

Academic Study

Hamas's Position on Palestinian Islamic Movements

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Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the relationship between Hamas and Palestinian Islamic movements that are active politically and religiously: Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Salafis, the Sufis, and the PIJ. This paper specifically addresses the relationship between Hamas and PIJ since the 1980s, as these two groups are the most cooperative, preoccupied, and engaged in the Palestinian issue compared to other Islamist groups, and are the most influential and popular among the Palestinian population.

The analysis is based on two tracks:

First, clarifying the changes witnessed by the Arab and international arenas in the 1980s. These changes led to important developments related to the Palestinian issue, resulting in the rise of popularity, strength, and influence of Islamic groups especially in relation to the conflict with Israel. This led to the decline and atrophy of other national and leftist movements in the Palestinian arena.

Second, analyzing the political thought of Palestinian Islamic movements, in their various orientations and developments resulting from subjective, Arab, and international factors. This paper does not follow a narrative approach following the issue from a historical perspective only, but also seeks to shed light on the roots of the relationship among Palestinian Islamists, based on the ideological differences between them resulting from the differences in their interaction with Arab and international developments.

It is important to note that there is a systemic problem facing researchers when it comes to Hamas's positions on other Islamist groups in Palestine. First, Hamas did not

¹ This is an academic study that was published in the Arabic Version of the Book: *Islamic Resistance Movement-Hamas: Studies of Thought and Experience* (pp. 177–211), edited by Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh. Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations published the Arabic version in 2014, and the English version will be published soon.

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develop a specific approach or clear political theory prior to its appearance.³ Rather, its ideas and political discourse on Palestine began to crystallize essentially after its launch in late in 1987.

This does not mean that Hamas, when established, lacked a theoretical background, and lacked a systematic intellectual platform. Indeed, Hamas is considered an extension of the MB movement, and it bases its general ideological orientations and political ideas on the literature of this movement. Hamas was also inspired by the political and ideological discourse of the Palestinian MB movement in their student and trade union activities.

The movement also benefited from what was agreed at the (secret) founding conference held in October 1983, and when the Palestine Apparatus was formed in 1985. All of this does not contradict the premise that Hamas's political ideas developed and matured over time as happens with other movements, and through its activities and work in the conflict with Israel during the *Intifadah*, then again following the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the PA in GS and parts of the WB. Hamas's ideas also developed further as a result of its relations with other national and Islamist groups like Fatah and the PIJ.

What is certain for any researcher studying the emergence and evolution of Hamas is that its political ideas have responded, in most cases, to the questions and challenges it has faced. Thus, Hamas is a political movement that engages, affects and gets affected by surrounding changes.⁴ The researcher is required here to carefully follow the movement's intellectual progression and avoid slipping into crude and/or

³ Sheikh Ahmad Yasin used to say: "I dedicated my life for deeds, not words. My entire life was the application of what I read and learned". See the book by Muhammad al-Yafawi, *Al-Shaykh al-Shahid Ahmad Yasin: 'Azamat al-'Ataa' wa raw'at al-Shahadah* (The Martyr Sheikh Ahmad Yasin: The Magnificence of Bestowal and the Splendor of Martyrdom) (Jerusalem: al-Ibaa Publishing and Distribution, 2004); Amer Shamakh, *Ahmad Yasin: Shahid Ayqaz Umma* (Ahmad Yasin: a Martyr Who Awakened the Nation) (Cairo: Islamic Publishing and Distribution House, 2004), p. 96. Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi, editors of *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas 1987–1996) (Amman: Middle East Studies Center (MESOC), 1997), pp. 13–14, noted, "Hamas's leaders do not have a distinguished contribution in writing and theorizing regarding the movement's philosophy in the form of published studies and journals. For this reason, the movement did not address in its literature (at least until the book was published in 1997) some of the ideological concepts related to the conflict, such as the questions of Zionism and Judaism, negotiations with Israel, and the movement's vision for an interim or comprehensive political settlement".

⁴ Basim al-Zubaidi, *Hamas wa al-Hukum: Dukhul al-Nizam am al-Tamarrud 'alayh* (Hamas and Power: Entering the System or Rebellious Against It) (Ramallah: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2010), p. 9.

propagandistic characterizations, be they negative or positive, which lack scientific accuracy and objective research.

The second problem related to methodology has to do with the fact that the attitudes of the leaders and symbols of Hamas have not always been identical, but rather, there were often clear differences and disagreements among them. The researcher studying Hamas's thought will certainly find contradictions in its discourse, lack of clarity in its vision and proposals, and will find disparities in the account of events related to Hamas from its leaders and founders. Therefore, sound methodology in analyzing the positions of Hamas and its leaders must take into account the impact of time and place, and the subjective factors related to those leaders. These factors imposed different views regarding facts that are themselves variable, and regarding successive different political events that are complex in their subtexts and backgrounds.

First: Arab and International Changes and Their Impact on the Rise of Islamic Movements in Palestine

Arab, Islamic, Western, and international changes had a large impact on the Palestinian issue, helping the Islamic movement rise in parallel with the decline of the Palestinian left and Fatah movements. Perhaps the 1973 October war was one of the most important changes. That war proved to the Arabs that the possibility of achieving victory against Israel was limited, for the Western powers led by the United States would always side fully and unequivocally with Israel in its wars with Arabs, and would not allow Arabs to defeat Israel decisively and would be willing to commit significant resources to guarantee this state of affairs.

For this reason, the ruling Arab political elite judged that it was inevitable that they would need to reach a political settlement with Israel that would recover elements of Arabs' rights, and end Israel's expansionist policy. The Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel were the first result of this thinking. This stage also saw the start of the shift by 'Arafat and Fatah's leadership, which dominated the PLO, towards political action, merging it with military action. Previously, the main focus was on armed resistance as the basis of the efforts to fulfil Palestinian national goals. It was therefore not a surprise that in 1974, following the October War, the idea of

transitional solutions was proposed by the DFLP Secretary General Nayef Hawatmeh in the ten-point program, which was adopted by Fatah and the PLO.

This shift was followed by an accord between the world's two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, which agreed to resolve their problems peacefully and through dialogue. As a result, the Soviet Union began putting pressure on the Arabs, particularly the PLO, to accept a political solution based on UN resolutions including 242 and 338. Other factors include a number of major changes and events, led by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, when the PLO was forced to withdraw from Lebanon and its fighters were scattered across many Arab countries away from the borders of occupied Palestine.

The PLO bowed to the pressure and adopted primarily political programs and projects that accepted the two-state solution and a political settlement with Israel. In parallel, the PLO moved away from armed struggle, practically abandoning it.

This position undermined the legitimacy of the PLO, which was derived from its program to liberate all of Palestine through armed struggle. Subsequently, the PLO's popularity went into decline, and huge defections took place in the ranks of the Fatah movement. Relations between Fatah and the Syrian regime deteriorated, as the latter started supporting Palestinian organizations opposed to the Fatah leadership, especially Yasir 'Arafat and his inner circle, further weakening them.

These changes took place in parallel with the Iranian revolution led by Ruhollah Mostafavi Moosavi Khomeini in 1979. The successful revolution sparked a great Islamic awakening in the region that spread throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. This empowered Islamic movements, which call for a return to Islam and its teachings, and for populations to counter the Western challenge and Israeli presence culturally, economically, politically, militarily, and intellectually.

As a result of the strong interest Khomeini gave to the Palestinian issue, his call for the liberation of Jerusalem and for creating an Islamic army for that purpose, the Islamic movements and others that were just beginning to emerge joined this orientation. These groups called for the liberation of all Palestinian territories and for putting an end to Israel. These movements began attracting Palestinians including those who abandoned the left and lost hope in the Soviet Union, and those who had doubts about the political settlement adopted by Fatah and the PLO.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when the socialist camp was collapsing, economic aid, financial and political support for the Palestinians disappeared. The Soviet Union collapsed and broke up into multiple countries, Russia's economic and political power declined, and it became dependent on Western powers, accepting their dictates in return for economic aid. Consequently, Palestinian leftist factions were weakened, as they relied financially, politically, and ideologically on the socialist bloc. The PLO also found itself on its own against the United States and pro-Israel Western powers.

When the PLO agreed to enter the peace process, it was placing itself and its people at the mercy of its enemies: Israel, the United States, and their Western allies. This position led the PLO to adopt policies that destroyed what was left of its legitimacy, such as committing to Israel's security (including security coordination with Israel), placing the leaders of Fatah and the PA in a position that was at odds with their people and freedom fighters.

Very briefly, the rise of Islamic movements that coincided with the decline in the Palestinian national program led to the formation of the PIJ (emerging publicly in 1981) and Hamas (which began operating in late 1987), led to the return of Hizb ut-Tahrir activity in Palestine, and led to the growth and proliferation of Salafist movements.

Second: The Bases of Hamas's Position Vis-à-Vis Islamic Movements

Theoretically, as Hamas states in its discourse and media, the group has no qualms with the presence of other Islamist groups on the Palestinian arena. The movement's charter included a special clause titled "Islamic Movements," explaining Hamas's position on Islamist groups in general⁵:

The Islamic Resistance Movement regards the other Islamic Movements with respect and honor even if it disagrees with them on an issue or viewpoint. However, it agrees with them on many issues and viewpoints and sees in those movements-if they have good intentions, which are purely for Allah's sake-that

⁵ Rajab al-Baba, in his master degree dissertation at the Islamic University in Gaza supervised by Ahmad Muhammad Sa'aty, believes that this clause is related to the PIJ (Rajab Hasan al-Awadi al-Baba, *The Efforts of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Palestinian Intifadah 1987–1994*, unpublished master degree thesis, Islamic University, Gaza, 2010, p. 230). This conclusion could be correct given that Hamas has not clashed and interacted during the period in which the charter was published except with PIJ.

they fall within the area of *Ijtihad* [Creative self-exertion to derive legislation from legitimate source]. As long as its actions are within the Islamic (Jurisprudence), to every *Mujtahid* there is a reward.⁶

Khaled Hroub, former managing editor of the magazine *Filisteen Almuslima*, which expressed Hamas's thought, pointed out:

Islamists of all backgrounds in Palestine agree that the project of liberation is the projection of a nation and not one of individual groups. If the Islamic and practical duty requires mobilizing the wills and capacities of the whole nation for the sake of this project, then it is a bigger duty to unify Islamic jihad efforts in Palestine, if not through organizational unity then at least through the unity of practice.⁷

However, can this be considered the final answer to the questions regarding the relationship between Hamas and all other Islamists? If the relationship between Hamas and other Islamic groups should be referred to their single religious-doctrinal frame of reference, then why does separation continue between these movements?

Certainly the image of the relationship between Islamic movements is more complex than many hope, especially the supporters of the Islamic movement who would like to see all these movements become unified. The relationship is also much more complex than many think, especially the opponents of Islamists who tend to put all Islamic movements in one basket and lump them all together just because they have the same ideological roots and because of the similarity of their proposals, and thus reject them all without distinction.⁸

Indeed, Islamic groups have profound differences in their political programs. It is not reasonable to ignore or simplify these differences, as they reflect the emergence and evolution of different socio-political groups. They may be based on the same Islamic heritage ideas and culture, but they operate in different backgrounds and

⁶ Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), August 1988, Article 23. The charter was translated by Muhammad Maqdsi for the Islamic Association for Palestine, Dallas, Texas, in 1990, and was published in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), Beirut, vol. XXII, no. 4, Summer 1993, pp. 122–134, <http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jps-articles/1734.pdf>

⁷ Khaled Hroub, *al-Islamiyyun fi Filastin: Qira'at wa Mawaqif wa Qadaya Ukhra* (The Islamists in Palestine: Readings, Positions, and Other Matters) (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1994).

⁸ For example: The Islamists agree that Islam is the ideological reference for the project of liberation, that this project is the project of the entire Islamic nation and not just the Palestinians', and that it is unacceptable to compromise any part of Palestinian territory in favor of the Israelis.

climates; local, regional and international. They are led by social forces and elites with different and even rival intellectual, economic, and social backgrounds.

Having the same ideological frame of reference cannot cancel out these differences, which are natural and in line with the realities of human sociology.

We can analyze and study Hamas's attitudes on Palestinian Islamic movements, in general, based on the ideological platform of the MB movement, which established Hamas, especially the parts related to Islamic action and the Palestinian issue, and based on the evolution of Hamas itself.

There are two elements in the ideological platform of the MB movement, which have had the most important role in determining Hamas's positions towards other Islamists:

The first is the MB movement's position on political pluralism in society in general, and between Muslims and their movements in particular. This element is linked to the movement's perception of itself and its role in the Islamic arena. The second element is related to the movement's position on the Palestinian issue and its belief that it is the best suited group to liberate Palestine.

Concerning the first element, theoretically speaking, and as a number of experts indicate, including Egyptian MB leader Tawfiq al-Wa'y, the MB movement allows partisan pluralism in the Islamic state. He said that it allows the multiplicity of ideas, approaches, and policies proposed by each side, backed with arguments and proof. As such, those who believe in these, will support them and see reform is only possible through them. The pluralism of parties in politics is similar to the pluralism of doctrines in jurisprudence.⁹

According to Khaled Hroub, Hamas understands the issue of pluralism based on Islamic *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law) and doctrinal principles. The Qur'an has recognized plurality and differences of peoples, and the Prophet (SAW) recognized other religions, and organized the relationship with Jews in Medina on the basis of citizenship rights and duties.¹⁰

⁹ See Tawfiq al-Wa'y, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi al-Mu'asir 'Ind al-Ikhwān al-Muslimin* (Modern Political Thought of the Muslim Brotherhood) (Kuwait: Al-Manar Islamic Library, n.d.), p. 106.

¹⁰ Khaled Hroub, "Hamas and Religious and Political Pluralism," in Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Hamas: 1987–1996) (Amman: Middle East Studies Center (MESOC), 1997), pp. 173–183. (in Arabic)

Actually, the MB movement prefers the unity of Islamic action and does not welcome the emergence of other groups, believing this weakens Islamic ranks. It strongly believes that it is the mother and pioneer of all Islamic movements, the most important, most committed, and most aware of the teachings of Islam. Consequently, and like any other movement or party, it seeks to be the most popular and most present.

However, despite these beliefs, the movement does not prevent others from expressing or organizing themselves into independent movements. This is based on the rule adopted by the group's founder Hasan al-Banna: "We cooperate where we agree, and excuse each other where we disagree." Yet this has not prevented competition and disputes between MB movement supporters and the others. Mistakes are committed by both sides, as happened in the 1980s between the youths of MB and PIJ.

The second element was that the MB movement strongly believes it will have a crucial role in liberating Palestine, and that the group is the most capable of achieving this. This was based on the belief that Islam is the only creed that will bring about the liberation of Palestine, and supporters of the movement believe that the MB adopts Islam correctly, comprehensively, and moderately; and that they are the most acceptable and present among Muslims; that their ideas are the most widespread, effective, and persuasive; thus they believe that it is natural for them to lead the Muslim *Ummah* (Nation) in the project of liberation.¹¹

According to MB literature, the movement is "the only party capable of snatching the cause from the hands of those who are complacent and the defeatists, and to endure, strike, and be honest in endeavoring and being patient when it comes to diligent guided

¹¹ Former Palestinian MB leader 'Abdullah Abu 'Izzah explains in his memoirs how the MB movement perceived the Palestinian issue in the 1950s, which was considered an alternative to the proposals of influential nationalist and leftist movements. They called for doubling the support to the movement, because if it prevails then it shall be the one to liberate Palestine. They also believed that when the movement mobilizes its ranks for liberation, it would not be the Palestinians alone who will comply, rather it will be the entire Muslim *Ummah*. This participation would not be just to help and assist, rather it would be to fulfill the sacred duty of all Muslims, i.e., rescuing the first of the two Qiblahs and purging the land of *al-Isra'* (The Night Journey) and Mi'raj (Night Ascension) from Zionism. See 'Abdullah Abu 'Izzah, *Ma' al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Duwal al-'Arabiyyah* (With the Islamic Movement in Arab Countries) (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1986), p. 86.



work.”¹² These statements are not based on “excessive self-confidence,” and are not just media propaganda, but they express the sense of responsibility MB members have towards Palestine, and the need to lead the ranks to perform this duty. As for their pride in their approach to liberation, it is not because they are biased towards their opinion, but, according to a number of their leaders, if they knew a better approach (based on Islamic reference itself) they would have followed it.

As for the intellectual, political, and military evolution of Hamas, several factors increased its self-confidence and strengthened its belief in its success and the success of its approach. These factors were: the rise of Hamas’s military power and ability to confront the Israeli occupation army and deal painful blows to Israeli society; the growth of its political influence in the Palestinian street and the Arab and Muslim worlds; and the extension of its alliances and its activities and its expansion in Arab and Muslim countries. However, at the same time, these pushed Hamas to open up to other forces, and to seek to form wide Islamic and national alliances.

Voices within Hamas believed it was necessary for the PIJ to merge with Hamas. Their argument was that the justifications for PIJ’s founding revolved around the need for military action against Israel, something that Hamas subsequently adopted and pursued extensively.

However, this argument did not take on serious proportions, even though some Hamas leaders quoted PIJ Secretary General Ramadan ‘Abdullah proposing unification more than once. In any case, it now seems clear that the two sides tend towards coexistence, cooperation, and coordination, rather than towards integration.

Accordingly, it can be said that Hamas’s positions on other Palestinian Islamic movements were different and diverse. They ranged from extreme keenness about a given group to apathy about others, based on the ideological structure and political vision of every respective Palestinian Islamic movement and its influence on the public, and hence, its ability to compete with Hamas.

If these movements refuse to merge and insist on continuing to operate independently, Hamas considers cooperation and collaboration in practical steps and political positions the next acceptable position. In the coming section, we will briefly consider Hamas’s positions towards Hizb ut-Tahrir, Sufi groups, Salafist groups, and PIJ.

¹² Ziad Abu ‘Amr, *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita‘ Gazzah: al-Ikhwana al-Muslimun al-Jihad al-Islami* (The Islamic Movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: The Muslim Brotherhood the Islamic Jihad) (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1989), p. 51.

Third: Hamas's Position Towards Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of liberation) was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by *Shari'ah* Judge Taqiyuddin al-Nabahani in collaboration with Dawood Hamdan, and Nimr al-Masri, Munir Shuqair, 'Adel al-Nabulsi, and 'Abdul-Qadim Zalloom, and Ghanem 'Abdo.

The party took its name from the need to revive the Muslim *Ummah*, halting its decline and liberating it from "infidel ideas, structures, and laws." The party believes this liberation could be achieved by "lifting it [the nation] intellectually by changing, fundamentally and comprehensively, ideas and concepts that led to its decline, and fostering the correct ideas and concepts of Islam within it, so that it adapts its behavior in life in accordance to the ideas and provisions of Islam."¹³

Hizb ut-Tahrir also saw that the establishment of an Islamic political party was a religious duty, in order to save the Muslim *Ummah* from its severe decline and restore the Islamic caliphate.¹⁴ This party saw itself as the rallying of Muslims on the basis of Islam alone as an idea and method, "and prohibits them from rallying on a capitalist, communist, socialist, nationalist, patriotic, sectarian, or Masonic basis, prohibits them from forming or joining communist, socialist, nationalist, patriotic, sectarian, or Masonic parties."¹⁵

This means that the party is radically different from any nationalist or patriotic movement, including the various Palestinian groups that gathered in the framework of the PLO.

However, the differences the party had were not just with nationalist and patriotic political movements, but also with the MB movement. Hizb ut-Tahrir considered it and all other reformist Islamic movements inconsistent with the sound path for Muslim revival. According to the party, these movements suffer from:

Lack of clarity in the way Islam implements the ideas and provisions of Islam. They carry the Islamic idea in an improvised manner, marred by ambiguity. They think that Islam's return can be achieved by building mosques and publishing books, by establishing charitable and cooperative societies, and by educating and reforming individuals. By being oblivious to the corruption of society, and the dominance of infidel ideas, provisions, and systems, believing reforming society can be achieved by

¹³ As stated in a book published by the party: *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Party of Liberation) (no place: no publisher, no date), p. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

reforming its ideas, sentiments, and systems, which they believe will lead to reforming its individuals.¹⁶

Therefore, we can say that Hizb ut-Tahrir, when founded in 1953, considered itself an alternative to the MB movement for the restoration of the Islamic caliphate and liberation of Muslim countries from Western colonial domination. As a result, a theoretical, political, and practical dispute appeared over the years between the party and the movement. Meanwhile, the history of the party since its foundation was characterized by a political clash with the Jordanian regime and an ideological clash with the MB movement, which maintained a generally good relationship with the Jordanian regime.¹⁷

This background of political and ideological differences prompted Hizb ut-Tahrir in Palestine to keep its distance from Hamas and its activities, not trusting its policies and stances, and constantly criticizing it. The party did not recognize the government Hamas leads in GS,¹⁸ and reiterated in its statements its demands of Hamas to adhere to the approach it believes is the only correct path to liberate Palestine, namely to seek support from the armies of the Muslim *Ummah*, establish the caliphate, and then liberate Palestine.

These positions led to clashes between supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Hamas-led government in GS, when they sought to stage public events and the government denied them permission.

Criticisms made by Hizb ut-Tahrir revolve around Hamas's political positions and the statements of its leaders. Whereas Hizb ut-Tahrir has a strict position on refusing to recognize Israel, Hamas's political position, after its entry into politics and vying to lead the PA in 2006, precipitated a shift in its discourse and tone, as dictated by its new position. This invited candid and public criticism from Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Al-Wa'i magazine, the mouthpiece of Hizb ut-Tahrir, commented on the issue of recognition of Israel in November 2006, saying: "Abbas says 'yes' to recognition, and

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁷ For more details on the conflict between the party and the Hashemite regime in Jordan, see Amnon Cohen, *al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah fi Zalam al-Nizam al-Urduni 1949–1967* (Political Parties in the West Bank Under the Jordanian Regime 1949–1967), translated by Khaled Hasan (Jerusalem: Al-Qadisiyah Printing Press, 1988).

¹⁸ On 26/6/2012, member of Hizb ut-Tahrir media office in Palestine Maher Ja'bari said on television that his party does not recognize the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority under occupation, whether in WB or GS. Site of Loblab, <http://www.loblab.com/item.aspx?itemid=26162>

Haniyyah does not think of saying ‘no’ or ‘yes,’ but rather ‘Nes.’”¹⁹ Concerning the Mecca Agreement between Fatah and Hamas, brokered by Saudi King ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, Hizb ut-Tahrir was not enthusiastic, and did not see in it any good for Muslims or the cause of Palestine.

In an editorial in March 2007, *al-Wa‘i* magazine commented on the decisions and agreements reached in Mecca saying: “It is evident and clear for anyone with eyes that all these decisions and agreements recognize the state of the Jews, and is a prelude to removing the rest of the fig leaf—if there is still rest left—covering the verbal maneuvers, to be replaced by direct recognition without even a scrap of paper!”²⁰ The editorial goes on to consider the Mecca Agreement a “disaster,” and says that what made this disaster even worse for the religion of *Allah* was:

1. That it was signed in the sacred month in the sacred land, where crime is worse than in other lands.
2. That the signatories had prepared for the agreement by escalating the fighting between those in the PA (Fatah) and the government (Hamas), “with the shedding of innocent blood to terrorize the people of Palestine to accept the disastrous agreement to prevent further bloodshed.”
3. That recognizing Israel was taking place at a time when its crimes were being escalated, such as in the excavations at the *al-Aqsa* Mosque.²¹

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s criticism of Hamas did not stop. Naturally, we will not be able to enumerate all criticisms here, but we refer to some. On 21/12/2012, Hizb ut-Tahrir addressed Hamas in a press comment published by the party’s media office in Palestine, titled “Brothers in Hamas: Why do you keep mistaking who to ask for support whenever a Jewish crime occurs?” Hizb ut-Tahrir called on Hamas to stop appealing to the international community, arguing that “the battle with the Jewish occupation is not a legal battle,” and sending what it called “a message of guidance to our brothers in Hamas” that said: “It is time for you to make a call to the correct side for support, the armies of the Muslim *Ummah*, and to call on them to move to do their jihad duty to remove this occupation, especially in the climate of revolutions that shook the pillars of the Arab regimes.”

¹⁹ *Al-Wa‘i* magazine, issue 237, November 2006, p. 4, the magazine is published in Beirut, Lebanon by a group of Muslim university students who adhere to the party’s ideology.

See http://www.al-waie.org/issues/237/article.php?id=422_0_33_0_C

²⁰ *Al-Wa‘i*, issue 241, March 2006, *Al-Wa‘i* editorial, p. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*



Hizb ut-Tahrir concluded its comment by saying: In the context of assuming good faith in every Muslim, do Muslims expect the future to bring with it new statements by Hamas leadership that call on the “army of Egypt and the armies of surrounding countries to act urgently to rescue Palestine from the Jewish occupation and its crimes?”²²

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s statement came in the wake of statements attributed to Ahmad Bahar, first deputy speaker of the PLC, who called on “the international community to save Palestinian lands from theft,” and called on the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC),²³ the UN, and Arab, Islamic, and international parliaments to take a serious position and speak out against racist Israeli laws.²⁴

Hizb ut-Tahrir said: The “Jewish occupation state” does not care about legal threats. It fully realizes that there is a broad American cloak ready to cover up its legal violations whenever they are exposed in international forums. The organizations that have the Arab regimes as members that have failed Palestine, such as the Arab League and the OIC, are complicit in the crimes of the occupation. They cover up the flaws of the regimes failing Palestine and promoting initiatives for normalization with the occupation like the Arab League has done. It added that the UN has legitimized the occupation on the land of Palestine, and is a mere tool in the hands of the United States and international powers, which consider the security of the “state of the Jews” is above all else, as Obama declared.

Hizb ut-Tahrir then asks: “What is the purpose of seeking this support from all those conspiring parties? What can these delusional legal battles produce vis-à-vis the crimes of the occupation?” Hizb ut-Tahrir also said, “Stopping the series of Jewish crimes can only be done when the armies of the Muslims move for a fateful battle that uproots this occupation.”

Despite the harsh criticisms made by Hizb ut-Tahrir against the MB movement and Hamas, the latter do not assign great importance to the party, because of its limited influence, and given that its activities are confined to propaganda and discussions without any practical activities. Practically speaking, this means Hizb ut-Tahrir has little impact politically, and is unable to attract significant public support.

²² See site of the media office of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Palestine, 17/12/2011, <http://www.pal-tahrir.info>

²³ The official name of the organization became the Organization of Islamic Cooperation as of 28/6/2011.

²⁴ Ma’an News Agency, 21/12/2011, <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=446756> (in Arabic)

Hamas's position on Hizb ut-Tahrir comes not only from the belief the MB movement has, that unifying the Islamic ranks is better than fragmenting and dividing them, but because it believes the methods the party has advocated for achieving its goals will not lead to achieving the desired results. Furthermore, the MB movement has responded in their writings to the ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir, highlighting their contradiction, lack of realism, and inconsistency with the known provisions of *Shari'ah*.²⁵

Fourth: Hamas's Position on Sufi Groups

There is no considerable interest by Hamas in Sufi groups. For one thing, these movements are not politicized. Furthermore, Sufi sheikhs do not constitute an ideological or political challenge for Hamas, and do not bar their followers from joining the Prime Minister of the Hamas government in GS, Isma'il Haniyyah. In his youth, Haniyyah was a follower of the Sufi Shadhili order Sheikh Ibrahim al-Khalidi, and visited his lodge in the Shati' refugee camp.²⁶ Nevertheless, the Sufi focus on spiritual matters with no equal interest in Islamic causes and advocacy, has been criticized by the MB movement.²⁷

Fifth: Hamas's Position on Salafist Groups

Hamas's position on Salafist groups differs from its position on Sufi groups, as many of these are involved in military and political activity, and their ideas and

²⁵ One of the most famous books published by the MB movement in responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir was written by Sadiq Amin (a nom de plume for a prominent MB movement leader in Jordan 'Abdullah 'Azzam), Sadiq Amin, *al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah Faridah Shar'iyyah wa Darurah Bashariyyah (The Islamic Da'wah is a Shari'ah Duty and a Human Necessity)* (Amman: Cooperative Print Press Workers Association, 1978). The book (*al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin (The Islamic Movement in Palestine)*) published by Abu al-Khawalid al-Hasan, a Hamas supporter in Palestine sums up some of the main ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and overviews the MB movement position on the party and response to some of its religious and ideological tenets. The book narrates the debate between Sayyid Qutb and Nabahani when the two men met in Jerusalem after the party was declared, where Qutb "reminded him of the consequences of his actions and his responsibility before Allah as well as the dismal state of the Muslims that required all to unite their efforts, proposing to him to operate within the MB movement in Jordan if he wanted reform." However, Nabahani's condition, according to the book, was for the MB movement in Jordan to separate from that of Egypt. See Abu al-Khawalid al-Hasan, *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin (The Islamic movements in Palestine)* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), pp. 144–165.

²⁶ Information from Sheikh Ya'qub Qarrash, leading Shadhili sheikh in Palestine, in an interview with the researcher on 11/11/2011.

²⁷ Abu al-Khawalid al-Hasan, *op. cit.*, p. 143.



programs conflict with those of Hamas. Nevertheless, Hamas does not see Salafist groups as a real rival, essentially because these groups, despite their political activity, lack a clear political program and appropriate vision to address Palestinian reality. At the popular level, they do not pose a challenge to Hamas.

The Salafist groups also consist of different groups that have ideas with varying degrees of convergence or divergence from those of the MB movement. On the other hand, the term Salafism is not understood or defined by Islamic movements in the same way. The MB movement themselves call their movement a “Salafist call,” according to the definition of Hasan al-Banna himself. However, this concept is different from the one espoused by other Salafist movements, which adopt ideas similar to the Saudi “Wahhabism” school, which is hostile to the Sufi education that Banna had also adopted. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning here that many supporters of the MB movement have Salafist tendencies in that sense, especially those who studied in KSA or who have lived in Gulf countries.

The dispute and clash between Hamas and some Salafi groups was the result of the latter’s ties to al-Qaeda, and their attempts to implement *Shari‘ah* provisions by force in GS and impose their will on society. It was not the result of any challenge these groups posed to Hamas’s strength and ability to lead Islamist action.

From the ideological point of view, there are disputes between Hamas and some Salafi movements, especially those linked to al-Qaeda, particularly in declaring people apostates who should be killed. Disputes also include the position on Twelver Shiites, as Hamas and the MB movement in general refuse the Salafi-Wahhabi position that declares them apostates. They consider the differences with them only doctrinal and historical and do not declare them as apostates, based on the positions of Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah himself in not declaring them as apostates.

The differences between Hamas and these Salafi movements were not confined to ideology and doctrine, but went beyond this in to armed clashes. The incidents in Rafah involving clashes between security forces in GS and Ansar Jundallah caused a huge controversy. The mentor of the group ‘Abdul-Latif Musa had proclaimed an Islamic emirate from the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque in Rafah on 14/8/2009. Clashes erupted between security forces and the group, killing 28 and injuring 150 others. Among the dead were ‘Abdul-Latif Musa himself and Khalid Banat (aka Abu ‘Abdullah al-Suri), the founder and military commander of the group. Six were killed from the security forces and Hamas, including Muhammad al-Shamali the commander of the East

Battalion in al-Qassam Brigades in Rafah, as well as six civilians. The authorities arrested around 100 members and supporters of the group.²⁸

The clashes spread to the house of Sheikh Abu Musa, which Hamas demolished. The second clash took place in April 2011, after a Salafi group calling itself “Tawhid Wal Jihad” kidnapped the Italian solidarity activist Vittorio Arrigoni on April 15, to force Hamas to release its detainees led by the group’s leader Hisham al-Sa’idani.²⁹ On the following day, Arrigoni’s body was found in an abandoned apartment in northern GS. Hamas described the group as deviant outlaw group. The Hamas government security forces succeeded on April 19 in tracking down the killers and had them surrounded at a home in al-Nusairat refugee camp in central GS. Two of the killers died in the armed clashes that ensued, while a third was apprehended.

Sixth: Hamas’s Position Towards PIJ

Hamas’s relationship with the PIJ is more complex than with other groups, and has passed through three main phases over the past three decades.

The first stage was one of sharp conflict and rivalry between the PIJ and the MB movement, and subsequently Hamas. This was the result of differences of thought and general approach to the Palestinian issue, and differences related to the MB movement and its role in the Islamic arena in general, and the Palestinian arena in particular.

The second stage was marked by rapprochement and cooperation between the two groups, especially with Israel’s relentless targeting of both groups including its targeting of their leaders and cadres. This compelled the two sides to close ranks against Israel.

The third stage followed a series of events; Hamas’s victory in the 2006 PLC elections, forming the 10th government and then the national unity government, before it had to take military action in GS precipitating the estrangement from Fatah.

There were differences between the two groups regarding participation in the elections and accepting membership of the PA. Then came the official Arab, Western, American, and Israeli positions that opposed Hamas and rejected its democratic electoral legitimacy. This strengthened the bond between the two groups in order to

²⁸ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10* (Beirut: al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2011), pp. 65–67.

²⁹ Site of Aljazeera.net, 15/4/2011, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/11006454-def47f2-b053-a81f8abc508b>

defend GS and thwart attempts aiming at bringing it back in to the fold of the Oslo Accords and their restrictions.

Israel's aggression on GS in late 2008 and early 2009, the Palestinian reconciliation talks, and the Arab revolutions that toppled the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya led the two groups to an even higher level of cooperation and coordination.

1. The First Phase Until 1987

The emergence of the PIJ out of the womb of the MB movement in GS was not an easy process and was marred by disputes and conflict between the two. Since its foundation, the PIJ had lived in a state of conflict with the movement, which ultimately led to the formation of Hamas. Hence, there was a radical shift in the movement's overall political position vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. Was the PIJ then the main driving force behind the founding of Hamas?

Experts and scholars are in disagreement over this. Some believe that Hamas emerged when the MB movement saw the PIJ as a challenge to it, and not as a result of a natural development of the group's political discourse and positions. This was the conclusion of researcher Khalid Zawawi,³⁰ and it is possible to say that this view expresses the PIJ position and narrative.

Others believe otherwise, however. In the testimony offered by Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yasin broadcast by Al-Jazeera in its program *Shahid 'ala al-Asr* (Witness to the Era), and published later in a book, he did not mention any PIJ influence on Hamas's founding. Furthermore, Khalid Mish'al, in a long interview conducted by Ghassan Charbel for *An-Nahar* newspaper, published later in a separate book, does not allude to this influence either. Instead, he spoke about a historical context leading up to the foundation of Hamas outside Palestine, beginning with the establishment of Islamic Justice list for the elections of General Union of Palestinian Students at Kuwait University in 1977.³¹

At any rate, it is certain that the PIJ's emergence was a catalyst that sped up the MB movement's adoption of armed resistance against Israel, as well as a number of PIJ analyses and ideological proposals. The MB youths were influenced by the ideas of

³⁰ Khalid Zawawi, *Marja'iyat al-Khitab al-Siyasi fi Filastin* (The Reference Frame of Political Discourse in Palestine) (Ramallah: The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy—Muwatin, 2012), p. 87.

³¹ See Ghassan Charbel, *Khalid Mish'al Yatadhakkar: Harakat Hamas wa Tahrir Filastin* (Khalid Mish'al Remembers: Hamas and the Liberation of Palestine) (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2006), pp. 32–38.

Fathi al-Shaqqaqi, especially his idea that the Palestinian issue is the central cause for the Islamic movement. This was unprecedented in the MB movement. Palestinian historian Mohsen Muhammad Saleh believes that the MB movement agreed that Palestine was a central cause for the nation and Islamists but, before Shaqaqi, their literature did not proclaim it to be the central cause. Yet he also believes, according to a number of interviews he made, that discussions within the movement's ranks regarding this idea and the inclination to adopt it dates back to at least 1981–1982, especially among the Palestinian MB in Kuwait (Khalid Mish'al and his associates).³²

The head of Hamas's political bureau Khalid Mish'al had said that the Hamas project began to emerge between 1985 and 1986. The project began to mature without being declared, and extensive contacts were underway between concerned parties outside and inside Palestine to draw its features. He added that the leadership abroad focused on raising funds to put it into practice and cover its expenses, and on rallying Palestinians in the Diaspora, as well as communicating with Arab and Islamic movements. He added that the idea they started promoting in these circles was that the Palestinian issue is the central cause of the Muslim *Ummah*.³³

However, this was not the only factor. There were also the MB movement's ideological and doctrinal structures, in addition to the role the group played historically concerning the Palestinian issue. This included its role in the 1948 war, and its experience with Fatah through the Shuyukh Camps in Jordan, which ended with the September 1970 conflict between the Jordanian regime and the Palestinian freedom fighters (*fedayeen*). These factors clearly indicate that the idea was never absent from the awareness of the group and its future plans, even though they did not fully develop until after the first *Intifadah* in late 1987.

We can speak of three main issues that determined Hamas's position on PIJ:

First, the PIJ originates from the MB movement, and it developed a discourse critical of Islamic groups and movements, describing their positions as disappointing vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. The discourse also tackled the military action against the occupation, which could be considered an ideological and political challenge to

³² E-mail from Mohsen Mohammad Saleh to the author Sameeh Hammoudeh, Ramallah, 8/10/2012.

³³ Ghassan Charbel, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

these movements in general, and the MB movement in particular.³⁴ PIJ adopted a revolutionary ideological, political and organizational approach, one that did not subscribe to that of the MB movement, which is based on gradual and slow reform of Arab society order to prepare it for resistance. PIJ believed that the alternative was a revolutionary movement by an Islamic vanguard that could impose an Islamic system, which would then wage a total war on Israel.³⁵

Second, the sharp criticism voiced by the PIJ founders against the MB movement was not limited to the latter's position on the Palestinian issue. It also applied to their position concerning the Arab world in general, and Egypt and GS in particular. This caused sensitivity in the movement's ranks vis-à-vis the PIJ, leading sometimes to some skirmishes, especially in GS.

Third, the PIJ considered the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini as a reference frame, and considered Imam Khomeini a renewer of the faith and a leader of change during that period. This set off alarms among the MB, who would never accept following an authority from outside their ranks, let alone a Shiite rather than a Sunni authority.

The MB follow their authority in administrative and organizational matters, and benefit greatly—when it comes to general ideological and Islamic issues—from renowned scholars in their circles or in close circles, such as Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, Abu al-Hasan al-Nadawi and others. However, in Palestine, they were unsettled by how far the PIJ went in getting close to the Iranian revolution and its proposals, and how its founder Shafaqi pledged loyalty to Imam Khomeini.

Shafaqi, in the course of criticizing the position of Islamic movements on the Palestinian cause, said: "If the absence of the Islamic movement was understandable and justified in the 1950s and 1960s, it is not possible to understand or justify this

³⁴ Iyyad al-Barghouthi believes that the MB movement's prime concern with respect to PIJ was that the latter would become more popular and secure more achievements than the former. For this reason, the movement rushed to rebrand itself as Hamas at the start of the *Intifadah* on 14/12/1987, announcing that it is a branch of the MB movement. This was done particularly during this *Intifadah*, because the PIJ rose to quick prominence as an Islamic military organization. See Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *al-Aslamah wa al-Siyasah fi al-Aradd al-Filastiniyyah al-Muhtallah* (Islamization and Politics in the Occupied Palestinian Territories) (Jerusalem: al-Zahraa Center for Studies and Research, 1990), p. 89. One of the PIJ founders, Sheikh 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Odeh, also reckons that the MB saw the PIJ as an alternative to them. See Ziad Abu 'Amr, *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 158.

³⁵ Ziad Abu 'Amr, *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 151.

astounding absence of the Islamic movement from occupying its natural position in leading the stage, steering its events, and controlling its changes.”³⁶

Shaqaqi proposed the Palestinian cause as the central cause of the Islamic movement, and said the Zionist project and the Hebrew state were the essence of Western-Islamic conflict, stressing that confronting Israel was the primary duty of the Islamic movement.

The PIJ’s Critique of the MB Movement

We do not intend to analyze exhaustively all criticisms made by the PIJ against the MB movement. What concerns us is stating the most prominent of the criticisms in order to explain their effect on the position of the MB movement, and Hamas later, vis-à-vis the PIJ, and the sensitive relations between the latter two in the 1980s. While bearing in mind that relations between them at a later stage overcame crisis and conflict and became accord, coordination, and alliance. Both groups are in fierce conflict with the Israeli occupation, and they needed to close ranks against Israel. Here, we note the following criticisms:³⁷

1. The MB movement does not engage in self-criticism.
2. The absence of a clear political program for the MB movement.
3. The proclivity to hallow leaders.
4. The movement’s lack of a vision and theoretical understanding of history.
5. The movement’s appeasement of and coexistence with Arab regimes.³⁸
6. The reliance of the MB movement on educating its members on rigid and prescriptive curricula detached from the constantly changing objective reality, be it social, economic, political, or intellectual. This has led their youths to complacency.³⁹
7. The prevalence of an uncritical mentality among the MB.⁴⁰

Perhaps some of these criticisms reflect the climate in which the founders of PIJ lived, or perhaps some of their personal experiences. Indeed, many of these criticisms do not apply to MB chapters in other places.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁷ This analysis is based on books by Ziad Abu ‘Amr and Khalid Zawawi, previously mentioned, and a book by Muhammad Moro, *Fathi al-Shaqaqi: Sawt al-Mustad‘afin fi Muwajahat Mashru‘ al-Haimanah al-Gharbi* (Fathi al-Shaqaqi: The Voice of the Oppressed Against the Western Dominance Project) (Gaza: Palestinian Center for Studies and Civilizational Communication, 2011).

³⁸ Ziad Abu ‘Amr, *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita‘ Gazzah*, p. 154.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

The PIJ's Position on the Iranian Revolution and the Shiites

Fathi al-Shaqaqi, the PIJ founder, was influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini. To him, this was the beginning of a revolutionary transformation. Shaqaqi, when he was still a student at Al-Zaqaziq University ⁴¹ in Egypt, wrote his book “Khomeini the Islamic Solution and Alternative.”⁴² Multiple editions of the book were printed in a short period of time, and because of the book, the author was detained for four months before being forced to return to his home in Rafah. There, he became active in disseminating his ideas and political visions, and rallied Islamist youths around him.

Some of Shaqaqi's views were met with reservations by the MB in GS. His views regarding the Iranian revolution and his strong defense of it; considering the differences with Shiite Muslims irrelevant in the course of the conflict fought by Muslims against “Western imperialism” and Israel. He glorified the Iranian position on this conflict and its defiance of the West, especially the United States and Israel, believing the latter to be a cancer that must be uprooted. This is despite the fact that the MB movement initially had a positive stance regarding the revolution, a position they maintained until the eruption of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980.

The MB movement in GS believed the resolution stemmed from Islamic foundations, “but began to lose its brilliance year after year,” having failed to establish a model Islamic state based on stable institutions, and to overcome the sectarian dimension,⁴³ as they said. The difference in the positions over the Iranian revolution and Shiite Muslims led the MB to accuse the PIJ of having Shiite tendencies.⁴⁴

2. The Second Phase 1987–2005⁴⁵

Hamas began operating in late 1987, and quickly took a major role in the *Intifadah*. It became the main rival of Fatah on the popular and resistance levels. With Hamas's launch, most of the previous PIJ criticisms of the MB movement decreased. The PIJ became akin to Hamas's younger sibling, meeting with it on politics, ideology, and jihad, as well as strategic proposals, differing only in some partial and tactical matters.

⁴¹ After al-Shaqaqi graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, he applied to study history at the Faculty of Humanities.

⁴² Fathi al-Shaqaqi, *al-Khomeini al-Hall al-Islami wa al-Badil* (Khomeini the Islamic Solution and the Alternative) (Cairo: Dar al-Mukhtar al-Islami, 1979).

⁴³ Ziad Abu 'Amr, *al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 157.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴⁵ The editor (Mohsen Mohammad Saleh) added the text related to the second phase 1987–2005 and the third phase 2005–2013, which was not present in the original text.

The two groups maintained their different approaches during the *Intifadah* of 1987–1993. Each side had its own programs, events, and activities. Yet no side sought to disrupt the work of the other.

Nevertheless, there was sometimes friction on the ground, for example when competing over influence in mosques. But the two sides continued to stress Islamic unity, and formed a joint front to resist political concessions by the PLO leadership.

The two movements jointly formed an alliance comprising 10 factions in total, the “Alliance of the Ten Factions,” on the sidelines of a conference to support the *Intifadah* on 22–25/10/1991. The alliance opposed the peace process and the Madrid Conference held on 30/10/1991.

On the sidelines of the conference, the delegations of Hamas and PIJ met and held discussions. According to Ibrahim Ghushah, Hamas spokesperson, the inclination was to reach unity through three stages: first, coordination, second forming a joint front, and third, unity.

Ghushah said that Fathi Shaqaqi had stressed to him the need for unity between them. Ghushah said that Hamas’s relationship with the PIJ was and remained strong because “what brings us close to the Islamic Jihad are two main factors: First, we share the same Islamic background, and second, our political programs are very close.”⁴⁶

On 17/12/1992, Israel deported 416 Islamist leaders from Palestine to Marj al-Zuhur in Lebanon, mostly from Hamas, but the group also included 16 PIJ members. This created an opportunity for contact between the two sides, who began coordinating their plans for steadfastness and returning to Palestine.

Hamas and PIJ agreed to confront the Oslo Accords and to continue armed resistance, becoming active as part of the “Alliance of the Ten Factions.” Both groups were persecuted by the PA’s security forces, which did not reduce the pressure on the two groups until *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000. Both boycotted the PA legislative and presidential elections in 1996, and staged self-immolation⁴⁷ attacks together, including

⁴⁶ Ibrahim Ghushah, *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghushah (Ex-spokesman of Hamas)* (Beirut: al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2013), p. 164.

⁴⁷ The overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims consider these operations to be “martyrdom operations” while most Israelis and western writers and media describe them as “suicide operations”. We used the word “self-immolation” in this report to be as neutral as possible. However, such terms may need more discussion.

the attack in Beit Lid on 22/1/1995 and an attack on a shopping center in Tel Aviv on 5/3/1996. Hamas provided logistical support, while PIJ members carried out the attacks.

The *al-Aqsa Intifadah* of 2000–2005 was a turning point for both Hamas and PIJ. They showed remarkable abilities in resistance activity, with reduced PA pressures and restrictions, and coordinated directly on the ground, for example with the attack on the Erez crossing in GS on 8/6/2003.

3. The Third Phase 2005–2013

Hamas and the PIJ boycotted the Palestinian presidential elections on 9/1/2005, in which the Fatah candidate Mahmud ‘Abbas won. They were among the Palestinian factions that signed the Cairo Agreement on 17/3/2005, which sought to prepare the ground for them to join the PLO and put the Palestinian house in order. The two movements took part in the municipal elections in WB and GS, allying in a number of municipalities. The huge popularity of Hamas and extreme rivalry with Fatah was obvious to observers, while the PIJ and other factions achieved modest results compared to Hamas and Fatah.

Hamas decided to take part in the PLC elections based on advisory opinions related to the need to protect the resistance program, reform, fighting corruption, and preventing political concessions. For its part, the PIJ decided to boycott the elections because they were being held under the Oslo ceiling, where the resistance forces had little chance to impose the rules of the game on the PA.

Hamas’s victory in the election in early 2006 gave it a strong impetus, which was met in pro-resistance circles including the PIJ with great relief. Iran (the main backer of the PIJ) provided broad and extensive assistance to Hamas and its government, in light of its popularity. In addition, regional and international forces opened to Hamas more extensively.

Hamas offered the PIJ the chance to participate in the government that Isma‘il Haniyyah was tasked with forming, but it declined.⁴⁸ PIJ Leader Khalid al-Batsh asked Hamas to decline to form a government if it did not include a national coalition comprising all Palestinian sides.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Al-Hayat* newspaper, London, 29/1/2006.

⁴⁹ *Al Bayan* newspaper, Dubai, 4/2/2006.

Batsh stressed the PIJ's cooperation with Hamas because it is committed to Palestinian fundamentals, and because it is an essential part of the resistance.⁵⁰ PIJ Leader Nafez 'Azzam indicated there was a possibility of cooperating with the Hamas-led government on a number of issues, the most important among them being internal reform, promoting resistance, and protecting the rights of the Palestinian people. He added that they could also cooperate in resisting the pressures put on Hamas.⁵¹

Relations between Hamas and the PIJ continued in a positive way. The special relationship between the leaders of the two movements, Khalid Mish'al and Ramadan 'Abdallah, gave their accord a strong impetus that helped overcome friction.

After Hamas forged a government of national unity led by Isma'il Haniyyah in March 2007, reports emerged that the Hamas-PIJ coordination was at a peak. There were reports that Hamas had received PIJ promises to adhere as much as possible to the truce with Israel, to help ease the blockade on the Palestinian people and government. Mahmud al-Zahhar indicated there were continuous bilateral meetings, and added that at the start of their relationship, there were differences in points of view regarding the desire of the PIJ to engage in armed action at its inception, while the MB movement wanted to focus on education before armed struggle. He said that after all sides became involved in armed struggle, they became closer, and pointed out that the two groups were an Islamic project with a joint vision.⁵² He also said that the merger of the two groups under a unified organizational framework was on the table, but required prior arrangements and measures and maturation on a high level.⁵³

However, the PIJ opposed the military takeover by Hamas in GS in mid-June 2007, and tried to mediate with Fatah. This upset Hamas, for it expected the PIJ to side with it or at least be more understanding of its position.

Hamas did not conceal its annoyance either when many Fatah members and supporters joined the PIJ as an umbrella providing them with protection and freedom to act. Hamas saw these elements as factors of potential tension in GS or within the PIJ, with the goal of pushing the latter into a more rigid direction vis-à-vis Hamas and

⁵⁰ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, 10/2/2006.

⁵¹ *Al-Khaleej* newspaper, Sharjah, 26/2/2006.

⁵² *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, Beirut, 9/5/2007.

⁵³ *Al-Khaleej*, 9/5/2007.

its government. For its part, the PIJ continued its efforts to mediate and bring the parties closer together.⁵⁴

That period was not free of individual frictions between Hamas and PIJ members.⁵⁵ Khalid al-Batsh reckoned that the Hamas takeover emboldened Israel to the extent of endangering the Palestinian cause, calling on both Fatah and Hamas to back down and make mutual concessions⁵⁶. Bilateral meetings did not stop, and a series of them were held in GS to better coordinate their positions. The two sides also agreed to form joint field committees to address any disputes that arose between them.⁵⁷ Tensions and clashes broke out several times on 21/10/2007, however, the two agreed to pull out fighters immediately and address the causes of tensions, while accusing suspicious elements of trying to instigate sedition between them.⁵⁸

On 8/9/2008, the two movements held a lengthy meeting and issued a statement stressing their strategic bilateral relations, and the Palestinian fundamentals that both movements believed in. The meeting stressed that a serious national dialogue was the only way to address Palestinian political division. In the statement, the two movements said they had agreed to form joint committees to address any possible disputes.⁵⁹

The two movements coordinated their positions on the comprehensive dialogue meeting for national reconciliation that was supposed to be held in Cairo on 9–11/10/2008. Along with two other Palestinian factions, they declined to attend a day before the meeting was scheduled, citing Fatah's lack of seriousness. The PA failed to release political prisoners in WB; the Hamas delegation was not allowed to travel from WB; and 'Abbas insisted on attending only the opening session but not subsequent dialogue sessions.⁶⁰ Coordination between Hamas and PIJ continued for the next years regarding reconciliation, national dialogue, and PLO reform.

⁵⁴ See for example on mediation efforts: site of Islam Online, 22/6/2007, <http://islamonline.net>; Paltoday News Agency, 10/7/2007, <http://paltoday.ps/ar>; and *Addustour* newspaper, Amman, 19/9/2007.

⁵⁵ See for example about the misunderstanding regarding the targeting of the Sufa crossing in: *Al-Ayyam* newspaper, Ramallah, 24/7/2007, and, the story about clashes that killed three and injured 7 in Gaza in *Alrai* newspaper, Amman, 3/8/2007.

⁵⁶ *Al-Ayyam*, 6/8/2007.

⁵⁷ See *al-Khaleej*, 16/8/2007; and *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 18/9/2007.

⁵⁸ Site of The Palestinian Information Center (PIC), 22/10/2007; and *al-Khaleej*, 24/10/2007.

⁵⁹ PIC, 9/9/2008.

⁶⁰ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008* (Beirut: al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2010), pp. 43–44.

When Israel assaulted GS, 27/12/2008–18/1/2009, PIJ stood by Hamas. Both, along with other Palestinian factions, played a significant role in confronting the Israeli attack. After that, Muhammad al-Hindi, the top PIJ official in GS, called for quick unity between the two.⁶¹ However, PIJ Leader Nafez ‘Azzam confirmed the following day that while his movement sought unity for Islamic action in Palestine through better coordination with Hamas and other factions, this did not mean that the two groups would merge.⁶² Hamas Leader Ra’fat Nassif said that the resistance’s victory in GS reduced the differences preventing the establishing of a unified leadership or unified action.⁶³

The two sides continued to stress unity, but they did not seem to be in a rush about merging, when the development of joint coordination seemed satisfactory to them. For example, Hamas Leader Isma‘il Radwan stated that both parties agreed on the vision and strategic goals. The relationship reached a peak through positive coordination between secretary generals, whether inside or outside Palestine. However, Radwan added that they did not see any problem in the continued existence of the two groups as separate movements, in light of the high level of coordination between them, because their strategic goals were the same.⁶⁴

At any rate, leaders from both sides continued to call for unity or for practical gradualism towards it. For example, Muhammad al-Hindi called for a dialogue between Hamas and PIJ to build a strategy and vision for the coming phase.⁶⁵ In early 2012, the Hamas Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah called for a profound dialogue to achieve full merger. Muhammad al-Hindi welcomed Haniyyah’s call, explaining that the unity of Palestinian resistance forces was a religious and patriotic duty.⁶⁶ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *Assafir* newspapers both reported that such a dialogue had been launched between the two groups.⁶⁷ Despite this, leaders from both sides were well aware that achieving unity was still far off. Nafez Azzam asserted that great efforts and a much time must be invested to reach the goal. Taher al-Nunu, spokesperson for the GS government, said there were four factors conducive to unity: the common Islamic

⁶¹ *Al-Hayat*, 25/1/2009.

⁶² *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, London, 26/1/2009.

⁶³ *Asharq Alawsat*, 26/1/2009.

⁶⁴ *Felesteen* newspaper, 5/7/2009.

⁶⁵ *Assabeel* newspaper, Amman, 20/10/2010.

⁶⁶ *Alghad* newspaper, Amman, 18/1/2012.

⁶⁷ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 18/1/2012; and see *Alquds* newspaper, 20/1/2012.

starting point, the joint project and goals, the joint methods, and the tactical nature of any disputes between the two groups which Nunu said were normal and expected.⁶⁸

PIJ Secretary General Ramadan ‘Abdullah had stressed that talk about unity was both old and new, and that the desire for unity was present in principle on both sides. Regarding the form and timing of unity, he said the matter was still being discussed inside and between both sides.⁶⁹ Although Muhammad al-Hindi indicated in mid-March 2012 that talks for unity were going ahead and positively proceeding,⁷⁰ there was no concrete progress until the end of 2013.

In addition to their military coordination against Israeli assaults on GS, joint attacks were carried out, such as the one on the industrial zone near Tulkarm in WB on 25/4/2008. The Shin Bet also announced it had arrested members of the cell that carried out an attack in Tel Aviv on 21/11/2012 that injured 29 Israelis, saying the members belonged to both Hamas and PIJ.⁷¹

While dialogue and coordination continued between the two sides, friction on the ground also continued from time to time, albeit always dealt with promptly. It seems that the “government” logic which Hamas represents, and the “non-state actor” logic, which the PIJ represents, led to some conflicts in priorities and methods. Hamas is committed to a truce (as happened after the 2009 Cast Lead Operation or al-Furqan Battle), it saw any truce violation by other factions as damaging to its political commitments, including its bid to ease the GS blockade. Whereas, the PIJ saw it necessary to respond directly to Israeli violations. Frictions occurred between the two sides for this reason.⁷²

The rivalry between the two over winning some supporters by dominating mosques was another reason for friction. PIJ accused Hamas of exploiting its power to dominate mosques the PIJ originally dominated. It said that the number of such mosques was 70, of which 11 Hamas took control of at a time when Hamas already dominated hundreds of other mosques.⁷³ For his part, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the GS government, Taleb Abu Sha‘ar, said there were no armed

⁶⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 20/1/2012. Also see statement by Isma‘il Radwan to Ma‘an agency on 20/2/2012. (in Arabic)

⁶⁹ Site of Felesteen Online, 4/3/2012.

⁷⁰ Felesteen Online, 18/3/2012.

⁷¹ Palestinian Press Agency (Safa), 23/11/2012.

⁷² See for example *Asharq Alawsat*, 10/3/2009; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 27/3/2009; *al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 22/4/2009; *al-Hayat*, 11/10/2009; *Alghad*, 27/8/2010; and *al-Hayat*, 25/6/2013.

⁷³ *Al-Hayat*, 11/7/2009.

clashes in the context of the “competition for mosques,” saying the latter were platforms for national unity and warning against strife. He added that the GS government had inherited a complex status quo many years ago in the mosques, where various factions were present, and yet the Ministry did not prop up any imam or prevent anyone from delivering their sermons.⁷⁴

On the other hand, Hamas leader Salah al-Bardawil attributed the clashes on the ground between the two sides to the failure of some PIJ members to abide by the orders of their political leaders. Bardawil said that after the military takeover in GS, members of former security forces and former Fatah members joined the military formations of the PIJ, where they would have cover to attack Hamas and instigate strife between the two sides. Bardawil referred to violations attributed to the PIJ, such as firing celebratory rounds during weddings, and kidnapping citizens and interrogating them.

Bardawil stressed that Hamas was keen to address these problems with the PIJ leadership.⁷⁵ At a later time, Bardawil stressed that Hamas’s ties to PIJ were solid on all issues, and governed by brotherly, patriotic, and honest checks and balances. Bardawil said the two movements worked in “full harmony” and that coordination between them was solid and governed by the ethics of the “*Mujahid* (freedom fighter).”⁷⁶

The revolutions and changes in the Arab world caused huge reverberations that were translated as victories, defeats, gains, or setbacks for the Palestinian Islamic movement, a topic for another treatise. However, the damage sustained to the relationships between Hamas, and Iran, Syria, and Hizbullah, made some Hamas observers wary of reports about increased Iranian military and logistical support for the PIJ, in parallel with the decline in support for Hamas. This was understood as a bid by the Iranian side to strengthen the PIJ at the expense of Hamas⁷⁷.

In general, what brings Hamas and PIJ closer is much bigger than what pushes them apart. Competition between them remains in the context of resistance, liberation, and national action. Therefore, developing cooperation and moving closer to unity is the most logical path for the future course of events as far as they are concerned.

⁷⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 11/7/2009.

⁷⁵ Aljazeera.net, 15/9/2010.

⁷⁶ Felesteen Online, 20/6/2013.

⁷⁷ Also see quoted Israeli sources on the topic in *Alquds*, 27/6/2013.

Conclusion

The centrist moderate Islamic movement continues to represent the strongest Islamist faction in Palestine and the Diaspora. This is essentially expressed by the MB movement, specifically Hamas.

However, the Salafist movement must not be underestimated, and the PIJ represents one of the strongest Palestinian resistance factions. This is in addition to the historical and ongoing presence of the Islamic Hizb ut-Tahrir. As for extremist groups close to al-Qaeda or those affiliated to Salafist-Jihadism or Takfirism, they still have a limited presence and influence in the Palestinian arena.

Hamas has dealt with other Islamist groups in the arena on the basis of “We cooperate where we agree, and excuse each other where we disagree.” Hamas has avoided, as much as possible, being drawn into conflicts, clashes, and accusations. It also sought to unify visions, ideas, and coordinate on various issues.

Hamas benefited from the MB movement’s definition of itself as a Salafist calling to seek common ground with the Salafists. Furthermore, the MB movement background of the PIJ founders and the similarities with the latter over ideological, strategic, and practical starting points, especially after the launch of Hamas, served to strengthen greatly bilateral relations and their bid for unity in the future.

The situation in Palestine and the Arab region is undergoing huge changes and revolutions. Hamas must deal well with the Palestinian Islamist phenomenon and its complexities, and in containing or allying with it in a way that serves the joint strategic causes and the liberation of Palestine. Otherwise, any negative consequence related to the Palestinian Islamist phenomenon could adversely affect Hamas and its Islamic project, and the Islamic project in Palestine in general.

دراسة علمية

موقف حماس من
الحركات الإسلامية
الفلسطينية

سميح حمّودة

