Islamic Resistance Movement

Hamas

Studies of

Thought & Experience

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Chapter Ten

Hamas in Power

A Study of Its Ideology and Policies, 2006–2012

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Hamas in Power
A Study of Its Ideology and Policies, 2006–2012

Introduction

When Islamic movements began to operate openly as political parties competing with other parties, questions were raised about their ability to operate within democratic political environments, win elections, form governments and rule. These questions are no longer being raised today, after Islamic movements took power in several countries. Instead, the questions now center on the extent to which these movements can coexist with the democratic structure of political systems, because the ideological background of these movements raises questions about their ability to operate in a democratic environment, whose outputs could contradict the principles adopted by these movements.

With Hamas having been in power in Palestine (in GS) since 2006, it faces the same questions, regarding the extent of its ability to reconcile its Islamic frame of reference with accepting operating within democratic institutions, and by extension, questions about the problem of combining ideological principles and democratic political work in general. Combining resistance action and governance is a challenge for the movement. Indeed, one of the things that set Hamas apart from other groups was that it was able to combine social activities with military action, so how would Hamas be able to add the new dimension embodied in political governance and official political action? To be sure, social movements are able to turn into political parties, but military movements face many obstacles if they want to operate as a political party, not least in operating with the transparency required for political parties, in a legal democratic environment, something that is not commensurate with the secretive nature of resistance work.

There was extensive interest in Hamas and in following up its activities in the West. Hamas was once described by American President George W. Bush as "one of the deadliest terror organizations in the world."[1] His view has been

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[1] Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective* (New York: I. B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, 2009), p. 2.

shared by Israel, Western Europe, Canada, amongst others. But Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 elections was a game-changer. These elections marked the entrance of Hamas into international politics and made it a player that cannot be ignored.[2] Hamas not only contested the Palestinian elections in 2006, but won 74 out of 132 seats in the PLC. Four independent candidates supported by Hamas also won seats. The results of that election will be discussed later in this chapter.

After this, Hamas formed the tenth government by itself, and then the eleventh government in the framework of a national unity cabinet, which lasted until the GS-WB split with the Hamas takeover of GS, and Fatah controlling the PA-administered areas of WB.

Hamas consists of three broad sub-divisions: civil society (charitable and educational institutions), political (the Political Bureau), and a military (Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades). This chapter focuses solely on Hamas's political party.

There is a belief, especially in the West that Hamas has many contradictions, which are best described by Francis Robinson in the following comment while reviewing Jeroen Gunning's Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence, where he said:

> To observers Hamas has many apparent contradictions: it has used political violence against both Israel and its Palestinian political rival, Fatah, but it fought the 2006 election on a law, order and social welfare platform; it aims to create an Islamic state but holds elections and champions democracy; it supports the sharia yet its leaders are mainly secular professionals; it calls for the destruction of Israel, but has shown some willingness to honour previous peace agreements.[3]

However, Robinson apparently fell victim to generalization and oversimplification in his characterizations of Hamas. Indeed, that resistance movements, in their fight against occupation, have used military resistance or political methods is a general phenomenon seen with resistance movements in their confrontation with all forms of occupation and colonialism around the world. This is what Fatah itself did, as

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2   Baudouin Long, "The Hamas Agenda: How Has it Changed?" *Middle East Policy* journal, vol. 17, no. 4, Winter 2010, p. 131,
    http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/hamas-agenda- how-has-it-changed

3   Jeroen Gunning, "Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 20, issue 2, April 2010, p. 226.

well as resistance movements in Nazi-occupied Europe and Ireland, and others. Meanwhile, the quest to establish an Islamic state, in the vision of most political Islamic groups, is not incompatible with democratic electoral competition. Also, in Islam, advocating Shari'ah is not the work of clerics and scholars alone, but could also involve broad segments of society and from all scientific specialties that believe that Islam is a comprehensive religion, and believe Islam is applicable in every time and place. Such people should not be described as "secular," just because they are not Shari'ah scholars or "clerics" in the Western sense of the term.

Concerning Hamas's declaration of its respect for previous agreements and its assent to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the lands occupied in 1967, this is for Hamas and many other factions something that is in line with the necessities of interim action, alongside Hamas's insistence on not recognizing Israel. This is something that Hamas has adhered to despite all the pressures and the severity of the blockade.

Hamas came to power in 2006, faced with the challenge of not only reconciling their Islamic ideology with a democratic political order, but also the challenge of managing the relationship with Palestinian political forces and international actors, in addition to the challenge of preserving itself as a resistance movement and a ruling political party.

Keeping these facts in view, this chapter aims to:

1. Discuss the problems of the Palestinian political system and explain the ways Hamas has tried to deal with those problems since its election in 2006.
2. Analyze the challenges faced by Hamas, such as that of harmonization between its Islamic ideology and democracy and combining resistance with governance.
3. Evaluate Hamas' political performance since 2006.

With the above-mentioned aims in mind, this chapter is divided into the following sections: Section One provides an analysis of the 2006 PLC Elections in Palestine, because this was a milestone in the political history of Palestine; Section Two presents and analyzes the main problems of the Palestinian political system and explains how Hamas worked within that system once it was elected in 2006; Section Three of this chapter discusses the challenges of Hamas, such as the harmonization between its Islamic ideology and democracy and also the challenge of combining resistance with governance; and finally, in Section Four of this chapter, an assessment is made of Hamas's political performance.

First: The 2006 PLC Elections in Palestine

The first PLC elections since the signing of the Oslo Accords (1993) were organized in the Palestinian territories in 1996. It was not until 2006 that PLC elections were held for the second time. Mahjoob Zweiri points out that the significance of these elections was apparent even before announcement of the results, for the following three reasons:

1. These elections were the first parliamentary elections since the death of Yasir 'Arafat.
2. They came after the Israeli withdrawal from GS.
3. Hamas decided to participate in the elections, whereas it had boycotted the previous elections in 1996.[4]

Beginning with the 9/1/2005 vote to fill the PA presidency after Yasir 'Arafat's death in November, 2004, moving through local elections that began in stages at around the same time, and culminating in Hamas's surprise win over Fatah in the 25/1/2006 parliamentary election, international observers confirmed the transparency, freedom, and fairness of elections whose successful conduct suggested that a new era in Middle Eastern political life might be on the way.[5]

When Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 PLC elections was announced in Nablus by Muhammad Ghazal, a member of the Political Bureau, most of Hamas's political rivals like Fatah did not think that the Islamic movement could win the elections. This was because, at the time of Hamas's announcement, various polls conducted in the occupied territories had clearly shown that Fatah was ahead of Hamas. This helps explain why many actors consented to Hamas's participation in the legislative elections. Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, expressed the view that was perhaps the opinion of those opposed to Hamas and the Islamists in general, saying to an Israeli newspaper that Hamas's participation should be approved by the Israelis, because after the election Hamas would turn into a party whose role would not exceed being an electorally ineffective opposition faction.

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[4] Mahjoob Zweiri, "The Hamas Victory: Shifting Sands or Major Earthquake?" *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2006, p. 675.

[5] Riad Malki, "The Palestinian Elections: Beyond Hamas and Fatah," *Journal of Democracy,* vol. 17, no. 3, July 2006, pp. 131–132.

Like President Hosni Mubarak, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, was also convinced that Hamas would not be able to win the elections. However, she said:

> I tend to believe that when people start getting elected and have to start worrying about constituencies and have to start worrying not about whether their fire-breathing rhetoric against Israel is being heard, but about whether or not that person's child down the street is able to go to a good school or that road has been fixed or life is getting better, that things start to change.[6]

Rice's statement showed her complete understanding of the PA's financial situation, and of the donors' capabilities of pressuring it. However, Rice's statement did not indicate that the US expected Hamas to win the PLC elections. For it believed that the elections would serve to contain Hamas in the PA's institutions and would diminish its military capabilities.

On the Palestinian side, the Fatah movement was not yet ready for the idea of being dislodged from its leadership of the PA. Although Hamas had won in the local elections before the legislative elections, observers attributed this to the fact that local elections essentially rely on tribal and religious groups and charity work, something that was Hamas's strong suit. Victory at the national elections was a different matter altogether. Among many things, a Hamas victory at the legislative elections depended on the overall national political situation and the party's policies for governing the occupied territories. There was a widespread belief that Hamas would not be able to govern except for carrying out its social and charitable works through mosques and charities.

The Hamas leadership did not provide any public indication that they were serious in winning the elections. Indeed, most Hamas leaders did not expect to win at all, and their focus was on forming a strong opposition to protect the resistance program, fight against corruption, and monitor the performance of the PA's executive branch.

Following Hamas's victory in the elections, on 25/1/2006, political observers tried to fathom the reasons for the surprise. Some of them considered the religious

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[6] Interview With Washington Times Editorial Board, US Department of State, 11/3/2005, http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43341.htm; and see Daniel Pipes, "Can Hamas and Hezbollah be Democratic?," *New York Sun* newspaper, 22/3/2005, http://www.freemuslims.org/news/article.php?article=526

angle a major contributing factor toward Hamas's victory at the polls. According to this analysis, the leaders of Hamas used mosques to organize their supporters through religious sermons. But this explanation may be too simplistic. The point may be made here that the same tactics were used by at least two other Islamic movements—the PIJ and Hizb ut-Tahrir Party, appealing to the electorate not to vote in the upcoming elections. Many others, however, considered the Hamas victory as the Palestinian voters' support to the Hamas call to weed out corruption considered widespread in PA institutions under the Fatah leadership. This anti-corruption message was certainly popular but alone cannot explain such a sweeping victory. If it had been the case, the popular votes would have been also distributed among other movements such as the National Initiative, the Third Way and other leftist movements who had also pointed out the rampant corruption affecting the PA institutions.

Given the above-mentioned factors, and Hamas's strong social and charitable networks, it is more credible to claim that Hamas's election victory at the 2006 Legislative Council elections can be attributed to Hamas's election campaigns on daily economic and social issues affecting the population. Going back to the polls at the time regarding the priorities of Palestinian citizens, it is possible to infer that Hamas's electoral program recast what was implicit in those polls in the form of a government policy that Hamas would seek to implement if it won the elections.[7] Studying the poll from the Development Studies Programme of Birzeit University in 2004,[8] it is possible to say that the priorities of Palestinian citizens in WB and GS focused on security stability, improving the economic situation, and the rule of law.

Other polls conducted by some Palestinian think tanks reinforced the same conclusions, and clearly pointed to a widespread restlessness over the corruption prevalent in WB and GS. Among the most important conclusions that can be made from an analysis of the surveys, are:

• The ability to fight corruption came first among the eight criterions in the selection of the lists participating in the upcoming (2006) legislative elections (30%).[9]

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[7] Development Studies Programme (DSP)-Birzeit University, "An Opinion Poll Concerning Living Conditions, Emigration, the Palestinian Government, Security Conditions and Reform," Poll no. 19, 5/10/2004, http://sites.birzeit.edu/cds/opinionpolls/poll19/

[8] Ibid.

[9] Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), Poll no. (18), 6–8/12/2005, http://www.pcpsr.org/arabic/survey/polls/2005/p18apressrelease.html (in Arabic)

- 21% of the respondents said that fighting corruption in public institutions was one of the most important priorities at the domestic level. [10]
- The key issue that the respondents in the sample hoped for the members of the Legislative Council to focus on was combatting corruption (53%). One of the most important qualities that the respondents thought candidates in the legislative elections should have is not to be corrupt (92%).[11]
- When voting for parties and movements in the legislative elections, the first consideration was the ability to fight corruption (24%).[12]
- The most important criterion on which the respondents would choose to vote for individual candidates was integrity and distance from corruption.[13]

A comparison in Hamas's theoretical framework suggests that there was clear convergence between what was proposed in its modern literature and the priorities of the street identified by polls and experts. Hamas's slogans in the elections were based on this congruence, showing a qualitative shift in its discourse directed at the masses. Traditionally, Hamas's discourse often focused on its attitudes towards Israel. However, ahead of the elections, Hamas produced new slogans away from the relationship with the Israeli occupation, instead focusing as much as possible on issues of Palestinian official institutions.

In addition to the title of Hamas's project at the time (Change and Reform), the program itself contained several items that emphasized the institutionalization of the PA in a way that would ensure sound management of the Palestinian people's resources and the integrity and transparency of institutional work. In addition, it would fight corruption in all its forms, while stressing the need to find a sound administrative mechanism for appointments to the PA's positions in all sectors. Despite the many reservations on the program, which will be discussed later in this chapter, the program as an indicator of a new phase was indeed in line with the wishes of Palestinian public opinion.

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[10] "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," site of Transparency Palestine, citing Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Unit, An-Najah National University, 25/12/2005. (in Arabic)

[11] "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," Transparency Palestine, citing Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Unit, 16–18/11/2005. (in Arabic)

[12] PCPSR, Poll no. (17), 7–9/9/2005, http://www.pcpsr.org/arabic/survey/polls/2005/p17a1.pdf (in Arabic)

[13] "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," Transparency Palestine, citing Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Unit, 9–11/6/2005. (in Arabic)

According to the program of Change and Reform, in the section on the policy of administrative reform and the fight against corruption, the program stated that good governance was the key factor for the success and progress of countries, and, therefore, the Change and Reform bloc would work towards:

1. The elimination of all forms of corruption, in all areas as quickly as possible, seeing it as a major cause behind weakening the internal Palestinian front and undermining the foundations of national unity.

(….)

3. Adopting an accommodative policy and distributing the labor force in a balanced manner according to clear plans and the needs of the administrative organs for various competences, and fighting favoritism and nepotism.[14]

Regarding legislative policy, the Change and Reform list stressed the need for constitutional reform, and for working on reforming the judicial system to bolster its integrity, independence, dynamism and development. Hamas wanted to put an end to the dominance of the executive branch over various other branches, in addition to reactivating the principles of accountability to which all members of the PA should be subjected to, with full transparency.[15]

Many of Hamas's 2006 candidates had distinguished themselves academically, compared to Fatah's candidates. Of 74 Hamas MPs, 19 were holders of PhDs (25.7%) and 22 were holders of Master's Degrees (29.7%), while 89.2% of Hamas's MPs were university graduates. By comparison, with the Fatah movement, which won 45 seats, 10 (22.2%) held PhDs, and seven (15.6%) held Master's Degrees, while university graduates accounted for 77.8%.[16] However, Shari'ah was the most prominent discipline of specialty among the Hamas members in the legislature.

Hamas PLC members were also younger than Fatah's representatives. For instance, 12 (16.2%) of Hamas's MPs were under 40 years of age. 34 (45.9%) MPs were between 40 and 50 years old, 25 (33.8%) MPs were between 50 and 60

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[14] See "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," Transparency Palestine. (in Arabic)

[15] Ibid.

[16] Samar Jawdat al-Barghouthi, *Simat al-Nukhbah al-Siyasiyyah al-Filastiniyyah Qabla wa Ba'da Qiyam al-Sultah al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (The Characteristics of the Palestinian Political Elite Before and After the Establishment of the Palestinian National Authority) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2009), pp. 202 and 257.

and three (4.1%) members were over 60 years old. Fatah, however, had three MPs below 40 years of age, just 6.7%, 24 MPs between 50 and 60 years of age (53.3%) and seven MPs over 60 (15.6%).[17] The average age of Hamas's MPs in the Council was 47.7 years compared to 49.2 years for Fatah's MPs.[18]

There are also notes on the mechanism followed by Hamas in the selection of its MPs. Hamas relied primarily on the popularity of certain personalities, and not necessarily on diversifying skills and competencies. This meant that Hamas lawmakers had similar backgrounds in some WB areas, in terms of specialty or line of work. A large proportion of the Hamas PLC candidates were imams, Shari'ah graduates, or Shari'ah workers. One example of this was in Bethlehem, where three out of four candidates were specialized in Islamic law,[19] and in the Qalqiliya governorate all candidates were imams or teachers of Islamic sciences, including some who did not hold degrees.[20]

These matters are not discussed to undermine the capabilities of those in Shari'ah, rather it is to point out that the PLC does not discuss only religious matters, it is also concerned with other technical issues. This is evident when PLC committees are formed, covering law, politics, economy, financial sciences, communication, transportation, health, technology, power, etc.

It would be fair to note however that, despite the existence of many teachers and imams in the Change and Reform bloc, it also included other distinguished competencies and specialties that compared favorably to other blocs. Our assessment here is not in relation to other parliamentary blocs, but rather of Hamas's ambition to bring about change and reform in all aspects of the Palestinian situation in all aspects, which required qualified and competent individuals in all community issues. For more information, consideration could be given to table (1), which gives a detailed, in-the-numbers breakdown of the academic level of the PLC members of the Change and Reform bloc, and their specialties.

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[17] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[19] To view the resumes of Hamas candidates in Bethlehem, see PIC, http://www.palestine-info.info/ arabic/palestoday/reports/report2006_1/entkhabat06/entkhabat_tashre3i_06/bet_lahem/22_1_06. htm (in Arabic)

[20] PIC, http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2006_1/entkhabat06/ entkhabat_tashre3i_06/kalkelyah/5_1_06.htm (in Arabic)

Hamas won the legislative elections and theoretically could have formed a government and implemented its program comfortably, but the reality of Palestinian political life undermined the democratic mandate secured by Hamas. Instead of having the victory of the movement usher in a new phase, in which Hamas enjoyed privileges at the local, regional, and international levels, things looked tragic for the movement in terms of internal and external relationships. In any case, before delving into Hamas's political performance, it is informative to examine the context in which Hamas operated in the Palestinian political system.

Table (1): Specialties of Change and Reform Bloc PLC Members[21]

Specialty	WB & GS	Percentage (%)	WB	Percentage (%)	GS	Percentage (%)
Shari'ah Sciences	32	47.8	23	53.5	9	37.5
Literature and Education	12	17.9	4	9.3	8	33.3
Medicine, Pharmacology and Nursing	6	9	3	7	3	12.5
Law	1	1.5	1	2.3	-	0
Economics and Administrative Sciences	7	10.5	6	14	1	4.2
Sciences and Engineering	7	10.5	5	11.7	2	8.3
Political Sciences	2	3	1	2.3	1	4.2

Second: Problems of the Palestinian Political System and How Hamas Has Dealt with Them

One of the most important problems of the Palestinian political system has involved the overlap between the PLO and the PA. There is redundancy in the Palestinian political system resulting from the absence of a boundary between the functions of the PA and the functions of the PLO. Although there may be a theoretical boundary, actual political practice reflects an ambiguity in the roles, in addition to the weakness of both institutions in terms of infrastructure and programs, which hampers their work. Mamdouh Nawfal has emphasized the lack of capacity the PLO has to effectively carry out the struggle against the occupation and blamed

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[21] This table is exclusive to the study, prepared by the researcher, based on the biographies of the members of the Change and Reform bloc in the Palestinian Legislative Council.

this on the failure of the PLO to carry out reforms in the organization. He therefore pointed out the need for reinvigorating and reactivating the role of the PLO. As part of reforming the PLO, Mamdouh calls for stopping the mix-up between the roles of the ministries and that of the Executive Committee, and working on correcting the conditions of many PLO staff. He also calls for the reconsideration of the system of representation and factional quota systems. Mamdouh's call for reform was not limited to the PLO, as he also called for reforming the PA, in relation to many cases similar to those mentioned above, in terms of institution building and programs.[22]

When the PA was established, and the traditional leaderships of the PLO returned to Palestine, establishing a political system based on the idea of self-rule, there were some organizations that had popular support that refused to participate in the new political system, preferring instead to try to influence it from the outside. This highlighted the issue of the presence of other political forces that do not deal with the PLO or the PA as representative of the Palestinians. In other words, as George Jaqman explains, transferring the comprehensive model of the PLO and applying it onto the nascent political system in Palestine threatened to swallow the whole society, in the absence of organized civil society organizations, parties, unions, or popular movements capable of mounting real opposition.[23]

The problem of the Palestinian system is not limited to the PLO, where there is a lack of democracy in its institutions, no elections are held, and not all Palestinian parties are represented. It also includes the problems of the Palestinian political system and the critical relations between the PLO and the PA. Before Hamas came to power, there were no critical relations, because Fatah controlled the PLO and the PA, and it marginalized the role of the PLO. However, after Hamas's election victory, Fatah revived the role of the PLO, creating a problem of representation in the Palestinian political system.

The fact of the matter is that the Palestinian factions realize the need to reform the PLO, and have signed joint agreements calling for changes, reflecting their

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[22] Mamdouh Nawfal, *The Palestinian Political System, Between Palestine and the Diaspora: The Structural Changes in the Palestinian Political Life*, The Fourth Annual Conference of The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy—Muwatin, 22–23/10/1998 (Ramallah: Muwatin, 1999).

[23] George Jaqman, *The Danger Posed by the Past to the Future, a Critique of the Model of the Palestine Liberation Organization* (Ramallah: Muwatin, 1999).

consensus on the existence of problems within the organization. But agreeing on the need for reform is insufficient if there is no more precise definition of said reform, and agreeing that the partisan lineup within the PLO is no longer consistent with the political landscape,[24] given the growing popularity of some movements, the decline of others, and the emergence or demise of others still. If the dispute revolves around the nature and form of the reform, the agreement on the principle remains empty rhetoric meant for media consumption. To date, the Palestinian factions have yet to agree on the details of the reform to be implemented in the PLO.[25]

Hamas has a clear stand on the PLO, not denying the fact that the PLO is the legitimate representative of the Palestinians, but viewing it as not the only representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas, PIJ and the National Initiative maintain that in order to be accepted as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO has to carry out an overall reform of the organization and hold free and fair elections of the National Council. The elected National Council could then decide on the policies, positions, and the charter of the new PLO. However, the Fatah movement disrupted the process of reforming the PLO to ensure its continued control over the latter, though the reform of the organization is an item on the talks for Palestinian reconciliation.

Internal power struggles in the PA especially between its president and the prime minister existed even before the participation of Hamas in the political system. The political conflict between Abu Mazen and Yasir 'Arafat was well-known, and the intra-PA conflict continued even after the dismissal of the Hamas government in the WB. There were disagreements between Salam Fayyad and many Fatah leaders, and later disagreements between Fayyad and Mahmud 'Abbas himself. This problem weakened the ability of Hamas to implement its program, because the president had a completely different program, and he, in cooperation with foreign donors, was able to stop funds from arriving to the Hamas-led government, instead

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[24] Jawad al-Hamad (ed.), *Munazamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah Nahwa Mashru' li Islah Buniawy Siasy* (Palestine Liberation Organization Towards a Structural Political Reform) (Amman: MESC, 2006).

[25] Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah: Taqyyim al-Tajrubah wa I'adat al-Bina'* (Palestinian Liberation Organization: Evaluating the Experience and Restructuring) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2007).

diverting funds to the president's office, something that aggravated tensions within the institutions of the PA.

Hamas's boycott of the 2005 Palestinian presidential election might have contributed to this problem. Perhaps Hamas did not expect to win both the presidential and PLC elections. But in their view, this absolves Hamas of responsibility for non-participation in the vote in the presidential elections in favor of another independent candidate, because there were candidates who were willing to cooperate with Hamas, such as 'Abdul Sattar al-Qassem and Mustafa al-Barghouthi.

After the legislative elections, Hamas dealt democratically with the conflict with the president and Fatah, and engaged in dialogue. It was able to reach a solution through National Conciliation Document of 2006, and other agreements, most notably the Mecca Agreement of 2007. However, the unity government did not last long because of actions by some corrupt Fatah leaders. For example, they prepared for overturning the election results and were accused of contributing to internal dissension. Muhammad Dahlan is one such leader facing multiple charges in the Palestinian court in Ramallah filed by the President Mahmud 'Abbas. In 2007, Hamas took a decision to use force against those groups,[26] after incitement against Hamas and its government reached a peak. Hamas succeeded in wresting full control over GS, but the result was the collapse of the unity government, and Fatah's seizure of control of WB and the beginning of a new phase of the conflict.

The other problem that Hamas faced was that governments are usually governed by the Constitution or Basic Law. The Palestinian political system is also governed by the agreements signed between the PLO and Israel. Various PA-Israel agreements reduced the PA's control over key areas like security, economics and politics. Therefore, Hamas had to look for harmony between its programs and the President's programs, which are based on those agreements. Through the Mecca Agreement,[27] Hamas tried to overcome that problem but did not solve it completely. Hamas announced its respect for the signed agreements, but as a separate movement said it would not abide by them. However, it acknowledged that a Palestinian government that includes all parties would not breach those agreements.

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[26] *Asharq Alawsat*, 4/1/2011.

[27] *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/2/2007.

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Another important problem faced by Hamas was the situation concerning the PLC after the elections in 2006. The previous Legislative Council held a final session following the Legislative Elections in 2006, and took many decisions that restricted the work of the newly elected Council.[28] The actions of the former PLC in its last meeting diverted the efforts of the elected council, from its first moment after taking office, towards addressing the new problem, instead of embarking on the tasks of Change and Reform pledged in their program. Furthermore, the PLC, since its inception, continued to suffer from some administrative problems caused by flaws in its administrative structure in relation to the distribution of tasks, especially between the secretary general and speaker, over issues such as staffing and transportation.[29]

Third: Subjective and Objective Challenges

Hamas faced a fundamental dilemma in the immediate aftermath of its victory in the 2006 PLC elections, related to the attempts of some internal and external parties to pressure it to make a choice, either to remain as a resistance movement or to transform itself quickly from a resistance movement to a full-fledged political party. This was a serious issue because if the movement had wanted to continue with resistance it would have meant withdrawing from politics altogether. Hamas had played a significant role in the second *Intifadah*, and in forcing Israel to withdraw from GS. Therefore, a full transition into a political party shorn of its resistance activities represented an existential threat to Hamas. In addition to this, Hamas faced the challenges of proving its ability to combine an Islamic ideology with the requirements of democracy. On the other hand, there were substantive challenges for Hamas to face, namely the occupation and the institutional imbalance in the Palestinian political system. This chapter will discuss these challenges as follows:

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[28] Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (Panorama), *Taqrir al-Ada' al-Barlamani (1)* (The Parliamentary Performance Report (1)) (Ramallah: Panorama, 2007), p. 25.

[29] Ahmad Abu Dayyah, The Administrative Construction and the Supporting Units of the Legislative Council, Transparency Palestine, 2004, www.aman-palestine.org/Documents/Publication/ManagBuild.doc (in Arabic)

1. The Ability to Achieve Harmonization Between Islamic Ideology and Democracy

Doubts were expressed that Hamas's ideology based on Islamic principles may hinder the establishment of democratic institutions, or may not help Hamas pursue realistic policies. This may not be a real challenge, or more precisely, it is a theoretical challenge that did not materialize on the ground, especially since Hamas's first step towards entering power was undertaken in a democratic way, without violating any of its ideological principles. Elections were Hamas's path. It should be noted here that a number of Islamic thinkers do not find any contradiction between Islam and democracy.[30] In any case, the differences between the foundations of the Islamic political system and democracy do not negate compatibility and harmony between the two.[31]

The newness of the experience has prompted many people, especially liberals, to argue that democratization is a challenge not only for Hamas, but also for the Palestinian people. There are expectations in certain quarters that the ideology of Hamas would put the organization against democratization and push it towards a policy to Islamize Palestinian society. In addition, the lack of precise separation between what is political and what is ideological makes it impractical to pause at each position or policy followed by the movement, and analyze whether it is motivated by ideology or politics. Indeed, there is no doubt that the reality in which Hamas lives is not compatible with its principles, but logically speaking, we cannot negate the possibility that Hamas's policies could be consistent with reality without violating its principles.

Immediately following its electoral victory, Hamas was keen to disprove the assumptions mentioned above, making the case that it had a comprehensive program to run society, derived from Islamic law, but that it would not seek to force anyone to adopt its programs.[32] Hamas as a movement with essentially the

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[30] Muhammad Jalal Sharaf, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Siyasi wa Tatawwuruhu fi al-Islam* (The Emergence of Political Thought and its Evolution in Islam) (Beirut: Dar al-Nahdah al-Arabiyyah, 1982), pp. 33–83.

[31] Magdi Hammad et al., *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah wa al-Dimuqratiyyah: Dirasat fi al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah* (Islamic and Democratic Movemnets: Studies on Thought and Practice) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1999).

[32] An interview with 'Atallah Abu al-Sabah, Palestinian Minister of Education in the 10th government, OnIslam, 11/3/2007. (in Arabic)

same ideology as the MB movement, does not have revolutionary social change on its agenda.[33] Furthermore, its new position meant that it had to implement the program of "Hamas government" that adapted to reality and the political context within which it operated, and not the program of "Hamas the resistance," which rejected political reality and sought to change it, and which did not care for the calculations of the factions that support the Oslo Accords.

In the beginning, statements like these were seen as an attempt to appease concerned parties. The Change and Reform bloc was elected by a majority in the Palestinian street, and hence, democracy required that this Bloc's programs be present in all domains. Beyond the claims of those who spoke about this challenge, and those who deny its existence, there were a number of indicators showing that Hamas's entry to the PA's institutions through elections was not the first step on the road to democracy. Hamas's victory was followed by long rounds of dialogue to form a National Unity Government. Despite the failure of these early attempts, this serves as a clear indication that Hamas approves of pluralism and political partnership.

Subsequent steps confirmed this. The steps were related to the rounds of dialogue about the PLO and participation within it, and the National Unity Government and its format. Although dialogue took place amidst a crisis, a political partnership a preference for Hamas. A year after entering the institutions of the PA, Hamas succeeded in perpetuating political partnership as a concrete reality, forming the first National Unity Government in the PA.

The political partnership that Hamas formed sought to change reality from mere slogans to practice in PA institutions, and not only in the political domain. Indeed, Hamas was keen on having ministers in its government from the Christian community in the country, reflecting a deeper grasp of the notion of partnership and acceptance of others. This categorically invalidates the claim that Hamas's religious ideology may prevent it from dealing in harmony with the others, politically or religiously.

The challenge faced by Hamas was not from a single source. The fear that a dominant Hamas political ideology would produce a limited program unable to

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[33] Khaled Hroub, Manifestations of Pragmatism Among Moderate Islamists, OnIslam, 22/3/2007, http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/analysis-opinions/palestine/89779-2007-03-22%20 01-45-57.html (in Arabic)

deal with reality and the prevailing environment, was matched by fears from the opposite direction, perhaps from supporters and members of Hamas themselves. The fear stems from their doubts about the ability of the movement to preserve its ideology in the context of the prevailing environment. Therefore, one of the achievements of Hamas was that it overcame this concern during the various milestones it underwent, showing flexibility in dealing with the harsh demands of reality, without losing sight of its intellectual and ideological references. The Mecca Agreement was a practical indication of Hamas's ability to overcome the aforementioned challenge.

The tight scope of what is politically permissible is the natural focus of ideological movements. Hamas, being part of the ideological Islamic movement, shares distinctive characteristics with similar organizations, different to other movements that operate in the political arena. What is meant here by the scope of what is politically permissible is that political movements in general determine their policies in accordance with the principle of profit and loss, depending on circumstances, where the ceiling of what is allowed and permitted is high. But in the case of ideological movements like Hamas, the ceiling of what is permissible and allowed will be determined, above the calculations of profit and loss and circumstances, by principles and ideology.

Therefore, any assessment of the Hamas movement must consider the fact that the determinants of Hamas's experience include dimensions other than those related to political expediency. The Islamic frame of reference is evident in the literature of the movement and its programs. But despite this, the movement declared on more than one occasion that its ideology does not undermine its political effectiveness or how it deals with circumstances, and that it is able to reconcile its intellectual and ideological principles with the policies demanded by reality.[34]

So far, reconciling these issues remains under question, especially regarding Hamas's position on the Israeli occupation expressed in its Charter. This question was raised more than once, even by senior Hamas leaders. But another aspect of Palestinian political action showed the extent of Hamas's ability to find a formula that is consistent with its ideological origins, namely, internal politics. This meant reconciling ideology with democracy. While this dialectic is still under discussion,

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[34] An interview with 'Atallah Abu al-Sabah, OnIslam, 11/3/2007; and Khaled Hroub, Manifestations of Pragmatism Among Moderate Islamists.

in this study it is sufficient to note that the practical dimension of Hamas's participation in elections and the formation of governments is an indicator of its adoption of the idea of differentiation between Islam and democracy, rather than contradiction. Hamas doesn't consider any contradiction between its ideology and political participation in a democratic process. Khaled Hroub discusses the idea of synchronization between Islamization and liberalization in Hamas. According to him, for Hamas, the Islamization of the society is no longer considered a precondition for liberation, rather it is a considered a process that runs parallel with liberation.[35]

The Charter of Hamas issued in 1988 is controversial issue because it contains provisions that are inconsistent with the role of Hamas as a political party that participates in elections and power, whether in terms of the Islamization of the Palestinian society or in terms of relations with Israel. Two points are mentioned here:

First: Evaluating Hamas as a political party shouldn't depend on the Charter of "Hamas the movement." This Charter was drawn up when it was a resistance movement in 1988. It is only fair that Hamas be assessed (after 25 years) based on the political, social and economic programs it developed through its parliament bloc. Hamas's membership of the PLC and forming a government was based on the electoral and government programs but not on the Charter.

Second: It should be remembered that although Hamas has not amended its Charter, it has been marginalized by the Hamas leadership and Hamas does not consider the Charter as a source of its policies. Hamas has signaled that its Charter is no longer binding, and can be modified. One example is that Hamas has accepted Mecca Agreement that requires all states to respect all the previous agreements signed by the PLO. Prominent Hamas leaders like 'Aziz Dwaik, and Nasiruddin al-Sha'ir , have said that the Hamas Charter is not sacred and therefore, can be changed. Perhaps the reason for not amending the Charter of Hamas until the moment is fear of losing some popular support.

In short, it can be argued that the history of Hamas suggests that it did not want to impose Islamic law on society, a view that is reinforced by its participation in the 2006 elections and then the government, which reflected its acceptance of political

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

and religious pluralism, through the appointment of Christian ministers in the government. Then the caretaker government led by Hamas in GS did not impose Shari'ah, and an idea prevails among large segments in Hamas that this should be done gradually, and that society should be prepared and reality accommodated in doing so. Although Hamas was rejected internationally and domestically, it kept open the option of dialogue with all parties and did not use violence apart from in self-defense.

2. Hamas' Policy of Combining Resistance with Governance

The mixed record of Fatah's journey from armed struggle to a political settlement and establishing an authority under occupation reinforces the argument that combining resistance and governance is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Some political observers wondered whether Hamas would meet the same fate. Skepticism about Hamas's ability to combine resistance and governance also came from Hamas members. For example, for some Hamas members, it was possible to combine resistance and governance but they were unsure of Hamas's ability to do so. On the other hand, Hamas's rivals hoped the movement would fail to combine resistance and governance thereby strengthening their own political positions.

This chapter highlights this dialectic and discusses the ways Hamas has combined resistance and governance since taking power. Based on its literature and political behavior, we can say that what Hamas did after its political participation in 2006 showed that reconciling the two is possible. While Hamas could not partake effectively in military resistance, due to its participation in government, this did not mean that Hamas waived its right to resist, and perhaps its participation in the government was an opportunity to review the concept of resistance, so that it becomes more comprehensive.

3. Resistance Through Reform

Traditionally in Palestinian society, resistance means military action against occupation despite its modest forces compared to regular armies; this idea was reinforced as a result of violent clashes in the Palestinian territories following the start of the occupation. Nowadays, this concept has become a subject for discussion indicating the existence of a wide interpretation of what resistance is. There is now an understanding that resistance shouldn't be limited to military action only and that it may include a variety of actions including the military option.

One of the most important issues that can be referred to in this area, is that both political education that serves national goals, and building Palestinian capacities in both its individual and social frameworks, cannot be taken out of the scope of resistance. Furthermore, contributing to building institutions on professional and legal bases, fighting corruption, and managing and investing in Palestinian resources in light of the liberation project, are all a crucial part of the overall project of Resistance. In effect, this part of resistance is considered a prerequisite to the other forms of resistance, including armed resistance. Indeed, good governance, and building the institutions of the government in a way that serves national goals and spare it from economic and political subservience, lays the foundations for effective resistance, and one that would be efficient and durable, and enjoys official and popular support.

If Hamas adopts this approach, Hamas's political rivals will try to portray it as a retreat from Hamas's resistance path, even though they themselves do not adopt military resistance. This is an attempt to show that Hamas is impotent and lacking credibility in its proposals. But what is convenient for Hamas is that its electoral program, which focused on issues of reform in society, was in line with the priorities of Palestinian public opinion. This has facilitated Hamas pressing ahead with its program, with a poll conducted by the Development Studies Programme in Ramallah on 5/10/2004, that the respondents feel that the main priority that the government should focus on is improving the economic situation, as stated by 35% of respondents. The next priority for the respondents was internal security with 18%, followed by the need to address unemployment at 8%, and the fight against corruption at 8%, strengthening the rule of law, 3%, and solving the problem of the proliferation of arms, 2%. This means that 72% of respondents were mainly concerned with reforming the internal situation.[36]

Hamas was wise in choosing Change and Reform as its program, on the basis of which it contested the legislative elections. Therefore, we can say that the movement took a step forward in expanding the concept of resistance. The concept begins first with self-jihad and self-development, which is commensurate with Hamas's ideology and belief system, if we invoke the concept of the jihad of the soul to express the same idea. It is also commensurate with its new position as a parliamentary bloc and a political party participating in power. The late Sheikh

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[36] DSP–Birzeit University, Poll no. 19, 5/10/2004.

Ahmad Yasin expressed this approach in not separating good governance and resistance, with a statement that summed up the previous stage. Sheikh Ahmad Yasin clearly said during the second *Intifadah*: "The current stage is a stage where liberation mingled together with construction."[37]

The emphasis by Hamas on the need to adopt transparency, integrity, accountability and financial control strengthened Hamas's appeal to the population of Palestine, after the failure of previous governments to gain credibility with the public. What contributed to giving an image closer to the pulse of the street was linking the electoral program to modern concepts and visions that are accepted in the Western world, and at the same time, consistent with Islamic heritage. This was perhaps a message from Hamas that there was no contradiction between global calls for institutional reform and an Islamic frame of reference.[38]

However, Hamas did not ignore the other interpretations of resistance, including the traditional military one. Throughout the election manifesto of the Change and Reform bloc, Hamas expressed its desire to direct the Palestinian political system towards resistance, but Hamas also made it clear that it would also seek to be part of official institutions, especially the legislature, and this was aimed to "support the program of resistance and uprising which was favored by the Palestinian people as a strategic choice to end the occupation."[39] Hamas demonstrated its ability to combine resistance and governance, a good example of which was the capture and holding prisoner of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit at a time when the Palestinian government was busy managing the Palestinian institutions.

However, although indicative of Hamas's insistence on combining military action with the governance, the capture of Shalit also proved that embarking on military action hinders the application of reform programs by virtue of Israel's ability to intervene, disrupt PA institutions, arrest its ministers and PLC members, and choke the Authority financially and economically, as well as its ability to prevent the movement of officials and individuals… This has created a growing conviction

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[37] Khalid al-Hindi, *'Amaliyyat al-Bina' al-Watani al-Filastini Wijhat Nazar Islamiyyah* (The National Palestinian Building Process From an Islamic Perspective) (Nablus: Palestinian Research and Studies Center, 1999), p. 73.

[38] Belal Shobaki, In its Twenty First Anniversary: Hamas and the Dialectic Between the Resistance and Governance, *Filisteen Almuslima*, January 2009, www.fm-m.com/2009/jan/9-2.php (in Arabic)

[39] Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

within Hamas that it is extremely difficult to combine managing the Authority and resistance under occupation. This requires an in-depth study by the movement for its next electoral programs and what is expected from its opponents and enemies. It is that a platform of sensitizing the Palestinian street to the priority of ending corruption internally as well as resistance against Israel, could prove popular.

4. Hamas and the Transition from Reaction to Initiative

Hamas has found itself facing military conflicts with Israel since its election in 2006. Hamas was able at all times to endure without the collapse of its GS rule. But resilience in every round with the occupation was not enough, and Hamas needed to create a new approach to safeguard its ability to take initiative and not to leave things under Israel's control. It can be said that Hamas's proposal for a truce represented a first step on the road to the political investment of its armed resistance. Some tried to interpret the truce as a setback for Hamas's resistance by being unable to engage in resistance and power simultaneously, but this claim fades in light of the following facts: First, Hamas did not recognize Israel and yet won the last PLC elections, giving it popular legitimacy. Second, henceforth, military resistance would be conducted by Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. Third, Hamas, in recent years, has been the only Palestinian movement able to influence the Arab and Islamic street[40] especially in the post-Arab revolutions.

Hamas's truce proposal was not new, theoretically speaking. Hamas's view in putting forward the idea of a truce was based on the idea of breaking down the solution of the Palestinian issue to two stages: the first stage of the solution is brought forward, and encompasses a truce with a specific timeframe, in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. The second stage of the solution is deferred, the stage of liberating Palestine from the sea to the river, with Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic efforts.[41] This gives Hamas the ability to adapt to changes, and the flexibility to reap benefits in the stage between the accelerated and deferred solutions.[42]

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[40] Belal Shobaki, *op. cit*.

[41] Musa Zaid al-Kilani, *Al-Haraket al-Islamiyyah fi al-Urdun wa Filastin* (The Islamic Movements in Jordan and Palestine) (Beirut: Al-Risalah Foundation for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, and Amman: Dar al-Furqan for Publishing and Distribution, 2000), pp. 201–202.

[42] See the Arabic translation *'Asr Hamas* (Hamas Era) of Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Hamas Wind-Violence and Coexistence* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 1999) (in Hebrew), in "Talks Under Oslo Between Careful Rejection and Reserved Acceptance," Episode 13, Chapter 4, pp. 144–152, PIC, http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/books/aser_hamas/aser_hamas14.htm

Activating the idea and proposing it officially took place in 2003, and just like Hamas's electoral discourse was in line with the priorities of Palestinian citizens at the time, its political discourse related to the relationship with the occupation was consistent with Palestinian public opinion. In a public opinion poll conducted on 3–6/7/2003, 68.8% of respondents were satisfied with the decision of the truce declared by Hamas and various other Palestinian factions, and 56.8% of the respondents believed that the truce was in general the national interest, whereas 67.8% believed that the Palestinian people were in need for such a truce.[43]

Based on the above, it can be stated that Hamas's policy of combining resistance and governance consists of three different dimensions:

First: Focusing on reform and fighting corruption. According to the Islamic principles Hamas follows, this is considered as a part of *Jihad* (the struggle to achieve goodness against oneself), and is linked to the concept of the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice, and reforming the self, the family, and society.

Second: Continuation of military resistance through Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades. The capture of Israeli soldier Shalit and resisting the Israeli aggression on GS in 2008 and 2012, were part of that policy.

Third: Enhancing resilience and maintaining governance without abandoning resistance through the truce.

5. Israeli Occupation as a Challenge for Hamas's Rule

The special experience of the PA, stemming mainly from being under occupation; the policies of occupation and its attacks limit the PA's work, whoever is formally in control of the Authority. So, what if Hamas became the leader of the PA? It would inevitably lead to increasing Israeli restrictions on Palestinian institutions.

Israel's policies that restricted Hamas's governmental work, and therefore, any assessment of its experience, can be summarized as follows:

• Arresting PLC members, who belong to the Change and Reform bloc. Following the legislative elections, Israel arrested 64 Hamas leaders in the WB, including

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[43] Department of Information, Surveys and Public Opinion Polls, Results of Palestinian Public Opinion Polls on Truce Decision Between Palestinian Factions, Ramallah, 3–6/7/2003, http://www.sis.gov.ps/arabic/polls/archive/hodna.html (in Arabic)

44 PLC members (and Speaker 'Aziz Dwaik), affecting the equilibrium inside the Council and the real outcome of the elections.[44]

- Arresting 10 ministers of the tenth Palestinian government from the WB.[45]
- Arresting leaders and members of Hamas in WB, and bombing the headquarters of the government and the authority in GS. The number of prisoners detained following the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit on 25/6/2006 until the end of the year was 3,500 Palestinians,[46] mostly people affiliated to Hamas.
- Freezing and confiscating funds owed to the PA from customs and import and export revenues, which severely debilitated the PA economically. The value of the funds withheld by Israel was approximately $500–600 million, about a year and three months after the formation of the Hamas government (i.e., June 2007).[47]
- Successive military campaigns against GS, most notably Operation Summer Rain, which lasted from 26/6–31/10/2006,[48] killing 400 Palestinians and wounding 1,852 others, and Operation Autumn Clouds in November, which claimed the lives of 105 Palestinians and wounded 353.[49]
- Israeli authorities banned the movement of the government and popular leaders of Hamas, disrupting their ability to work.

6. The International Boycott of Hamas Government

Added to the above, the Palestinian tenth and eleventh governments worked under economic and political blockade by some international actors. The US and EU member-states continue to refuse to recognize Hamas or send financial aid to a government that Hamas led or was a partner in. Those countries insist that before they could do so Hamas first must recognize Israel as a state, renounce

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[44] *Addustour,* and *Al-Hayat*, 29/6/2006; *Asharq Alawsat*, 7/8/2006; and *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/8/2006.

[45] See Ministry of Detainees and ex-Detainees Affairs, A Comprehensive Statistical Report Discussing Prisoners' Conditions in General and the Most Prominent Events in 2006 in Particular, site of Palestinian National Information Center,
http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/social/prisoners/prisoners19.html

[46] Ibid.

[47] *Los Angeles Times* newspaper, 25/6/2007, articles.latimes.com/2007/jun/25/world/fg-mideast25

[48] See Hani al-Masri, "Summer Rain: Bigger than a Prisoner Soldier and Bigger than a Legal Vacuum in the Authority," *Al-Hayat*, 7/7/2006. (in Arabic)

[49] See Wafa Report, 23/11/2006, citing Mu'awiyah Hassanein, the director of ambulance and emergency services in the Ministry of Health; *Al Bayan*, 23/11/2006; and Report of Palestinian Information Center on Beit Hanoun Massacre, 8/11/2006. (in Arabic)

the use of violence as a policy, and abide by the agreements the PLO had signed previously with Israel.

Following the refusal by Hamas to accede to those demands, the international embargo imposed on the Palestinians continues. The official position of the Arab and Muslim countries on the embargoing of Palestine is not coherent enough to ensure the alleviation of the conditions. The public waited to see the ability of the government to lift the blockade and bring in funds instead of waiting for the implementation of the Change and Reform projects, which had formed the basis of Hamas's election.

Therefore, the objective evaluation of Hamas's political performance must consider the impact of the blockade on the movement's experience in power, as the benchmark of success under siege is different to that of a comparatively free government. For some, the benchmark of success shifted from being a measure of Hamas's ability to carry out its promises to its ability to lift the siege and endure. However, this assessment will still evaluate Hamas's performance forensically, as the movement was aware of the obstacles before it when it drafted its electoral and governmental manifesto.

7. Performance of Hamas in Governance

a. The Tenth and Eleventh Government Stages

As mentioned above, some people were not convinced that Hamas would have the ability to combine Islamic ideology and democratic ideals. Following its election victory, Hamas was accused of being in power based democratic principles only and neglecting its Islamic ideology. Hamas rejected such accusations, pointing out that participating in the political processes in Palestine is not against its Islamic principles.[50] The participation of Hamas in the elections meant that it had to co-exist with other Palestinian parties with very different ideologies within the

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[50] Mushir al-Masri, *Al-Musharakah fi al-Hayat al-Siyasiyyah fi Zill Anzimat al-Hukm al-Mu'asirah* (Participation in Political Life in Light of Contemporary Governance Systems) (Cairo: Dar al-Kalimah Library, 2006), in PIC, http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/books/2006/musheer/musheer1.htm

See also Amr Hamzawy, "The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists," Policy Brief, no. 40, August 2005, site of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,
http://carnegieendowment.org/files/pb40.hamzawy.FINAL.pdf

Palestinian political system. Some thought that Hamas made a number of mistakes while trying to adjust to a pluralistic political system.

b. An Ideal Platform

Idealism here does not necessarily mean a positive assessment for Hamas. Indeed, part of the success of any group or political figure is measured by the extent of their ability to read reality and formulate objectives in line with it, and not by the extent of the nobility of its goals. The idealism of a given proposal could turn overnight into a burden on those who drafted it, because it will become the standard by which they will be assessed. Some of the items were unrealistic in Hamas's electoral program, and even the wording of the electoral program was detached from how Hamas behaved after the election, suggesting that Hamas may not have expected to win, or that it expected to win but did not anticipate the extent of the implications. The problems that existed in the electoral program were as follows:

1. Hamas was not required in its electoral program to respond to strategic issues. Indeed, solving all the issues requires decades, while its electoral cycle is only four years. According to some views, Hamas, at a time when it was participating in elections for the PA, most of whose activities fall under the services category, was not required to import an ideological and political stance into the Change and Reform bloc, turning Hamas's goals into an obstacle that needed to be overcome in order to implement change and reform. Nevertheless, some saw that it would be extremely difficult for the Change and Reform bloc not to have a clear political program, because the Palestinian people are politicized, and because large numbers of them vote for a specific political program and not just a services program. Therefore, ignoring the fundamental issues would be extremely contentious for the Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, and would harm Hamas more than it would benefit it.

   No one can deny the practical correlation between Hamas and the Change and Reform bloc, and we are not among those who exaggerate in calling for separating them, because it is a parliamentary bloc affiliated to Hamas. But it was wise not to bring everything that Hamas has into the framework of the PA. Here, Hamas must answer the following question: Is the self-governing authority able to accommodate Hamas? If we as researchers were to answer this, we must say that the PA, which was created in accordance with the Oslo Accords,

cannot accommodate any program for liberation. Since Hamas and several other factions see the PA as necessary in the current stage, this does not mean that the authority would be the focus of the full scope of their political activities.

2. In the introduction, Hamas's electoral program contained wording that justifies raising questions about what Hamas intended to do. While Hamas had announced that it was pro-democratic and willing to engage in political participation through elections, the first paragraphs in the program confirmed that political participation was not a fixed path for Hamas. According to Hamas's vision and Islamic frame of reference, there would be nothing wrong with this, but according to the principles of democracy and the democratic process, political participation is one of its procedural constants. Here, we are entitled to ask and answer for those who drafted those words, what the importance is of the following clause in the electoral program: "To participate or not is a matter of debate and is a means, and not a fixed ideological tenet or principle that does not change."[51] It would have been possible to accept such words before Hamas declared its acceptance of entering the elections because of the ceiling imposed by Oslo, but after Hamas decided to enter the process, it was no longer acceptable to draft its words as such, as if nothing had changed.

3. Under "The Fundamentals" clause, Hamas set out in its election manifesto a set of points which would not be logical to apply to PA institutions because they are overall political issues that go beyond the ceiling set for the PA, whose existence is contingent upon a particular political stance on these issues. These fundamentals, according to Hamas, are:

4. Emphasis on the Palestinian right to historic Palestine.

5. Emphasis on armed resistance.

6. The right of return of all Palestinian refugees.

7. Prohibition of fighting and the use of force to settle internal disputes.

8. Striving to release all prisoners.

Placing the above fundamentals in an electoral program to join the PA cannot meet any of them for several reasons: First, the PA itself is incompatible with some of the fundamentals mentioned above. Some viewed the move as propaganda to attract voters, though there are those who defend it by saying that Hamas sought to

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[51] Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

reassure the public that its participation did not mean it forfeiting its fundamentals. Including them in a provisional electoral program gives every Palestinian the right to address questions to Hamas after four years about the shores of Haifa and Acre, and prisoners of the Negev and a Nafha, and the Palestinians in Lebanon and Syria. Since Hamas included these fundamentals in its platform, then they represent the contract on the basis of which Hamas was given a mandate to lead the PA.

The problem is not in the fundamentals set by Hamas, but it may be in the framework chosen by Hamas for these fundamentals. Hamas's political project is supposed to address domestic issues in the context of the PA, and issues related to Israel in the framework of Hamas itself or the PLO after it is reformed. Otherwise, it would mean that there was no room for participation and partnership within the PA, with each Palestinian faction pushing its political agenda as the ideal agenda to determine policy. The other factions have the same problem, but they are not the focus of our discussion in this book.

Problematic partnership in the aforementioned situation prompts us to look into another item in the fundamentals of the Change and Reform bloc, which are the prohibition of fighting and the use of force in internal relations. Such an item would not be included in a platform in normal circumstances, because we are in the third millennium, internal peace is no longer a subject of debate, being a core principle. Therefore, the inclusion of core indisputable principles in any electoral program may mean for some that it has lost this fundamental quality and is questionable. Not only this, but by including this issue in its platform, Hamas appeared as though it perceived the other parties in the Palestinian arena with suspicion and fear, even before taking office. However, the inclusion of this issue by Hamas was necessary because everyone is under occupation and because of the state of polarization in the Palestinian arena. In addition, Hamas was the party that most suffered from oppression and persecution by the PA, and was never a part of the PA or a member of the PLO.

In any case, there are those who accuse Hamas of reneging on the fundamentals regarding the prohibition of infighting with its military takeover in GS. But Hamas responds by asserting that it was forced to act following deliberate attempts to thwart its rule and cause lawlessness, as well as disrupt the work of institutions by Fatah affiliates. Hamas acted while in government, and at the same time enjoying PLC support, and therefore, as Hamas holds, its measures were meant to preserve order and constitutional legitimacy, and were not just a partisan-factional measure.

c. Formation of Government

When Hamas won the majority of PLC seats in 2006, and Isma'il Haniyyah was designated to form the government by the Palestinian president, Hamas called for the formation of a coalition government. On the surface, the issue lined with the principle of pluralism and political participation; however, it also reflected Hamas's fear of managing the PA alone; Hamas has realized the need to ensure the flow of funds to the PA. Indeed, the issue of salaries was the effective weapon in the hands of the party's opponents.

Hamas could not claim that the tenth government was not a Hamas government. To be sure, Hamas was forced to form a government on its own after the rest of the Palestinian factions refused to participate in its government; whether in an attempt to derail Hamas, or because they sensed that Hamas's boat was going to inevitably sink and that there was no need to board it; or because of their tough conditions and demands for participation. In any case, Hamas selected a distinguished group of technocrats for the tenth government, which, for example, comprised 10 PhD holders out of 24 ministers. However, it might have blundered by opting for senior Hamas symbols to lead the government, because it was elected for a program focused on developmental issues and reform, which need to be undertaken by experts and qualified technocrats rather than politicians. Simultaneously, there is a strong conviction in the Palestinian arena that the nature of the Palestinian situation and the circumstances and the challenges of occupation dictate the need for strong personalities and political symbols able to make big decisions, because technocrats in the end cannot operate without political cover and support.

Practically speaking, the presence of some political leaders in the government weakened both the movement and the government. It weakened the government because it meant that it would face difficulties in foreign relations, while the movement would be more vulnerable to external pressures. In addition, Hamas appointed its members to different positions in government institutions, and in many cases there was no justification for such appointments. The appointment was not based on a professional basis in many cases. Therefore, Hamas was following the nepotism stereotype of Fatah in the eyes of some sectors of the society. Hamas justified their decisions by claiming that it was unable to implement its governmental program because of the ignorance it faced in the government institutions. This step did not derive any benefit because those who were appointed by Hamas could not implement

its program. Further, the policy made many people try to manoeuver themselves closer to Hamas through the media to obtain prestigious government jobs.

Also, Hamas was contradicting itself; it formed the Executive Force by Sa'id Siyam. Through the election campaign, Hamas was one of the parties calling for reforming the security forces, reducing their number, and merging them. All of this affected the credibility of Hamas's electoral platform. However, Hamas believed that this move was necessary after it found that the leaders of the security forces refused to cooperate with it, and were trying to undermine it, while reporting to President 'Abbas and the leaders of Fatah, rather than the government. Hamas criticized the overlap between Fatah and the security forces, and then it made the same mistake when Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades overlapped with the Executive Force.

d. Achievements of Hamas in Power

Despite the above observations, the tenth and eleventh governments had their achievements in reform and fighting corruption. There was an increase in transparency, in line with the public desire to be informed of the administrative and financial procedures in the PA institutions, in order to curb the spread of corruption. A report issued by the UN on transparency in 2006 showed that the level of transparency in PA institutions saw a significant increase in the period that followed the victory of Hamas in the elections and its formation of the tenth Palestinian government. The government at that time also contributed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) on 13/3/2006, thus achieving a major step forward in terms of developing its statistical system.[52]

Also as part of the fight against corruption in PA institutions, and to turn the slogan of Change and Reform to concrete facts on the ground, many legal cases involving corruption were brought, notably financial and administrative ones, in a way that international institutions were not able to overlook. Some reports, including a special UN report, referenced the fact that the judiciary received numerous cases involving senior managers especially in institutions that hold monopolies.[53]

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[52] United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Program on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR), Democratic Governance, Financial Transparency,
http://www.pogar.org/arabic/countries/finances.asp?cid=14

[53] Ibid.

This was confirmed by local civil society organizations and think tanks, where it was pointed out that Hamas's tenure at the helm of the tenth government saw investigations into dozens of corruption cases by the Public Prosecutor.[54]

The reform steps Hamas embarked on in PA institutions, especially during the tenure of the tenth government, were acceptable relative to the magnitude of the pressure brought to bear on the Hamas-led government. However, they were lackluster in terms of media coverage, both because of the failure of the PA in dealing with the media and the preoccupation of the media with political issues.

The steps undertaken by Hamas for reforming PA institutions also affected one of the sensitive institutions, namely, the security institution. Hamas initiated many reforms in this area, and here we mean reform steps in the administrative side of the security establishment as well as the various PA institutions. This is what was clearly alluded to in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2006 report, which stressed very clearly that the tenth government was leading a reform campaign in the various organs of the PA, but that what was undermining the importance and relevance of this campaign was the extent of the pressures imposed on the PA.[55]

Another issue that we may refer to, as a step in promoting integrity and transparency in the institutions of the Palestinian government, and which formed a precedent when implemented by the tenth government, was having ministers regularly appear on camera, in an Arabic program called "Wajih al-Sahafah" (Face the Press), where journalists would ask ministers periodical and regular questions. A step like this made public issues a topic of debate not only between leaders, but also at community level. This enhanced one of the principles of good governance in democratic systems, where governance by citizens is implemented by allowing them to examine the details of their public affairs in all sectors.[56]

It may also be noted that the members of the tenth and eleventh governments believe that many other achievements were made. Samir Abu Eisha, during

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[54] Jihad Harb, "The Future of Political Reform in the Palestinian Authority Under Hamas Government," PCPSR, Politics and Governance Unit, Ramallah, April 2006, http://www.pcpsr.org/arabic/domestic/policypapers/policyjehadreform.pdf (in Arabic)

[55] UNDP, POGAR, Democratic Governance, Financial Transparency.

[56] Site of King Abdullah II Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency, http://english.kaa.jo/Award/default.aspx

his meeting with the researcher, detailed several achievements of the tenth and eleventh government, including:[57]

1. Despite the state of tension and instability, the tenth government made contingency plans to deal with the extraordinary situation, focusing on employment and infrastructure projects.

2. Enhancing relations between ministries. The Ministry of Planning played an important role in this despite the prevailing disharmony.

3. Planning was linked to the budget, an important step to achieve a kind of harmony between potential capacities and goals.

4. Restructuring ministries on professional and scientific bases, benefiting from previous experiences.

5. Making sure that no appointments took place outside legal systems.

6. There was a ministerial-administrative committee following up issues related to arranging public posts in line with the laws in place.

7. Regular declaration of financial revenues and expenditures by ministries.

8. A computer program was developed to deal with recruitment and vacancies, completely discounting personal preferences in appointments.

9. Undertaking many social development projects to improve the lives of citizens and combat poverty, such as the empowerment project for families that lost their breadwinner, and planning to establish a bank for the poor.

It is necessary here to point out that the steps expected by Palestinian society are much deeper than some superficial reforms, which fight the symptoms of corruption rather than its causes. The steps, like those carried out by Hamas, albeit positive, did not address the roots of the problem related to the structural imbalances and flaws in the PA institutions. The reason no reform steps of this profound nature were undertaken is that these steps require a political environment that embraces the reform project.[58] The Auditing Department report on PA institutions stated that there were multiple flaws in public administration and financial management.[59]

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[57] Interview with Samir Abu Eisha, 17/1/2009.

[58] Candidate's Integrity Criteria and its Impact on the Conduct of Palestinian Voter, Transparency Palestine, http://www.aman-palestine.org/Arabic/Documents/Election/VoterTrans.doc (in Arabic)

[59] Palestinian National Authority, Bureau of Financial and Administrative Control, http://www.facb.gov.ps (in Arabic)

Minister of Planning of the tenth and eleventh government, Samir Abu Eisha, explained in an interview the factors that prevented the achievement of many of the goals set forth by his governments:[60]

1. The lack of political stability, and the preoccupation with attempts at de-escalation.
2. Lawlessness in major cities.
3. The lack of harmony within the administrative institutions of the government.
4. Overlap between the ministries and the government, especially in the eleventh government.
5. The absence of harmony and limited coordination among ministers in the unity government.
6. Strikes that paralyzed public life.
7. Failure to deliver the government's message effectively, and even when the message was delivered, the manner in which this was done undermined the importance of government achievements among citizens.
8. Severed ties with many international institutions that supported the PA.
9. Most funds that reached the PA covered current account expenses, and were not enough to pay salaries.
10. The Israeli side withheld tax revenues from the Palestinians.
11. Many government cadres needed training and development.
12. Lack of sufficient cooperation by official bodies, whether within the PA itself or the countries that had relations with the latter.
13. Lack of direct communication between the two parts of the government in GS and WB.
14. Limited coordination between the Office of the president and some ministries.

e. Ruling in GS 2007–2013

After the Palestinian factions signed the Mecca Agreement and formed the first Palestinian National Unity Government, some groups affiliated to powerful figures continued to disrupt the work of the government, prompting Hamas to resort to armed confrontation, and leading to Hamas's complete takeover of the GS. This step had negative effects on the internal Palestinian relations. It led to a complete boycott between Fatah and Hamas, the authority was split between the two parties,

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[60] Interview with Samir Abu Eisha, 17/1/2009.

one in WB and the other in GS. This harmed the interests of Hamas in WB to the point of being completely uprooted as a political organization.

Hamas's solo rule in GS made things easier for the international community and Israel, and Hamas's internal opponents. GS was thus subjected to a blockade, war, and security chaos, though this did not lead to the collapse of Hamas's rule, and the movement remained steadfast. As a result, the international embargo on Hamas loosened somewhat, internal dialogue was reestablished, and the truce with the occupation was renewed. But Hamas, since its takeover of GS, was no longer able to seek to find mechanisms to implement the Change and Reform program. To be sure, that program was designed for a normal and relatively stable term in office, but under the circumstances of the blockade, threat of Israeli war, and internal security challenges, the Hamas government program focused on steadfastness almost exclusively.

In April 2008, Isma'il Haniyyah made a decision that provoked the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah, proclaiming that the expansion of his government to include more ministers entrenched the schism.[61] Despite the implications of that negative step for the relationship with Fatah, it served the government in GS, which could continue operating the Ministries of Education and Health despite the strike staged by pro-Fatah staff. Hamas thwarted the strike by hiring alternative cadres.

The government assumed its responsibilities immediately after the war. After having endured just under one month of Israeli warfare, which destroyed most of its buildings, the government resumed its functions from temporary offices, and distributed emergency financial aid packages to those affected by the war worth $38 million.[62] The government also enlisted support from some Arab countries to rebuild GS under its supervision or the supervision of donors.[63]

The government continued to function in GS without being able to plan for strategic development projects. In 2009, the government was preoccupied with reconstruction, and with attempting to secure the needs of the citizens. The government benefited greatly from the tunnels along the border with Egypt.

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[61] See 'Azzam al-Ahmad statement to *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 29/4/2008; and 'Abdullah 'Abdullah statement to *Okaz*, 29/4/2008.

[62] Felesteen, 13/4/2009.

[63] *Al-Hayat*, 22/1/2009.

Despite the security concerns these tunnels raised for the Egyptians, the tunnels maintained the continuity of life in GS through the provision of the basic needs of the population. The number of these tunnels was estimated at 500. The tunnels were also provided a boost in the performance of resistance movements, after weapons flowed to them through these tunnels. This meant that resistance movements now had a broader margin of work, and security protection under the Hamas government.

Despite the harsh conditions of the blockade, it seemed that the Haniyyah government was able to gradually achieve relative economic improvement, higher than the one achieved by the government of Salam Fayyad in Ramallah, even though the latter enjoyed Arab and international support, and relative cooperation from the Israeli side. For instance, after the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Fayyad government in WB reached 9.5% compared to 0.7% in GS under the Haniyyah government in 2009, GDP under the Fayyad government was 7.6% in 2010 compared to 15.1% in GS under Haniyyah's government. GDP under the Haniyyah government in 2011 jumped to 23% compared to 8.7% under the Fayyad government.[64] This indicates that the Haniyyah government was more competent in benefiting from its available resources as well as in combatting corruption. GS could get close to achieving self-sufficiency in vegetables and poultry, and other daily needs for the citizens. Unemployment in GS also declined to 30.3% in 2011, having reached 60% in 2007.[65]

In the context of security work and the resistance factions, the GS government, though several security campaigns, managed to crack down on espionage for the Israeli occupation. The crackdown included prosecution of spies as well as preventive security awareness campaign to curb the increase in the number of collaborators with the occupation. It seems that the GS government also benefited from the war on GS in 2008/2009, in that it discovered many security breaches, spying methods, and devices used for sending information to the Israeli

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[64] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Press Report, Preliminary Estimates of Quarterly National Accounts (Fourth Quarter 2012) (Ramallah: PCBS, March 2013), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_QNAQ42012E.pdf

[65] See PCBS, Labour Force Survey, (October–December, 2012) Round (Q4/2012) (Ramallah: PCBS, 21/2/2013), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_LFSQ42012E.pdf

intelligence.[66] In the context of the counter-espionage campaign, the government uncovered collaborators and executed some as a deterrence to anyone who thought about collaborating. They were tried according to the laws in place in the Palestinian justice system.[67] Security campaigns to counter espionage take place each year and are ongoing.

In short, we can say that 2008 was a year of confrontation and shoring up the foundations for the Hamas government. 2009 was a year of steadfastness. In 2010, the GS government began a new stage marked by relative stability, and began to look outward again. Hamas managed to enlist a broad segment of international public opinion on its side, and land convoys and international flotillas became active in many countries of the world in order to break the GS siege. Some succeeded in breaking through the blockade, while others had to return after being intercepted by Israeli navy ships, or were not allowed to enter through the Rafah crossing.

The Lifeline to Gaza Convoy (Viva Palestina) was one of the earliest and most important land convoys. It set out for the first time from London on 14/2/2009. The total number of buses in the convoy was 110, carrying 300 solidarity activists from 20 countries. In 2009–2010, five convoys set out to break the GS siege. There was the Miles of Smiles Convoy, which first set out on 28/9/2009, carrying 58 containers, 110 cars to transport the disabled, and 275 electric wheelchairs, as well as medicines and computers. Up to the time of writing, Miles of Smiles has launched more than 20 convoys.

The Freedom Flotilla carried on its ships around 10 thousand tons of humanitarian aid. But on the morning of Monday 31/5/2010, special forces of the Israeli navy attacked the flotilla in international waters, killing nine Turkish activists and injuring dozens of other solidarity activists.[68] Despite the obstacles they faced, these convoys were the beginning of an open wave of continuous support, albeit moral support in most cases. The GS government could take advantage of the

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[66] Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian Ministers Council, General Secretariat, Gaza, 26/9/2010, http://www.pmo.gov.ps/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=564:2010-09-26-06-51-37&catid=25:news&Itemid=67 (in Arabic)

[67] *Alghad*, 16/4/2010.

[68] For more information see Archives and Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultaions, *Qwafil Kasr al-Hisar 'An Qita' Gazzah* (The Convoys of Breaking the Siege of Gaza Strip), Information Report (20) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2011).

aggression in the media well. But more importantly, Israeli actions profoundly hurt relations with Turkey, and caused Arab, Islamic, and international outrage over Israel's harsh treatment of foreign activists.[69]

2010 was not only a year that saw the beginning of popular solidarity campaign with GS, but also saw several international political figures visiting GS and meeting with officials there, to make calls for ending the blockade. More detailed analysis of Hamas's foreign policy belongs to another chapter in this book, but it should be noted in this regard that the visitors were diverse, and included ministers, officials in international organizations, media figures and former political personalities, most notably the former Secretary General of the League of Arab States 'Amr Musa,[70] the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton,[71] and the foreign ministers of Germany, Italy, and Malta, who visited the Strip in late 2010 and made a call for lifting the GS blockade.[72]

In 2011, the GS government entered a new phase, where it now operated in a changing Arab environment. Revolutions erupted in many countries, and many regimes were toppled. Perhaps the most important event for GS was the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. Hamas hoped that this change would be the beginning of a new stage where the blockade would become history. Hamas then became more optimistic when Muhammad Morsi won the presidential election. However, all these developments in Egypt did not live up to Palestinian aspirations, and the change was confined to moral and media support, without a fundamental change in relation to the crossings and the movement of people and goods. The new Egyptian (military) leadership, before Morsi's elections, continued to deal with Hamas and the GS government the same way Mubarak dealt with them, refusing to meet with them despite their repeated visits to Egypt. It only received them through non-official figures with the exception of the Egyptian intelligence, which indicates that Hamas was being dealt with only at a security level as had been the habit.[73]

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[69] Aljazeera.net, 31/5/2010. (in Arabic)

[70] *Asharq Alawsat*, 14/6/2010.

[71] *Al-Quds*, 18/7/2010.

[72] Aljazeera.net, 8 and 24/11/2010, and 17/12/2010. (in Arabic)

[73] Elaph.com, 12/1/2012, http://www.elaph.com/publishermessage.htm

In November 2012, a new Israeli war was waged on GS, dubbed Operation Pillar of Defense. The war coincided with major regional developments, most notably the rise of Islamists to power in Tunisia and Egypt. During the war, it became clear that Hamas had benefitted significantly from the Arab Spring, in terms of the quality and quantity of weapons it had acquired and which it used in repelling the Israeli assault. Indeed, it was clear that the smuggling of arms into GS from neighboring countries had become easier under the new variables. The war also took place on the back of a clear evolution in Qatar's position, with the Emir of Qatar visiting GS and taking it upon himself to support the Strip,[74] with the Israelis reacting with direct escalation in their attempts to thwart support for the Hamas government.

During the war, the government in GS proved its ability to manage internal affairs, and survived despite all the attacks that it was subjected to. The government emerged from the war stronger, thanks to the success of Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades and various resistance factions in hitting Israeli targets with rockets. Delegations successively visited GS coming from the countries of the Arab spring, including one led by Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil during the Israeli assault,[75] which was perhaps the strongest message to Israel after the Arab revolutions. The Tunisian Foreign Minister also conducted a solidarity visit to GS following the Israeli assault,[76] and so did Libyan First Deputy Prime Sadiq Abdulkarim.[77]

Solidarity visits to GS were not only made by delegations from the countries of the Arab Spring. Many developed Muslim nations also expressed support for the Palestinian people in GS, with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visiting the Strip in solidarity with GS, during which he voiced his country's rejection of Israeli attacks.[78] In the same vein, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak visited GS, and stressed the need to break the siege on the Strip.[79]

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[74] Aljazeera.net, 4/11/2012. (in Arabic)

[75] Site of France 24, 16/11/2012, http://www.france24.com/ar/ (in Arabic)

[76] Reuters, 16/11/2012. (in Arabic)

[77] *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 21/11/2012.

[78] *Alghad*, 20/11/2012.

[79] Site of Anba Moscow, 22/1/2013, http://anbamoscow.com/ (in Arabic)

It was clear that the stage that followed the Arab revolutions had increased the fortitude of Hamas's position, leading to renewed talk about internal Palestinian dialogue and the need for national reconciliation, especially given the stalemate in the peace process. However, although Palestinian factions succeeded in concluding agreements or accords in Cairo, they did not reach a fundamental, workable understanding on key issues. For this reason, the issue of Palestinian dialogue remained on hold in practice, while the Palestinian street turned increasingly cynical about any announcement claiming a National Unity Government was around the corner, in a sign of the declining confidence in Palestinian factions.

The GS government began to move in a different direction, other than steadfastness and facing aggression, a direction that sought to develop the GS internal situation. For this reason, Isma'il Haniyyah carried out a cabinet reshuffle that he stressed was not based on political motives, though it did end up provoking Fatah once again.[80]

The government focused on improving the GS economic situation, putting forward many proposals to avoid continued reliance on the tunnels. Hamas took advantage of the presence of a new Egyptian administration to propose leasing a dedicated pier in the port of El-Arish to import goods to GS, but the GS government did not receive any practical response from the Egyptian leadership.[81] This gave serious indications that Egypt was not yet capable of protecting or assisting GS, or even to ensuring a margin of movement for its people, at least in the short term, for the internal Egyptian situation was very complicated.

Despite the difficult situation, the GS government proposed development plans. A development plan for 2013–2014 was unveiled, to be put forth by the Ministry of Planning for discussion and implementation. The plan, according to information published by the GS Ministry of Planning, covered "productive and social sectors, infrastructure, security, and good governance."[82] In spite of the difficulty of implementing any development plans in GS as a result of the blockade and the worsening crisis in Egypt, culminating with the coup against

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[80] Site of Albawaba, 10/3/2011, http://www.albawaba.com/ar/ (in Arabic)

[81] Quds Press, 15/5/2011, http://www.qudspress.com/

[82] Felesteen Online, 3/9/2012, http://www.felesteen.ps/

President Muhammad Morsi and the appointment of an interim president, the quest by the Hamas government to implement development projects is indicative of a relatively stable situation.

Although at the time of writing, the picture is not yet clear in Egypt, there are voices now (Summer 2013) claiming that the end of Hamas's rule is near, in light of the collapse of Hamas's allies in Egypt. Here, it should be noted that Hamas's situation may not be much worse than it was under Mubarak. No matter what the outcome of events will be, they will not have a radical effect on Hamas. Indeed, Hamas has not drawn its power from abroad, and has not relied in its activities on direct external activities, instead limiting itself to the activities of Hamas's bureau abroad. But this does not mean that Hamas will not face any obstacles or problems. The economic situation will get worse because of the policies of closing the Rafah crossing and destroying tunnels, but the people of GS have proven over nearly a decade that no matter what pressure is exerted on GS, a popular eruption against its government is unlikely. Rather, an eruption against the occupation is more likely.

Based on the above, concerning Hamas's rule of GS since its takeover in 2007, it can be said that Hamas as a Palestinian organization has lost a lot in WB because of this move. Hamas lost all its institutions and its supporters and members were subjected to arrests and dismissal from their jobs. In WB, Hamas lost the ability to engage in recruitment and political education. The movement is also absent from schools, mosques, charities, and sports clubs, and all but absent from universities. A feeling of betrayal crept in among its supporters in the WB, who felt that the movement in GS decided to takeover the Strip without any coordination with Hamas in WB or the Diaspora, and without factoring in what would happen to its supporters in WB.

At the same time, in mid-2007 Hamas found itself faced with two bitter choices. The military takeover in GS was something that Hamas was forced to do, while the other option was caving in to the attempt to topple and thwart Hamas, with parties affiliated to Fatah in the PA seeking to put down the Palestinian democratic experience, and implement the American roadmap, requiring the liquidation of resistance forces and the imposition of security in accordance with Israeli wishes. In other words, if Hamas let things develop the way others wanted, it would have been decimated and persecuted in GS, while the program to do the same in WB would not have changed either way.

But against this political loss for Hamas as an organization, Hamas saw its move as a guarantee to protect the Palestinian national project as a whole. Indeed, its takeover of GS prevented the PA from pressing ahead with projects for accommodation with the Israeli occupation, something that Hamas sees as an achievement surpassing any loss at the organizational level. The move also helped Hamas develop its military capabilities, as evident from its showdowns with Israel when Hamas rockets hit Israeli communities in the territories occupied in 1948, at a range of 75 km, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Internally, the problem of "questionable legitimacy" cast a shadow on the GS caretaker government and the Hamas movement in general. To be sure, Hamas's government in GS was dismissed, and could not deal with Arab and international countries as a legitimate government. But there was also a problem of legitimacy with the government in Ramallah, which was not endorsed by the PLC. Another problem was that the term of President 'Abbas had expired and so did the PLC term. These problems took a toll on the political conduct of Palestinian parties. Although a reconciliation agreement was signed, the practical Palestinian reality continued to be affected by these problems.

At the security level, there is no doubt that the GS government excelled, in terms of its ability to safeguard internal security, protect citizens, and put an end to lawlessness, in addition to curbing collaboration with the occupation. The GS government also demonstrated its ability to protect resistance fighters, caring for them, and giving them a margin of movement, alongside an ability to maintain the truce with Israel.

Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter lead us to the following conclusions:

First: The challenges Hamas faced were due to the defects within the Palestinian political system. One of these was the unbalanced relationship between the PA and the PLO. In addition, the conflict of powers between the president and the prime minister was a major challenge. This defect existed even before Hamas had come to power.

Second: Criticisms of Hamas's ideology worked as pressure on Hamas. Through its policies, Hamas was careful not to appear to be Islamizing the society. By its decision to join the PA, Hamas indicated its desire to accept the principles of democracy and pluralism.

Third: Hamas's attempt to combine military resistance and political participation prevented it from implementing its electoral platform.

Fourth: The electoral platform of Hamas suffered from several major weaknesses. One such weakness was the absence of any clear strategy of action at the international level, considering the PA's financial reliance on the West.

Fifth: Hamas's decision to appoint its leaders in government positions was not beneficial to it. On the contrary, it made the movement more vulnerable to international pressure, and reduced the possibility of developing relations between the government and the international community.

Sixth: The policies of Hamas contradicted its electoral platform when it appointed its supporters in sensitive and important positions in PA regardless of their qualifications.

Seventh: The circumstances of the blockade and repeated Israeli aggression forced Hamas to focus on survival and enhancing steadfastness more than issues of development and reform.

Eighth: The Arab revolutions helped give Hamas and its government a broader margin of movement at the regional level, though did not bring about a radical change in conditions in the GS.

Ninth: The GS government had many security-related achievements in counter-espionage, tackling lawlessness, and guarding the borders, but was still unable to implement its development and economic programs.

Islamic Resistance Movement
Hamas
Studies of
Thought &
Experience

This Book

The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas is a prominent Palestinian resistance movement. It enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, broad popularity in the Palestinian arena. Hamas adopts Islam as a creed, way of life, and a code. It belongs to the school of Muslim Brothers movement.

Credit for the idea behind this book is owed to the late Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi'. 17 academicians, researchers and senior Hamas leaders participated in writing the chapters of this book.

This book is indeed one of the most specialized references regarding Hamas thought and experience, and it is an indispensable source for those interested in studying the Movement. It committed itself to the methodologies of academic research and all this entails in terms of accuracy, objectivity, and documentation. The contributions by several Hamas leaders shed additional and up-to-date light on a number of controversial issues surrounding Hamas and its experience.

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