mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest site of Sunni Islam.

The underlying factors were the overall public sentiment that the peace process had established a system of supervised occupation under the PA, who had effectively no control over the Israeli defense forces and the settlers inside the Palestinian state. In addition, there was a real decline of socioeconomic stability as a result of Israel's economic and military policies. Therefore, the convergence of Hamas's consistently unyielding rhetoric toward Israeli measures and its unique provision of social services strengthened its image of being the best voice and arm of

the resistance.

Even so, the second *Intifada* did not have the benefit of wide community support. Another damaging factor in terms of the external image of the *Intifada* was the media portrayals of suicide terrorism against Israeli civilians. The condemnation of these acts increased after the September 11 attacks in the US and the subsequent launch of the Global War on Terror, which provided substantial justification to the political and military stigmatization of Islamism by the US and Israel. This geopolitical event produced disastrous consequences for regional understanding of Islamism and the continuation of armed struggle against the Occupation.

Local Support

Hamas operates within an organizational infrastructure consisting of internal security, military and political activities, social services and Islamic preaching, or *da'wa*. As previously mentioned, Hamas derives the majority of its local legitimacy from extensive social services and mosque-centered mobilizing activities. This aspect of its mass appeal distinguishes it from other Palestinian organizations. Beyond the revolutionary objectives of the Islamist rejectionists such as Islamic Jihad, and the PLO before the PA, these organizations were empty-handed in

terms of sustaining a civil society. In contrast, since its inception, Hamas has sought to build a broad base of support from the ground up.

This community support can be seen as a method of communal accountability. By staying close to its constituents through the Muslim tax collection, or *zakat*, and social services, Hamas reinforces its image as an organization that is concerned for the welfare of the Palestinian community, not political power or revolutionary prestige (Baumgarten 2005: 40; Ayoob 2004: 7). According to Baumgarten, this is "the polar opposite of the patronage and rentier politics (and the accompanying corruption) characteristic of Fatah and the PA" (2005: 40).

Hamas's role is critical considering that, as a result of the Palestinian economy's dependence on foreign aid and labor-resource exchange with the Israeli economy—conditions that are, arguably, measured results of the Occupation, any forced closures of the Territories by Israel produces minor economic collapses. Therefore, to counteract these trends of corruption and intermittent closures, Hamas's service network remains independent of both Israel and the PA.

In contrast to its consistent social and religious services, Hamas's political and military actions have developed in varying degrees—and on the whole, toward

pragmatism. Since its inception, Hamas's leadership has participated and been successful in several elections, including the levels of universities, unions, professional associations, and municipalities. The issue of elections will be taken up again below.

Hamas's military practice, though active in the *Intifada,* only "came to occupy a central practice in Hamas's thought, practice, and strategy…after 1992, when it formed its military wing the Martyr 'Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades" (Hroub 2000: 242). The wing is named after the leader of the Great Arab Revolt, who, in the Covenant, is linked to Hamas's emergence. Also in its Covenant is the statement that "there is no solution to the Palestinian problem expect through struggle (jihad)" (Hroub 2000: 242). The goal of the jihad is to liberate Palestine. However, the founders also realized the intermediate position of jihad in their political struggle for a liberated Palestine. As quoted by Hroub, Shaykh Yassin states that

> Hamas's policy is one of realizing the goals
> of the Palestinian people. If these goals are
> achieved by peaceful means, then there would
> be no need for other sorts of action. (2000:
> 243)

After the 1994 Hebron Mosque massacre, Hamas redefined its limited military activities, which once only consisted of kidnappings and assassinations of Israeli soldiers, and

mass mobilized violence. As a retaliatory measure for the mosque killings, Hamas militants organized a suicide bombing of what turned out to be a civilian bus, killing ten civilians. Though this image of Hamas largely defines the movement in the West, out of the four aspects of its organizational infrastructure, military operations have varied the most. Hamas's vacillated tactical pursuance of suicide terrorism specifically and violence in general operates in accordance with both popular appeal and whether or not the political leadership perceives it as a strategic advantage to conduct direct resistance (Mishal 2003: 576-579).

The most persuasive factor in this variation includes communal support. During periods of broad opposition to the peace process, the community supports Hamas's military tactics, including suicide bombing. When the peace process is in favor, support for martyrdom operations falls greatly. Military tactics often also bring Israeli retaliation in the form of collective punishment, which jeopardizes Hamas's popular support.

Senior leaders of Hamas insist that the use of suicide violence is reserved as a "last means" in the nationalist jihad and they have always subordinated it to political calculations (Hroub 2004: 23-24; Mishal 2003: 577). During

the peace process and especially in later years, Hamas saw suicide violence as a tactical means, not a strategy. According to Strindberg, this is critical because the

> implication of viewing Hamas's armed struggle against Israel as tactical rather than strategic is, of course, that there is room for negotiation and dialogue. (Strindberg 2002: 268)

Military and Political Relations with Israel

One of the key issues brought up in defense of the continued categorization of Hamas as a terrorist organization is its refusal to recognize Israel. However, for some time Hamas has been increasingly pragmatic in its relations with Israel. The fact that Hamas has not publicly or formally accepted Israel can be interpreted as a balance between rhetoric and practice. In examination of this nuanced position, Khaled Hroub states that

> Hamas needs to keep its rhetoric high and loud, refraining from any blunt offer of recognition of Israel, in order to compensate for the slow, daily "undoing" of its military struggle. If Hamas gives in on both rhetorical and practical fronts, it will lose out greatly in the eyes of its supporters. (2006a)

In the pre-Oslo period of the *Intifada*, Israel and Hamas attempted to establish a dialogue. Israel's goal was "to convince Hamas to renounce its violence in exchange for a guaranteed political role in a peace settlement" (Hroub

2000: 205). Although negotiations are paradoxical to Hamas's ideological rhetoric against Israel, from early on the leaders realized the nature of their proximity to Israel. According to Hroub, Hamas's early position can be explained

> [b]y virtue of the relationship between the occupation authorities and the people under occupation, [thus] Hamas leaders and others close to it were compelled to meet Israeli security and political officials. In this respect, Hamas's situation was different from that of the PLO, whose known leaders were always outside the Occupied Territories. (Hroub 2000: 204)

However, in the opening phases of the Madrid-Oslo framework, Hamas declared its external leadership and adopted a stance similar to the PLO before the PA, "no negotiations with the Zionist entity" (Hroub 2000: 205). Moreover, especially after the PLO had given up Palestine during the Oslo process, Hamas interpreted all negotiations with Israel as shadowy attempts to concede the legitimate liberation of Palestine.

Still, the political leadership has imposed several unilateral ceasefires on its combatants. The militants have essentially complied, even in the face of Israeli assassinations and incursions in the Territories. In 1995, just two years after Oslo, Hamas proposed a conditional cease-fire, *or hudna*, with Israel. According to Mishal,

Hamas viewed

> [t]he legitimacy of the…*hudna*…as a phase in
> the course of a defensive *jihad* against the
> enemies of Islam [that] has been widely
> discussed—and accepted—by both radical and
> more moderate Islamic scholars since Egypt's
> President Anwar Sadat signed…[the Camp David]
> peace treaty with Israel in 1979. (Mishal
> 2003: 577)

Hamas has also proposed an interim solution in tandem distinction from its historic solution—of Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. The interim solution is based on a long-term ceasefire, or *tahdi'a.* This falls short of full acceptance of Israel specifically because Hamas does not want to cede the rhetorical militancy that provides it both local and regional support. According to a Crisis group interview with a West Bank Hamas senior political leader, the terms of the long-term ceasefire are

> full and complete withdrawal from Gaza, West
> Bank and East Jerusalem; release of all
> prisoners; recognition of the right of return
> for refugees; and a fully sovereign and
> sustainable Palestinian state. (2006: 19)

Much like the PLO's formal and public acceptance of pre-1967 borders in 1988, Hamas publicly, and later formally retracted its vision of Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. As stated by Mishal,

> [b]y agreeing to a two-state solution, HAMAS
> has made a *de facto* recognition of Israel. To
> be sure, it will most likely never make a
> change of its rhetoric or 'official' position

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of not stopping the jihad until all of
historic Palestine is recovered, but on the
ground it has already ceded this idealistic
demand. (Mishal 2003: 578-9)

Hamas's determined position is for Israel to "withdraw

first, and then we'll take things as they come" (Crisis

Group 2006: 23). As defended by one of the senior leaders

in a Crisis Group interview:

wherever a military occupation exists, a
military resistance should be expected and
exercised. Such a resistance, taking various
forms, would only stop when the occupation
ends. (2006: 23)

This is not an isolated position among more moderate but

less effective leadership. It is an ideal reinforced by the

spiritual leader Shaykh Ahmad Yassin, who, prior to his

assassination by Israeli forces in 2004, asserted

we want the complete removal of occupation
from our lands occupied after 1967. … [W]e
want to set up our independent Palestinian
state on our liberated soil with holy
Jerusalem as its capital. (Malka 2005: 39;
see also Crisis Group p. 19)

The above statements regarding an increasing

pragmatism might be taken as mere speculation if it were

not for the more recent formal transformation of Hamas's

strategic existence revealed through three key documents.

The essence of these formal statements reveals that Hamas

has, in fact, adapted to the reality of Israel's existence

and legitimacy of past agreements. In these documents,

Hamas has also recognized the international, as opposed to religious or cultural, illegality of the Occupation. Nevertheless, these documents are excluded in recent discussions on Hamas. Instead, according to Hroub,

> Hamas continues to be characterized with reference to its 1988 charter, drawn up less than a year after the movement was established in direct response to the outbreak of the first Intifada and when its raison d'etre was *armed* resistance to the occupation. (Hroub 2006b: 7)

Internal Relations and Local Elections

In its relations with other groups, particularly the PLO and Fatah, Hamas, and the *Mujamma'* in the past, has proclaimed that the national struggle is composed of multiple segments and that no one should assert the preeminence of their version. In both the Covenant and recent political memorandums, Hamas has refrained from attacking the PA or Fatah. The leadership does this partially in hopes that their military tactics and righteous upholding of Islam would influence the PLO and Fatah back onto the liberation platform and proposed Islamic state. But, Hamas also does this to win broader support for its politico-military campaign.

Therefore, even during and after Oslo, when Hamas accused the PLO of abandoning the liberation struggle and making compromises to Palestinian rights, the leadership

consistently reinforced their historical position toward

the secular group. According to an International Crisis

Group interview with a senior Hamas leader,

> the Palestinian situation requires all these
> forces and trends to center on one common
> objective, to end the occupation. There is no
> monopoly on the cause, and it is important
> that everybody is in the movement so that, if
> it is shaken, it is, as a whole, able to stay
> the course because of the firm principles
> shared by all, the liberation of the
> homeland. (Strindberg and Warn 2005:31)

Still, there have been intermittent clashes between

Hamas militants and the PA backed Fatah security forces.

The near civil war between Hamas and Fatah following the

former's unexpectedly successful election, when several

hundred perished, is but one recent example. Nevertheless,

their strategic position is for an all-inclusive struggle.

As stated in a recent memorandum,

> Hamas believes that regardless of the extent
> of differences in viewpoints and perspectives
> in the national effort, it is impermissible
> under any circumstances to use violence.
> (Hroub 2000: 210)

In this respect, and in context of local elections,

Hamas interprets a pluralist government as the only viable

representative of the Palestinian people. According to

Hroub, Shaykh Yassin

> said that Hamas will accept the views of the
> Palestinian public on any issue if they are
> expressed in a democratic election and that

the movement is prepared to accept the authority of any democratically elected Palestinian group. (2000: 210)

The issue of elections has been discussed since the formation of the *Mujamma'*, when its leaders began participating in local student, labor union and municipal elections. At the local level, Hamas candidates reinforced Shaykh Yassin's view that the Palestinian question is legitimate only if addressed in a pluralist method. Over time, Hamas's appeal grew, especially in the municipal and student elections. The appeal of Hamas's message on the municipal level is apparent in the fact that, according to the Crisis Group, "hundreds of thousands of Palestinians [now] live in localities ruled by Hamas" (2006: i) The rising acceptance of an Islamist framework is also seen in Hamas's success in student councils at the Islamic University in Gaza, a base of operations for the *Mujamma'*, and at Bir Zeit University, traditionally a Fatah stronghold (Hroub 2000: 219).

National Elections and International Legitimacy

Prior to its recent involvement in the PLC elections, Hamas viewed political elections as recognition of the Oslo framework that it fully rejected. However, their successes in student and municipal elections brought local and regional recognition of Hamas's political influence.

Therefore, in 1996, when time came for presidential and legislative elections in accordance with the terms of Oslo, Hamas was invited but refused to participate.

This was an unsettled decision ultimately made by Shaykh Yassin, who was initially open to the idea of legislative elections because Parliament would allow for representation. However, Yassin finally issued religious judgments, or *fatwas*, against the PLC elections arguing that elections solely for administration and executive branches would negate the legitimate demands of the Palestinians by establishing a preset agenda influenced by Israel and the US. Even so, many leaders in Hamas, notably the future Prime Minister, Ismail Haniya, argued that banning participation in the elections would make it seem that Hamas was rejecting democracy. In the end, the senior leaders were compelled to show unity with Yassin.

A number of factors between the 1996 and the 2006 elections repositioned Hamas to view involvement in national politics as acceptable. For one, there was a continued attrition of the Oslo agreements as Israel continued the Occupation. A second factor, according to Mishal and Sela, was the PA's "corruption, ineptitude, mismanagement and internal rivalries" (Mishal and Sela 2006: *xiv*).

The third factor was Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza region in late 2005. Many Palestinians in the Territories saw this as a direct result the continued military struggle on the part of Hamas's and others. The fourth factor included Israel's systematic program to destroy the PA's infrastructure and rule of law (Mishal and Sela 2006: *xv*). This program was revealed in the March 2002 Israeli Defense Force's "Operative Defensive Shield" that laid siege to Arafat's headquarters and witnessed a full reoccupation of the West Bank. During this time, Hamas remained deep inside the Gaza refugee camps, committed to social service provisions in the midst of the economic collapse caused by the Occupation and the *Intifada* to resist it. This, according to Sela and Mishal, allowed Hamas's civil institutions to thrive

> at the expense of its main rival, Arafat's Fatah movement. By early 2003, large segments of the Gaza Strip were out reach for the PA's police and security forces and seemed to have come under effective control of Hamas. (2006: *xiv*)

The convergence of these factors motivated Hamas's senior leaders to accept the idea of national elections. This was especially true following the imminent death of Arafat and the targeted assassination of Yassin in late 2004, when Mahmood Abbas, the Prime Minister under Arafat,

was elected as successor to the PA Presidency. Shortly after his appointment, Abbas outlined the need for another Palestinian Legislative Council election—the same elections demanded by Yassin during the early days of Oslo. Influenced by Yassin's vision of legitimate representation carried in parliament, Hamas issued three key documents outlining its strategic justification to be involved in the expected 2005 elections. These documents, according to Hroub, contain

> strong programmatic and…state building emphasis, but also considerable nuance in its positions with regard to resistance and a two-state solution. (Hroub 2006b: 6)

Nevertheless, Hamas's involvement in the upcoming elections alarmed Israel, for the potential of Hamas's success could produce a PA composed of a group that is committed to armed resistance and suicide bombing, refuses to recognize Israel and opposes a two-state agreement. Consequently, Israel pressured Abbas to impede Hamas's involvement in the parliamentary elections. Israel's stance was based on the 1995 interim agreement reached between Israel and Arafat on the eve of the 1996 general elections. This agreement restricted

> candidates, parties or coalitions…[that] commit or advocate racism, or pursue the implementation of their aims by unlawful or undemocratic means. (Malka 2005: 43)

The United States and other Western governments were focused on the ideal of democratic elections in Palestine and the effect this could have on ushering in a new era for the peace process. In fact, the Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) sent a team to observe the political environment before and during the elections. Their initial analysis claimed that

> [e]lections will provide a unique opportunity for political leadership renewal and institution building which could, if accomplished peacefully, pave the way for greater stability and a better future for Palestinians and their neighbors. (2006: 2)

The NDI warned that although the long-term vision of "Palestinian democratic development" includes the principle of pluralism, "Hamas's current political participation, while simultaneously advocating violence, undermines a fundamental principle of democratic elections" (2006: 3) Therefore, in prelude to the election, the NDI, along with several Arab states in a coalition called the Arab Thought Forum, formulated a "code of conduct" outlining the requirements of candidates in the anticipated 2003 PLC elections. This meeting suggested that

> a code of conduct be developed and enforced which committed all parties to transparent and democratic principles, disallowed election related violence and restricted individuals engaged in, or advocating violence from becoming candidates. (2006: 2)

From 2005 to April 2007, Hamas remained committed to a unilateral ceasefire with Israel. In January 2006, Hamas accepted and signed the code of conduct.

Hamas's successes in the PLC elections resulted in diplomatic and economic sanctions against the PA. Though the aid embargo was designed to estrange Hamas and not the Palestinian people, the yearlong sanctions have increased poverty levels by 30%, which, according to Oxfam, put the level of poverty at roughly 75%, in addition to a pre-sanction unemployment level of 60% (Hroub 2004: 36; Oxfam 2007). There has also been a destabilization of health care, education, welfare and other important social services. This has devastated both Territories, especially the Gaza Strip and its refugee camps, where over half of the municipalities are under Hamas's rule. Also, there has been a politicization of aid as Western donors circumvent Hamas and the sanction and give directly to Abbas and Fatah.

Following the Arab Unity Government deal reached in March of this year, Hamas and Fatah have dealt with each other in a civil manner. This is the case, even though their ranks are still at odds over the near civil war that erupted last fall. Moreover, even though the American and Israeli embargo was designed to estrange Hamas, according

to Alan Johnston, a BBC correspondent in Gaza, this has not happened. He states that the "vast majority of Palestinians blame the outside world for the bulk of their troubles, and there has been no collapse in support of Hamas" (Johnston Jan. 2007).

Though Hamas has evolved considerably in recent years, Western perceptions of the movement are based exclusively on its Covenant and limited and now ceased suicide violence. This categorical view has marginalized what many Palestinians consider to be a legitimate representative of their aspirations for a liberated Palestine, in addition to the substantial social benefit of Hamas's Islamic welfare distributions.

Conclusion

September 11 2001 clearly changed many aspects of geopolitical involvement in the Middle East. The war against al-Qa'ida was legitimatized by almost every nation in the world. Notably, many Arab and Muslim states also perceived that the Global War on Terror was justifiable. This support all but disappeared when the Bush administration expressed their schema of invading Iraq for supposedly maintaining weapons of mass destruction. As a consequence, many Muslims claim that the American war on Terror is really a war on Islam. This has undoubtedly embellished once inconsistent antipathy for Western objectives in the region.

The Bush Administration has implicitly claimed that they distinguish "good" from "bad" Muslims. "Good" Muslims have a secular politic, are rational, peaceful, modern, and educated—ultimately Westernized. "Good" Muslims cooperate with the War on Terror, for they are equally plagued by extensive violence. On the other hand, "bad" Muslims have a religious politic, are ritualistic and devoted to jihad. For the administration, "bad" Muslims either cooperate or sympathize with the idea and fulfillment of Terror.

This is a simplification reflected in overall Western interpretations of "bad" Muslims. Western policy typically

affixes Islamists with the terrorist stigma, regardless of context; thus canalizing them into an unmediated Islamist Other. This took shape primarily following the Sept 11th attacks, expressed when President Bush informed Congress that the war "begins with al-Qa'ida, but…will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated" (Strindberg and Warn 2005: 23).

Political violence labeled as terrorism is nothing new. The concept of terror as a description of Others' violence traces back to the French Revolution. The result of the revolution was the unification of France and the formulation of the concept of the nation-state, which is now inseparable from our notions of political modernity. As stated by Mamdani,

> [t]oday, political modernity is equated with the beginning of democracy, but nineteenth-century political theorists—notably Max Weber—recognized that political modernity depended upon the centralized state monopolizing violence. (Mamdani 2004: 5).

The West has for some time seen Others' violence as terrorism, particularly when Western interests are at risk. In the Global War on Terror, the West has sought to monopolize violence against the perpetrators of 9/11 and their sympathizers, or anyone considered as such. This political and academic trend is responsible for the

unyielding stigmatization of Hamas and other Islamists devoted to national liberation through political violence and now committed to political practice—thus flirting with pragmatism. According to Zulaika and Douglass, this is not unique, for the definition of terrorism

> is framed according to a definite world view that opposes countries and cultures within a hierarchy of values in which "we" are at the top and the practitioners of terrorism at the bottom…As a premise, terrorism tends to be about the Other; i.e., one's country, one's class, one's creed, one's president, oneself can hardly be a terrorist. (1996: 13)

Also coming out of the discourse and policies of the GWOT is the American program of democratizing the Middle East as a way out of the oppression caused by the "hateful ideology of terrorism" (Khan 2003: 1-2). However, American hopes of democratizing the Middle East—if genuine—might result in similar predicaments that the Palestinians and the peace process now face. In short, democratization will lead to Islamist legitimacy.

In recent years, several Islamist groups have sought stronger political voices in their societies and states. Hamas is but one manifestation of this current. Other expressions are found in Turkey, Bahrain, Algeria, Pakistan, Morocco, and Lebanon (Khan 2003:6). Significantly, the inclusion of these Islamists is also

linked to reductions in their use of political violence. Some scholars claim that the best example of this is Hizbullah. Their participation in the Lebanese parliamentary elections unfolded only as a result of Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, which, according to Ayoob, "made Hezbollah largely redundant as a military force" (2004: 7). He further states,

> Hezbollah's leaders openly express their commitment to parliamentary politics and accept the reality of Lebanon as a multiconfessional polity, while stressing their special role as an Islamic pressure group within that polity. (2004: 7)

Similarly, Hamas's decision to participate in the PLC elections, along with its commitment to uphold the principle of peaceful democratic elections, as outlined by the NDI and the Arab Thought Forum, are critical steps in its deradicalization. This pragmatism could be the start of a new development for both Hamas and the peace process. However, their strategic shift is essentially ignored by the US and Israel who continue to condemn Hamas for a 20-year-old Covenant and suicide violence that was ceased in the run-up to the elections.

Once politically legitimatized, it is not entirely clear whether Hamas and others will attempt to establish *shari'ah* at the national level, which would clearly be

deleterious to democratic ideals. Also unclear is whether Hamas will be more successful than the Fatah leaders in muting their militants in the days to come. However, what should be relatively obvious by now is that the marginalization of Islamist groups with territorial aims and limited political demands will deny further pragmatism. For the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this could unsettle developments of a nominal coexistence between Israel and an independent Palestine. In the global context, in the words of the late Basque anthropologist Begona Aretxaga,

> [i]f Terrorism remains the overarching enemy without organizational, cultural or historical distinctions…then we might very well find ourselves with a phenomenon of violence characterized by close links between different organizations that might not have collaborated before. The War on Terrorism might end up creating the very nemesis it seeks to eliminate. (Aretxaga 2001: 146-7)

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