

The institutional trajectory of Hamas

From radicalism to pragmatism—and back again?

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In memory of my father

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Abstract

This thesis explains Hamas's development, from its modest beginnings to the political force it is today, by analyzing it as a case of party institutionalization. The analytical framework, based on elements from the literature on social movements and political parties, distinguishes between institutionalization as a process and a property variable. By investigating its ideological and organizational development, the processual element interrogates the institutional trajectory of Hamas, from a militant movement toward a political party. The property element, by contrast, estimates the degree to which Hamas was institutionalized at various historical junctures. The thesis combines the interpretative case study method with within-case, longitudinal comparisons, and relies on interview data, secondary sources, and opinion polls. By referencing suitable theories and grounding the analysis within sound methodological frameworks, the thesis aims to avoid essentializing Hamas, thus contributing with an improved understanding of its development.

The thesis finds that Hamas largely developed as hypothesized, i.e., moderating ideologically and routinizing organizationally, while becoming increasingly valued as an end in itself. From its establishment as a religiously motivated liberation movement set on erecting an Islamic state in the whole of historic Palestine, Hamas limited its territorial claims and softened its focus on religion. Organizationally, Hamas expanded and routinized by easing its recruitment requirements and instituting legitimate decision-making procedures. In short, Hamas developed away from the ideological rigidity and operational logic of a movement organization toward the pragmatism of an institutionalized political party. By 2011, however, Hamas had developed into an awkward but somewhat institutionalized organizational state between that of a liberation movement, a governing party, and a party-statelet. This mixing of roles is explained by the unresolved nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which makes it difficult for Hamas to discard its identity as a liberation movement, and by Hamas's roots as a religious liberation movement, a legacy that counteracts both pragmatism and moderation. Yet, Hamas's awkward organizational state does not detract from the explanatory power of the applied theories or the relevance of the findings, as the thesis offers a de-exoticized and nuanced account of Hamas's development. The thesis concludes that through the course of its institutional trajectory, Hamas has institutionalized sufficiently to remain a key political player both in domestic Palestinian politics and as part of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Hamas has come a long way in a short time; emerging as a modest militant movement only in 1987, it soon established itself as the main Palestinian opposition party, and in 2006 it won the Palestinian elections and entered into office. While such a rapid development and ascension to power would be a feat for any political movement, Hamas pulled it off while operating under the challenging circumstances of the Israeli occupation. Furthermore, it has not only survived but also managed to hold on to power in Gaza in the years since the 2007 Palestinian civil war, despite the debilitating economic consequences of the international boycott and political isolation from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. Even in the face of large-scale attacks from Israel, such as the military offensive Operation Cast Lead, Hamas has persisted. Carried out in the winter of 2008–2009, this three-week bombardment left Gaza in ruins, its population destitute, and the international community with a humanitarian disaster on its hands. The war inflicted enormous destruction on Hamas's territory, killed many of its constituents, and left the organization severely weakened. Hamas survived the onslaught, however, and was even considered a victor by many Palestinians.¹ A similar trend has been observed in the years that has followed; Hamas continues to rule Gaza with widespread domestic legitimacy while being isolated from the West Bank, suffering regular Israeli attacks, continued international boycott, and lackluster economic development.

By surviving while retaining a high level of legitimacy in the face of such challenges, Hamas has proved itself to be a political actor of considerable skill, and one that likely will continue to play a key role on the Palestinian political scene. And by the same tokens, Hamas have seemingly *institutionalized* as political party. For one, Hamas has endured despite the assassination of many of its leaders, including its founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Second, Hamas has arguably moderated both rhetorically and strategically in order to increase its reach, rather than staying true to its cause and thus remain at the fringes. As Hamas can no longer credibly claim to pursue the goals that initially gave it legitimacy and drove its recruitment, this indicates that it has become a valued end in itself for its members. Third, Hamas's strong position and popularity among Palestinians stand in stark contrast to its failure to provide for and protect its constituents. This, in turn, underlines that Hamas has become a fixture in the Palestinian public imagination, and is taken for granted as a leading movement,

¹ Approximately half of those asked in a poll carried out in late January 2009 considered Hamas to be the victor of the war (JMCC 2009).

both by its supporters and detractors. In short, Hamas's survival is in itself indicative of high levels of organizational capability and strategic adaptability, and combined with its position among Palestinians in the occupied territories, it can be said to have become a valued end in itself—i.e., it has become established as an *institution*.

Based on the above, it is advanced that Hamas merits analysis for two interconnected reasons. Theoretically, Hamas's rapid transmutation from a loosely organized, militant movement toward a seemingly stable and institutionalized governing party is an interesting case of party institutionalization.² And because of Hamas's apparent institutionalization, it is—and will likely continue to be—a force to be reckoned with on the Palestinian political scene and thus also play a role for any peace process between the Palestinians and Israel. As such, the analysis has obvious empirical and political merit.

The aim of this dissertation, then, is to analyze the development of Hamas as a case of party institutionalization and through such an analysis contribute to an improved understanding of how Hamas developed from its modest beginnings to the political force it is today. And *contribute* and *improve* are two keywords here; the extant literature on Hamas is vast and contains important contributions. Nevertheless, as with most topics related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, many studies of Hamas are either overly politicized, and/or they belong to the Palestine-area studies literature, which has a tendency to focus on the unique and peculiar (see chapter 2 for a literature review). As a consequence, the quality of much of the existing knowledge of what Hamas is, how it came to be, how it has developed, and where it might be going, is found wanting. And the most common reason for this inadequate quality is the widespread lack of theoretical and methodological grounding in many Hamas studies.

One approach promising to contribute with improved and non-politicized knowledge is therefore to interpret Hamas by referencing suitable theories and grounding the analysis within sound methodological frameworks. By analyzing Hamas as a case of party institutionalization, aided by established theories drawn from the literature on social movements and political parties, and by doing so with methodological rigor, this dissertation will produce more reliable and valid knowledge about Hamas. In addition, the application of established political scientific theories on a case such as Hamas promises to test and refine the applied theories.³

2 “Transmutation” is preferred to “transformation” or the simpler “change” when analyzing the development from movement toward party, as it highlights the fundamental differences between movement and party.

3 This is important, for as long as political science theories are developed mainly to target political

1.1 Research outline: Hamas as a case of party institutionalization

Party institutionalization holds such a central role for the thesis that a short discussion of how it is understood and used is in order early on. As the analytical framework will be laid out in detail in section 1.3.3 below, the following section is limited to some brief introductory and clarifying statements.

1.1.1 Institutionalization explained

Political parties are—as is often repeated in the literature—considered a *sine qua non* for democracy (see, inter alia, Randall and Svåsand 2002a; Webb and White 2009a, 1–2). And as “[a]ll parties must institutionalize to a certain extent in order to survive” (Panebianco 1988, 54), the study of party institutionalization is important for uncovering the mechanism by which parties can fulfill their assumed role in democracy. Or, in other words, the performance of a party for a democracy depends on it being *institutionalized* (Webb and White 2009a, 11). Basically, a party is considered institutionalized when it is seen by the electorate as a necessary component of the political system, and when it has developed its organization sufficiently to both be autonomous from individual personalities and have the organizational capacity to pursue its primary objectives to a meaningful degree (Webb and White 2009a, 11–3). To analyze Hamas as a case of party institutionalization, then, is to carry out a theoretically grounded investigation of its position in Palestinian society and to examine its organizational capabilities.

Somewhat more specifically, the *process* of institutionalization is what takes place when a party “becomes valuable in and of itself and its goals become inseparable and indistinguishable from it” (Panebianco 1988, 53). Or, in the words of Scott, it is when the party acquires both “stability and persistence” (2008, 128). The process of party institutionalization, then, refers to the transmutation of a party from being a pure vehicle for seeking some political goal, to incrementally becoming a valued end in itself. Such a process can be traced from the party’s origins, via its identity building phase, through its organization-building phase, to its stabilization phase and eventual institutionalization.

In addition to the process, *institutionalization* can be understood as a property variable (Zucker 1977, 728). For, at any stage in the process of becoming an institution—or, for that

phenomena in the Western world, they often fall short of providing the tools necessary to explain politics elsewhere. It is recognized, however, that the potential for theory development based on a case study of Hamas is limited.

matter, at any point in its history—a party is always more or less institutionalized. In short, institutionalization also refers to the *degree to which* the party has institutionalized. Although the conceptualizations of institutionalization as a process and as a property variable are interlinked, it makes analytical sense to distinguish between them.

A number of authors have theorized around party institutionalization understood as a property variable (see in particular Huntington 1968; Janda 1980; Levitsky 1998; Panebianco 1988). For this thesis, Randall and Svåsand's (2002a) take on institutionalization as a property is deemed to be the most refined and useful. Their conceptualization will be discussed in detail when the full analytical framework is presented below. Suffice it to say for now, they offer a multi-dimensional framework to measure the degree of institutionalization, building on previous theories, but taking great care to allow for contextual variations. Their model contains four elements in two dimensions, each capturing different but interlinked parts of a party's institutionalization. In essence, they distinguish between routinized patterns of *behavior* and *attitudes*, both with regard to the *internal* workings of the party and its relation to the *external* environment in which it operates. Combined, these elements capture both formal and informal aspects of a party's organization; the nature of its relationship with external sponsors; cohesiveness within the party; and how the party is perceived by the Palestinian population at large, including its political opponents. In short, the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized throughout its process of institutionalization will be measured with the aid of these four elements.⁴ As such, they constitute the core of institutionalization as a property of a party.

Tracing the institutionalization process of Hamas and measuring the degree to which it has institutionalized, together make up the analysis of Hamas as a *case of party institutionalization*. The first, sequential or processual, element of this analysis will provide insights into the institutional development of Hamas, whereas the second element, supported by the four elements suggested by Randall and Svåsand, will estimate and assess the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized at various junctures throughout this process. Combined, these two elements of the analysis will contribute to a fuller understanding of Hamas's transmutation from its roots as militant movement toward a governing party; its organizational outline, discipline, and coherence; its degree of autonomy from external sponsors and donors; the extent to which it is valued as an end in itself by its card-carrying

⁴ It should be noted, however, that these four elements of party institutionalization might be in tension with each other, i.e., they are not assumed to be simply cumulative (Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 12).

members; as well as how it is perceived both by other Palestinian political actors and the Palestinian population at large.

In short, it is the aim of this thesis to analyze and explain the process of institutionalization and to measure the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized as a political party. The following pages will briefly outline the chronological sequence of the analysis and indicate which theoretical tools will be employed at each step.

1.1.2 From movement ...

Given the importance ascribed to the roots of a party for its institutionalization (see e.g., Panebianco 1988, 163; Scott 2008, 158–59),⁵ the natural point of departure for the analysis is Hamas's organizational heritage and subsequent establishment. And because Hamas is the organizational offspring of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, a social movement that worked to Islamize Palestinian society through welfare work and proselytizing (Abu-Amr 1994a; Milton-Edwards 1996; Shadid 1988), the first part of the analysis will be informed and structured by the classic movement-to-party thesis (Michels 1915; Panebianco 1988; Tarrow 2011; Zald and Ash 1966). Arguably, the hallmark of this thesis is “its emphasis on routinization or institutionalization” (Close and Prevost 2008, 9), with institutionalization here being understood as the combined process of “formalization of the internal structure of [the social movement organization] with moderation of its goals” (Tarrow 2011, 212). In other words, institutionalization is taken as the process through which the manifest ideology, collective incentives, and often informal and loose organization of a social movement gives way to the more adaptable ideology, selective incentives, and formalized organization associated with a political party (Panebianco 1988, 20).

As a necessary backdrop to such an analysis, the development of the both the historical and immediate precursors of Hamas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its Palestinian branch, must be laid out. Then, based on this background, the founding of Hamas at the eve of the first *intifada* (from 1987 to 1993) can be detailed. This phase has previously been analyzed through social movement theories, specifically by Robinson (2004) interpreting Hamas as a case of social movement *organization*. Aided by Robinson's contribution and based on the rich empirical literature dealing with the emergence of Hamas (e.g., Abu-Amr 1993; Filiu 2012; Hroub 2000; Tamimi 2007), the thesis will elaborate on and nuance the existing

5 Also, Gunther and Diamond argue that the “‘founding contest’ [of a given party] can leave a lasting imprint on the basic nature of the party's organization for decades to come” (2003, 173).

analyses of Hamas's first years, with particular reference to its early organization-building.

1.1.3 ... toward institutionalized political party

Following the end of the *intifada* and during the ensuing “Oslo years” (1994 to 1999), Hamas tried to further develop as a political movement. However, the period saw the movement suffer intense persecution at the hands of Israel and the newly established PA, effectively obstructing its organization-building efforts. Added to this, Hamas's dual legacies as a religio-social movement and a liberation movement pulled its ideological and organizational development in contradictory directions (Close and Prevost 2008; de Zeeuw 2008b). Combined, these exogenous and endogenous factors led Hamas to remain ambiguous with regards to its ideological goals, prompting unpredictable behavior indicative of an organization still undecided about its political aims and role.

With the outbreak of the second *intifada* and the “death of Oslo process” in September 2000, Palestinian politics—and by implication also Hamas—entered a new violent and chaotic phase. Despite being a volatile period, however, the following six years saw Hamas evolve further as a political organization. Organizational expansion and increasing ideological coherence coupled with rising popularity elevated Hamas's political position and confidence, culminating in its decision to participate in the 2006 elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

By certain crucial tokens, Hamas can be said to have reached maturity as a political party when it participated in and won the 2006 PLC elections. For one, contesting elections is probably *the* defining characteristic of political parties according to most definitions (Sartori 1976, 57). Second, occupying office and governing is one of the prime functions ascribed to parties (Gunther and Diamond 2003). As such, the years from 2006 and onward to 2011 will be analyzed by relying mainly on party theories. More specifically, this period in Hamas's development will reference theories dealing with party-in-government (Deschouwer 2008b).

Although discussed in more detail below,⁶ it is pertinent to note here that, while a conceptual distinction is made between movement organizations and political parties when tracing Hamas's transmutation from the former toward the latter, the two are not necessarily dichotomous. Although movement organizations are expected to be ideologically rigid when compared to the pragmatism associated with political parties, and parties in turn usually have

6 See in particular sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3, on pp. 30ff. and pp. 34ff., respectively.

stricter organizational structures, there can be a great deal of overlap between these organizational expressions of political mobilization. Moreover, the transmutation process from movement to party is often characterized by incremental changes in the balance between these roles rather than a clear-cut and abrupt move from one to the other. Yet, the two are associated with different qualities and characteristics in terms of ideological rigidity, organizational structure, operational logic, and thus strategy and behavior. In order to identify these changes and highlight their consequences for Hamas, it makes analytical sense to distinguish between the two when tracing its transmutation from one toward the other.

1.2 Consequences of Palestinian politics ≠ ordinary politics

Given the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, Palestinian politics can hardly be seen as “ordinary politics.” Apart from dictating the economic, civil, and political circumstances in the Palestinian territories, the Israeli occupation also prompts all Palestinian political factions to be dedicated to the liberation of (at least some part of) their homeland.⁷ Many also advocate armed resistance to achieve this, and some—including Hamas—retain armed branches and carry out militant and terrorist operations against Israel. Within such a context, the decision to analyze Hamas as a case of party institutionalization must be properly justified.

Furthermore, to travel to the occupied Palestinian territories with theories and concepts developed mainly to explain political phenomena in the industrialized world must also be qualified. The party literature is highly biased toward the Western European experience (Erdmann 2004). Care must therefore be taken when utilizing these theories and concepts elsewhere (Collier and Mahon, Jr. 1993). In addition, politics in the occupied Palestinian territories are neither stable nor democratic as assumed by theories dealing with political parties, but rather characterized by volatility, violence, and destabilizing international interference (Longo and Lust 2012, 259).

And finally, to complicate things further, “Palestine” itself remains a contested, complex, and ambiguous political entity, “[n]ot a state but rather a territory, a national entity, perhaps a state-in-becoming” (Lentin 2008a, 1). For although the Palestine National Authority (PA) is a state-like construct, it has severely circumscribed powers within the limited territories it was set up to rule, and has developed into more of a *management* than *governing* body (Parsons

⁷ For concise introductions to Palestinian factional politics, cf. Baumgarten (2005) and Løvlie (2014). For a comprehensive treatment of the same topic, see Sayigh (1997).

2005).⁸ Moreover, it is not the PA but the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—of which Hamas is not a member—that is recognized as the “sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people,” and thus negotiates with Israel on behalf of the Palestinians and has observer status in the UN.⁹

Given the peculiarities and volatility of the political system in which Hamas operates, then, the following sections are devoted first to further substantiating the empirical rationale for analyzing Hamas as a case of party institutionalization, and subsequently making the case for traveling with the selected theories and concepts to the ambiguous political entity “Palestine.”

1.2.1 Hamas as a party—the empirical rationale

It is noteworthy that, with only a few exceptions, the international community defines Hamas as a terrorist organization and not as a political party. This approach is prompted by Hamas’s use of terrorist tactics from 1994 onward, which has also led to a number of studies of Hamas as a terrorist group (see, in particular, Frisch 2009; Levitt 2006; Singh 2011).¹⁰ Yet, Hamas slowly supplemented militant resistance with political and social work throughout the latter part of the 1990s, a development culminating with their participation and surprise victory in the 2006 elections to the PLC. This in effect made Hamas not only a legitimate political party for the Palestinians, but also their legally elected representative (Butenschøn and Vollan 2006).

And although Hamas continues to rely on armed tactics, and at times also mounts terrorist operations as part of their overall strategy, this does not render it unfit for analysis via party theories. Instead, it is maintained here that terrorism should be understood as a strategy or tactic, not as an ideology, and as a consequence only those organizations that rely on terrorist violence as their primary means of political expression should be labeled and analyzed as terrorists groups (Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger 2008, 3). So, while the military wing of

8 See chapter 5, section 5.1.1, pp. 146ff. for an introduction to the PA.

9 See the section *The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)* in chapter 3 on pp. 89ff. for an introduction to the PLO. It is pertinent to note here, however, that already in 1974, the UN General Assembly Resolution 3210 first recognized the PLO as the “legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people” (UNGA 1974a), before Resolution 3237 provided the PLO with observer status in the UN General Assembly as a non-state entity (UNGA 1974b). In 1988, the UN General Assembly Resolution 43/177 decided that the designation “Palestine” should be used in place of the PLO, and in 2012, after its bid to obtain full membership status was stopped in the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly Resolution 67/17 upgraded the status of Palestine in the UN from that of non-state entity observer to “non-member observer State status” (UNGA 2012).

10 The ministries of foreign affairs from certain European countries—including Norway—have definitely softened their stance toward Hamas in recent years (see e.g., TV2 Nyhetene 2011).

Hamas continues to intermittently carry out terrorist operations, it presumably does so on the orders of the political wing. Indeed, in a list compiled by Close and Prevost of revolutionary movements that have evolved into political parties (2008, 4), Hamas, together with the Lebanese Hezbollah, are categorized as parties maintaining “armed operations alongside their electoral actions”—contrasted to those that have made the full transition to political parties, and the revolutionary movements that maintain political wings.¹¹ And in an overview of terrorist groups that have turned to party politics, Weinberg *et al.* also place Hamas in the same category as Hezbollah, together with the Herut party of Israel, M-19 from Colombia, and the Basque ETA (2008, 75–104).¹²

Also note that the most obvious theoretical alternatives to interpreting Hamas through the lens of party theories—to conceptualize it either as a terrorist group or a movement organization—are both considered inferior to the adopted approach. On the one hand, if Hamas was conceptualized purely as a movement organization, the analyses would lose some of the focused qualities provided by party theories. For instance, reliance on social movement theories would fail to adequately explain Hamas’s participation in the 2006 PLC elections and subsequent behavior in government. To define and analyze Hamas as a terrorist group, on the other hand, would limit the analytical focus to its militant aspects, thereby losing sight of its non-violent activities and politically comprehensive goals.

In brief, and despite being defined as a terrorist group and consequently boycotted by both Israel and most of the international community, Hamas is currently a legal and legitimate political party within the Palestinian territories. This discrepancy has severe implications for the populations in both Israel and the occupied territories, and attests to the need for reconceptualizing Hamas. Here, it is maintained that to analyze Hamas as a case of party institutionalization is a fruitful analytical approach, promising to capture a wide range of its social and political activities—including both its grassroots work as a religious social movement and terrorist activities as a liberation movement—as well as its overall development as a political organization.

11 Examples of the latter include Sinn Fein, which is linked to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and the political wing of the Basque ETA, Batasuna (Close and Prevost 2008, 4–5).

12 Also, Scholey argues that the use of violence is just “one of an array of political tools” used by Hamas to pursue its political agenda (2008, 131).

1.2.2 The theoretical case for traveling to Palestine

As part of one of the world's longest running conflicts, Palestinian politics has been studied extensively. Numerous well-researched books and articles have been written, covering different aspects of Palestinian history, economy, society, and politics, and with a steady stream of new books and journal articles continuously being published, the accumulated knowledge of this tiny area in the Middle East is impressive. However, many of these works suffer from what Tamari labeled “the problem of Palestinian exceptionalism” (1994, 70), the tendency to grant the unique and exceptional nature of the Palestinian experience center stage in the analysis. This has led many scholars to approach Hamas as a *sui generis* political phenomenon, elevating, as it were, the uniqueness of the Palestinian context to the detriment of both analytical rigor and theoretical development.¹³

Admittedly, the unresolved nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict lends some credibility to those arguing that the Palestinian case and thus Hamas are somewhat unique. But, because of the politicized nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself, and of the research on topics related to it, these claims of exceptionalism take on an added dimension. On the one hand, there is the tendency to focus on the Israeli occupation as an all-explanatory variable for Palestinian politics, reminiscent of Zionist conspiracy theories. On the other hand, there is the neo-Orientalist approach whose proponents fall prey to traditional essentializing explanations of Palestinian politics, assuming that some Middle Eastern, Arab, or Islamic “culture” is the one salient variable explaining Palestinian politics (Al-Anani 2012, 467; Halliday 2003, 200).

This inclination to focus on the unique and particular is by no means specific to Palestine studies. Area specialists in general have traditionally been reluctant to examine “their region” through theories and concepts developed to explain social and political phenomena in the West, exactly because these theories and concepts presumably fail to take into consideration the assumed exceptional nature of their own subject matter (Bunce 1995; Schmitter 2001, 75–76). Dubbing the application of Western theories and concepts on their cases as the “violence of abstraction” (Baber 2002, 747), many area specialists argue that such research strategies are bound to produce ahistorical, acontextual, and thus inaccurate or even incorrect findings.

Here, this argument is reversed. For, regardless of where a scholar's sympathy lies, the application of “culture-specific paradigms ... diminishes the possibility of studying ... comparatively or within broader theoretical frameworks” (Tamari 1994, 71). And because

13 See chapter 2 for a review of the extant literature on Hamas.

such culture-specific paradigms assume, *a priori*, that some set of peculiarities of the Palestinian context is of such importance that it accounts for the matter at hand, it is studies of this type that can lead to inferior and dubious, if not straight out erroneous, inferences. In short, to assume exceptionalism prior to empirical studies is to put the cart before the horse. Rather, it is through comparative analysis and by asking theoretically informed questions that both shared and unique characteristics of any society can be identified (Halliday 2003, 196–97).

Provided that the need for contextual sensitivity is appreciated, then, the utilization of established political scientific theories on new cases can yield new, interesting, and important knowledge, while also help to refine these same theories (Lijphart 1971; Lustick 1997). And finally, when countering some of the common points made with regard to conceptual and theoretical traveling and stretching, it has been argued that

the theoretical apparatuses brought to bear in political science ... are more elaborate, more precisely rendered, more ready for operationalization, and more able to refine themselves in response to new evidence than the bodies of theory available to previous generations of scholars (Lustick 2000).

Added to the empirical rationale outlined in the previous subsection, then, it is maintained that analyzing Hamas as a case of party institutionalization is theoretically promising. Moreover, it is deemed an analytical necessity to ground the analysis within applicable theoretical frameworks to contribute with improved knowledge. In sum, because Hamas appears as an organization pursuing a comprehensive political project through both institutional and non-institutional politics, the analytical approach promising to provide the most thorough explanations of its development and behavior—also capturing its characteristics as a movement organization employing violent tactics—is exactly to conceptualize it as a political party.

1.3 The analytical framework

As mentioned, this thesis will analyze Hamas as a case of party institutionalization. The processual element of the constructed analytical framework allows the analysis to capture the decisive ideological and organizational developments as Hamas evolved from a militant movement toward a political party, whereas the property element enables the analysis to estimate the degree to which Hamas had institutionalized at the various junctures. The process

of party institutionalization can be divided into different phases, which in turn can be explained and interpreted with reference to different theoretical frameworks. These different stages of Hamas's institutionalization toward a party will be analyzed with the assistance of concepts, stipulations, and hypotheses drawn from social movement theory and party theory. The property element, in turn, relies on the multi-dimensional framework offered by Randall and Svåsand (2002a) and measures the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized. The following sections will lay out and explain the various theoretical elements that together make up the analytical framework.

1.3.1 Party institutionalization in Palestine

To analyze Hamas as a case of party institutionalization ultimately means that Hamas is conceptualized as a *political party*. There is thus a need for a clear conceptualization of what constitutes a political party. As one of the largest subfields within comparative politics (Mair 1994, 1), research on political parties has produced a vast and analytically diverse body of literature, with contributions focusing on different aspects of political parties. Naturally, then, there are a number of different definitions of what a political party is. One famous and influential definition was offered by Sartori, who defined a political party as “any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office” (1976, 57). Writing later, Strøm offers a somewhat similar definition, stating that a party is “an organization that seeks benefits derived from public office by gaining representation in duly constituted elections” (1990, 574). More or less similar definitions abound, most of which share at least the focus on electoral participation as a defining feature of political parties. However, most definitions of political parties—and indeed most of the literature on parties itself—share another common feature, namely a heavy bias toward the European party experience (Gloppen and Rakner 2007; Gunther and Diamond 2003; Gunther, Linz, and Montero 2002).

This bias is of obvious relevance for the case at hand. In general, as it is the European experience that has been most influential in the party literature, most party theories assume a high degree of political stability and a certain degree of political predictability. These are qualities lacking in the unstable and conflict-prone political environment in which Hamas operates. Analyzing Hamas as a case of party institutionalization, relying in large parts on different party theories, then, risks conflating and reducing the theories' analytical value by stretching both intention and range (Collier and Mahon, Jr. 1993; Sartori 1970).

It should be noted, however, that as the population of political parties has grown considerably due to recent waves of democratization, there have been calls to widen the range and applicability of party theories. In particular, the alleged crucial role played by political parties for democracy and democratization processes (cf. Michels 1915; Randall and Svåsand 2002b, 5; Stokes 1999) has motivated a growing body of research on parties in democratizing or new democracies (e.g., Carbone 2007; Deonandan, Close, and Prevost 2008; Garcia-Rivero and Kotze 2007; Webb and White 2009b; de Zeeuw 2008a). The utilization of party theories to analyze Hamas will fit with the growing number of party studies aimed at explaining political parties outside the Western world and through this counter the bias in the party literature by refining the applied theories by testing them on a new case (Gloppen and Rakner 2007; Lijphart 1971).

Although participation in elections is an important feature of political parties and thus also a key reason to analyze Hamas as one, it is advanced here that a broader conceptualization is needed so as not to lose or discard important aspects in the analysis of Hamas. One such definition is given by Ware, who defines a political party as “an institution that (a) seeks influence in a state, often attempting to occupy positions in government, and (b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and so to some degree attempts to ‘aggregate interests’” (1995, 5). Here, it is recognized that neither elections nor office are necessary conditions for a political group to be a political party. Instead, the defining characteristics are those of *seeking to influence* the state in some way or another, and the pursuit of *more than one interest*.

Inspired by this definition, taking one analytical step back, and focusing on the conflictual nature of politics, the phrase “war is merely the continuation of politics by other means” can be reversed to capture the essence of political parties, seeing them as the “organizational weapon” of political interests (Close and Prevost 2008, 2). This is a more comprehensive conceptualization of parties, as it retains the conflictual aspects of politics, but avoids limiting the political conflict only to elections. And while not a strict definition, conceptualizing political parties as the organizational expression of political interests involved mainly in non-violent conflict is a comprehensive understanding of political parties deemed applicable for the case at hand.

1.3.2 The roots of Hamas—a social movement organization in Palestine

The importance of a party's origins for its institutionalization has been reiterated by numerous authors, maybe most forcefully by Panebianco (1988, 50–53).¹⁴ A natural point of departure for analyzing the institutionalization of Hamas is thus to investigate its origins. Different mechanisms for party roots and construction have been identified (see for example, van Biezen 2005; Panebianco 1988, 50–53), but a common assumption is that many parties grow out of more or less formalized movements founded to pursue or defend a certain political interest (Ware 1995, 22).¹⁵ From a theoretical point of view, the most basic understanding of such a collective expression of interests is to be found in the social movement literature. And empirically, Hamas traces its ideological and organizational heritage directly back to the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, a movement that fits within most social movement organization conceptualizations and is itself part of the broader Islamization movement.

Although there exists a multitude of analytical approaches to and definitions of social movements, the encompassing purview of social movement theory provides analytical frameworks and concepts that capture the most basic expressions of (more or less organized) political interests. And the synthesized definition offered by Diani strikes a fine balance between generality and specificity, stating that a “social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (1992, 13). One important strength of this definition is that it distinguishes between social movements and social movement *organizations* as different analytical units. This, in turn, allows for a more complete analysis of both the loosely organized network of the Muslim Brotherhood groups in the occupied territories, and how Hamas emerged as a social movement organization from this.

Here, then, Hamas will be approached as a social movement organization being part of a network of more informally organized groups, all “engaged in a cultural and political conflict [against colonialism, occupation and for Islamization], on the basis of a shared collective identity [Islam].” Furthermore, it should be noted that in contrast to the European bias found in the party literature discussed above, social movement theories have already been applied to

14 In the oft-quoted words of Duverger, “[j]ust as men bear all their lives the mark of their childhood, so parties are profoundly influenced by their origins” (1959, xxii).

15 This is not to say that all or indeed most social movements necessarily develop into parties. See fn. 17 below.

a wide range of cases, spread out both historically and geographically (Bayat 2007; Tilly and Wood 2009; Wiktorowicz 2004). As such, adopting a social movement approach to analyze the background, origins, and early years of Hamas is considered a promising approach.

A number of analytical concepts have been used to explain the emergence of various social movement organizations (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). Inspired by Robinson's (2004) convincing analysis of Hamas, changes in *political opportunity structures*, its utilization of *mobilizing structures*, and the more or less successful formulation and use of *framing techniques* will be used to examine and explain how Hamas as a social movement organization came to be established from the larger Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood movement. As used here and by Robinson (2004), *political opportunity structure* refers to "changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system" that "might help explain the emergence of a particular social movement," whereas *mobilizing structure* refers broadly to "those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 3). Finally, *framing techniques* or *framing processes* is defined as "the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 6).¹⁶

The phase following the establishment of Hamas as a social movement organization is its incremental transmutation toward a political party. The classic model explaining this process has been dubbed the Weber-Michels model (Zald and Ash 1966). It shares many characteristics with the party institutionalization literature, as it assumes that a social "movement organization will become more conservative and that its goals will be displaced in favor of organizational maintenance" (Zald and Ash 1966, 327), i.e., that the movement will become an end in itself. Introducing a somewhat more nuanced prediction, Zald and Ash suggest that the process by which a social movement organization becomes established as a political party does not mean that it evolves "from goals *to* structure" but rather with regard to both "goals *and* structure" (1966, 340). In current social movement literature, this is how the transmutation from social movement organization to political party is understood: as the formalization of its internal structures *and* the moderation of its goals (Tarrow 2011, 212–13).¹⁷

16 Consult McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996, 1–20) for an introduction and discussion of these concepts.

17 Social movement organizations do not necessarily develop into political parties. Indeed, and as discussed

Importantly, the Islamist movement out of which Hamas emerged, and of which it is still a part, pursues a totalitarian goal reminiscent of the historic socialist movement. More specifically, Hamas's stated goals of re-Islamization and liberation of Palestine are of the same subversive and revolutionary nature found in the socialist movements of 19th century Europe, and its structure resembles the hierarchical and disciplined organization of the labor movement (Michels 1915, 333).¹⁸ What is currently labeled *old* social movements is thus considered a better fit with the social movement organization that was Hamas than the more narrowly defined claims put forward by the so-called *new* social movements.¹⁹ Based on this observation, it is expected that the European experience of socialist movements developing into social democratic political parties can be informative for the analysis of Hamas's transmutation from movement organization toward party.

Przeworski and Sprague convincingly argue that "there is a permanent tension between the narrower interests of unions and the broader interests represented by parties," as the "class base of unions is confined to certain groups of people [whereas] political parties which organize workers can also mobilize people who cannot be members of unions" (1986, 19). This argument illuminates an important difference between social movement organizations and political parties; the former can remain content with representing an exclusive group, pursuing a narrowly defined issue, or defending a special interest, whereas the relevance of a political party depends on articulating and taking a position on all—or at least most—policy areas that mobilize voters. Somewhat crudely, it can be argued that political parties can be expected to—at least as a tendency—espouse less ideological rigidity than social movement organizations. Hence, it is hypothesized that Hamas over time would adopt less absolutist and narrow goals to the benefit of more centrist goals in order to widen its potential electoral base and thus increase its political relevance.

by Della and Diani, "few of them actually survive for a significant time spell" (2006, 151). And even in the framework employed here, *institutionalization* into a political party is only one of four trajectories of social movement organizations identified by Kriesi, with the other three being (1) *commercialization*, i.e., "the transformation in the direction of a service organization," (2) *involution*, in which the movement organization gives primacy to its social incentives and turns into a self-help group, voluntary organization, or a club, and (3), *radicalization*, "the path to reinvigorated mobilization" (1996, 156–57; these paths are also discussed in Tarrow 2011, 212–14).

- 18 Close and Prevos argue that "[f]lexibility, of course, is far more characteristic of new social movements—for example, second- and third-wave feminism, antiglobalization, and the environmental movement—than of old social movements, for example labour" (fn. 9, 2008, 16).
- 19 Writing on the difference between "old" and new social movements (NSM), Pichardo argues that the latter "[r]ather than focusing on economic redistribution (as do working-class movements), NSMs emphasize quality of life and life-style concerns. Thus, NSMs question the wealth-oriented materialistic goals of industrial societies" (1997, 414).

Organizationally speaking, the difference between political parties and social movement organizations goes in the opposite direction. Whereas movements “generally have flexible structures [and] encourage members to participate broadly and allow substantial innovation,” members of a political party are expected to be disciplined and toe the party line when asked to (Close and Prevost 2008, 9). As mentioned above, this is understood as the process of routinization of social movement organizations. As will become clear in the next section, this can be construed as the organization-building phase in the institutionalization process toward a stabilized political party.

It should be noted, however, that movements employing militant means such as Hamas are expected to have far greater organizational cohesion and ideological rigidity from the outset. Militant operations require vertical command structures and disciplined and dedicated members. Because of this, the transmutation from *liberation* movement toward party is not necessarily marked by increased routinization and greater ideological flexibility; to succeed as a political party and attract both voters and new members the organizational structure might instead have to become more inclusive, and the ideology more flexible and moderate (Close and Prevost 2008; de Zeeuw 2008b).

With reference to the adopted conceptualization of *political party*, it is pertinent to reiterate that there is no obvious *a priori* point in time at which Hamas could be expected to complete its transmutation from a movement organization into a political party. Rather, it is the goal of the analyses to investigate if or when Hamas indeed finished this process. Intuitively, it is expected that Hamas’s development from a movement organization toward political party will overlap with the process of party institutionalization. For, given the violent and unpredictable nature of politics in occupied Palestine, it seems unlikely that Hamas would abruptly leave behind its role as either a liberation movement or a grassroots-oriented religious movement for an uncertain fate as a political party competing for power in a non-state entity still occupied by Israel. As such, throughout Hamas’s transmutation process the difference between movement organizations and political parties can be construed as a question of priority or balance between their respective *modi operandi*. These points should be borne in mind in the next section, which lays out the analytical framework for examining the process and degree by which Hamas institutionalized as a political party.

1.3.3 The institutionalization of Hamas as a political party

As argued, party institutionalization should be understood both as a process and a property variable. Consequently, a framework suitable to analyze Hamas's institutionalization into a political party must deal both with *how* it institutionalized and the *degree* to which it has institutionalized. These two aspects of institutionalization will be dealt with separately in the following sections.

The process of institutionalization

Famously defined by Huntington, institutionalization is “the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability” (1968, 12), or, in the words of Panebianco, it is what takes place when an “organization slowly loses its character as a tool [and instead] becomes valuable in and of itself” and when “its goals become inseparable and indistinguishable from it” (1988, 53). In broad terms, the process of institutionalization can be traced from the party's establishment to its “relevance” (Sartori 1976), and it can further be sequenced in the following three main phases (Harmel and Svåsand 1993; Panebianco 1988, 20):

First, the party must develop a message and establish its *identification*, and through this define and carve out its ideological “hunting domain.” During this phase, the party can be seen as a tool or a means toward some ideological end. Next, to be capable of reaching its goal, the party labors to increase its *organizational* capacity. This is done by building its organization through the establishment of local branches, and by bureaucratizing and professionalizing its operations. And finally, as it becomes increasingly bureaucratized and professionalized, the party *stabilizes*, at which time it is expected to have gone from being a means toward some political end to becoming an end in itself. These three phases, labeled the identification, organization, and stabilization phase, will guide the analysis of Hamas's process of institutionalization.²⁰

The process of institutionalization, however, does not play out in the same way for all parties. Rather, the mechanism through which the party came to be in the first place, its genetic makeup as it were, has consequences for both its process and degree of institutionalization. From Panebianco's model outlining factors affecting party genetics, Hamas seems to most closely resemble an *externally legitimated* party established through combined *territorial*

²⁰ As Harmel and Svåsand note, many parties of course also go through a fourth phase, namely that of decline (1993, 87, fn. 16), alternatively labeled de-institutionalization (Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 15).

diffusion and penetration (1988, 51–53).²¹

To be externally legitimated means that a party is created or sponsored by some external institution, a mechanism consistent with the movement-to-party thesis. Being the creation of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas can thus be said to have been externally legitimated. And to be the political arm of some external sponsor has consequences for the institutionalization process. For one, the presence of an external sponsor can lead to double organizational loyalties and thereby undermine the authority of the party leadership to the benefit of the sponsoring institution's leadership. This makes it more difficult for the party leadership to establish its identity and articulate its goals and strategy freely, as the sponsoring institution is expected to directly or indirectly interfere—at least if the goals and strategy wanted by the party diverge from those of the sponsoring institution.

Second, to be externally legitimated also has potentially negative consequences for organization-building. The sponsor is expected to wield considerable influence over the party organization for two reasons. For one, as the leadership at least initially draws its legitimacy from this sponsoring institution, the sponsor has significant leverage regarding the makeup of the leadership. One example would be where the sponsor favors one leadership coalition over another, presumably the more loyal one. And two, the development of the party into an autonomous organization is impeded as the sponsoring institution is loath to see its political arm emancipated. In sum, being externally legitimated poses some ideological, strategic, and organizational challenges for the party's institutionalization.

At the same time, it is argued here that stemming from a social movement also has its benefits in terms of institutionalization. Although the problems for organizational development associated with being the creation of a sponsoring institution still have some relevance for Hamas, being the organizational offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood meant that it arrived with an established ideology and a ready-made constituency (Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 19). And based on the experience from Islamic parties elsewhere in the developing world, its roots in a social movement bodes well for Hamas's institutionalization (Randall 2007, 645). So, while the presence of an external sponsor might have worked to curb the institutionalization of Hamas in some ways, the strong roots of the Muslim Brotherhood canceled out this effect to a certain extent.

21 Panebianco distinguishes between three factors affecting a party's genetics: it can be created through territorial diffusion or penetration, it can be externally or internally legitimated, and its initial leadership can qualify as being a case of personal charisma in the Weberian sense (1988, 65–67).

As for the territorial aspect of Hamas's genetics, it spread through a combination of diffusion and penetration. A party is said to be established through diffusion when it emerged at the periphery and only over time and through alliance building became a national organization. Conversely, a party founded at the center and then expanding to the periphery to establish a national presence is said to be created through territorial penetration. The former is expected to lead to a more turbulent and uncertain process toward institutionalization, as competing claims of leadership and local interests take on a more salient role. The latter precipitates a cohesive and strong central leadership, which in turn makes for a smoother organization-building phase.

Although Hamas was established on the Gaza Strip and then spread to the West Bank, it was not a clear-cut case of territorial penetration. Rather, Hamas relied on the existing organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood on the West Bank. So, while the organizational center of gravity undoubtedly was in Gaza at the time of its establishment, the process by which Hamas spread out through the occupied territories relied on an already existing structure, meaning that the process was a combination of penetration and diffusion. Rather than a smooth organization-building phase, some of the turbulence associated with territorial diffusion is expected to have affected the organization-building of Hamas.

In brief, the process of Hamas's institutionalization toward a political party will be analyzed according to three phases: identification, organization, and stability. Furthermore, the emphasis on the consequences of Hamas's genetic makeup calls for an investigation into how it was legitimated and how it built its early organization. With regard to this latter point, it is pertinent to note that both Hamas's ideological heritage from the Muslim Brotherhood and its history as an armed liberation movement are hypothesized to counteract the expected ideological moderation associated with the transmutation from movement to party and the subsequent institutionalization process.²² Also, certain characteristics of the political environment in occupied Palestine undermine this theoretically expected moderation. In particular, the unresolved nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict intuitively means that it would be tantamount to political suicide for any Palestinian faction—including Hamas—to abandon its goals of Palestinian liberation. It is therefore recognized that even if the need for contextual sensitivity is heeded when traveling to occupied Palestine with the selected

22 See Gunther and Diamond (2003) for a brief discussion regarding the expected ideological rigidity associated with religious parties, and Close and Prevost (2008) and de Zeeuw (2008b) for details of the effects of militancy on ideological development.

theories, the ongoing occupation of Palestine limits their applicability somewhat and they can thus not be expected to exhaustively explain the subject matter.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the processual elements of the analytical framework suggested above are deemed suitable to ground the analysis theoretically, thereby producing improved knowledge regarding the development of Hamas. Throughout the analysis of Hamas’s transmutation from movement toward party and institutionalization process, its degree of institutionalization will be measured at critical junctures, aided by the framework discussed in the next subsection.

Institutionalization as a property variable

The framework offered by Randall and Svåsand (2002a) will be taken as a point of departure for analyzing and measuring the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized at various points in its development. Although theories on institutionalization abound (see Huntington 1968; Janda 1980; Levitsky 1998; Panebianco 1988), Randall and Svåsand’s framework convincingly builds upon and refines previous theories, and is explicitly developed to allow for the analysis of parties in the developing world. In addition, it has already been operationalized and applied on empirical cases (Basedau and Stroh 2008; de Zeeuw 2009).²³ It is therefore considered the most well-developed and suitable framework for the case at hand.

In brief, Randall and Svåsand argue that a more complete measurement of institutionalization than previously available is made possible by distinguishing between a party’s *structural* and *attitudinal* qualities in its *internal* and *external* dimensions. Their conceptualization of institutionalization is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions of party institutionalization

	Internal	External
Structural	Systemness	Decisional autonomy
Attitudinal	Value infusion	Reification

Beginning in the top left corner with their internal-structural element of institutionalization, Randall and Svåsand define *systemness* as “the increasing scope, density and regularity of the interactions that constitute the party structure,” adding that this regularity “implies ...

²³ See the next section for details regarding the selected criteria and associated indicators used to assess the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized.

routinization, and the development of prevalent conventions guiding behaviour” (2002a, 13). As a party’s systemness increases, so does its degree of institutionalization. This definition of systemness is inspired by Panebianco, although its somewhat broadened scope captures other forms of routinization than the explicitly formal ones, e.g., routinization of informal procedures.

On the external-structural dimension, Randall and Svåsand identify an important conceptual disagreement in the literature. Both Huntington (1968, 20) and Panebianco (1988, 55) define and use autonomy in a similar way, arguing that parties are more institutionalized the more independent they are from their environment. However, as argued by Janda, “a party can be highly institutionalized and yet lack independence of other groups ... as the Labour Party in Great Britain” (1980, 19). Randall and Svåsand also point to Levitsky’s analysis of the Justicialist Party in Argentina, in which he argues that the close (but informal) ties between the trade union movement and the party in fact increased the latter’s degree of institutionalization (1998, 86).²⁴

Randall and Svåsand proceed to suggest *decisional autonomy* as an alternative to circumvent the conceptual disagreement and confusion regarding the term. This is deemed as a more useful indicator of party institutionalization as it says something specific about the nature of the relationship between a party and other organizations, allowing parties to have strong ties to external organizations or other nonpolitical actors, while retaining its decisional discretion (2002a, 14). This element relates directly to the question of internal or external legitimation, as already discussed. Given Hamas’s roots in the Muslim Brotherhood and the alleged influence of its international sponsors, the question of decisional autonomy is of particular importance.

Value infusion is defined as “the extent to which party actors and supporters ... acquire an identification with and commitment to the party which transcend more instrumental or self-interested incentives for involvement” (2002a, 13). As the party takes on a value in and for itself, it stops being just a means to an end for its members; it becomes a valued end in itself (Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 13). In essence, the more infused with value a party is, the more institutionalized it is.

24 Interestingly, Levitsky uses this close link between the Justicialist Party and the trade union movement as an example of *informal routinization*, which Randall and Svåsand avoid incorporating explicitly into their framework.

The last concept in Randall and Svåsand's framework is the attitudinal-external element, *reification*, defined as "the extent to which the party's existence is established in the public imagination ... including other parties" (2002a, 14).²⁵ In short, the more reified a party is, the more institutionalized it is.

Adaptability has been a traditional dimension in conceptualizations of institutionalization. Randall and Svåsand, however, leave it out as a measurement, as "it seems more appropriate to regard it as a likely but not inevitable consequence of institutionalization, leaving its exact relationship with institutionalization in any given case as a matter of empirical investigation" (2002a, 15). Depending on which dimension a party has institutionalized, a high level of institutionalization might even impede its capability to adapt to environmental challenges and shocks. For, as Panebianco argues,

a "strong" institution can be more fragile than a "weak" one [because w]hen an organization's systemness level is high ... a crisis affecting one of its parts is destined to make itself quickly felt by all its other parts. When its level is low, the relative autonomy of the different parts allows for an easier isolation of the crisis effects (1988, 57–8).²⁶

More specifically, he argues that

an inverse relation exists between the party's degree of institutionalization and its sub-groups' degree of organization, for *the more institutionalized the party, the less organized its internal groups*. Correlatively, *the less institutionalized the party, the more organized are its internal groups* (1988, 60).

This relationship between degree of institutionalization and coherence of a party's internal groups is presented in Figure 1, employing Sartori's terminology for more (*factions*) or less (*tendencies*) organized sub-groups (1976, 66–67).

25 Note that Harmel and Svåsand introduced a similar element in their theory on party development phases. According to their theory, a party must, in its third and final phase of development, "develop [a] reputation for credibility and dependability [and] develop ... relations with other parties" (1993, 75).

26 As an example of this counterintuitive weakness of highly institutionalized parties, Svåsand points to the Venezuelan experience, in which the "two main parties appeared to be well institutionalized" but nevertheless collapsed (2013, 16–17).

Figure 1: Organizational strength of party sub-groups



(Source: Panebianco 1988, 61).

While an important observation in its own right, it also underlines the high level of complexity in the institutionalization concept. For, although *institution* connotes permanence and survival, this means—somewhat counterintuitively—that being highly institutionalized is no guarantee for survival. As Hamas has faced environmental shocks and challenges of considerable force, this implies that its subunits are closer to being factions than tendencies, and in turn that the degree of *systemness* throughout considerable portions of its existence might have been rather low.

1.3.4 Tracing the process and measuring the degree of institutionalization

By combining the three discussed theoretical components—the movement-to-party thesis, the process of party institutionalization, and institutionalization as a property variable—a coherent analytical framework suited for examining the institutionalization of Hamas is constructed. The framework is divided into two basic elements, namely that of *process* and *property*. The processual or sequential element fuses social movement theory and institutionalization as a process, whereas the property element is focused on measuring the degree of institutionalization.

The processual element allows for a theoretically founded analysis of Hamas from its modest beginnings as a militant movement, its transmutation toward a political party, and its institutionalization into an increasingly stabilized political party. Based on the sequencing of the two theoretical components, the process is divided into five phases: It begins by tracing Hamas from its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood movement to its establishment as a social movement organization; then the focus shifts to Hamas's transmutation from a social movement organization to a political party; and finally comes the three phases of institutionalization as a process—i.e., identification, organization, and stabilization. Recall

that there are no clear-cut thresholds between these phases, but rather that both the transmutation from movement organization toward political party and the institutionalization process are expected to be incremental and overlapping. In combination with the need for contextual sensitivity, the processual element of the analysis will therefore be organized according to historical phases rather than to the theorized steps.

The property element enables the analysis to investigate the degree to which Hamas institutionalized throughout these phases. Importantly, there are no standardized frameworks to measure the degree of institutionalization. Furthermore, as the environment in which Hamas emerged and matured escapes clear classification and in any event is a far cry from “ordinary politics,” it would be of limited analytical value to directly adopt existing frameworks developed to measure the degree of party institutionalization in more stable political systems.²⁷ In short, the volatility and violence characterizing the political environment in occupied Palestine render some of the criteria usually employed to measure the degree of party institutionalization unsuitable for the case at hand, and for the same reasons, Hamas can not be expected to institutionalize to the same degree as parties operating under more conventional circumstances.²⁸

By carefully selecting criteria and associated indicators deemed appropriate given the environmental conditions in occupied Palestine, it is nevertheless possible to estimate the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized at various historical junctures. Following previous studies of party institutionalization employing Randall and Svåsand’s framework, such as de Zeeuw (2009), Hamas’s changing degree of institutionalization from one period to the next will be estimated on a rough ordinal scale from *low*, via *medium*, to *high*. This approach is adopted to highlight in a clear and consistent manner the changes in Hamas’s degree of institutionalization between the historical periods covered.²⁹

It would have been preferable to offer a more precise and nuanced scoring of Hamas’s degree of institutionalization. However, the data needed for achieving this was neither available in

27 Basedau and Stroh (2008) suggest a number of criteria to measure party institutionalization that are suitable for comparison. However, adopting their framework wholesale would sacrifice the contextual sensitivity needed to properly measure the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized. Note, however, that certain criteria listed below are taken from or inspired by the framework developed by Basedau and Stroh, complemented with suitable criteria partly based on those employed in other studies of party institutionalization, including de Zeeuw (2009), Levitsky (1998), Dix (1992), and Janda (1980).

28 For example, it would be a tall order for a political organization operating under the dire conditions of occupation to routinize organizationally to an extent comparable to parties in stable political systems.

29 Because of this, no claims for external comparability of these scores are made.

the extant literature nor obtainable as primary data—mainly due to the Israeli occupation and the consequent secrecy surrounding certain aspects of Hamas.³⁰ And in lieu of higher quality data, it was also unfeasible to define exactly what would qualify for an increase or decrease between the ordinal levels. To compensate for this lack of explicit coding rules, care was taken to be as transparent as possible in the inductive assessments of Hamas's degree of institutionalization. As a result of the above, the scoring is admittedly rather rough and somewhat subjective. Nevertheless, the scores do provide a clear picture of the changing degree to which Hamas had institutionalized in the various periods of analysis.

In essence, Hamas's level of institutionalization will be measured by relying on the four elements of institutionalization suggested by Randall and Svåsand (2002a), i.e., *systemness*, *value infusion*, *decisional autonomy*, and *reification*. Below, the selected criteria and associated indicators for each of the four elements are laid out in some detail. For a summarized version, see Table 10 on page 343, Appendix D.

The criteria

Criteria used to assess Hamas's level of systemness in each period include the degree to which it had routinized—both formally and informally—leadership alternation, decision-making, and recruitment and advancement procedures. Although details regarding Hamas's internal workings and structure are scarce, crucial aspects were nevertheless uncovered, both in interviews with current and former Hamas members and by consulting certain secondary sources.³¹ Based on this information, it is possible to infer with some certainty how routinized Hamas was at various points. Moreover, by observing the behavior of Hamas, deviations from these routines can be identified, which in turn would indicate lack of systemness.

Organizational coherence is also deemed a suitable indicator of Hamas's systemness. Operationalized as factionalism, observed occurrences of either horizontal or vertical power struggles between identifiable sub-groups will be taken to indicate a lack of systemness. In addition, how closely bylaws are followed and the degree of material self-sufficiency are regularly used as criteria of systemness. However, as Hamas refuse to disclose both its bylaws and financial details—ostensibly for reasons of security—it is difficult to rely on these criteria

30 Consult chapter 2, section 2.2, pp. 56ff. for discussions regarding the consequences that the Israeli occupation has for the quality of the data used in the thesis.

31 In particular, Mishal and Sela (2000), Hroub (2000, 2006b), Tamimi (2007), Gunning (2008), Caridi (2010), and Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010) provide credible details regarding the inner workings and organizational structure of Hamas. For details regarding the interviewees, see chapter 2, section 2.2.1, pp. 56ff.

to measure Hamas's level of systemness. Yet, based on secondary sources, it is possible to at least indicate the degree to which Hamas was materially self-sufficient at various junctures.

Hamas's level of value infusion will be measured by its degree of organizational cohesion, i.e., how disciplined its members remain in the face of unpopular decisions taken by the leadership. More specifically, if the Hamas leadership fundamentally alters its stated goals or changes its preferred strategy without suffering defections or facing public opposition from its rank-and-file, it is arguably infused with value. Conversely, members defecting in protest, or rank-and-file vocally opposing changes in ideology or strategy, are taken to indicate a low degree of value infusion. Note, however, that given Hamas's organizational and ideological heritage, there are probably limits as to how infused with value it can become; simply put, as Hamas was founded as a *religious liberation* movement, it can neither stray too far from Islam nor abandon its goals of liberation without risking organizational splits and possibly its own demise.³²

Decisional autonomy will be measured through investigations of the nature and number of relationships between Hamas and external sponsors. More specifically, if it can be demonstrated that Hamas depends on the sponsorship of one particular donor for its survival, there is obviously a risk that this patron can exercise undue influence on Hamas and thus impede on its decisional autonomy. Because of this, it is assumed that having a larger array of external sponsors, Hamas will be less dependent on any one of them, which in turn is taken to indicate a higher degree of decisional autonomy. In addition, the nature of Hamas's relationship with civil society organization can be used to evaluate its degree of decisional autonomy.³³

Finally, the degree to which popular support for Hamas has fluctuated will be used to estimate its level of reification. Specifically, trends in available polling data will indicate whether Hamas became more or less reified throughout the periods examined. Added to this, the question of identifiability, i.e., if Hamas successfully monopolized important symbolic values and whether it was recognized as a serious contender by both its supporters and detractors,

32 Another criterion used to measure value infusion relates to whether a party belongs to a broader social movement. However, as this question can be answered in the positive at the outset—after all, Hamas was established by the Brotherhood movement—this criterion will not be used to trace its changing degree of value infusion.

33 While this criterion will be used intermittently in the coming analyses, it should be noted that, despite some overlap in personnel, Hamas's relationship with civil society organizations in occupied Palestine have been thoroughly studied by various authors, most of whom find that there is no obvious or official ties, and no examples of meddling in either direction (cf. Benthall 2010; Hoigilt 2010; Kjøstvedt 2011; Roy 2011; see Levitt 2006 for a different view).

will be used to suggest the degree to which it had become reified in the public imagination.

In sum, these criteria and associated indicators constitute the main independent variables used to track the degree to which Hamas has institutionalized throughout the analyses; Hamas's degree of institutionalization as estimated at the end of the first *intifada* will form the baseline for the longitudinal comparison, and each subsequent analytical chapter will conclude with a section assessing and detailing Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the respective period under scrutiny.

1.4 Structure of thesis

Before delving into the analysis itself, a number of methodological questions must be tackled. The next chapter will therefore present and discuss the most crucial methodological challenges arising when analyzing Hamas through established political science theories. First, the chapter covers some basic methodological issues related to studying a controversial topic such as Hamas. Then, a discussion of case study methods follows, dealing in particular with the applicability of qualitative case study methods to achieve the necessary context and depth for understanding Hamas. Next follows a discussion of the quality of the data sources used in the analyses. This subsection includes a short account of the fieldwork carried out for the thesis, a brief evaluation of the extant literature, and some reflections around the quality of the quantitative data used.

Chapter 3 is also dedicated to covering some necessary ground before committing to the analysis, namely that of historical background and context. In short, the chapter will focus on three topics deemed key to appreciating the historical context and the conditions under which Hamas operates. First, it is necessary to obtain a grasp of the history of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, both because this is an omnipresent factor in all that is taking place within the occupied territories, and more specifically to contextualize the environment in which Hamas emerged and developed; second, a general overview of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is needed, as this movement dominated Palestinian politics from the 1960s onward and naturally has influenced Hamas; and third, a concise introduction to the Muslim Brotherhood is needed to allow for an analytical treatment of the ideological and organizational background of Hamas. In brief, chapter 3 purports to lay the necessary contextual and historical groundwork for a theoretically grounded analysis of Hamas and its history from 1987 onward by providing a short account of its ideological roots and

organizational ancestors.

With the context in place, chapter 4 will lay out and discuss the emergence and first years of Hamas, from its establishment during the first *intifada* to the signing of the Oslo Accords (1987 to 1993). This period in Hamas's history has been dealt with expertly and extensively in the existing literature (see e.g., Abu-Amr 1993; Chehab 2007; Filiu 2012; Gunning 2008), and in particular Robinson's (2004) analysis of Hamas as a case of social movement organization will be informative for the first section of this chapter. The analysis then turns to an investigation into the early development of Hamas with reference to its organizational evolution (Meyer 2004; Panebianco 1988; Porta and Diani 2006, 153–54).

Crucially, the years of the first *intifada* were challenging for the incipient organization, and Hamas's survival was by no means guaranteed. However, as will be demonstrated in chapter 4, Hamas did survive the persecution it suffered during the *intifada*, and had by 1993 established itself as a viable, if organizationally weak, alternative to the PLO, with a clear identity as *the* religiously motivated Palestinian liberation organization.

In terms of Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the first *intifada*, its undisputed identity as the main Islamist liberation movement suggests that it was highly reified in the public imagination from the outset. However, Hamas was still organizationally underdeveloped and dependent on its founding leaders at the end of the first *intifada*, indicating a rather low degree of systemness. Furthermore, its rank-and-file still perceived it as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, meaning that it was not infused with value to any noticeable extent. And although Hamas was free to make its own decisions without undue interference, its heavy reliance on the Jordanian Brotherhood during these first years effectively and markedly limited its decisional autonomy.

Chapter 5 will cover Hamas's development throughout the so-called "Oslo years" (1994 to 1999). The defining characteristics of this period were the establishment and growth of the PA and the return of Yasser Arafat and the PLO to the occupied territories. The chapter will therefore devote considerable attention to how Hamas coped with these developments. In particular, the introduction of formalized politics in the guise of the PA proto-state fundamentally altered the operational logic of all Palestinian factions, prompting many of them to begin transmuting from militant liberation movements to political parties. To explain this process with reference to Hamas, the analysis will rely in part on analytical frameworks specifically constructed to trace the development of militant movements into political parties

(Close and Prevost 2008; de Zeeuw 2008b) and in part on an analytical framework aimed at accounting for how the institutional makeup of states affects the organization and behavior of political parties (Samuels and Shugart 2010).

While the Oslo years saw Hamas take its first steps both ideologically and organizationally on its transmutation from movement toward party, its dual legacy as a conventional religious social movement and a militant revolutionary movement pulled its development in contradictory directions. Furthermore, the increasingly effective persecution of Hamas undermined its organization-building efforts. In sum, by boycotting the 1996 PLC elections, and failing both to develop its organization and to unite behind a consistent ideological message, it seems as if the balance between its identity as a movement and party tilted in favor of the former, thus prompting the conclusion that Hamas remained more of a movement than a political party at the end of the 1990s.

Hamas had increased its overall level of institutionalization somewhat by the end of the Oslo years as compared to the previous period. As mentioned, Hamas was already highly reified by the end of the first *intifada*. However, it was still dependent on its sponsors, and its decisional autonomy thus remained unchanged. Furthermore, the persecution Hamas suffered throughout this period forced it to rely on informal routines and improvisation simply to survive. However, by surviving as a united organization despite the ordeals of the 1990s suggests a slight increase in informal routinization and thus systemness. Finally, as both Hamas's new and old members still saw it as a means toward an end, it did not noticeably increase its level of value infusion.

With the outbreak of the second *intifada* and the “death of Oslo process” in September 2000, Palestinian politics—and by implication Hamas—entered a new violent and chaotic phase. Chapter 6 is dedicated to detailing Hamas's development in this six year period (2000 to 2006), which, despite being volatile, saw Hamas evolve further as a political organization. Organizational expansion coupled with rising popularity elevated Hamas's political position and confidence, culminating in its decision to contest the 2006 PLC elections. The analysis will therefore concentrate on Hamas's organization-building efforts and its strategic deliberations.

Although the years of the second *intifada* also saw Hamas develop ideologically and organizationally in the direction of a political party, crucially indicated by its decision to contest the 2006 PLC elections, it proved unprepared to complete its transmutation from

movement to party; instead of willingly assume office, Hamas expressed reservations and reluctance to fulfill its role as a responsible and mature political party when it unexpectedly found itself the winner of the elections. As such, it is argued that Hamas stopped short of completing its transmutation from movement to party by the end of the period in question, remaining too influenced by the operational logic of movements to be considered a *bona fide* political party.

However, Hamas's level of institutionalization increased slightly from the Oslo years to the end of the second *intifada*. The persecution Hamas suffered throughout the uprising had made it all but impossible to improve its organizational state, leaving its level of systemness unchanged. Added to this, Hamas's vulnerable position made it sensitive to the priorities of its donors, meaning that its level of decisional autonomy also was as it had been. Yet, Hamas did increase its level of value infusion noticeably, indicated by the fact that it adopted a more pragmatic and moderate ideology without seeing members defect. Finally, with regard to reification, Hamas's rise in the polls and eventual victory in the 2006 PLC elections is taken as proof that it remained highly reified and had cemented its position as one of the main contenders for political power in the occupied territories.

The penultimate chapter will cover Hamas's first five years in government, from its electoral victory in 2006 until the Arab Spring spread to occupied Palestine in 2011. As running in elections is probably *the* defining characteristic of political parties, and occupying office and governing is one of the prime functions ascribed to parties, the development of Hamas throughout these years will be analyzed by relying mainly on party theories dealing with first-time governing parties (Deschouwer 2008a). By assuming office, Hamas crossed a crucial threshold in its development as a political party; governing is an end-point in the evolution of a political party, as it ostensibly means that the it finally has obtained the power to implement its political program.

However, although a host of environmental challenges hampered Hamas's efforts to demonstrate its capabilities in government, most saliently the international boycott that eventually toppled the Palestinian unity government, Hamas itself also proved unprepared and insufficiently developed to fulfill its role as party-in-government. In short, its legacy as a religious liberation movement remained too crucial a marker of its organizational identity, and continued to influence its strategic, ideological, and organizational development. This state of affairs led to a situation in which the demarcation lines between the Hamas organization,

Hamas in government, and the statelet of Gaza, were blurred at best, and nonexistent at worst. Nonetheless, after five years in office, Hamas's overall level of institutionalization had increased somewhat as compared to 2006, although its level of systemness remained largely unchanged. In particular, its erratic behavior while in office suggests that its decision-making procedures and command structures were insufficiently routinized to meet the demands of governing. Moreover, by not implementing the promised Islamist order while in government, and by brokering ceasefires with Israel instead of resisting the occupation, Hamas provoked a number of its members to defect. However, the fact that so many members remained loyal, despite Hamas's broken promises, suggests that it was more or less similarly infused with value as in the previous period. The organizational and financial resources made available to Hamas as the sole authority in Gaza decreased its reliance on external sponsors, and conversely undermined any influence such actors might have had—in effect increasing its decisional autonomy.³⁴ Finally, as the second most powerful political faction in occupied Palestine and the sole authority in the Gaza Strip, Hamas remained reified to a high degree.

The concluding chapter will recapitulate the analyses and their results. In short, the overarching finding is that Hamas's development from its establishment as a militia movement in 1987 to governing body in 2011 closely followed the trajectory hypothesized by the employed theories. Hamas had not completed the transmutation process from movement to party by the end of the analysis, however. Instead, it reached an awkward and somewhat institutionalized—and thus seemingly sustainable—equilibrium between that of a liberation movement, a governing party, and a party-statelet. Yet, this finding does not detract from the overall theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis; the theories aided the analyses in providing a de-exoticized account of Hamas's development, added nuance to the extant knowledge, and demonstrated that the theories employed can yield results when applied outside their intended scope.

The chapter ends with a section briefly outlining the developments in occupied Palestine since 2011, looking at how Hamas handled the Arab Spring and the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in 2014, with a specific view on how the findings of the thesis hold up. Although a fully fledged analysis of Hamas's continued development and institutionalization in the years since 2011 would have been preferable, this was not feasible for want of reliable sources. And as will be discussed in brief, the Arab Spring has not only affected domestic Palestinian politics and thus

³⁴ Added to this, the number of donors increased, as various Arab regimes stepped in to compensate for the shortfall of aid following the international boycott of the Hamas government.

Hamas, but fundamentally recast the regional power balance, rendering it difficult to analyze and infer with any certainty the consequences for the further development of Hamas. However, and notwithstanding the uncertainty surrounding Hamas's immediate future, it is maintained that through the course of its institutional trajectory, Hamas has laid a strong foundation to remain a key political player for years to come, both in domestic Palestinian politics and as part of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Chapter 2: Researching Hamas—methods, sources, and data

This chapter presents and discusses what are considered the most crucial methodological challenges facing an analysis using established political science theories to investigate a controversial topic such as Hamas. The two main methodological issues identified for discussion are (1) the choice of method to employ and (2) the quality of the sources consulted and the data utilized.

The first section deals with the choice of method, initially arguing for the importance of a sound and consciously chosen methodological grounding to avoid the widespread tendency to essentialize Palestinian politics, which can lead to weak or even erroneous conclusions. A discussion of case study methods follows, dealing in particular with the applicability of comparative case study methods for the case at hand, and including a short subsection on theoretical comparisons. Some general issues regarding within-case comparisons are then covered, followed by a brief outline of the spatial aspects of the coming analyses, and then an outline of the within-case, temporal comparative method.

The second section covers the challenges associated with the quality of the sources consulted and the data used in the analyses. The fact that Palestine remains occupied undermines the reliability and validity of both the public opinion polls and the primary data collected through fieldwork, as the occupation produces a volatile and unpredictable situation in which respondents—both in in-depth interviews and in surveys—are more likely to distort their responses for fear of reprisals. To mitigate these challenges, caution was exercised in the analysis of the interview material, whereas the quantitative data only will be used to indicate changes in Palestinian public opinion.

Furthermore, given the politicized nature of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the extant literature tends to suffer from culturalist biases of both the pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian type. At the same time, this politicization means that the conflict has for long attracted a disproportionate level of attention from scholars, the media, and the public at large. This, in turn, has led to the publication of innumerable books, reports, articles, and analyses covering both historical and current events in detail, constituting a rich source of data for this thesis. And by meticulously perusing and evaluating the reliability of these written sources, those not weeded out are hoped to be of sufficiently high quality.

2.1 Comparative case studies as a remedy to ideological bias

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the overarching aim of this thesis is to contribute with an updated and improved understanding of Hamas's development from its establishment as the armed wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1987 to a governing party in 2007. To achieve this, Hamas will be analyzed via a selection of meso-level theories drawn from the literature on social movement organizations and political parties. For one, the analytical frameworks provided by these theories offer well-grounded hypotheses and stipulations regarding the emergence and development of political organizations such as Hamas, and the theoretically guided analyses thus promise to contribute improved knowledge of the development and institutionalization of Hamas into a political party. It is further argued that such theoretically grounded analyses will aid in avoiding the essentializing approaches often tainting studies of political phenomena in the Arab world (R. Khalidi 1995; Said 1978), including those dealing with the "question of Palestine" (Halliday 1993; Lentin 2008b; Said and Hitchens 2001).

In addition, a conscious methodological approach and the application of "normal, comparative social science methods" will further this aim "to de-exoticize [the] Arab political culture" of which Hamas is a part (Carapico 2006, 430). On a general level, it is argued that atheoretical and unconscious applications of case study methods are prone to produce idiographic knowledge (Sartori 1991, 252–53).³⁵ Furthermore, it is advanced that when the topic at hand is controversial, such idiographic knowledge easily turns biased (Sadowski 1993; Volpi 2009).³⁶ This has been true for much of the research dealing with Hamas, as it "has lacked methodological rigor as well as a thorough foundation in historical and sociopolitical realities" that in turn has led to "moralizing, acrimonious, and prescriptive ... academic works that read more like political propaganda than social science" (Strindberg 2002, 264).

While the quality of the scholarly literature on Hamas has improved since Strindberg offered the above critique, methodological rigor is arguably still lacking in many studies of Hamas. This is itself partly a result of the ideological polarization plaguing much research related to

35 See Gerring (2004, 351–52) for a short discussion on the distinction between ideographic and nomothetic ontologies in relation to case study methods. There he argues that case study methods "occupies a tenuous ontological midway ground between ideographic and nomothetic extremes" (2004, 352).

36 Abaza and Stauth (1988) have an interesting exploration of ideological trends following essentializing approaches to fundamentalist Islam.

the Israel-Palestine conflict (Christison 1988).³⁷ For good reasons, ideologically influenced researchers tend to avoid being explicit about their methodological choices (or lack thereof). Without an explicit method, researchers are free to pick and choose how and what to emphasize, allowing them to conclude with “findings” that always seem to agree with and corroborate their initial expectations (Nickerson 1998). The application of sound methods, on the other hand, might eventually produce analyses and conclusions that contradict these initial expectations.³⁸ As such, this lack of methodological rigor also works to cement the various ideological positions of researchers, exacerbating the bias problem even further. Thus, much of the knowledge produced on Hamas still suffers from ideological bias and polarization.³⁹

To avoid this ideological diffusion and the tendency to essentialize Palestinian politics (Tamari 1994), the analyses of Hamas will utilize different comparative case study methods. In the words of Sartori, “[c]omparing is ‘learning’ from the experience of others and, conversely, ... he who knows only one [case] knows none” (1991, 245). So, to analyze Hamas without any (explicit or implicit) reference to other (more or less) comparable cases would produce ideographic findings, and the thesis could easily fall victim to the bias problem described above. As such,

[c]omparative analysis ... seems to be essential, not only to see what is shared between [cases], but also to pose theoretical questions that the study of the particular may ignore, as well as to be able, with greater justice, to identify what is specific or original (Halliday 1993, 146).

In short, adopting comparative case study methods when analyzing Hamas promises to structure and discipline the thesis in a way that—at least in part—aids it in avoiding the ideological bias trap and the essentialization pitfall.

To achieve the necessary in-depth knowledge and contextual sensitivity, Hamas is defined as the main unit of analysis throughout the thesis, and will be analyzed through different case study methods relying mainly on qualitative data. Specifically, two case-oriented, comparative methods are adopted: the interpretative case study method and within-case, longitudinal

37 Isacoff (2005), Nusseibeh (2005), and Pressman (2005) debate the use of different historical sources in political science analyses specifically related to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

38 Flyvbjerg (2006, 234–37) discusses confirmation bias and case studies in some detail, arguing that “[t]he case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher’s preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification” (2006, 237).

39 The quality of the extant literature is evaluated and discussed in some detail in section 2.2.2, pp. 69ff.

comparative method. The following sections will discuss and outline the specificities of the selected methods in some detail.

2.1.1 Theoretical comparisons

Given the theoretically grounded nature of the thesis, the primary method through which Hamas is analyzed resembles the *interpretative case study* method described by Lijphart.⁴⁰ This method is “selected for analysis because of an interest in the case” itself, and makes “explicit use of established theoretical propositions” to interpret, understand, and explain the said case (1971, 692). The primary merit of this method is to structure and focus the analyses, as it makes use of the theoretical stipulations and assumptions spelled out in the theories. As such, this method works to guide the analyses and—depending on the relevance and explanatory power of the theories—promises increased validity of any findings. Furthermore, it allows for implicit comparisons, e.g., between Hamas and other well-documented parties sharing important characteristics or between Hamas and anti-colonial movements elsewhere (Lijphart 1971).⁴¹ Similarly, this method also helps the analyses to avoid the previously discussed essentializing tendency and ideological bias.

In addition to implicit comparisons and analytical guidance, the application of established theories on a certain case also allows for some theory development. As Eckstein argues, a “case can impugn established theories if the theories ought to fit it but do not [and thus] the application of theories to cases can have feedback effects on theorizing” (2009, 135). In this way, the theoretically grounded, case-oriented method adopted also has a theory *testing* component.⁴² Even if theory testing case study methods often are distinguished from empirically oriented and theoretically grounded case studies such as this one,⁴³ the interpretation and analysis of Hamas through established theories can help refine them, providing increased confidence and extending their geographical reach (Gloppen and Rakner 2007; Sartori 1970, 1994; Tilly 2004). On the one hand, then, the interpretative case study method assists in explaining and understanding Hamas, and on the other, the chosen theories are both tested and ultimately refined by being applied to Hamas.

40 According to George and Bennett (2005, 213), Lijphart’s *interpretative case study* is similar to what Eckstein (2009, 134–37) labels the *disciplined configurative case study*.

41 For example, the ANC in South Africa shares important characteristics with Hamas. See also Deonandan, Close, and Prevos (2008), and de Zeeuw (2008a).

42 Lijphart dubs this *theory-confirming* and *theory-infirming case studies* (1971, 692), whereas Eckstein calls it *crucial case studies* (2009, 140–52).

43 See discussions in George and Bennett (2005) as well as Eckstein (2009) and Lijphart (Lijphart 1971).

2.1.2 Within-case comparison

Given the primacy granted to the theoretical grounding of the thesis, the interpretative case study remains the main adopted methodological approach. However, further specification is required in terms of its application. Indeed, as argued by Gerring, “when one refers to *the* case study method, one is in fact referring to three possible methods, each with a different menu of covariational evidence” (2004, 343). These are (1) case studies with spatial variation, (2) case studies with temporal variation (longitudinal), and (3) case studies with both spatial and temporal variations. This specification of different within-case comparisons is similar to the one offered by Lijphart when he argued that “analyzing the same case ... diachronically [and/or] select[ing] intra[unit] cases” maximizes the shared similarities between the observations, and thus aids in identifying variables with explanatory power (1975, 159). While the thesis covers certain spatial aspects of Hamas, it relies mainly on the method of temporal comparison. Both will be briefly discussed below.

The spatial aspects

The analyses will focus on certain spatial aspects of Hamas’s development. From early on in its history, Hamas was organized in a federated manner, with branches operating in the two occupied territories (the West Bank and Gaza), with a leadership body in Amman, Jordan, that later moved to Damascus, Syria, and in recent years with a local presence among Palestinian refugees both in Lebanon and Syria. As these Hamas branches operate under widely different conditions and to some extent emerged under unique circumstances, they have different ideological outlooks and preferences. The spatial dimension will therefore be covered in some length throughout the analyses, in particular with regard to alterations in the internal power balance between them, as these changes had an effect on Hamas’s behavior. However, the various branches will not be compared as such. The geographical aspects will be included only when relevant to explain the changing behavior of Hamas. As such, the thesis does not comply with the requirements of a proper spatial comparison.

Temporal comparison

The focus on Hamas’s *development* from a social movement organization to a governing party gives the thesis a processual quality. As such, the within-case, longitudinal approach will be the method applied throughout the analyses. In essence, and as alluded to in the introductory chapter, the comparisons are informed by the analytical framework adopted. To recapitulate,

the framework was built by combining theoretical elements from the literature dealing with social movement organizations and political parties. This framework enables the thesis to analyze Hamas from its modest beginnings as a social movement organization to its transmutation and institutionalization toward a stabilized political party. Based on the sequencing of the two theoretical components, this process can be divided into five phases: first, tracing Hamas from its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood movement to its establishment as a social movement organization; then Hamas's transmutation from a social movement organization to a political party; and finally the three phases of institutionalization as a political party, namely *identification*, *organization*, and *stabilization*.⁴⁴

While the analyses are informed by and focused on these phases, the longitudinal comparison itself is not neatly divided according to them. For one, there are no clear-cut thresholds between these steps. As a result, Hamas is expected to be at various stages simultaneously, e.g., still qualifying as a social movement organization in terms of ideology and strategy, but with organizational elements similar to that of a political party. Furthermore, changes in the environmental conditions under which Hamas operates—in the Palestinian political system, in relation to the conflict with Israel, and internationally—strongly affected its development. Taking these two factors into consideration, the within-case comparison of Hamas is organized in historical phases rather than according to the theorized steps.

It should also be noted that relevant, additional theoretical frameworks will supplement the main analytical framework. For example, part of the analysis in chapter 5 is informed by theoretical assumptions related to how Hamas's legacy of violence shaped its development (Close and Prevost 2008). Or in chapter 6, which partly deals with the institutionalization of the Palestinian political system, the consequences of the introduction of semi-presidentialism in the PA for Hamas's development and behavior are covered (Cavatorta and Elgie 2010).

It should finally be mentioned that each analytical chapter ends with a section analyzing Hamas's degree of institutionalization for the period in question. Based on the findings from the preceding analysis and supplemented with data gleaned from the relevant literature, these

44 Such theoretically informed, within-case analyses can easily be confused with the methods of congruence and process-tracing described by George and Bennett (2005, chapters 9 and 10). As its name indicates, the process-tracing method focus on processes, attempting “to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (2005, 206). The congruence method “begins with a theory and then attempts to assess its ability to explain or predict the outcome in a particular case” (2005, 181). So, while both of these methods are used in case studies such as this one, they give primacy to theory testing and theory development, which are secondary to the empirical focus in this thesis.

measurements allow for a stringent temporal comparison of Hamas's degree of institutionalization throughout its history.⁴⁵

2.2 Sources and the quality of “occupied” data

The thesis makes use of different data sources. The extant literature on Hamas is an important source of secondary and descriptive information, as are data collected from various other secondary sources, such as different media, the gray literature (NGO reports, etc.), and the extensive literature dealing with Palestinian politics. In addition, the analyses rely on primary data generated during fieldwork in the occupied Palestinian territories and among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. These are mainly interview data from multiple interviews of a wide range of Hamas members, but they also include informal conversations and observations. Finally, quantitative data, primarily public opinion surveys, are utilized, although mainly for descriptive and corroborating purposes.

In the following subsections, these data sources will be discussed in some detail, including the rationale behind using them, how the data were collected, and what their respective strengths and weaknesses are—both in terms of relevance for the thesis and in terms of reliability and validity. The first subsection deals with the fieldwork carried out for this thesis, with a focus on the collected interview data; the next subsection covers the quality of the extant literature; and the final subsection discusses the quality of quantitative data in the occupied territories.

2.2.1 Fieldwork and *expert interviews*—some reflections

To complement the data provided by the extant literature, long-term fieldwork episodes were conducted in occupied Palestine and in Lebanon. Through this fieldwork, new and previously unavailable data were collected by means of qualitative, semi-structured interviews of Hamas cadres in various localities. This was done to obtain information suitable to answer some of the theoretically informed research questions, for example with regard to Hamas's degree of institutionalization, its ideological rigidity, and its organizational structure. Specifically, *systematizing expert interviews* (Bogner and Menz 2009, 46–47) was employed, as this form of interview is particularly suited to extract information and collect data from the mid- to higher echelons of Hamas (Abels and Behrens 2009, 139–40; Meuser and Nagel 2009, 24).

45 The degree of institutionalization is measured at the ordinal level (low, medium, high) and relies on the four-dimensional framework suggested by Randall and Svåsand (2002a). See the discussion in the introductory chapter for details regarding this framework and its four elements (in particular pp. 37ff. and pp. 42ff.).

Systematizing expert interviews as a data generating method is distinguished from other forms of interview techniques in its explicit focus “on knowledge of action and experience [which is] reflexively accessible, and can be spontaneously communicated,” aiming to extract and generate “systematic and complete information ... on ‘objective’ matters” (Bogner and Menz 2009, 46–47).⁴⁶

And, although the reasoning behind the use of expert interviews rests in part on the current deficit of relevant empirical data, it is important to note that it also was theoretically grounded. In particular with regard to ideological rigidity, mid-level activists from political parties are expected to constitute a major pool of experts, as they are the ones often formulating and suggesting why and how ideology should be put into practice (Downs 1957; Panebianco 1988, 8–9). Because of their “know-why” and “know-how” with regard to ideology formulation, the activists are considered *expert informants* in terms of Hamas’s ideological rigidity (Littig 2009, 98–99). Put simply, their role as activists means they are expected to possess currently unavailable, exclusive knowledge on Hamas’s ideological rigidity.

These activists can also be important informants for questions regarding Hamas’s institutionalization and organizational structure. However, given the relatively short organizational history of Hamas, it is, again based on relevant theories, assumed that the more high-ranking cadres within Hamas might be better positioned and have more relevant expertise on these variables (Panebianco 1988). So, as with the rationale for interviewing activists as experts on Hamas’s ideology, high-ranking, long-standing members with in-depth knowledge on the inner workings of Hamas served as expert informants providing information suitable to generate data for further analysis.

There are, however, a number of challenges associated with the expert interview as a method to generate data. Some challenges are shared with qualitative methods in general (chapter 4 in Mason 2002, 62–83), such as questions of ethics (see e.g., Christians 2005; for a discussion on ethics in expert interviews, see Obelene 2009) and reliability and validity (chapter 15 in Silverman 2009, 268–91). Others are specific to the qualitative interview or expert interview, e.g., questions regarding sampling (Littig 2009, 103–4), getting access to informants (Littig 2009, 104–5), how one should define expert in the first place (Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2009a, 3–5), and challenges associated with the power balance between the interviewer and

46 This latter characteristic of the systematizing expert interview also contrasts with the interpretative nature of most other qualitative interview techniques.

the interviewee (Abels and Behrens 2009; Pfadenhauer 2009).

The fieldwork localities and the interviewees

In addition to some data from a previous and unrelated month-long fieldwork on the West Bank in August 2007,⁴⁷ two long-term fieldwork episodes were conducted to collect primary data for the analyses: three months on the West Bank in the spring of 2011, and then again two months on the West Bank followed by one month in Lebanon during the fall of the same year. In addition to innumerable informal meetings and conversations throughout the fieldwork, a total of 69 in-depth, semi-structured interviews of 60 respondents were conducted. These interviews constitute the brunt of the primary data material for the analyses.

The choice of the occupied West Bank as location for the first fieldwork episode was based on two considerations. For one, previous fieldwork experience from the West Bank meant that there was already an established network of colleagues and potential interviewees, both of which made getting access and getting around rather straightforward. Second, getting into the West Bank has for long been the easiest option compared to the Gaza Strip. And related to this latter point, the West Bank is considered to be less violent and volatile than Gaza, also making it a more attractive place to carry out fieldwork.

It should be mentioned that plans were made to get into Gaza as well. For, although the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has advised against all travels in and near the Gaza Strip since Hamas took over in 2007, getting there was considered crucial for that exact reason; as Hamas is the governing party in Gaza, it is obviously a promising place to collect relevant information for a thesis analyzing Hamas through the lens of party theories. Nonetheless, despite several promising attempts, the security situation simply made it impossible to get in.⁴⁸

Fieldwork in Syria was also considered early on, as Hamas's Political Bureau has resided in Damascus since 1999. However, because of the uprising and ensuing civil war beginning in March 2011, no attempt was made to travel to Syria, for reasons of personal security. Instead, the monthlong fieldwork episode in Lebanon was carried out, partly because getting into Gaza and Syria proved impossible, but also because interviews conducted in a non-occupied

47 Specifically, this relates to information provided by four respondents only interviewed in 2007.

48 High-ranking Hamas officials in Gaza offered to facilitate the stay by providing a guide and a translator, and diplomats promised transport to and from the isolated strip by means of cars with *corps diplomatique* license plates. However, the trip never materialized as the particular MFA in question decided that the potential liability associated with aiding a researcher's entry into Gaza was too steep.

territory would add quality to the collected data. Furthermore, it should be added that Hamas has had a long-term presence in Lebanon, both with an official country representative and local chapters. Note also that certain members of Hamas's Political Bureau frequently visit Lebanon, making it a promising fieldwork locality.

Notwithstanding the merits of the fieldwork episodes on the West Bank and in Lebanon and the usefulness of the data collected in these localities, they did not fully compensate for the failure to get into Gaza. As mentioned, data gathering in Gaza was considered crucial for the thesis, exactly because Hamas since 2007 has operated as the sole authority there. In short, it was expected that interviews conducted there could provide information unavailable elsewhere. For one, it was hoped that access to commanders from the al-Qassam Brigades would have been possible. Such interviews could potentially have been illuminating with regard to the opaque relationship between the political and armed wings of Hamas. Furthermore, it was hoped that interviews with Hamas leaders in Gaza would provide crucial information regarding the inner workings of Hamas—a topic of which interviewed Hamas leaders on the West Bank and in Lebanon only occasionally were willing to discuss.⁴⁹ In short, it is recognized that the analyses probably suffer somewhat from relying on primary data collected solely on the West Bank and in Lebanon.

Yet, even if access to Gaza had been possible, it is unlikely that data gathered there would have proved a panacea for the analyses. The secrecy surrounding certain aspects of Hamas's internal workings are ostensibly there for reasons of security. As long as the Israeli occupation is upheld and Hamas remains a persecuted movement, its leaders will naturally be loath to disclose information they consider sensitive for the organization's survival. This would, for example, include detailing the changing power balance between its various leadership branches, as this would be an admission of weakness; discussing the specificities regarding its decision-making procedures, as this would render the organization vulnerable to targeted attacks by Israel and the PA; and providing information regarding its relationship with and number of patrons, as this would acknowledge its state of dependence on external actors and thus undermine Hamas's credibility as an autonomous Palestinian movement.

49 Of the numerous Hamas leaders interviewed, Dr. Mohammad Ghazal (interviewed in Nablus, April 17 and September 29, 2011), Ousama Hamdan (interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011), Dr. Ayman H. Daraghme (interviewed in Ramallah, August 26, 2007 and April 10, May 18, and September 27, 2011), and Nizar Ramadan (interviewed in Ramallah, May 8, 2011) were the ones willing to somewhat openly discuss and share information regarding the internal workings of Hamas.

On a general level, and as emphasized in the relevant literature, conducting interviews for data collection purposes is by nature a challenging and unpredictable exercise (see e.g., Part II in Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2009b; Dexter 2008; Gubrium and Holstein 2001). And particularly when attempting to do so in authoritarian Middle East regimes, the size, power, and reach of the internal security services in the region create a “culture of suspicion” that in turn makes interviewees reluctant to speak freely (Clark 2006). While the PA is a non-state polity, the combined effect of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the authoritarian turn of the PA there, and its extensive security cooperation with Israel, creates conditions similar to those found in authoritarian regimes in the region. In short, the combined “size, power, and reach” of Israel and the PA’s security services on the West Bank is comprehensive; cooperation between PA’s numerous security and intelligence services and Israel’s internal security service (known as Shabak or Shin Beth) and military intelligence (Aman) is such that sympathizers or members of Hamas there are increasingly reluctant to speak freely or be associated with Hamas.⁵⁰

This fear of persecution among Hamas members and its sympathizers is not unfounded. The Israeli and Palestinian security services regularly persecute, imprison, and assassinate both real and alleged Hamas members, as well as other political dissidents (see e.g., Ma’an 2009a).⁵¹ That known Hamas members refuse to be identified as such is therefore understandable. Sometimes they explicitly cited fear for themselves and their family as the main reason for not wanting to be identified as Hamas—thus implicitly admitting that they indeed *were* members.⁵² Instead, many agreed to be identified as affiliated or associated members, or just people sympathetic to and/or ideologically similar with Hamas.

Note, however, that many of those reluctant to be identified as Hamas spoke relatively freely, and some had detailed knowledge about the organization. For example, both Dr. Ayman Daraghme and Abderrahman F. Zaidan shared far too detailed information about the inner workings of Hamas for their claimed independence to be credible. In addition, those interviewed both in 2007 and 2011 were open about their membership in Hamas the first time

50 As an indication of this increased reluctance, people interviewed in 2007 who openly admitted to being Hamas members refused to be identified as such in 2011.

51 Human rights abuses from both the PA and Israel are common in occupied Palestine. For details on this, see e.g., B’Tselem (2011), Amnesty International (Amnesty International 2012, 186–89, 265–67), and later chapters.

52 For example, one prominent PLC member from Change and Reform expressed fear of what might happen to their family if they were interviewed as a Hamas member (interviewed on the West Bank, April 2011).

around.⁵³ Finally, some of those interviewed are known through the media and previous academic work to be Hamas members.⁵⁴ In particular, when well-known Hamas leaders such as Dr. Aziz Dweik, Dr. Mohammad Ghazal, and Sheikh Hassan Yousef said they were not members but only sympathetic to or associated with the organization, their claims were given little heed. In short, it is hard to believe that all of those claiming to be independents really *are* independents and not members in Hamas.

The fieldwork experience in Lebanon strengthened the doubts about the ostensibly “independent” status of many interviewees on the West Bank. Interviewees in Lebanon—from low-level activists to official country representatives and members of Hamas’s Political Bureau—all had business cards with the Hamas emblem, and more often than not also had Hamas flags in their offices. Except for some researchers and analysts with uncertain ideological allegiance, none of those interviewed in Lebanon had any apparent qualms about being identified as Hamas members.

The status of each interviewee has therefore been assessed through triangulation with other sources. It is recognized that such an approach might be insufficient to ascertain if someone actually is a member of Hamas, as disinformation and mistakes are reproduced throughout the media. It is, for example, easy to assume that a high-ranking official such as the former Deputy Prime Minister in the 2006 Hamas government, Nasser al-Din al-Shaer, *is* a member, as has been reported by numerous media outlets (BBC 2009; Myre 2006). However, he labels himself as an “independent Islamist,”⁵⁵ and Palestinian media seems to agree (see e.g., Ma’an 2012). While al-Shaer is classified as an independent Islamist here, it is acknowledged that it is difficult to ascertain his exact his status, and as such, it is recognized that there might be potential false positives or false negatives in the classification of interviewees.

The interviewed Hamas members had different positions within the movement, ranging from young recruits, via activists and cadres, through to mayors, MPs, ministers, and members of Hamas’s Political Bureau. Regarding the MPs, it should be noted that some were elected through the district quota to the PLC, whereas others were elected through the national list.

53 For example, an MP from the northern parts of the West Bank admitted to being Hamas in 2007, but refused to be identified as such in 2011 (interviewed on the West Bank, August 2007, and April 2011). Also a former Minister in the first Hamas government and current MP admitted to being Hamas in 2007, but claimed in 2011 only to be “associated” with the movement (interviewed on the West Bank, August 2007, and April 2011).

54 See e.g., Hadi (2006) for biographies of various Hamas leaders.

55 Interviewed in Nablus, April 18, 2011.

Few if any from the national list are likely to be non-members, as it is assumed that a political party nominates its own members as candidates when possible. For the district elections, this is different. In particular on the West Bank, Hamas has had a weak position in certain areas. It therefore made sense for Hamas to enter into alliances with local leaders who had good chances of winning, rather than nominating their own, unknown candidates.⁵⁶

Of the 60 interviewees,⁵⁷ one was from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), two were from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), five were from Fatah (the main PLO faction), three were independents (although politically active on different levels), 14 were without any known or relevant political affiliation (mostly academics and analysts), and the remaining 35 were either from Hamas (31) or associated with Hamas as independent Islamists (four).⁵⁸ It was useful to interview both independent observers and Hamas's domestic political opponents, as these interviews could provide sobering versions of certain events where Hamas members gave an unlikely rosy account of history, and at other times these interviews could be used to corroborate equally unlikely accounts that otherwise could have been easily dismissed.

While eleven of the interviewees refused to be recorded, including Dr. Nasser al-Din al-Shaer who requested a citation check if quoted,⁵⁹ most accepted both to be recorded and to be quoted by name. Four of the interviewees wanted to remain anonymous, however, and an additional five were anonymized. Four of the anonymized were lower ranking and largely unknown members in Hamas, and one was a Fatah cadre. They were all anonymized because they seemingly did not appreciate the risk stemming from being identified with full name (Clark 2006, 420).⁶⁰

56 See later chapters, and in particular chapter 6, for details regarding Hamas's nomination procedures.

57 See Appendix B: List of interviewees on page 334 for details.

58 The interviewed Hamas members were of both genders, different age groups, and came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. However, almost all had higher education in a technical profession, such as engineering or medicine. Only a few had any formal religious training. See also Robinson (2004, 117) and Jamal (2005, 108) for similar observations regarding the socioeconomic makeup of the Hamas leadership.

59 Interviewed in Nablus, April 18, 2011. Dr. al-Shaer has not been quoted in the thesis.

60 For example, Hamas members who are used to persecution may feel confident that providing information critical of the Israeli occupation or the corruption in Fatah to a Western researcher has little or no bearing on their situation, as they often have said such things in public before. However, the public sphere in occupied Palestine is different from the internationalized, English-speaking research community. Both Israel and Fatah might want to stop what is well established in the occupied Palestine from spreading, and react harshly against informants revealing what they themselves thought was only common knowledge. See Thomson *et al.* (2005) for a general discussion of the ethical concerns associated with naming and identifying interviewees.

The interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours, with most clocking in at approximately one hour. In total about 63 hours of interviews were recorded. However, because an interpreter was used in some interviews, a significant amount of this time was spent on translating between Arabic and English. The recorded interviews were in turn transcribed, after which the text files were imported and analyzed in ATLAS.ti, a software package designed for analysis of qualitative data.⁶¹

It should be mentioned that not all of the transcribed interviews will be used directly as primary sources for the analyses; a number of the interviewees provided no new or directly relevant information. However, even these interviews have helped contextualize Palestinian politics, and have thus indirectly informed the analyses.

Sampling, translating, interpreting, and facilitating

In terms of sampling of interviewees, a strategy combining purposiveness, convenience, and snowballing was adopted. Initial interviewees were thus sampled based on their assumed knowledge on and/or position in Hamas, as well as on ease of access. Following each interview, the interviewees were asked about other relevant and potential respondents (Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam 2003, 81–94). Such a strategy—and in particular the convenience dimension—led a number of the interviews to be of limited relevance in and for themselves. Those most accessible have often been interviewed by others before, and consequently their histories and viewpoints on different issues are well known.⁶² Because of this, many of the initial interviews produced little new knowledge. By getting started right away and accepting that the purpose of some interviews were to get access to other interviewees, however, this strategy eased what is often considered a major challenge in field research, namely getting access to interviewees (Littig 2009, 104–5).

Dr. Basem Ezbidi, a colleague at the University of Birzeit, also helped arrange meetings with certain higher-ranking politicians that otherwise would have been out of reach. This was especially the case for the meetings with former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education for the 2006 PA Government, Dr. Nasser al-Din al-Shaer, and Speaker of the PLC, Dr. Aziz Dweik.⁶³ However, it should be noted that many high-ranking Palestinian politicians

61 See <http://www.atlasti.com> for details.

62 For example, Sheikh Mohammad Totah, an MP living in a Red Cross compound in East Jerusalem to avoid being captured by Israel, is regularly interviewed by both journalists and researchers. And his consequent media savvy meant that his answers came across as rather rehearsed (interviewed October 4, 2011).

63 Interviewed in Nablus, April 18, 2011, and in Hebron, April 13, 2011, respectively.

are very approachable. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Dr. Mahmoud al-Habbash,⁶⁴ and the Minister of Planning and Public Administration, Dr. Ali al-Jarbawi, for example, both agreed to be interviewed without any “gatekeeper” involvement. The same was often the case with high-ranking Hamas members, e.g., with PLC member and Hamas West Bank leader, Sheikh Hassan Yousef,⁶⁵ the official representative of Hamas in Lebanon, Ali Barakeh,⁶⁶ and Hamas Political Bureau member, Ousama Hamdan.

Most Palestinians on the West Bank speak English, and almost all the interviewees belong to an educated political elite proficient in English. The language barrier was therefore rarely a real problem. Of course, the fact that neither the interviewer nor the interviewee could communicate in their mother tongue had consequences for the quality of the data collected. The language was often simplified so as to minimize the chances of misunderstandings. This, in turn, had consequences for nuance and accuracy—both for the questions asked and the answers provided. A difficult balance therefore had to be struck between being understood and successfully soliciting the information wanted.

Despite the fact that most interviewees spoke English, research assistants were hired during all three stays on the West Bank (although not in Lebanon). For the initial fieldwork carried out in 2007, the lack of fieldwork experience made it difficult to identify and get access to interviewees. As such, it became clear that it was necessary to hire a “stringer” that could set up appointments and facilitate during the interviews. With the help of a colleague from Birzeit University, a young teacher with scholarly interests in Hamas was recruited as a research assistant.⁶⁷ For the fieldwork in the spring of 2011, a lecturer at Birzeit University was recruited as a research assistant.⁶⁸ He was helpful in identifying potential interviewees, contacting and setting up appointments throughout the West Bank, and translating when necessary. When returning to the West Bank in the fall of 2011, a student majoring in English at Birzeit University was hired.⁶⁹ He also aided in identifying and setting up appointments, and translated when necessary.

64 Interviewed in Ramallah, May 27, 2011 and October 6, 2011, respectively.

65 Interviewed October 16, 2011, in Ramallah.

66 Interviewed in Beirut, November 11 and 18, 2011, respectively.

67 The teacher is anonymized because he has been persecuted by both Israel and the PA.

68 Named Nashaat Abdalfatah.

69 The student is also anonymized for similar reasons as the teacher.

One major challenge associated with the use of interpreters in interviews relates to what is translated and what is not. It seems obvious that literal translation of semi-structured (or conversational) interviews are unwarranted. However, there were times during the translation back and forth that what seemed like a long-winded and elaborate answer in Arabic to a complicated question was simply translated as “no” or “yes”—suggesting that the translator had either skipped all that he considered unimportant (Bujra 2006) or that he failed to grasp either the question or the answer. This was probably partly because none of the research assistants were professional translators.

Another and important side effect of using translators during interviews has to do with the communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. On the positive side, the presence of a local third-party can ease the interviewee and give the interviewer more time to formulate questions and keep track of the interview, as time goes by translating back and forth. On the negative side, the presence of the third-party can create more of a distance between the interviewer and the interviewee, and as noted above, the quality of the translation can lead to a loss of not only nuances but even crucial details. In sum, and although it is obvious that the fieldwork would have suffered without the help of these research assistants, the use of such services were not without challenges.

Reciprocity and credibility under occupation

Some observations about the interview situation itself are in order. First, and on a general level, it is important to recognize and remember that the interviewer and the interviewee probably have different reasons for wanting the interview (Berry 2002, 680). Whereas the interviewer is seeking information not available elsewhere (Rathbun 2010, 690), many interviewees might be willing to talk on some (explicit or implicit) condition of reciprocity—that something is given in return (Carapico 2006, 430). In the words of Berry, it is not only the interviewer who has a reason to interview the interviewee; “the subjects have a purpose in the interview too: they have something they want to say ... They’re talking about their work and, as such, justifying what they do” (2002, 680). This was in all likelihood the case in many if not most of the interviews carried out for this dissertation. For one, many Palestinians are interested in talking to researchers and journalists to convey *their* version of *their* lives under Israeli occupation—a version they often express as being unknown or ignored in the West. For Hamas members, this promotion of their own version of history might be even more important, as they claim to have been vilified not only by Israel and the West, but by many of

their fellow Palestinians as well, despite being the legally elected representatives of the Palestinian people.⁷⁰

For the quality of the collected data, this means that some answers were either sugarcoated or even straight out lies. To promote a certain version of events, interviewees from Hamas had a tendency to either downplay the importance of particular incidents if they suspected these to be detrimental to the reputation of Hamas, or alternatively to overstate the role played by Hamas at various junctures in an attempt to improve the stature and prominence of the organization.

One salient example of this tendency to downplay potentially negative aspects surfaced time and again when the interviews touched upon the issue of factionalization. In short, most interviewees from Hamas consistently ignored or refused to acknowledge that the organization intermittently suffered from internal power struggles,⁷¹ despite the fact that the various leadership branches have clashed publicly on numerous occasions. At most, the more confident and free-spoken interviewees from Hamas admitted that “we are only human beings, and of course we may have differences and make mistakes,” but they always hastened to add that these differences “have not led to any problems. We have, thankfully, not have had any problems like other Palestinian movements.”⁷²

In terms of sugarcoating, a prime example is the attempt to construct a historical narrative in which Hamas is only the latest incarnation of a long tradition of Islamist movements in Palestine to resist the Israeli occupation.⁷³ Dr. Aziz Dweik, for example, claimed that the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood ran clandestine cells resisting the Israeli occupation “in the 50s, the 60s, the 70s, and the 80s” before eventually establishing Hamas in 1987.⁷⁴ However, as will be covered in chapter 4, the few armed groups operated by the Muslim Brotherhood prior to the establishment of Hamas were focused on fighting the various secular Palestinian groups, and not the occupation.

70 A number of Hamas members even expressed gratitude for being interviewed, as this would enable them to inform a Western researcher of the real—and alleged just, democratic, and legitimate—nature of Hamas.

71 The power struggles within Hamas will be a recurring theme throughout the analyses.

72 Dr. Mohammad Ghazal, interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011. The “problems like other Palestinian movements” mentioned by Dr. Ghazal refer to the widespread fractionalization and splits plaguing the various PLO factions (cf. chapter 3).

73 See chapter 4 for an extensive treatment of this topic.

74 Dr. Aziz Dweik, interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011. Similar sentiments were expressed by Sheikh Mahmoud Musleh and Sheikh Hassan Yousef (both interviewed in Ramallah in 2011, April 21 and October 16, respectively).

Another tactic employed was to conveniently ignore reactionary, anti-Western or even racist public statements from their leadership, as if these are not known to even the casual newspaper reader, let alone someone who researches Hamas. Or, they avoided talking about Hamas's position regarding women, secularism, or other topics where the interviewees expect to meet strong resistance.

There were exceptions to this trend of avoiding contentious topics, as when a Hamas official interviewed in Lebanon argued that the Holocaust never took place.⁷⁵ Holocaust denial among Palestinians is sadly not uncommon. In an article tracing the history of the Holocaust in the Palestinian narrative, Litvak and Webman argues that

[s]ince the Palestinians regarded themselves as the victims of Zionism, they could not accept the victimhood of their enemy, as it might give it some moral justification. In addition, acknowledging systematic Nazi policy to exterminate all Jews might give implicit credence to the Zionist claims that the Jews were indeed a people and a persecuted one, who therefore had the right for statehood (2003, 125–26).

Furthermore, Litvak has argued that Holocaust denial and antisemitism are intrinsic parts of Hamas's ideology, quoting speeches made by its officials, the 1988 Charter, and articles from the Hamas-affiliated newspaper *Filastin al-Muslima* (2006). Without understating the actual problems with antisemitism and Holocaust denial, the methodological challenge here relates to the likelihood that many interviewees share the sentiments documented by Litvak, but that only one of 60 interviewees ever admitted to it. As such, it is probable that many of them concealed their true position for fear of alienating a Western researcher.⁷⁶

The topic of women's position in society was another exception to this tendency to conceal what the interviewees must have suspected to be controversial. A number of interviewees—both male and female—had few inhibitions to conveying conservative and reactionary positions on a number of issues related to gender. For example, a female MP from Hamas advanced that women should only get half of what men get in inheritance, as men are supposed to be the breadwinners. The fact that this is not always so and thus that such inheritance laws are unfair, was explained away as a problem of adherence to Islam, not a

75 Hamas leader interviewed in Tripoli in northern Lebanon, November 12, 2011.

76 It is possible that such topics rarely came up during interviews because most interviews were focused on domestic Palestinian issues and not on the historical conditions for the occupation of Palestine.

problem with the proposed law; the men simply *should* be the breadwinners.⁷⁷

In any event, triangulation with other interviewees and/or secondary sources can be used to ascertain what really happened, when the interviewees employed various tactics to hide or distort factual and historical data (Berry 2002, 680). However, most of the data is not easily confirmed through secondary sources. Indeed, if that had been the case, the merit of the fieldwork would have been dubious. And even if it is possible to cross-check with other interviewees, it is often inherently difficult to evaluate the truthfulness of two contrasting versions of the same story. There is no simple solution to this challenge, but by staying alert throughout the coding process and the analyses, it is hoped that any problems stemming from this can be minimized.

Next, interview recording is often associated with certain problems for data quality. In short, recording the interview is expected to lead the interviewees to toe the party line and not answer the questions freely (Clark 2006, 421). But, while some of the interviewees certainly seemed to toe the party line, the overall impression was that this had little to do with recording the interview. Some interviewees were simply not interested in speaking freely and preferred to follow the official discourse of their organization, whereas others lacked the knowledge and independence to know anything *but* the party line. In particular among these latter ones, many had probably not expected to find themselves in such an elevated position within Hamas. Hamas's electoral victory in 2006 was a surprise for Hamas as much as to its competitors and most observers. As such, candidates low on the ballot were in all likelihood put there to fill the list, and thus qualify as backbenchers. One such backbencher who wished to remain anonymous, for example, seemed incapable of admitting any mistakes on the part of Hamas. For instance, he claimed that the situation in Gaza had *improved* in the years after Hamas took power in 2007, despite overwhelming proof of rapidly deteriorating conditions.⁷⁸

By and large, however, most interviewees answered questions freely and surprisingly often in opposition to the official party line. Yet, not toeing the party line does not necessarily increase the credibility. As Berry succinctly notes, “[i]t’s a little too easy to believe you’re getting the

77 Sameera Halayqah interviewed in Hebron, May 8, 2011. In this particular interview, the issue of women witnesses in court cases was also covered. In short, according to certain interpretations of Islamic law, there must be two female witnesses for every male witness. The interviewee explained that this is so because women menstruate, which makes them a bit unbalanced. So, a second woman is needed to make sure that they together can remember what really happened, and in combination constitute one truthful witness.

78 Hamas MP interviewed on the West Bank, April 2011. That this particular MP wished to remain anonymous was probably due to the fact that he only days before the interview was released from a long stay in Israeli prison. He was arrested soon after the interview took place.

truth when it's coming from a source who is going out of his way not to give you the party line" (2002, 680).

In sum, there is no easy way to ascertain the truthfulness and validity of the data provided in the interviews, regardless of whether the interviewees seemed to sugar-coat certain events or were overly critical of these same events, whether they stuck to the party line or went out of their way *not* to do so, or whether they were overly creative in their efforts to construct a historical narrative suitable to their worldview. However, as argued by Burgat,

[i]t is an obvious fact that you must not "take their [the interviewees'] word for it". One of the basic laws of good methodology is to exercise extreme caution when dealing with discourse from a subject in general, and when the subject speaks about him- or herself in particular (2003, 4).

By striving to exercise such "extreme caution" throughout the analyses of the interview material, it is hoped that any grave misinterpretations have been avoided, and that the interview data relied upon in the analyses are of a sufficiently high quality.

2.2.2 Questions of quality in the extant literature

Data for the analyses are informed by the rich, voluminous literature on Hamas, ranging from monographs focusing on the terrorist aspect, e.g., Levitt (2006), Schanzer (2009), and Singh (2011); via empirical narratives and journalistic accounts such as those by Caridi (2010), Chehab (2007), McGeough (2010), and Tamimi (2007); to the more scholarly approaches by researchers such as Gunning (2008), Hroub (2000), Jensen (2008), Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010), Mishal and Sela (2000), and Roy (2011). In addition, there is a range of smaller studies aimed at explaining certain aspects of Hamas, such as Hovdenak (2009), Hroub (2006a), and Nusse (1998), who focus on its ideology and ideological development; Kristianasen (1999), and Milton-Edwards and Crooke (2004), who deal with its strategic responses to important events in the occupied Palestinian territories; Hilal (2006, 2010), who traces Hamas's sources of legitimacy and popularity; and Gunning (2004), Knudsen (2005a), Milton-Edwards (2008a), Roy (2003), Strindberg (2002), and Turner (2006), who all look into Hamas's political behavior and development.

The common problem

As discussed above, however, a recurring deficiency plaguing many of these studies is their lack of rigorous theoretical and methodological grounding (Robinson 2004, 113). While the

various authors approach Hamas from different vantage points and with different research questions, most nevertheless define it as a *sui generis* religious-political phenomena, reduced to a product “of the peculiar social milieu” in the occupied Palestinian territories, and/or of “distinct Islamic mentalities” (Tilly 2004, x–xi; Denooux 2002; see however Robinson 2004; Gunning 2004, 2008; and Turner 2006 for notable exceptions).⁷⁹ And to reiterate, such approaches pose a common challenge in studies of political Islam, and are partly responsible for the politicization of the subject and the survival of Orientalist and neo-orientalist paradigms (Sadowski 2006).⁸⁰

As some of the literature suffers from either being politicized and biased or providing accounts of an atheoretical and thus often eclectic nature, these studies cannot necessarily simply be used “as-is,” but must be meticulously perused prior to analysis so that unreliable and overly biased sources or claims within these can be weeded out. Probably the most common fallacy in the literature is the culturalist bias, i.e., the tendency to rely on and overstate some general cultural feature of Hamas as the explanatory factor for its political development and behavior.

Importantly, this culturalist bias includes both the neo-Orientalist, pro-Israeli type, which vilifies and simplifies Hamas, and the auto-Orientalists or apologists, who rely almost exclusively on the Israeli occupation as the explanation of everything Hamas does, and who ignore, downplay, or even excuse Hamas’s use of terror tactics. In between these extremes there is a number of journalistic accounts that often provide new and interesting information, although these frequently lack historical framing and methodological grounding. Finally, there is a range of high-quality, scholarly work that—to varying degree and with varying success—avoids overt bias and essentialization of Hamas.

The culturalist biases—pro et contra both Israel and Palestine

Two relevant examples from the neo-Orientalist, pro-Israeli camp include the works of Schanzer (2009) and Levitt (2006). They both fall prey to the temptation to “portray Hamas

79 Furthermore, this lack of theoretical rigor has led existing research on Hamas to be overly descriptive or to select explanatory variables eclectically, producing explanations with limited validity (Lijphart 1971, 691; López 1992). Such descriptive or selective analyses, in turn, easily fall prey to ideological biases, a problem that has been exacerbated by the contentious nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict (Said and Hitchens 2001).

80 As with classical Orientalism, neo-Orientalism now epitomizes the problematic but reciprocally beneficial relationship between state and scholars. The state gets knowledge that corroborates and facilitates its imperial and colonial ambitions, and the scholars receive funding and political influence in exchange (Bilgin 2004, 430; Sztompka 2007, 218).

strictly as a terrorist movement,” in the face of a growing consensus among scholars who “recognize that Hamas has greatly developed since its founding and that the movement ... has often shown a pragmatic and flexible side in dealing with both Israel and the PA” (Wagemakers 2010, 358). As such, they are guilty of essentializing and in turn vilifying Hamas, which in sum leaves much to be desired in terms of reliability and validity of these studies. In her scathing review of Levitt’s *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (2006), for example, Khalili criticizes the author for aiming solely

to prove that Hamas is all about terror, terror, terror, and nothing else [and that] [t]o accomplish this aim, Levitt uses declassified documents primarily drafted by Israeli and US security agencies [and] English-language news reports and court documents. Levitt consults no Arabic sources, conducts no interviews with Hamas members or leaders, and relies on documents produced by Hamas’s avowed political adversaries to illuminate the organization. In so doing, he reduces Hamas’s complex social relations, the divisions within its political organization and its broad methods of contention, to its use of violence against Israel, a militant tactic that Levitt does not come close to explaining why it has chosen, under what specific political conditions, and to achieve which particular political aims (2007, 605).

A similar criticism can be leveled at Schanzer’s book, *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle For Palestine* (2009). As Levitt, Schanzer relies solely on secondary sources, and as Levitt, Schanzer seems to have a political rather than scholarly agenda. His analysis—while containing some interesting observations—suffers from being one-sided in favor of Israel, which leads him to simplify and at times put forward incorrect claims. Already in the introduction it becomes clear that Schanzer has an ax to grind, as he claims that “most of the professorate [dealing with the Israel-Palestine conflict] has produced streams of anti-Israel diatribe but very little critical work on the internal Palestinian dynamics” (2009, 4), ignoring the scores of well-researched studies of intra-Palestinian politics (see e.g., Cobban 1984; Hilal 2007, 2010; Jamal 2005; Lybarger 2007; Sayigh 1997; Usher 1995a). He apparently disagrees with the findings of these studies, and so he identifies a non-existing lacuna in the literature that he sets out to fill.

One small but important example of the pro-Israeli bias in Schanzer’s book is found in his account of the outbreak of the second *intifada*. Without a single reference to any other study

on this topic,⁸¹ he simply concludes that “[t]his was a war that Yasir Arafat launched, after concluding that he would make painful concessions to Israel, in the same way that Israel would have to make painful concessions to the Palestinians if peace was to be made” (Schanzer 2009, 49). Such a blatant disregard for historical intricacies that led up to the outbreak of the second *intifada*—most important of which arguably was the failed Oslo Accords, the failure of which the Israelis played no small part—and demonstrated one-sidedness by blaming it all on Arafat, leaves little hope that the writings of Schanzer qualifies as “disinterested” and sound analysis.⁸²

At the other end of the continuum, arguably committing a similar type of essentializing mistake, are the auto-Orientalist apologists, including authors such as Tamimi (2007) and Chehab (2007). While the authors in this category rarely go to the same lengths to justify and rationalize Hamas’s actions as the neo-Orientalists go when demonizing it, there is a quite obvious tendency among these authors to rely on the Israeli occupation as a catch-all explanation for whatever takes place in Palestinian politics.

Tamimi, in general, tends to portray Hamas in an overly positive light; throughout his admittedly meticulously detailed and well-researched book *Hamas: A History from Within* (2007), he time and again paints a rosy picture of Hamas and its leaders. At one place, he argues that the leadership in Hamas is known for their “asceticism, altruism, dedication, and honesty,” claiming as an example of this how Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas’s founder and long-time spiritual leader, apparently refused a monthly stipend from the organization of USD 1000, accepting only USD 600. To account for this ascetic behavior, Tamimi first rather simplistically credits “Islamic values,” explaining further that

Hamas’s altruism is motivated by the principle that the world belongs to God, that He gives wealth to whom He wishes and denies wealth to whom wishes, and that all those that earn wealth in this life shall be brought to account on the Day of Judgment (Tamimi 2007, 116–17).

81 Of which there are many, including Pressman (2003), Rabbani (2001), and Usher (2003).

82 There are numerous other examples of inaccurate and biased reporting in this book. Some are minute, such as mixing the years 2004 with 2003 when accounting for the Israeli assassination of Hamas political leaders (2009, 81). Others are more serious, however, such as when he claims that Hamas has been persecuting Christians for their faith in Gaza (2009, 110–15), even if the stories he bases these claims on have been refuted by a number of scholars and witnesses (Long 2010, 134). Another example of how his ideological bias affects his analysis is the omission of any reference to the now well-documented US-Fatah conspiracy to carry out a *coup d'état* in occupied Palestine following Hamas’s 2006 electoral victory (see Hogan 2008; Rose 2008). By doing so, Schanzer can keep with his vilifying approach vis-à-vis Hamas, ignoring the defensive nature of Hamas’s 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip (see Schanzer 2009, 108).

In short, and notwithstanding the potential explanatory power of religion and culture for political behavior, Tamimi's analyses and explanations closely resemble the essentializing neo-Orientalism espoused by Levitt and Schanzer as discussed above, albeit with reversed partiality.

Chehab for his part avoids the most glaring examples of such essentializing analysis and panegyric characterizations of Hamas. However, in his book *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies* (2007), Chehab commits the mistake of uncritically reproducing the narratives provided by his interviewees, which in turn prompts him to—maybe inadvertently—advance some rather naïve and far-fetched claims regarding the tactical and strategic prowess of Hamas. For example, he claims that Hamas choreographed its own victory in the 2006 elections to the PLC, ostensibly by instructing its supporters to hide that they intended to vote for Hamas when asked by pollsters, and thus “fly under the radar” as it were throughout the election campaign (Chehab 2007, 1–14). Notwithstanding the fact that most sources—both secondary and primary—strongly suggest that Hamas indeed was surprised by its own victory in the said election,⁸³ the theory itself lacks credibility. In the words of Jamil Rabah, a Palestinian pollster and political analyst, Chehab's claim qualifies as “a conspiracy theory logistically impossible to carry out in the real world” and thus naïve in the extreme.⁸⁴

Useful nevertheless—secondary sources used

Despite the obvious inadequacies of these culturalist studies of Hamas, they are still considered useful supplementary source of data for the proposed analyses. The journalistic accounts by authors such as Caridi (2010) and McGeough (2010), which, although lacking methodological and theoretical grounding, suffer no obvious ideological bias and have no apparent agenda other than to tell an interesting story, also provide crucial details often not available elsewhere. And finally, the more academic studies of Hamas, such as Roy (2011), Hroub (2000, 2006b), and Gunning (2008), are highly useful data sources for the analyses. In short, these empirically thick case-studies are a necessary precondition for any theoretical analysis, and the extensive literature on Hamas therefore constitutes a rich and encompassing source of secondary empirical data *needed* for the proposed theoretical analyses (Robinson 2004, 113; Sadowski 2006).⁸⁵

83 The 2006 elections and its outcome is covered in detail in chapters 6 and 7.

84 Interviewed in Ramallah, March 23, 2011.

85 Even the politicized sources can be of use for the analyses, as they allow for triangulation and increased

Various media sources such as newspaper and magazine articles dealing with Hamas and the Israel-Palestine conflict will also inform the analyses. However, given the disproportionate media coverage of this conflict and the degree to which it has become entangled in domestic politics in various Western countries, media reports—and in particular analytic pieces—on Palestinian politics and Hamas often takes on a politicized nature. As such, these also must be vetted properly to avoid relying on overly biased sources.

Note, however, that vetting in these cases are less of a challenge than in the scholarly literature. For one, the day-to-day coverage of Palestinian politics is largely focused on specific events and are thus often possible to confirm. For example, Palestinian news agencies such as *Ma'an* cover Palestinian politics in a no-nonsense manner, and their articles can thus be used as reliable sources. And second, the abundance of purported analytical pieces that fail to meet any standard of objectivity is easily identified and discarded. In sum, then, the voluminous literature dealing with Hamas and the extensive media coverage of Palestinian politics both constitute important sources of information for the coming analyses, provided that the necessary degree of caution is demonstrated both at the stage of source selection and throughout the actual processes of analysis.

2.2.3 Numbers from the occupied territories

Different sources of quantitative data will be utilized to illustrate and corroborate findings from the analyses. To a limited extent, data from the World Bank will be used to illuminate the economic development and de-development in occupied Palestine (World Bank 1999, 2003). More important, however, are the opinion surveys used to indicate the rise and fall of Hamas's popularity throughout its history. Survey data are drawn from one-off studies (Shadid and Seltzer 1988a, 1988b, 1989; Smith 1982), aggregated public opinion analyses (Shamir and Shikaki 2010; Zureik and Moughrabi 1987), and raw figures from Palestinian polling bureaus (CPRS 2000; JMCC 2009; NEC 2010; PSR 2011). The following sections will outline some basic challenges and strengths associated with these different data sources.

Palestinian public opinion

In addition to the range of common challenges associated with conducting surveys and utilizing their data, such as sampling, response rates, biases, etc. (see Johnston 2010 for a brief account of these), the relevant surveys from the occupied Palestinian territories were all

confidence in findings that are reported across the board (Lustick 1996, 616).

hampered by additional challenges. As Shadid and Seltzer note,

[t]he task of conducting political surveys in the occupied territories is difficult and potentially hazardous with perhaps the most difficult obstacle being that of obtaining the trust of the respondents who are often afraid to express their political views for fear of punishment by the military authorities (1988a, 19).

This echoes the challenges faced when attempting to interview Palestinians on the occupied West Bank discussed above; some were reluctant to express their views freely for fear of reprisals from either the IDF or the PA. On the West Bank this is nowadays particularly true for Hamas sympathizers, whereas Fatah supporters probably are scared in Gaza.

Furthermore, Shadid and Seltzer write,

[a] second obstacle is that the occupation authorities essentially ban field research and surveys on political topics. If we had applied for and received a permit—a slim possibility at best—we would have been suspected by the local population of collaboration, and the refusal rate would have been much higher. We decided not to request a permit, and thus our field staff was subject to imprisonment and the materials were subject to confiscation. Researchers from Hebrew University and al-Najah University were recently punished for conducting political research in Tulkarm and Nablus respectively.

TIME Magazine had a similar experience a couple of years earlier:

When they learned of the project, Israeli authorities charged that the poll violated both a 1950 Jordanian law, retained by the Israelis after the 1967 occupation, forbidding the collection or publication of “statistical data” without prior permission, and two Israeli military regulations for the occupied territories. One of the Israeli rules banned publication of material of “political significance”; the other forbade “publishing, in writing or orally, praises, sympathy or support of a hostile organization.” The Israeli authorities accused PORI of using “a member of a Palestinian Arab terrorist group” to canvass public opinion. They arrested that poll-taker and confiscated some of his data. None of the seized material was used in tabulating the poll. Last week the Israeli government decided not to prosecute TIME (Smith 1982).

In short, the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories has consequences for the quality of the data collected through surveys, in turn limiting their analytical value. As such, there is reason to doubt both the reliability and validity of these surveys. Yet not using these data solely because of this shortcoming seems like a wrong choice. For example, the early surveys carried out by Shadid and Seltzer (1988a, 1988b, 1989), TIME Magazine (Smith 1982), and A'si (1987)⁸⁶ are important historical records of political attitudes previously prevalent among Palestinians. Such data can be employed as a corrective to the often biased and politicized narrative of Palestinian political history. In addition, the regular surveys carried out under the auspices of Dr. Khalil Shikaki from 1993 until today constitute a rich source of data on Palestinian public opinion, and importantly *changes* in these attitudes (CPRS 2000; PSR 2011).⁸⁷

However, it is obvious that the data from all of these political surveys must be handled with great care, as the aforementioned challenges with data collected under occupation arguably might undermine their quality. It should, for instance, be mentioned that all publicly available polling data prior to the 2006 elections to the PLC indicated that the incumbent Fatah movement would remain in office, and that Hamas would obtain around a third of the parliamentary seats. Hamas won in a landslide, however, winning 74 of the 132 seats up for grabs. Although numerous factors explain the failure of the polls to predict this outcome,⁸⁸ it nevertheless strongly suggests that any trends and tendencies gleaned from these polls should only be considered indicative and suggestive.

Despite such obvious weaknesses, the polling data from CPRS and PSR is used throughout the thesis to trace the popularity of Hamas. While there are some variations, the typical CPRS and PSR poll had an average sample size of around 1 300 randomly selected persons over the age of 18, of which roughly two thirds came from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and one third from the Gaza Strip. These persons were then interviewed face-to-face in some 127 randomly selected locations, and asked a variety of questions pertaining to Palestinian politics. The reported non-response rate varied from 2 percent to 9 percent, with a margin of

86 The chapter analyzes hard to find survey data, e.g., two unpublished reports in Arabic from 1982–3 and four surveys conducted by a Palestinian magazine (three in 1983 and one in 1985, cf. A'si 1987, 188–96).

87 In the first seven-year period (1993 to 2000) these surveys were carried out by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS) in Nablus. From 2000 and onward, Dr. Shikaki's team has conducted the same survey from the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR).

88 See chapters 6 and 7 for detailed analyses of the electoral outcome and reasons why most involved parties and almost all observers, pollsters, and other analysts failed to predict the outcome.

error not exceeding 3 percent.⁸⁹

The surveys asked some one-off questions, e.g., related to specific events such as the Hebron Massacre in 1994 or some ongoing round of negotiations between the PLO and Israel. However, throughout all the polls, all respondents were asked “Which of the following political parties do you support?,” and presented with a list of the main Palestinian parties (Fatah, Hamas, PFLP, DFLP, Feda, PPP, Islamic Jihad), one or two categories of independents (either one without specification, or two specified as “nationalist” and “Islamist”), “other” or “none” as the alternatives.⁹⁰ Respondents have been asked this question approximately four times a year since 1993, although some years saw far more surveys conducted (e.g., nine times in 1994), and in some years fewer were conducted (e.g., at the height of the second *intifada* in 2001, when only two surveys could be carried out).

Throughout the analyses, the response to this question is used to measure the popularity of Hamas. Specifically, the data is used to build graphs indicating the fluctuating popularity over time of Hamas, its main contender Fatah, and the residual category of “all others combined”⁹¹ among Palestinians in the occupied territories. Given the discussed challenges associated with conducting survey research in occupied Palestine, it is crucial to avoid the temptation to overstate the significance of the trends and tendencies that can be gleaned from looking at these surveys. In sum, however, the data is considered to be useful for illustrative and corroborating purposes.

89 Consult <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/metodology.html> for further details regarding the methodology employed by PSR and CPRS. See also Shamir and Shikaki (2010, 13).

90 It should be noted that—in addition to minor adjustments in the formulation of the question—pollsters sometimes asked “If elections were held today, you would vote for candidates affiliated with,” and then presented respondents with the same list of alternatives. However, while there is a difference between *supporting* a party and saying that one would *vote* for a party, as the former can be likened to partisanship while the latter is a mere expression of intent, this difference has had negligible consequences for the use of these data, as the polls and their associated graphs only are suggestive and indicative of changes in popularity.

91 The “all others combined” category include all the minor Palestinian parties, independents, as well as the unspecified “other” category.

Chapter 3: Historical and contextual background

This chapter is dedicated to providing a necessary if brief historical and contextual background of the political environment in which Hamas emerged and developed. As the Israel-Palestine conflict, and indeed the longer history of this small territory at the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, have been covered in great detail,⁹² the below sections will not be an exhaustive account; rather, it is a limited overview of the developments and events considered crucial for understanding and contextualizing the emergence and evolution of Hamas.

In short, the chapter will focus on three topics deemed key to appreciating the historical context and the conditions under which Hamas operates. First, contextualizing the environment in which Hamas emerged and developed necessitates obtaining a grasp of the history of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Second, a general overview of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is needed, as this movement dominated Palestinian politics from the 1960s onward, and naturally also has influenced Hamas. Third, a brief introduction to the Muslim Brotherhood is needed for an analytical treatment of Hamas's ideological and organizational background.

The chapter begins with a historical summary of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, covering first the period from the emergence of modern Zionism in the late 1800s until the end of the Second World War, then from the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 until the Six-Day War of 1967, and finally from the subsequent Israeli occupation of the remaining parts of Palestine until the outbreak of the first *intifada* in 1987. The discussion will then move to a short overview of the PLO, beginning with a section on its organizational makeup, followed by a brief history from its founding by the Arab League until the late 1980s, and ending with a section focused on the Fatah party, which from the late 1960s and under the leadership of Yasser Arafat took control of the PLO and has dominated Palestinian politics ever since. Thereafter, an account of the Islamist movement out of which Hamas emerged will be offered, beginning with a historical introduction to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its ideological characteristics and organizational attributes, followed by two subsections covering the historical development of the Palestinian branches of the Muslim

92 The number of scholarly works dedicated to the conflict is innumerable. For a general introduction, see Milton-Edwards (2008c) or Pappé (2006). For the history of Israel and its people, see e.g., Sand (2010) or Bregman (2002). For historical accounts of the Palestinian people, see Muslih (1989) or R. Khalidi (2010).

Brotherhood, first under Egyptian and Jordanian rule from 1948 until 1967, and then under Israeli occupation from 1967 until 1987.

3.1 A brief history of the Israel-Palestine conflict

Because of the unresolved nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict, competing—and politicized—historical narratives of its causes and consequences abound; depending on whose version to believe, the area today making up Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories rightfully belong to the Jews, given to them by God’s sacred decree, or it is the homeland of the Palestinians, who have lived and cultivated the land for the thousands of years of the Jewish diaspora. However, and notwithstanding the fact that it would be outside the scope of this thesis to trace the conflict back to the expulsion of the Jewish people from the Kingdom of Judah in the 6th century BCE, such a historical approach would provide little relevant insights into the development and nature of the conflict. There is nothing intrinsically peculiar about the Israel-Palestine conflict; it is simply a conflict between two peoples laying claim to the same piece of land (Hajjar, Rabbani, and Beinini 1989, 103).

There is therefore no need to go back several millennia to understand and contextualize the conflict and the political situation created by its perpetuation. Rather, as the creation of the distinct and competing nationalities of Israelis and Palestinians are at the root of the conflict, these are what must be traced and explained to understand the background for the political environment in which Hamas emerged and developed.

3.1.1 From the Ottomans to the *nakba* (1880s–1948)

The basis for the Israel-Palestine conflict was laid with the emergence of the modern Zionist movement late in the 19th century (Sayigh 1997, 1), and in particular with the publication of *The State of the Jews* by Theodore Herzl in 1896 and the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. These events marked the proper beginnings of the creation of the modern Jewish nationalist movement known as Zionism, which hold that “Jews all over the world constitute a single nationality” and that their rightfully owned homeland is Eretz Yisra’el, or Land of Israel, which coincidentally refers to the same area as Palestine (Hajjar, Rabbani, and Beinini 1989, 102).⁹³ In the years following the congress in Basel, the incipient Zionist movement started purchasing land in the three Ottoman provinces making up Palestine, to which

93 See Figure 2 on page 84 for a political map of occupied Palestine, Israel, and the neighboring states.

European Jews migrated in increasing numbers (Singh 2011, 31).⁹⁴

As a result of this strategy, the number of Jews residing in Palestine more than doubled from 35 000 in 1880 to 75 000 in 1914 (Robinson 1997, 5). Palestinian tenant farmers who were expelled as a result of the Zionist purchases of the land they worked on unsurprisingly came to resist the influx of European Jews. By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, there were organized efforts from the Palestinians to protest and prohibit the sale of land to the Zionists (Singh 2011, 32). The resistance intensified toward the end of the First World War, and in particular with the publication of the *Balfour Declaration* by the British Foreign Secretary in 1917, which promised to aid the Zionist project of establishing a “Jewish national home in Palestine” (Schneer 2010).

Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, the territory of Palestine fell to Britain, which in 1920 obtained endorsement from the Allied powers to rule the territory as the British Mandate over Palestine, a state of affairs ratified by the League of Nations in 1922 (Sayigh 1997, 1). Partly because of the mentioned *Balfour Declaration*, Palestinians feared that their new rulers were partial to the Zionist project, and consequently the opposition to both intensified in the interwar years. Both in 1920–21 and in 1929, violent anti-Jewish riots took place in Palestine, prompting the British, via the so-called *1930 White Paper*, to alleviate the volatile situation by limiting the influx of European Jews to Palestine (Abboushi 1977, 23).⁹⁵

However, with the rise to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933, the situation deteriorated again. Fearing the spread of antisemitism in Europe, the Zionists increased their purchases of land in Palestine, which in turn prompted further violent clashes with the Palestinians. Eventually, the 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine broke out, with the Palestinians attempting to both stem the influx of European Jews and gain independence from British rule (see Abboushi 1977 for details). Although the British successfully—and brutally—suppressed the revolt, the uprising was not a complete failure; it proved beyond a doubt that the Palestinians had national aspirations of their own, that they were willing to fight the British to gain independence, and that they would not sit idly by watching the Zionists take over their land. Partly because of this, the British published yet another white paper in 1939,⁹⁶ in which the

94 Crucially, Zionism gained many adherents as a consequence of the spread of antisemitism throughout much of Europe at this time, exemplified by the pogroms in Eastern Europe, the Dreyfus Affair in France, and later with the Holocaust (Hajjar, Rabbani, and Beinun 1989, 102).

95 Also known as the *Passfield White Paper*, after its author, Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield.

96 Referred to as the *MacDonald White Paper*, after Malcolm MacDonald, the then Colonial Secretary who

British government limited further Jewish immigration and promised that Palestine would become an independent state in ten years. Moreover, it

declared unequivocally that the government had no intention of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. It explained that the creation of a Jewish state had never been promised to the Jews either by the Balfour Declaration or by the Mandate Agreement, and that such a notion was in fact contrary to those two documents (Abboushi 1977, 45).

However, with the outbreak of the Second World War that same year, the British suddenly had far more pressing issues to focus on than what to do with Palestine in the future; it had to defend its territories in the Middle East and North Africa against German and French Vichy invasion forces. And at the same time, Zionist paramilitary organizations intensified their resistance to the newly adopted British policy position, carrying out a number of armed operations targeting British servicemen.⁹⁷ By the end of the Second World War, it had become apparent for the British that the situation in Palestine was untenable; the Holocaust had led to a dramatic increase in the number of illegal Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and although the British tried to contain the influx, it was obvious in the immediate *postbellum* period that the international community had to take on a larger responsibility to solve the ongoing crisis (Sayigh 1997, 3).

It fell on the newly established United Nations (UN) to intervene, and already in November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181, titled *United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine*.⁹⁸ The partition plan divided the former British Mandate over Palestine between the Zionists and the Arab Palestinians, and each “state was to occupy a little under half the territory, leaving Jerusalem in an enclave under UN supervision” (Sayigh 1997, 3). While the Zionist movement largely seemed to accept the plan, it was refused by both the surrounding Arab states and the Palestinian national movements. Only days after the General Assembly passed Resolution 181, fighting between Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish settlers broke out.

By April 1948, the Zionist forces obtained control of most of the territory provided for a Jewish state according to the partition plan, and in the process it had displaced some 200 000

presided over it.

97 Maybe the most crucial of these attacks was the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, in which 91 people died and a further 46 were injured. The bombing was perpetrated by Irgun, a precursor to the current right-wing Likud party in Israel.

98 The Resolution passed with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, and ten abstentions.

to 300 000 Palestinians (Sayigh 1997, 3; Singh 2011, 33).⁹⁹ On May 14, 1948, the Zionist leaders proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, to become independent with the termination of the British Mandate over Palestine. And as anticipated, Britain formally evacuated from the territory the following day, prompting the neighboring Arab states to intervene in an attempt to retake the territory claimed by the Zionists (Sayigh 1997, 3). The Arab states failed in their attempt, however, and when the armistice agreements between Israel and the various neighboring states were concluded by late July 1949, Israel had added an additional third to the territory it initially was allotted under the UN partition plan.

Importantly, when successfully claiming these additional territories as its own, Israel displaced a further 500 000 Palestinians from their homes, making the total number of Palestinian refugees surpass 700 000. Most of these fled to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or to one of the surrounding Arab states (Morris 2004, 603–4). In the end, of the estimated 900 000 to 950 000 Palestinians residing in the areas now making up the state of Israel, only 150 000 remained (Sayigh 1997, 4).¹⁰⁰

The establishment of the State of Israel on much of the territory of the Mandate of Palestine and the ensuing Palestinian exodus became known as the *nakba*, meaning catastrophe, among Palestinians. The *nakba* soon became—and still remains—a crucial marker of Palestinian identity and nationalism. The conflict with Israel therefore constitutes a major uniting force for Palestinians, largely superseding opposing loyalties and potential identity conflicts between different socioeconomic classes, families, clans, religious groups, ideologies, and cultural traditions (R. Khalidi 2010, 194).¹⁰¹ In short, the exclusiveness of Palestinian nationalism—i.e., who is and who is not a Palestinian and where the territory of Palestine is—has been largely uncontested since the establishment of Israel: The territory of Palestine is what used to be the British Mandate over Palestine, and all who lived there prior to the influx

99 The issue of the Palestinian exodus of 1948 has attracted both politicized and scholarly attention. Consult Glazer (1980) for a brief overview, and see the first couple of contributions in the edited volume by Karmi and Cotran (1999) for more details.

100 While the war was still ongoing, the UN General Assembly reacted to the imminent refugee crisis as part of its Resolution 194, stating in Article 11 that “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date” (UNGA 1948). Interpretations of this statement diverge, with the Palestinians using it as the legal basis for their claim to right of return for their refugees, a claim Israel vehemently refuses to accept. It should also be mentioned that the scale of the refugee problem was such that the UN established a specialized agency to deal with it, called the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

101 As discussed in Robinson (1997, 1–8), the dominant Palestinian political class was traditionally the “notables,” i.e., rich families with strong standings in the local communities.

of the Zionists are Palestinians.¹⁰²

3.1.2 From the *nakba* to The Six-Day War (1948–1967)

Following the 1948 war,¹⁰³ Mandatory Palestine was divided between three countries: the newly established State of Israel successfully maintained control of some 77 percent of the area (colored yellow in Figure 2 below); the 365 km² Gaza Strip was under Egyptian military administration (located in the lower left corner, colored green); whereas the West Bank, the brunt of the remaining 23 percent of Mandatory Palestine and including East Jerusalem (also colored green, middle right), was under Jordanian control (Beinin and Hajjar 2014, 5).

Although tensions at times ran high between Israel and its neighboring Arab states after the war, it was initially in the interest of all to remain calm; the involved states were young and vulnerable, and naturally cautious not to upset the delicate regional balance, no matter how hostile the Arab states were to the establishment of Israel (Singh 2011, 34).¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, they had all large populations of Palestinians, who in turn had become increasingly patriotic and nationalistic following the *nakba* trauma (Sayigh 1997, 46). As such, it was imperative for the continued stability of these states to control the Palestinians.

And as discussed by Robinson, the three states occupying the former territories of Mandatory Palestine—Israel, Egypt, and Jordan—all tried to control the Palestinians residing within their borders by replicating the “Ottoman and British policies of social control by strengthening the notable elite through allocation of resources,” in effect attempting to co-opt local Palestinian leaders and using these to control the population (1997, 8–11). Note, however, that the administrative way in which these three states dealt with the Palestinians differed somewhat. Whereas Egypt kept rather tight control over Gaza, ruling the territory by military administration (Butler 2009, 98–100),¹⁰⁵ Jordan decided to annex the West Bank and East

102 Note also that the resistance against the Zionists has worked to counteract the diffusion of an Arab identity among Palestinian refugees, even if pan-Arabism to some extent has influenced the Palestinian fight for their homeland. See Løvlie (2014) and Baumgarten (2005) for further details.

103 Whereas the Palestinians as mentioned call this war the *nakba*, it is labeled by the Israelis as either the War of Liberation or the War of Independence.

104 To indicate the instability of the involved Arab states, there was a *coup d'état* in Egypt in 1952, when the Free Officers Movement deposed King Farouk; Egypt and Syria together formed the United Arab Republic from 1958 to 1961; in 1963, the Arab Socialist Baath party seized power in Syria, and in 1966, a second *coup d'état* was carried out by the neo-Baathists. Also in Lebanon the situation was volatile, and in 1958 UN forces had to aid the government to quell a violent insurrection aimed at getting Lebanon to join the United Arab Republic. Although no revolutions took place in Jordan, its first monarch, King Abdullah I, was assassinated by a Palestinian activist in East Jerusalem in 1951, and his successor Talal I was in turn deposed by his own son and heir, King Hussein I, soon after ascending the throne.

105 See Feldman (2008) for an in-depth study of the ways in which first Britain and then Egypt governed Gaza.

Jerusalem in 1950 and offered all Palestinians within its borders Jordanian citizenship (Sayigh 1997, 41).¹⁰⁶ Inside Israel, the relatively few Palestinians remaining were subject to tight control, although most eventually received Israeli citizenship (Sayigh 1997, 37–39).¹⁰⁷

Figure 2: Political map of Palestine



(Source: map 3584, rev. 2 by the UN Cartographic Section 2004, slightly adjusted).

106 Jordan’s rule of the West Bank from 1948 until 1967 has been dealt with expertly by various authors. See, for example, A. Cohen (1982) for an overview of political parties on the West Bank under the Jordanian regime.

107 The *de jure* and *de facto* social, economic, and political rights of the Israeli-Palestinians (alternatively, the Arab-Israelis) is a distinct area of research. See e.g., Tessler and Grant (1998) for a brief overview.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the various host countries to control the Palestinians and curb their national aspirations, largely uncoordinated Palestinian guerrilla movements managed to carry out military operations inside Israel in the years following 1948. These operations inevitably led to reprisals from Israel, sometimes prompting Israel to breach the armistice lines and venture into its neighboring countries to capture or kill Palestinian militants. The Arab nations, in turn, saw these Israeli operations as provocations, and as a consequence of this tit-for-tat pattern of Palestinian guerrilla operations and Israeli reprisals, the regional situation became increasingly tense (Singh 2011, 34).¹⁰⁸

Following the 1966 *coup d'état* in Syria, the already tense situation took a turn for the worse; the new regime actively encouraged Palestinian guerrilla movements to operate along its border with Israel, which inescapably destabilized the region. Added to this, in the spring of 1967, the Soviet Union provided false intelligence to the Syrians, claiming that Israeli forces were massing close to its border (Beinin and Hajjar 2014, 6). Responding to Syria's plea for assistance, Egypt in turn began mobilizing its troops in Sinai in May, prompting the crisis to escalate further (Singh 2011, 34).

On June 5, 1967, Israel responded preemptively and struck militarily against both Syria and Egypt, and what became known as the Six-Day War was a fact.¹⁰⁹ Jordan soon came to the aid of its Arab brethren, and was subsequently also attacked by Israel. The war lasted only for six days, after which Israel emerged as the decisive victor; it had successfully defeated the much more populous surrounding Arab states and established itself as the dominant military power in the region. Through the course of this brief war, Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from Jordan (Beinin and Hajjar 2014, 6). In short, the Six-Day War of 1967 recast the fundamentals of the regional power balance, and its outcome continues to affect Middle Eastern politics to a profound degree (Popp 2006, 281).

108 Also, changes in the international power balance affected the regional situation and the Israel-Palestine conflict. For example, in 1956, when the Egyptian president Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which hitherto had been under joint French and British control, a short war broke out; Britain and France tried to regain control of the canal by military means and were aided in this by Israel. For a short period, this led Israel to occupy both Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. However, pressure from the US and the Soviet Union forced the former great powers to retreat, and Israel first handed back Gaza, and later the Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. Naturally, such events did little to ease the tense regional situation (Sayigh 1997, 23–27).

109 See Popp (2006) for a thorough analysis of the various theories purporting to explain the outbreak of the Six-Day War.

3.1.3 From occupation to the *intifada* (1967–1987)

The UN Security Council responded to the Six-Day War and the ensuing Israeli occupation of the remaining parts of Mandatory Palestine with Resolution 242,¹¹⁰ stating that Israel had to withdraw its “armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and that “a just settlement of the refugee problem” had to be found (UNSC 1967). For, as a consequence of Israel’s new-won territories, some 1.3 million Palestinians now lived within the cease-fire lines, with 400 000 inside Israel proper, 400 000 on the occupied Gaza Strip, and 500 000 on the occupied West Bank (Masalha 1999, 103).¹¹¹

Despite immense international pressure on Israel to end the occupation, exemplified both by UNSCR 242, the number of subsequent Security Council Resolutions reaffirming it,¹¹² and the attempts by the neighboring Arab states to reclaim the territory by force,¹¹³ Israel has upheld the occupation and governed the territories through military administration since June 10, 1967.¹¹⁴ And as summed up by Nakhleh twenty years after the Six-Day War, the Israeli military administration of the occupied territories has

affected every facet of the people’s daily existence: travel is restricted, building permits are delayed or denied, and funding for social services have [*sic*] been cut. Goods produced on the West Bank cannot easily be marketed in Israel, and all aspects of local government are controlled by the military government (1988, 209).

110 The Resolution was adopted unanimously.

111 In addition, some 320 000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during and immediately after the war (Masalha 1999, 64).

112 UNSCR 242 has become somewhat of a mainstay in later UNSCR dealings with the Israel-Palestine conflict, including, for instance, in UNSCR 338 (1973), UNSCR 667 (1990), and UNSCR 1322 (2000).

113 The year after being defeated by Israel, Egypt began preparations to launch its War of Attrition against Israel, in what was ultimately a failed attempt to regain control of Gaza and the Sinai peninsula. The war ended with a ceasefire agreement in 1970, without any border changes (A. S. Khalidi 1973). Next, on October 6, 1973, the Arab states, led by Egypt and Syria, launched a surprise attack against Israel. Known as the Yom Kippur War, as it was launched on this holiest day in Judaism, the element of surprise initially allowed the Arab armies to recapture parts of their respective territories (i.e., the Sinai Peninsula for Egypt and the Golan Heights for Syria). Israel proved able to repel the invading forces, largely thanks to increased US military support, and the war ended with yet another ceasefire agreement (Beinin and Hajjar 2014, 8). It should be noted that the initial military successes by the Arab armies at least partly rehabilitated their honor from the humiliating defeat in the Six-Day War, which in turn was a necessary precondition for the negotiations between Egypt and Israel in the latter part of the 1970s. These US-sponsored negotiations first led to the Camp David Accords of 1978, and eventually culminated with the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979, whose main points included the mutual recognition between Israel and Egypt, normalization of relations, and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula, which Egypt promised to leave demilitarized (Beinin and Hajjar 2014, 8).

114 See Jamal (2005, 22–29) for a brief overview of the occupation policies implemented by Israel following the 1967 war.

And Hajjar, Rabbani, and Beinín provide further examples of how the occupation has affected Palestinians in the territories, where

it is illegal to fly the Palestinian flag, publish or possess “subversive” literature, or hold a press conference without permission. One Israeli military order in the West Bank makes it illegal for Palestinians to pick and sell wild thyme, to protect an Israeli family’s monopoly over the herb’s production (1989, 108).

In short, Israel has since its occupation of the remaining parts of Mandatory Palestine defined the social, economic, and political conditions there.¹¹⁵ In addition to the military orders and general occupation policies curbing the political and economic development, Israel also began settling in the occupied territories soon after its victory (B’Tselem 2010). As indicated in Figure 3 below, the number of settlers and settlements on the occupied West Bank grew steadily, from 3 200 settlers in 20 settlements in 1976, to 57 900 settlers in 110 settlements in 1987.¹¹⁶ This proliferation of settlers and settlements carved the occupied West Bank into disconnected enclaves, further exacerbating the already difficult situation of the Palestinians living there.¹¹⁷

The harsh conditions in the occupied territories led many Palestinians to protests the occupation.¹¹⁸ From 1977 to 1982, the yearly number of protests averaged 500 and included general strikes, guerrilla attacks against Israeli military installations, and both organized and unorganized demonstrations and revolts.¹¹⁹ Most of these various forms of protest led to Israeli retaliations, and from 1967 to 1982, some 300 000 Palestinians were detained for various periods by Israeli security forces, almost all without any trial.¹²⁰ And as the situation failed to improve throughout the 1980s, the number of protests increased, with an average between 3 000 and 4 400 per year (Hajjar, Rabbani, and Beinín 1989, 108). Crucially, Palestinian protests against the occupation also became increasingly violent in this period, and

115 Consult Aronson (1990) for a detailed account of Israeli occupation policies on the West Bank and their consequences. See Roy (1995) for a similarly thorough account of Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip.

116 This equals a compound annual increase of settlers from 1976 to 1987 on the occupied West Bank of 27.29 percent.

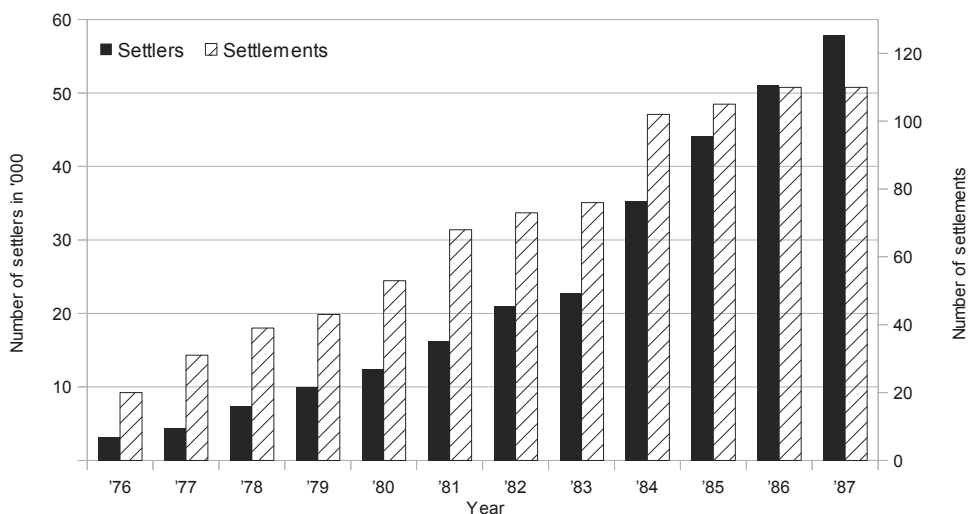
117 Israel also illegally settled the Gaza Strip, although to a far less extent.

118 See the section titled *From a diaspora of diplomats to exiled guerrillas* pp. 92ff. for a short discussion of the organized guerrilla movements resisting the Israeli occupation in the years from 1967 to 1987.

119 Cf. Pearlman (2011, 94–102) for an overview of Palestinian protests under Israeli occupation from 1967 until the first *intifada*.

120 It should also be noted that Israel deported a number of Palestinians from the occupied territories since 1967, initially rather extensively but later more selectively, targeting “specific people with public appeal and mobilizing potential” (see Table 1.2 in Jamal 2005, 26–27 for details).

Figure 3: Settlers and settlements, 1976–1987 (West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem)



(Source: B'Tselem 2010).

both the number of stone throwing incidents and armed attacks rose markedly in the mid-1980s (Pearlman 2011, 101).

In late 1985, and as a direct response to the intensification and violent turn of the Palestinian protests, Israel declared its Iron Fist policy (Shakrah 1986, 120). The ensuing months and years saw an increase in deportations of Palestinian activists, renewed use of so-called “administrative detention,” i.e., short-term imprisonment of Palestinians without trial,¹²¹ further escalation in the settlement of the West Bank,¹²² with the associated demolition of Palestinian houses and confiscation of Palestinian land, all accompanied by statements by Israeli officials such as then Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin that “there will be no development [in the occupied territories] initiated by the Israeli government, and no permits will be given for expanding agriculture or industry [there], which may compete with the state of Israel” (Shakrah 1986, 124).

121 According to the Red Cross, some 80 percent of those detained from the various refugee camps on the West Bank were between the age of twelve and sixteen (Shakrah 1986, 121).

122 Up from 35 000 settlers in 1984 to 63 600 in 1988 (B'Tselem 2010, 9).

In essence, the developments following the implementation of the Iron First policy “continued the trend of Palestinian displacement and dispossession and increased Palestinian dependency on Israeli facilities and the ongoing implementation of economic policies” (Shakrah 1986, 123), and worked to exacerbate the already tense and volatile situation. As will be covered in the next chapter, the escalation eventually culminated with the outbreak of the first *intifada* in 1987, a popular uprising that rapidly spread throughout the occupied territories and also marked the entrance of Hamas on the Palestinian political scene.

To summarize, it is clear from the above that Israel for a long time has exercised a high degree of influence on the Palestinian political scene; in particular since its occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank following the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel has for most intents and purposes dictated the conditions of the everyday lives of Palestinians, and fundamentally—and negatively—affected the possibilities for social, economic, and political development. It is against this backdrop that the establishment of Hamas in the early days of the first *intifada* will be analyzed and understood.

3.2 The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

In addition to Israel, which, as explicated above, has dictated the conditions in occupied Palestine since 1967, Hamas has also been influenced by various domestic players, primarily the PLO. Founded by the Arab League in 1964, the PLO was initially closely associated with the more powerful Arab leaders, and in particular president Nasser of Egypt (Cobban 1984, 28–29; R. Hamid 1975, 93–94). However, after the Arab states lost to Israel in the Six-Day War in 1967, both the defeated regimes and pan-Arabism as an ideology lost a great deal of credibility (R. Khalidi 2010, 193). The outcome of the war proved to the PLO that Arab patronage would be insufficient to liberate Palestine.

The PLO therefore freed itself from such direct sponsorship and developed into an independent Palestinian organization, dominated by the Fatah party and its late leader Yasser Arafat (R. Hamid 1975, 98). From then on until the first *intifada* (1987),¹²³ Palestinian politics became synonymous with the PLO (Hilal 2010; Malki 2006; Muslih 1990, 4). Illustrative of its importance, the PLO has observer status in the UN General Assembly, and it was the PLO that signed the Oslo Accords on behalf of the Palestinians, thereby ending the first *intifada*

123 *Intifada* is usually understood to mean “uprising” or “resistance.” The first Palestinian *intifada* broke out in December 1987 and lasted until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

and establishing the Palestinian Authority (PA) as the Palestinian proto-state.¹²⁴ As will be discussed in detail in the later chapters, the PLO in effect recreated the PA as its own tool.¹²⁵ The overlap of personnel and mixing of roles and mandates makes it difficult to disentangle the exact relationship between the Fatah, the PLO, and the PA. Suffice it to say, this Fatah-PLO-PA nexus is a formidable political force in the occupied territories, and is and has been—apart from Israel—the most influential actor vis-à-vis Hamas.

3.2.1 The organization

The PLO is a confederate, multi-faction organization currently made up of ten guerrilla movements.¹²⁶ Because of the ideological climate at the time of their founding, all the factions currently in the PLO ostensibly subscribe to various revolutionary and secular ideologies,¹²⁷ although most of them arguably lack ideological depth (Sayigh 1997, 56).¹²⁸ Rather than ideological differences, the major conflict lines between the various PLO factions have traditionally been strategic in nature.¹²⁹ In brief, one can identify two competing blocs within the PLO. The PFLP led those factions convinced that the solution to the Palestinian question in essence was a common Arab problem and that any solution would involve a pan-Arab revolution.¹³⁰ As such, they criticized the nationalist bloc led by Fatah, who for its part distrusted the revolutionary credentials of the Arab regimes and claimed that the Palestinians

124 Consult Abu-Amr (1994b) and Butenschön (1998) for a discussion on the Oslo Accords and the first years of the PA. See Cobban (1984) for a detailed account of the PLO and its history.

125 Although the PA nominally was an independent political entity, cadres and guerrillas from Fatah and the PLO filled its political positions and bureaucracy and formed the backbone of its security forces (Abu-Amr 1997; Usher 1996).

126 The number of constituent organizations have fluctuated somewhat throughout the history of the PLO. For details, consult Sayigh (1997).

127 The PFLP and its offshoot, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), are to varying degrees Marxist (or at least leftist) in their outlook (Cubert 1997, 52, 96–112); the DFLP's own offshoot, the Palestine Democratic Union (known as Fida), is social democratic, as is the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) (Sayigh 1997, 647), although the latter used to be communist (the PPP was formerly known as the Palestinian Communist Party, PCP); Sai'qa is the Palestinian arm of the Syrian Baathists whereas the Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and the Palestinian Arab Front (PAF) are associated with the Iraqi Baath Party, meaning that they all subscribe to versions of Arab socialism (Cobban 1984, 157, 163); the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF) are both minor factions with leftist inclinations (both of which can trace their pedigree to the PFLP); and finally Fatah (the inverse acronym of Palestinian National Liberation Movement in Arabic, often translated to “conquest”), the largest and most important PLO faction, also subscribes to leftist and secular ideas.

128 See Sayigh (1997, xlii) for a genealogical diagram of Palestinian organizations.

129 Løvlie (2014) identifies three main strategic points of contention within the PLO, namely *how* Palestine should be liberated (armed resistance or negotiations), *how much* to liberate (all or part of historic Palestine), and by *whom* (a pan-Arab solution or a Palestinian solution).

130 The ideological outlook of the PFLP can be explained by the fact that it was established in the wake of the Six-Day War by former leaders of the Arab National Movement (ANM), a pan-Arab organization founded in Beirut in the 1950s by Palestinian refugees set on solving the Palestinian issue through a common Arab solution (Baumgarten 2005, 27; R. Khalidi 1991).

should take responsibility for their own liberation. While both factions were nationalist, the one led by Fatah was arguably more nationalistic and patriotic than the one led by the PFLP (Jamal 2005, 16–19).¹³¹

The PLO is organized hierarchically. Nominally, ultimate authority within the PLO rests with the Palestine National Council (PNC), the Palestinian parliament made up of some 350–400 members appointed by the constituent organizations of the PLO, as well as various Palestinian civil society organizations (Cobban 1984, 13; Pina 2005, 3).¹³² The PNC in turn elects between 14 and 18 members to the Executive Committee, which in turn appoints the Chairman of the Committee. The Chairman of the Committee, in turn, was from the outset vested with autocratic powers within the PLO, and functioned as both the Spokesman for the PNC and nominally the Commander-in-Chief of the now largely defunct Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) (R. Hamid 1975, 96).¹³³

Traditionally, the Executive Committee has been far more powerful than the PNC, and its makeup has largely reflected the power balance between the various membership factions. The various departments of the PLO, such as the political, information, and planning departments, are all subjugated to the Executive Committee, and not the PNC (R. Hamid 1975, 102). It should also be noted that, as a result of the Palestinian exodus, the PNC has only rarely managed to obtain a quorum. Because of this, the PNC has been defunct for long periods of time. The PLO Central Council was therefore established to function as the acting deliberative and legislative forum when the PNC could not meet. This Central Council has had between 40 and 124 members, elected from the PNC (Pina 2005, 3).¹³⁴

It should also be mentioned that while the PLO previously had its own regular army, the PLA, most of the constituent organizations of the PLO have their own guerrilla units. Crucially,

131 It should also be noted that while the pan-Arabists still exist today and do command a certain level of popular support, the Fatah-led bloc has dominated the PLO since its leader, the late Yasser Arafat, was elected its Chairman in 1969 (Cobban 1984, 44).

132 According to Hamid, the first PNC in 1964 had 422 officials, and “included members of the Jordanian Parliament and that of the Gaza Strip, and mayors and presidents of urban and rural councils ... clergymen, pharmacists, professors, lawyers, doctors, engineers, businessmen, bankers, and industrialists ... farmers, labour leaders, and representatives of refugee camps and women’s and students’ organizations” (1975, 94).

133 Note, however, that the three PLA contingents were usually controlled by their respective host countries, i.e., Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and only to a limited degree by the PLO itself.

134 In addition to this political hierarchy, the PLO is also made up of a plethora of civil society organizations, trade unions, and interest organizations. According to Cobban, at least the following organizations are part of the PLO: General Union of Palestinian Workers, General Union of Palestinian Students, General Union of Palestinian Writers, General Union of Palestinian Women, and General Union of Palestinian Engineers (1984, 13).

these are not controlled by the PLO, but are rather commanded by their own organizations (R. Hamid 1975, 105). And finally, it is noteworthy that the PLO has never held popular elections to its various bodies, relying instead on opaque backroom dealings to nominate and appoint representatives and officials from its constituent organizations (Muslih 1990, 5).

3.2.2 From a diaspora of diplomats to exiled guerrillas

The PLO has operated in exile for most of its existence.¹³⁵ From its establishment in 1964 until the Six-Day War in 1967, the PLO was tightly tied to Egypt, and while the first and constituting PNC session was held in then Jordanian controlled Jerusalem in 1964, subsequent sessions were located in Egypt or Egyptian controlled Gaza. The Egyptian influence, combined with the aforementioned need for the newly independent Arab states to retain control of the Palestinians lest they risk destabilizing the region, meant that the PLO for these first years remained mostly a diplomatic outfit (R. Hamid 1975, 96–97).

The rhetoric of the PLO soon became more militant, however, at least in part as a response to the ongoing guerrilla warfare against Israel by Palestinian movements not yet part of the PLO, the most prominent of which was Fatah (Baumgarten 2005, 29). As the official liberation movement of the Palestinians, the PLO could not be seen to be less active in its efforts to actually liberate Palestine than these smaller groups. Late in December 1966, then PLO Chairman Shuqairy therefore “announced the replacement of the Executive Committee with a Revolutionary Council ‘to assume the responsibility of preparing the people for the war of liberation’” (R. Hamid 1975, 97).

Nevertheless, the events of 1967 voided whatever plans Shuqairy might have had; following their humiliating defeat in the Six-Day War, it became imperative for the Arab regimes to regain both honor and the territory they lost by military means (R. Hamid 1975, 98). For the PLO and the other Palestinian movements, it was now obvious that armed struggle—and not Arab sponsorship—was the only viable way toward liberation (Baumgarten 2005, 34). And these changes in strategic thinking within both the Arab regimes and the Palestinian movements had consequences for the PLO.

For one, the various Palestinian guerrilla units gained both experience and popularity by fighting alongside Jordanian and Egyptian forces against Israel in the War of Attrition.¹³⁶ In

135 See Jamal (2005) for an analysis of Palestinian politics between 1967 and 2005 with a focus on the competition between the inside, local leaders, and the exiled PLO leadership.

136 See fn. 113 on page 86.

particular, the Battle of Karameh in March 1968, where Palestinian commandos and the Jordanian army fought against a larger Israeli force, increased the standing of the Palestinian guerrilla groups (R. Hamid 1975, 99). Second, and after various attempts to reconcile the old PLO leadership and the increasingly popular and powerful militias throughout 1967 and 1968, the latter eventually won control of the PLO.¹³⁷ At the 5th PNC session in Cairo, February 1 to 5, 1969 (JPS 1987, 150), Fatah won 33 of the then 105 seats of the PNC, and became the single largest faction in the PLO. Furthermore, the leader of Fatah, Yasser Arafat, was elected Chairman of the PLO (R. Hamid 1975, 100).

Under the new leadership, and operating from Jordan, commandos from the various PLO organizations continued to carry out military incursions into the occupied West Bank. As before, these operations inevitably provoked Israeli retaliations, some of which had devastating consequences for civilians in Jordan.¹³⁸ Combined with the fact that the PLO had expanded and entrenched its position in Jordan, operating as a state within a state, complete with security services, courts, information and media offices, King Hussein of Jordan became increasingly worried about the integrity and survival of his country.¹³⁹

In an attempt to regain control and stabilize the situation, King Hussein therefore tried to rein in and control the guerrillas in 1970 by setting new terms for guerrilla activities in the Kingdom. The PLO, however, was eager to keep its autonomous position. Throughout the spring and summer of 1970, the relationship between the King and the PLO deteriorated, and in September that year, the PLO called for the overthrow of the monarchy and the installation of a “revolutionary nationalist [Palestinian] government” in its place (Sayigh 1997, 260). Subsequently, and in what became known as Black September, intense clashes between the PLO and the Jordanian army broke out. Although there were various lulls and hiatuses in the fighting over the coming months, the war continued until June 1971. By then, the Jordanian army had successfully routed out the PLO from the Kingdom (Sayigh 1997, 262–81).

The PLO subsequently relocated to Lebanon, and from there continued to mount armed incursions into the northern parts of Israel. However, Lebanon descended into civil war in 1975, and the PLO soon became part of the fighting. To complicate things further, a renegade

137 For details of these internal struggles for power in the PLO, see Hamid (1975, 99–100) and Sayigh (1997, 218–21).

138 Israeli retaliatory strikes in 1968 forced 100 000 inhabitants in the Jordan Valley to flee, and in 1969 Israeli airstrikes extended far into Jordan (Sayigh 1997, 243).

139 For a detailed historical account of the relationship between Jordan and the PLO, consult Sayigh (1997, 243–81).

Palestinian faction tried to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in London on June 3, 1982. With the attempted assassination as the immediate pretext, but having waited for a provocation to finally respond to the ongoing Palestinian attacks, Israel invaded Lebanon on the following day (Sayigh 1997, 523). By August 1982, Israel had laid siege on Beirut,¹⁴⁰ prompting international involvement. Under US auspices, a ceasefire agreement was negotiated, which stipulated that the PLO and its guerrillas would evacuate from Lebanon.¹⁴¹

After the expulsion from Lebanon, the PLO relocated to Tunisia, where it remained until 1994 (Beinin and Hajjar 2014, 8). Then, following the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the establishment of the PA in 1994, the PLO and its exiled leaders could for the first time return to occupied Palestine.¹⁴² A number of crucial events and developments took place in the intervening years, and these will be discussed in the coming section covering the history, ideology, and development of Fatah. For although Fatah is only one of ten constituting organization of the PLO and the two cannot be conflated, it dominated the Palestinian national movement from the mid-1970s onward. In particular, Yasser Arafat, both the leader of Fatah and the Chairman of the PLO, came to personify the Palestinian struggle for liberation. As such, it is pertinent to provide a brief but focused history of Fatah.

3.2.3 Fatah—powerful and pragmatic

Fatah was established in the late 1950s (Cobban 1984, 23),¹⁴³ with the stated aim “to liberate the whole of Palestine and destroy the foundations of [the] colonialist, Zionist occupation state and society” (Sayigh 1997, 87). Modeled after and inspired by the contemporary liberation wars and movements—and in particular those in Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam—Fatah had established itself as the main Palestinian nationalist faction advocating armed struggle against the Israeli occupation by the time it took leadership of the PLO in 1969 (Baumgarten 2005; Rubin 1994, 1–23). Partly as a side effect of adopting the strategies and tactics of these guerrilla groups, and partly as a byproduct of the Cold War—with the Soviet Union sponsoring many liberation movements against the colonial powers of the West—Fatah adopted a revolutionary and secular ideology, which it combined with a nationalist rhetoric

140 For details of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, see Sayigh (1997, 522–43).

141 As part of the invasion, and after the evacuation of the PLO, Israel cooperated with the Lebanese Phalange party to commit the Sabra and Shatila massacres, in which somewhere between 300 and 3 000 Palestinian refugees and Lebanese Shias were killed in two refugee camps on the outskirts of Beirut (Malone 1985).

142 Both the Oslo process and the return of the PLO to the occupied territories will be covered in some detail in chapter 5.

143 There are some discrepancies regarding the exact date between the different historical accounts of Fatah’s founding, ranging from 1958 to 1962 (Cobban 1984, 23–24; Sayigh 1997, 84).

influenced by the anti-colonial discourse.¹⁴⁴

Crucially, Fatah has arguably only paid lip-service to these ideals throughout most of its history. As a consequence of its strong focus on nationalism and lack of ideological rigidity, Fatah has been free to adopt and discard ideological rhetoric as its leaders have seen fit.¹⁴⁵ During the late 1960s and 1970s, Fatah therefore utilized the then prevalent anti-colonial discourse, as can be gleaned from its Constitution. However, as long as pan-Arabism remained an ideological force to be reckoned with,¹⁴⁶ it made sense for Fatah to downplay the exclusivity of its Palestinian nationalism. Instead, Fatah framed its goal of liberating Palestine as the necessary first step toward Arab unity (Sayigh 1997, 198–99).¹⁴⁷ Later, after the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Islamic revivalism that followed, Fatah supplemented its old slogans, such as “the right to self-determination” and “revolution until victory,” with verses and excerpts from the Koran (Frisch 2005).

This ideological elasticity and pragmatism have had consequences for Fatah’s strategy, and given its dominance, also for the PLO and thus Palestinian politics. In particular, two key developments underline this. First, Fatah led the 12th PNC session in Cairo, June 1 to 9, 1974, to adopt the so-called ten-point political program, which would come to influence PLO strategy and policy for the next decades (JPS 1987, 151). Although the first article in the adopted program rejects UNSCR 242 and states that the PLO “refuses to have anything to do with this resolution at any level, Arab or international” (PNC 1974), it also paved the way for alternative strategies in the struggle for liberation. Specifically, article two of the ten-point program states that the PLO “will employ all means, and first and foremost armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated” (PNC 1974).

Although the wording remains revolutionary, two crucial points should be highlighted from the above quotation. First, even if armed struggle remains the primary strategy, it implicitly

144 A brief look at Fatah’s 1968 Constitution supports such an interpretation. Among other claims, it states that Fatah is a national, revolutionary movement fighting against Zionism, colonialism, and international imperialism. In this way, Fatah frames the liberation of Palestine as part of the global fight against Western colonialism and imperialism, situation itself squarely in the anti-colonial camp (Rubin 1994, 8–9). Of course, the officially stated goals of any political party or movement might be sidelined for various reasons and should not be taken at face value (Panebianco 1988). They are, nevertheless, considered a useful source of data on ideology and policy positions (Budge et al. 2001).

145 See Baumgarten (2005) and Løvlie (2014) for analyses of Fatah’s pragmatism.

146 I.e., until the defeat of the Arab armies at the hands of Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967.

147 The exact slogan was the reverse of the pan-Arabist, i.e., “Palestine is the road to unity” rather than “unity is the road to Palestine” (Sayigh 1997, 198).

opens for other strategies in the Palestinian fight for liberation. This marks a departure from the dominant idea that armed struggle was the only way to liberate Palestine. Second, it advocates the establishment of a Palestinian state on “every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated,” i.e., not necessarily the whole of historic Palestine (R. Hamid 1975, 108–9). In essence, then, the adoption of the ten-point program in 1974 constituted a radical shift for the PLO in both strategy and goals (Løvlie 2014).¹⁴⁸

Crucially, since the adoption of the ten-point program allowed for both negotiations and a Palestinian state alongside Israel, the Arab Summit held in Rabat, Morocco, in October 1974 rewarded the PLO by recognizing it as the Palestinian’s “sole legitimate representatives” (Cubert 1997, 59). This, in turn, paved the way for the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 3237 in November 1974, which invited “the Palestinian Liberation Organization to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity as an observer,” i.e., granting the PLO non-state observer status in the UN (UNGA 1974b).

The second event underlining the ideological elasticity and pragmatism of Fatah was the Palestinian Declaration of Independence proclaimed at the 19th PNC session in Algiers. On November 15, 1988, Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, announced a “moral and psychological” Palestinian state on the occupied Palestinian territories, with Jerusalem as its capital. In an accompanying document, UN Security Council Resolution 242 was referenced, specifying the territory of the Palestinian state as that of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thus reducing the Palestinian territorial claim by some 78 percent (Muslih 1990; PNC 1988).

This proclamation of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders constituted a radical shift in PLO politics with far-reaching consequences; by adopting a two-state solution and thus *de facto* recognizing the State of Israel, direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians became possible for the first time.¹⁴⁹ In 1991 the demise of communism and the ensuing “new world order” made it possible for the US to arrange the Madrid Conference between Israel and Palestine (Usher 1995a, 2–3). This conference was the first of a range of talks between Israel

148 The adoption of this ten-point program led certain constituent PLO factions, and most prominently the PFLP, to temporarily leave the organization in protest. Collectively, these were known as the Rejectionist Front (Cubert 1997, 59).

149 Confronted with these examples of political pragmatism and ideological opportunism, a senior Fatah cadre retorted that Fatah has been and continues to be the “National Movement for the Liberation of Palestine, and *not* a party which has an ideology. We have no ideology. We are not Marxist. We are not Islamist. Fatah is not a party with a political or social program” (interviewed in Ramallah, May 24, 2011). Similar sentiments regarding the ideological elasticity of Fatah were expressed by various Palestinian scholars, including Dr. Giacaman and pollster and analyst Jamil Rabah (interviewed in Ramallah, April 5 and March 23, 2011, respectively).

and Palestinians leading up to the Oslo Accords, and the first in which Israeli and Palestinian officials negotiated directly with each other.¹⁵⁰

In sum, it is clear from the above that the PLO under the control of Fatah has played a dominant and crucial role in Palestinian politics from the late 1960s onward. Although the effects of the Israeli occupation far outweigh the influence of the PLO for Palestinians living inside the occupied territories, the establishment of Hamas by the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza was partly a response to the lack of religiosity on the part of the PLO, as well as its failure to liberate Palestine after decades of trying. And as will be demonstrated in the coming chapters, the competition between the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus and Hamas has come to define and polarize the Palestinian political field (Hilal 2010; Løvlie 2014).

3.3 The Muslim Brotherhood—Hamas's ancestor

The Islamist revivalist movement of which Hamas is a part has a history going back to at least the 1920s. This section purports to lay the necessary historical backdrop for the coming theoretically grounded analyses of Hamas and its history from 1987 onward, by providing a short account of its ideological roots and organizational ancestors.

First, a brief overview of the history, ideology, and organization of the Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt from its inception in the 1928 to the late 1940s is provided. Next comes a somewhat more detailed account of the development of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, beginning with its establishment in 1945–46 and onward until the 1967 Six-Day War, and then from the ensuing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories to the establishment of Hamas in 1987.

3.3.1 The Society of the Muslim Brothers

The Society of the Muslim Brothers is recognized as the 20th century's largest and most influential Islamic political movement (Simms 2002).¹⁵¹ With its long and rich history, it is outside the scope of this chapter to provide a complete account of all the Brotherhood's aspects. The following paragraphs are therefore limited to a historical overview of the Brotherhood's first 20 years, a summary of its most important ideological characteristics, and a brief discussion of its basic organizational attributes.

150 The Oslo Accords and their consequences for Palestinian politics in general and Hamas in particular will be covered in coming chapters.

151 Colloquially known as the Muslim Brotherhood or just The Brothers.

The first 20 years at a glance

The Muslim Brotherhood was established by the schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna in 1928, in the Egyptian city of Isma'iliya. The Brotherhood was but one of a number of conservative reformist Islamic organizations emerging in Egypt at the time, many of which were established in response to the “failure of liberal institutions ... to free the country from the British” (Aly and Wenner 1982, 339). The Brotherhood—as many of its Islamic contemporary movements—argued that the current woes of Egyptians stemmed from the decadence produced by secularization, Westernization, and their departure from “true” Islam (Simms 2002, 570). Consequently, the Brothers’ suggested remedy was a return to Islam, and in particular a return to the ways of the “golden age” of the early Islamic caliphates (Aly and Wenner 1982, 338–39).

While the Brotherhood eventually developed into a political anti-colonization organization aiming to liberate Egypt from British rule, it remained a largely apolitical movement for its first ten years, focusing on religious education, welfare provision, and social work (Aly and Wenner 1982, 338). During these early years, al-Banna also spent considerable efforts on membership recruitment and organization-building (Lia 2006c, 93–108). His efforts paid off, as indicated by the rapid expansion of the Brotherhood. After relocating to Cairo in 1932, the number of branches increased from five to 15, and by 1938, the Brotherhood had some 300 branches (Lia 2006c, 295). In the same period, the number of regular members increased to somewhere between 50 000 and 150 000 members (Munson 2001, 488).¹⁵²

The late 1930s also saw the Brotherhood’s first forays into political activism. Responding to the Great Arab Rebellion in the British Mandate of Palestine,¹⁵³ the Brotherhood organized demonstrations and raised funds to support the rebellion. It also turned increasingly anti-British in its leaflets and newspapers, calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt (Munson 2001, 488). Finally, in 1941, the Brotherhood announced its candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Egypt. In many ways the Brotherhood had thus completed its transformation from a socially oriented, conservative reform movement to a political organization intent on exploiting its increasing popular support to influence politics.

152 See Munson (2001) for an in-depth analysis explaining the Brotherhood’s rapid expansion.

153 Discussed briefly in the section *From the Ottomans to the nakba (1880s–1948)* pp. 79ff. Also known as the “Arab revolt in Palestine” or the “Arab general strike in Palestine,” this was a nationalistic uprising against the British rule and the influx of Jewish immigrants to Palestine (see Abboushi 1977). Note that the current militant branch of Hamas (the al-Qassam Brigades) was named after Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, one of the early Palestinian martyrs taking part in the uprising.

The Brotherhood's political turn and vocal opposition to the regime, however, was met with harsh government responses; its public rallies were banned, its offices were ransacked, and many of its leaders—including al-Banna—were at different times arrested for varying periods of time (Simms 2002, 571). While World War II occasionally limited the Egyptian government's ability to oppress the Brotherhood, the conflict between them ebbed and flowed throughout the 1940s. Following the Israeli victory over Egypt and other Arab states in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, the relationship between the Brotherhood and the regime deteriorated rapidly. One decision with far-reaching consequences was taken by the Egyptian Prime Minister, when late in 1948 he officially banned the Brotherhood (Mitchell 1969, 58). He did so partly because the Brotherhood had become increasingly vocal in its denunciation of his government, but also because they had gained important combat experience after sending volunteers to fight in the war against Israel.¹⁵⁴ The Brothers thus became more of a threat for the Egyptian government. The Brotherhood for its part was frustrated by Egypt's lackluster performance in the war, blaming the government for the humiliating defeat against Israel. Against this backdrop, and provoked by being outlawed, a Brother assassinated the Egyptian Prime Minister on December 28, 1948. Some six weeks later, on February 12, 1949, the Egyptian political police retaliated by killing al-Banna himself (Aly and Wenner 1982, 341; Mitchell 1969, 67–71; Munson 2001, 489).

Despite this long-running and at times bloody conflict with the regime, the Brotherhood managed to continue its expansion, commanding the support of an ever-growing number of people. From 1944 to 1949, the Brotherhood doubled its number of branches to some two thousand. In the same period, membership estimates increased from between 100 000 to 500 000 in 1944, to between 300 000 to 600 000 in 1949, effectively making it “the largest organized force in the country” (Munson 2001, 489; Zahid and Medley 2006, 693).¹⁵⁵ In addition the Brotherhood had expanded abroad, establishing branches in the Sudan, Syria,

154 It is uncertain how many Brothers fought against the Israelis in the 1948 war, with estimates ranging from 471 to 1500 (Abu-Amr 1994a, 2). Consult El-Awaisi (1998) for a dedicated analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood and the question of Palestine.

155 The Muslim Brotherhood themselves claimed to have had two million members at the time (IkhwanWeb 2007), but this seems rather unlikely. Partly because other sources have far lower estimates, and partly because it is in the interest of the Brotherhood to inflate their membership numbers to appear larger and more powerful than they in reality are (Mair and van Biezen 2001, 7). As the estimated ranges indicate, there is a degree of uncertainty associated with the membership figures of the Brotherhood. One reason is that they operate with varying levels of membership (Lia 2006c, 96, 103). Finally, it should also be underlined that no other organization in Egypt managed to attract such a large following, even if one relies on the lowest estimates. Warburg even argues that the Muslim Brotherhood was the *only* Egyptian organization “who succeeded to attain grass-roots support” (1982, 132).

Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories (Simms 2002, 570–71). In short, the movement had established itself as one of the main political and religious players in the Middle East in the span of roughly 20 years.

Ideology and strategies

Somewhat simplified, the overarching goal of the Brotherhood is “the creation of an ‘Islamic order’,” in which the principles of *sharia* will regulate society (Mitchell 1969, 234–35).¹⁵⁶ Within this Islamic order they will then erect an Islamic state modeled after the just and righteous rule of the first four caliphs, collectively known as The Rightly Guided Caliphs (Mitchell 1969, 209–11).¹⁵⁷ As such, resistance to Westernization and colonization was only part of the *raison d’être* for the Brotherhood; from the outset, it also had an encompassing vision of how society should be governed (Aly and Wenner 1982, 340).

The specificities of this vision have naturally changed throughout the Brotherhood’s history,¹⁵⁸ often in response to changes at the topmost levels of the Egyptian regime (Aly and Wenner 1982). Nevertheless, certain overarching ideological and strategic constants can be identified. First and foremost, the Brotherhood believes

the rules and teachings of Islam to be comprehensive, to include the people’s affairs in the world and the hereafter. Those who believe that these teachings deal only with the spiritual side of life are mistaken. Islam is an ideology and a worship, a home and a nationality, a religion and a state, a spirit and work, and a book and sword (Hassan al-Banna, quoted in Aly and Wenner 1982, 340).

In short, and according to the Brotherhood, Islam provides the solution to all possible challenges, be they at the international, national, societal, or personal levels, or of a moral, cultural, political, or economical nature (Simms 2002, 573).¹⁵⁹ It is noteworthy, however, that the organization often remains vague as to the exact details of how Islam can be operationalized into public policy, instead arguing on an overarching level that “true Islam was essentially democratic and capable of solving the problems of the modern world”

156 *Sharia* translates to Islamic law. It is drawn from the Koran and the sayings and traditions of the Prophet, known as the *sunna*. Of the four *sharia* traditions, the Brotherhood subscribes to the Hanbali school, described as “the most conservative in terms of its insistence on a literal reading of the Quran and other texts” (Munson 2001, 489).

157 They were Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib.

158 The ideology of the Brotherhood has evolved throughout its existence. For a brief overview of its various phases, consult the account provided by former Brotherhood leader Helbawy (2010).

159 This belief in the all-encompassing relevance of Islam is reflected in the Brotherhood slogan “Islam is the solution” (Najjar 1996).

(Munson 2001, 490).

This is not to say that the Brotherhood has never come up with specific policy proposals. In its early years, the Brotherhood promoted the strengthening of the Egyptian army, greater pan-Arab cooperation, the increase and expansion of social services, and the improvement of working conditions, e.g., through the introduction of a minimum wage (Munson 2001, 490).¹⁶⁰ While these tasks are run-of-the-mill policies, and thus should be implemented by the state, the Brotherhood firmly believes that the ills of Egyptian society only can be alleviated if the population return to the “path of Islam” (Munson 2001, 490).

This emphasis on the return to Islam is explained by the Brotherhood’s argument that most societal problems are attributable to the increasingly secular lifestyle adopted by Egyptians from the days of the British and onward. And secularism, the Brothers argue, leads “to immorality, poverty, and domination” (Munson 2001, 490). In this way, the Brotherhood connects the large-scale political, economical, and social problems with the personal beliefs of ordinary Egyptians. To recreate Egyptian society in the image of Islam, the organization has thus adopted a bottom-up, grassroots approach. By building and running everything from mosques and schools, via social clubs and small industrial enterprises, to hospitals, the Brotherhood has essentially been duplicating many conventional state functions. The aim of these activities, in addition to their obvious usefulness in an impoverished nation, is to help convince people through real-life examples how and why a return to “true” Islam would be beneficial.

In sum, the Brotherhood has a two-tiered strategy to reach their goal of creating an Islamic order and establishing an Islamic state modeled after the first four caliphs: On the one hand, the Brothers have turned to political activism, e.g., by organizing demonstrations and participating in elections. On the other, they have retained a socially oriented, bottom-up approach. Through their religious and social activities, they strive to “educate the masses and render them aware of ‘proper’ Islamic principles and way of life” (Karam 1997, 159). Step by step, they strive to pave the way for the Islamic order, in turn a prerequisite for the success of the coming Islamic state.

¹⁶⁰ In later years, the Brotherhood has been represented in the Egyptian parliament, and from 2012 to 2013 it also held the office of the President.

Organizational characteristics

The Egyptian Brotherhood was a multifaceted organization already by the mid-1930s, spread throughout a large and diverse country, and with an extensive portfolio of operations. As mentioned, the organization has at times been banned by the Egyptian state, forcing it to operate underground (Munson 2001). Because of these factors, its organizational outline is both complex and has changed multiple times throughout the organization's history (IkhwanWeb 2007; Mitchell 1969, 163). It is therefore difficult to accurately account for its organizational characteristics, although it is possible to provide a brief and schematic account of its organizational makeup.¹⁶¹

In short, the Brotherhood has a hierarchical, federated, and stratified organizational structure. The hierarchical dimension relates to the power and authority of the leadership to control and instruct the lower organizational units; the federated dimension means that the various geographic branches are given leeway to adjust and prioritize goals and strategies to best fit their particular context; and the stratified dimension means that although the lower organizational units are subjugated to the higher strata in the organization, they retain a high degree of autonomy and are relatively free to organize and prioritize according to local circumstances and needs.

At the top of the organizational hierarchy are three intertwined institutions: the Consultative Assembly, the deliberative and legislative branch of the Brotherhood; the General Guidance Council, the administrative and executive branch; and the General Guide, which essentially is the head of the Brotherhood and chairman of both the Consultative Assembly and the Guidance Council. The Brotherhood thus concentrates a lot of influence and power in this one position (Mitchell 1969, 165–69).¹⁶²

At the next level down in the hierarchy is the administrative office. These are operated by a small council appointed by the Guidance Council, tasked with the implementation of the overarching strategy, as formulated by the Consultative Assembly, as well as the prioritizations for each governorate as decided by the Guidance Council. Below these administrative offices are approximately 300 district offices. These are run partly by appointees from the Guidance Council and partly by leaders from the more important local

161 The organizational experience and development of the Egyptian Brotherhood have influenced many of its chapters in other countries. As will be demonstrated later, the Egyptian experience was particularly important for the Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (Abu-Amr 1994a, 6–10).

162 The General Guide must be a member of the Consultative Assembly and is elected for life by a qualified majority (3/4) of its deputies.

branches. Each district office administers a varying number of local branches.¹⁶³ In sum, the hierarchy is as follows: The local branches are subordinate to its district branch, the district branch to its respective administrative office, which in turn is subordinate to the Guidance Council (IkhwanWeb 2007; Mitchell 1969, 175–80).

The local branch is the basic administrative unit in the Brotherhood. Each local branch has a headquarter governing the Brotherhood's activities, the most important of which is the building and running of mosques. Bigger local branches might also run schools, health clinics, sports clubs, and even local industries (Munson 2001, 501). While the number of Brothers in each branch varies, a rough average of estimated total members divided by the known number of local branches indicate that there are approximately between one hundred to three hundred Brothers in any one branch. Although the local branch is the basic administrative unit, and initially also the basic organizational unit, the Brotherhood introduced small cells in response to government persecution.¹⁶⁴ These cells are made up of between five and ten Brothers and function as the main vehicle for recruiting and initial training.

The Brotherhood has a rather sophisticated, three-tiered recruitment procedure (Munson 2001, 499–500).¹⁶⁵ At first, prospective members are only asked to sign on as supporters and donate a small amount of money to the organization. Through education and training, they can advance to become regular members. Regular members are asked to contribute a larger share of their income to the Brotherhood, and are given voting rights within the organization. Finally, they can become active members, which means that they can run in internal elections to higher positions (Mitchell 1969, 183–84).¹⁶⁶

The Egyptian Brotherhood continues to be the largest and arguably most influential of all Islamist movements throughout the Middle East, and in particular its influence on the development of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood—and by extension Hamas—has been strong. Because of this, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the Palestinian experience of the Brotherhood.

163 Villages will typically have one local branch, whereas bigger cities might have multiple branches.

164 The different governments of Egypt have all cracked down hard on the Brotherhood at one time or another. The assassination of al-Banna in 1949 is one important example (Mitchell 1969, 71), and the hanging of three Brothers convicted of conspiring to overthrow the regime of Nasser in 1966 is another (Mitchell 1969, vii).

165 Trager (2011) suggests there are five levels of membership in the Brotherhood. However, all other consulted sources, including the Brotherhood's English language website, agree that there are only three levels (IkhwanWeb 2007).

166 Mitchell labels these three stages of membership as (1) assistant, (2) related, and (3) active (1969, 183). Other authors use different terms.

3.3.2 The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood established its first Palestinian branch in Jerusalem in 1945, when Palestine was still part of the British Mandate.¹⁶⁷ Predominantly a religious reform movement, and without a political agenda outside of Egypt, the British allowed the Brotherhood to operate relatively freely.¹⁶⁸ And in the years until UN General Assembly Resolution 181 passed in late November 1947, the Brotherhood had recruited some 20 000 Brothers spread among some 20–25 branches throughout Palestine. While this rapid expansion partly came about because the Brotherhood’s ideological message resonated well among Palestinians, it must be noted that it profited from recruiting a number of notables and established politicians, and from the co-optation of a range of already established religious societies (El-Awaisi 1998, 155–56). Following the founding of the State of Israel and the ensuing *nakba*, some Brotherhood branches within the 1948 territories were closed down, mainly as a response to the participation of the Brotherhood in the war against Israel.¹⁶⁹

Egyptian and Jordanian rule (1948–1967)

As discussed above,¹⁷⁰ Egypt and Jordan adopted different policies vis-à-vis Gaza and the West Bank; whereas Egypt relied on its military to rule Gaza, Jordan annexed the West Bank and offered the Palestinians there citizenship. These differences had consequences for the conditions under which Palestinians in these territories could mobilize politically, and thus also for the experience of the two branches of the Palestinian Brotherhood (Shadid 1988). In turn, and as argued by Robinson, these divergent experiences “go a long way toward explaining the disparate state of affairs for the Islamist movement in the Gaza Strip and West Bank under Israeli rule following 1967” (2004, 120).

In brief, the Gaza branch of the Palestinian Brotherhood was established on November 25, 1946, and was from the outset closely integrated with the main Brotherhood in Egypt (Filiu 2012, 56–58). This tight integration continued after the *nakba* when Gaza was ruled by Egypt, and meant that whenever the Egyptian Brotherhood was outlawed, so was the Gaza branch of

167 There is some disagreement on the exact year and date for the founding of the first branch, but most authors seem to agree that it was either in late 1945 or early 1946. See El-Awaisi (1998, 153), Abu-Amr (1994a, 3), and A. Cohen (1982, 144).

168 El-Awaisi (1998, 164–66) documents how the British tried to curb the expansion of the Brotherhood in Palestine.

169 The Muslim Brotherhood inside Israel continues to operate independently from the Brotherhood in the occupied territories. For details, consult Tal (2000), Rosmer (2010), and Ghanem and Mustafa (2014).

170 See section *From the nakba to The Six-Day War (1948–1967)* on pp. 83ff.

the Palestinian Brotherhood. In general, the Egyptian regime enforced a harsh and strict rule of the Gaza Strip; in particular, following the ousting of the Egyptian King Farouk in 1952 by the Free Officers Movement, political activities in Gaza were brutally suppressed (Milton-Edwards 1996, 49; Shadid 1988, 660).¹⁷¹

The persecution of the Brotherhood by the Egyptian regime seriously and negatively affected the operational capabilities of the Gaza branch; whereas the Brotherhood operated an estimated eleven branches throughout the Gaza Strip with some 1 000 active members prior to the clampdown in 1952, the severity of the suppression essentially forced the Brotherhood underground (Milton-Edwards 1996, 48). The incipient organizational structure developed in the late 1940s was obliterated in the next decade and a half, and by the time the Six-Day War broke out in 1967, the Brotherhood had no impact on politics in Gaza, operating only a clandestine network of independent but largely defunct cells (Milton-Edwards 1996, 55).

Despite this sorry state of affairs, the Brotherhood in Gaza survived the ordeal of Egyptian rule. And by outlawing the Brotherhood, Egypt inadvertently provided “its activists in the Gaza Strip experience in building decentralized and clandestine organizations” (Robinson 2004, 120). As will be demonstrated in the coming chapters, this experience where the Gaza branch ran a clandestine network of operative cells under persecution later proved invaluable for the survival of Hamas.

On the Jordanian-ruled West Bank, the situation was rather more relaxed (Shadid 1988, 661).¹⁷² From the *nakba* onward, the West Bank branches of the Brotherhood became closely aligned with the Jordanian Brotherhood.¹⁷³ Crucially, the Jordanian Brotherhood had pledged allegiance to the monarchy, and did not constitute a subservient force such as in Egypt.¹⁷⁴ Rather, as Islam “served as one of the building blocks of regime legitimacy and of nation-building” in Jordan, the Brotherhood there was given ample room for political mobilization (Bar 1998, 5). Because it enjoyed a rather amicable relationship with the King,¹⁷⁵

171 See Milton-Edwards (1996, 49–55) for details of the Egyptian rule of Gaza and the consequences for the Muslim Brotherhood there.

172 Consult Milton-Edwards (1996, 55–64) for an account of Palestinian Islamist politics on the West Bank under Jordanian rule.

173 This claim—often found in the literature on the Muslim Brotherhood—was supported by Sheikh Hassan Yousef, a former Brother and current Hamas leader on the West Bank, when he was interviewed during one of his short hiatuses from Israeli prison, October 16, 2011, in Ramallah.

174 As summed up by Burgat, the “Hashemite kingdom of Jordan relied upon the support of members of the very Muslim Brotherhood organisation that Egypt imprisoned in their thousands” (2003, 51).

175 See Boulby (1999) for a history of the Muslim Brotherhood and its relationship with the various kings of Jordan.

the Brotherhood in Jordan was one of the few parties not outlawed on the West Bank (A. Cohen 1982, 146). And as part of a legal party, the Brotherhood branches on the West Bank participated in multiple elections while under Jordanian rule.¹⁷⁶

While the organizational structure of the Jordanian Brotherhood was partly inspired by the Egyptian Brotherhood, it developed according to the localized needs and possibilities in Jordan. And unlike in Egypt and on the Gaza Strip, there was no need for the Brotherhood in Jordan to rely on small and secret cells as the basic organizational unit. Rather, the basic unit was the local branch, just as had been the case in Egypt until the Brotherhood there had been outlawed and forced underground (Bar 1998, 15).¹⁷⁷

These divergent experiences of the Gaza and West Bank branches of the Muslim Brotherhood help explain their different ideological outlooks and political priorities later on.¹⁷⁸ Whereas the Gaza branch barely survived as a clandestine movement during the two decades of Egyptian rule, the Jordanian branch was allowed to operate legally,¹⁷⁹ gained crucial electoral experience, and expanded its organization.

The Israeli occupation (1967–1987)

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the Six-Day War in 1967 fundamentally altered the political, economic, social, and cultural nature of Palestinian society (Milton-Edwards 1996, 79).¹⁸⁰ Simultaneously, the years following the Arab defeat saw the ascendance of the Palestinian secular nationalist movement, most saliently indicated by the rise of Fatah and its control of the PLO. Combined, the Israeli occupation and the dominance of the PLO weakened the Palestinian Brotherhood, prompting Milton-Edwards to conclude that in the first decade after the Six-Day War, it “played almost no role in politics in the West

176 First in 1956, when they became the largest faction in parliament (Bar 1998, 26), next in 1961 (Bar 1998, 29), then in 1962 (A. Cohen 1982, 147), and finally in early 1967 (Bar 1998, 30).

177 Operating legally, the Brotherhood in Jordan and on the West Bank expanded rather than contracted in the years between 1948 and 1967. According to Bar, by 1955 there were “approximately 6,000 members in at least 19 branches in Jordan; on the East Bank, in Amman, Irbid, Salt, Zarqa, Jarash, Karak, and the refugee camps of Karama and Jabal Hussein, and on the West Bank, in Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, and the refugee camps in Jericho” (1998, 15–16).

178 See discussions of factionalism within Hamas in later chapters, in particular the section *Decision-making* in chapter 4, pp. 133ff., and the sections *The dominance of the Bureau and the Brigades—electoral boycott and violence* on pp. 173ff., and *Gaza obtains factional dominance—renewed moderation* on pp. 177ff., both in chapter 5.

179 It should be noted, however, that while the Brotherhood was allowed to operate rather freely in Jordan, the regime discriminated against the Palestinians on the West Bank. Although the two Brotherhood branches had merged completely, the King remained reluctant to give the Palestinians the same free reins as were granted to the Jordanians (Bar 1998, 16).

180 See section *From occupation to the intifada (1967–1987)* pp. 86ff.

Bank and Gaza Strip” (1996, 79).¹⁸¹

In Gaza, the Brotherhood was almost nonexistent following two decades of Egyptian persecution. In addition, the Israeli occupation meant that whatever clandestine links the Brotherhood there had to its Egyptian counterpart were severed, further weakening whatever organizational presence it had (Milton-Edwards 1996, 91–92). Yet its weakness turned out to be a blessing in disguise; whereas the Israeli occupation spent a lot of resources attempting to pacify the different nationalist resistance movements, it largely ignored the Brotherhood. In the words of Filii, “[a]s the nationalist forces were bled dry, Shaykh Yasin was patiently constructing ... a whole network of interlocking activities subsumed under the name *Al-Mujamma’ al-Islami*” (2012, 63).¹⁸²

On the West Bank, the Palestinian Brotherhood branches faced a dual challenge in the wake of the Israeli occupation. For one, and as in Gaza, their ties with the Jordanian Brotherhood were disrupted (Shadid 1988, 664–65),¹⁸³ forcing many of the already struggling local branches to close down. Second, and in contrast to their Gaza brethren, those on the West Bank proved incapable or unwilling to continue their religious and social work, instead winding down their activities and allowing the ascending Palestinian nationalist movement to take on an increasingly important political and social role (Milton-Edwards 1996, 89–90). In sum, the two Palestinian Brotherhood branches had negligible political impact and played only a marginal role as a religious and social movement in the occupied territories during the first decade of the Israeli occupation (Milton-Edwards 1996, 102; Shadid 1988, 662).

In the latter part of the 1970s, however, the Brotherhood in Gaza came to play an increasingly important role. Although it kept out of the political game, it experienced an increased social influence and popularity in the years following the establishment of the Islamic Center in Gaza in 1973. Under the auspices of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the Brotherhood in Gaza developed an extensive network of health and medical facilities, sports clubs, kindergartens, and schools (Abu-Amr 1993, 6–8). Through its highly successful welfare work, the Brotherhood gained followers and supporters, in particular in Gaza (Shadid 1988, 663).

181 Or as Shadid observed, “[d]uring the first ten years of occupation the Muslim Brotherhood [on the West Bank and in Gaza] maintained a low profile” (1988, 662).

182 Roughly translating to “Islamic Center” and known locally only as the Mujamma, this religio-social center is considered the forerunner to Hamas.

183 For analyses of Palestinian politics on the East and West Bank of River Jordan following the Israeli occupation, see Jamal (2005, 55–102).

Added to this, Islam became increasingly popular and politicized throughout the 1980s. Often seen as part of a larger regional trend beginning with the Iranian revolution in 1979 (Aburaiya 2009; Hroub 2010, 170),¹⁸⁴ indicators of this rise of Islam in the occupied territories are found in the available polling data, election results to the student councils at Palestinian universities, and in the number of mosques built in the occupied territories. With regard to the latter, the number of mosques in the West Bank nearly doubled in the decades from 1967 to 1987, from 400 to 750. In the same period, the number of mosques in Gaza tripled, from 200 to 600 (Abu-Amr 1994a, 15–16).

In terms of public opinion, three polls were carried out in the occupied territories (in 1982, 1984, and 1986). Although all indicated that there was no real challenge—religious or otherwise—to the secular nationalism pursued by Fatah and the PLO,¹⁸⁵ the results from the polls also suggested that religion was making inroads into Palestinian politics throughout the 1980s, and could come to produce a “cleavage within Palestinian society ... between those advocating secularism and those who advocate religious alternatives” (Shadid and Seltzer 1988a, 24). For one, the 1982 poll found that 35 percent of respondents indeed preferred an Islamic Palestinian state to a secular-democratic one (Smith 1982).¹⁸⁶ And while the results between the polls are not directly comparable because of differences in sampling and questionnaires, 56 percent of respondents in the 1986 poll supported either a Palestinian state governed according to Islamic Law (26 percent) or a state based on Arab nationalism and Islam (30 percent) (Shadid and Seltzer 1988a, 24).

Another trend indicating that Islam was becoming increasingly popular and politicized throughout the 1980s is found in the election results to the student councils at Palestinian universities. For while Fatah and various other secular PLO factions fared well in elections in the West Bank universities, by and large winning majorities and the most powerful positions, the Islamist blocs consistently obtained around one third of the votes (Robinson 1997, 19–

184 Note, however, that a number of scholars have labored to nuance this picture, arguing that to conflate the rise of Islamic revivalism in the occupied territories with the regional trend is an insufficient explanation. See e.g., Lybarger (2007, 8–9), who points out that the Palestinian case differs because the occupation is still on-going, and Milton-Edwards (1996, 8–9), who lists a number of additional factors, for example the failure of the secular PLO and interference by Israel.

185 In the 1982 poll, 56 percent of West Bank respondents stated that they “wanted a ‘secular-democratic’ Palestinian state,” thus underlining the strong position of Fatah’s secular-nationalist project (Smith 1982).

186 That the poll was carried out on the West Bank makes these findings particularly interesting, as it is documented that Palestinians on the Gaza Strip are more religious than those residing on the West Bank (Shadid 1988, 681; Shadid and Seltzer 1989, 295).

27).¹⁸⁷ Combined, these election results from the universities and the available polling data indicate that the hegemonic position of Fatah and its secular-nationalist project came increasingly at odds with large parts of the Palestinian grass roots throughout the 1980s.¹⁸⁸ Shadid and Seltzer thus cautioned that if Fatah failed to “produce tangible [political] results” one could expect their support to be transferred to the Islamic movement, which in turn “undoubtedly would shift its strategy to armed struggle and violent confrontation with Israel” (1989, 297–98).¹⁸⁹ And as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, Shadid and Seltzer’s prediction proved correct in late 1987, when Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and other Brothers from Gaza decided to establish Hamas as the armed and political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood.

To summarize, the organizational and ideological legacy of Hamas goes back to the Society of the Muslim Brothers founded in Egypt in the late 1920s. While the two Palestinian Brotherhood branches for some time operated under disparate conditions, the anti-colonial and Islamist ideology remained largely intact, as did the preferred bottom-up *modus operandi*—even if both were adjusted to better suit the local conditions in Palestine. Also, the organizational learning experience, first from the Egyptian Brotherhood and later from divergent conditions on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, has influenced the way in which Hamas later came to be organized. As will become clear, Hamas adopted the Brotherhood’s hierarchical, federated, and stratified structure, as well as its consultative decision-making procedures, recruitment requirements and membership indoctrination, and routines for advancement.

187 The exceptions to this trend are the Islamic University in Gaza where the Islamists won the majority (Filiu 2012, 65), and the Christian Bethlehem University where the Islamists naturally fared quite badly (Robinson 1997, 26).

188 As Shamir and Shikaki point out, these results “probably do not mirror the actual factional balance of power in public opinion, since they are too small and too particular to reflect the mood and interests of the general public” (2010, 132).

189 An important strategic dimension relates to the discussion on whether the Palestinians supported a two-state solution or still wanted to liberate the whole of Palestine. Also here, the gap between the strategy pursued by Fatah and the opinions in the Palestinian population widened following the PLO’s 1974 decision to accept a two-state solution as an interim step toward complete liberation of Palestine.

Chapter 4: Enter Hamas—the *intifada* years (1987–1993)

The current chapter will lay out and discuss the emergence and first years of Hamas, from its establishment during the first *intifada* (starting in 1987) to the signing of the Oslo Accords (1993). Empirically, this period in Hamas's history has been dealt with expertly and extensively by various authors (see e.g., Abu-Amr 1993; Chehab 2007; Filiu 2012; Gunning 2008). The extant literature focuses mainly on the outbreak of the *intifada* as the immediate catalysts prompting the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza to create Hamas as its armed wing; how Hamas then came to eclipse the Brotherhood and emerge as a political actor in its own right; the effects of Hamas's Brotherhood legacy for ideological development; and the challenges posed by the circumstances of the *intifada* for its early organization-building.

Theoretically, then, these first years in Hamas's evolution coincided with the identity building phase of political organizations, i.e., the period in which the articulation of a distinct ideological message is the prioritized task. As discussed in the introductory chapter, during this *identification* phase an organization is still expected to be a pure vehicle for realizing the stated ideological goals. The period in question also overlaps somewhat with the early *organization-building* phase, i.e., Hamas's efforts to increase its organizational capacity to be able to reach its goals (Harmel and Svåsand 1993; Panebianco 1988, 20).

The chapter begins by covering the establishment of Hamas. Although this period is thoroughly addressed in the literature, competing narratives have been promoted—both by scholars and the involved political actors—as to how exactly Hamas came to be. In particular, Hamas's own efforts to establish a distinct political identity by constructing a historical narrative all the way back to the 1930s is considered illuminating and will therefore be covered in some detail.

Following this, the emergence of Hamas will be analyzed aided by analytical concepts drawn from social movement theories. Here, Robinson's (2004) analysis of Hamas as a case of social movement organization will be particularly useful. In line with Robinson's analysis, the focus will be on how changes and openings in certain *political opportunity structures* led to the creation of Hamas, how Hamas utilized available *mobilizing structures* to garner support and gain influence, and how it used *framing* in different ways to establish its distinct identity as a political organization and thereby attract supporters. As hypothesized by relevant theories (e.g., Randall 2007), the analysis of Hamas as a social movement organization finds that it

quite easily was able to articulate its ideology and establish a distinct political identity.

Next follows a somewhat detailed analysis of Hamas's early organizational development. For although Hamas inherited a more or less ready-made identity as the religious alternative to the secular PLO in Palestinian domestic politics, the organizational structure it inherited was inadequate for its new role and more prominent position; both its expansion and diversification, combined with the relentless persecution it suffered at the hands of Israel, necessitated a more sophisticated organizational structure. And when building and developing its organizational structure, Hamas—as any organization—needed to balance a number of competing organizational interests. How Hamas reconciled and prioritized these organizational dilemmas has consequences for its organizational structure, which in turn influences both its behavior and possible future trajectories (Meyer 2004; Panebianco 1988; Porta and Diani 2006, 153–54).

The chapter then provides a recapitulation of the findings, concluding that at the end of the *intifada*, Hamas had successfully established itself as *the* religiously motivated, Palestinian liberation movement, albeit with an underdeveloped and weak organization. Finally, and based on the analyses and supplemented by additional data from interviews and the extant literature, the chapter concludes with a brief overview of Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the *intifada*. Measured in the four-pronged model of institutionalization suggested by Randall and Svåsand (2002a), it is argued that Hamas was highly *reified* in the public imagination more or less from its inception, recognized by both its supporters and detractors as a force to be reckoned with. Its level of *systemness*, however, was still rather low, as indicated by its weak organizational state and dependence on its founding leaders. Moreover, Hamas's heavy reliance on the Jordanian Brotherhood during these first years is taken to have effectively and markedly limited its *decisional autonomy*. Finally, and as would be expected from a recently established militia, Hamas was still perceived as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, meaning that it was not *infused* with *value* to any notable extent.

4.1 The establishment of Hamas

This first section will cover the establishment and early years of Hamas, beginning with a brief discussion of the competing historical narratives of Hamas's creation. Then, the founding of Hamas will be analyzed as a case of social movement organization, thereby

providing a theoretically grounded account of its early development. Crucially, such a theoretically informed analysis promises to counter the tendency in the literature to focus on the unique and peculiar aspects of Hamas, which undermines both the analytical quality and comparability of previous studies (Robinson 2004).

4.1.1 Competing narratives and the creation of Hamas

Hamas was established as a direct response to the outbreak of the first Palestinian *intifada*. This fact is uncontested, in the relevant literature, within Hamas, and among its political opponents (Caridi 2010; Gunning 2008; Hroub 2000; Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010; Mishal and Sela 2000).¹⁹⁰ And this is also where the consensus ends with regard to the early history of Hamas. Whereas the competitors and enemies of Hamas—in particular Fatah—claim that Hamas is an Israeli creation, Hamas itself traces its lineage of resistance directly and all the way back to ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, a Syrian cleric fighting for Palestinian liberation in the 1930s (Filiu 2012, 54–55). As for the literature, it is largely in agreement on the main points, e.g., that Hamas was founded as a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza to take part in the *intifada*.

For Fatah it is rational—at least in the short term—to promote a historical narrative that puts their domestic nemesis in league with Israel. And their version of history goes roughly as follows: The strength and cohesion of the PLO was such that it at times threatened the Israeli occupation. This prompted the occupier to do as occupiers have done to its occupied for ages, adopt a strategy of *divide et impera*. By establishing—or in the more modest versions of the history, assist in establishing or allow for the establishment of—Hamas, Israel successfully drove a wedge between the different Palestinian factions, dividing their leaders, thus weakening them all, and thereby making it easier to uphold and manage the occupation. And despite vehement protests from Hamas, there is some merit to this version of history. In short, the Muslim Brotherhood was largely free to operate its auxiliary organizations within the occupied territories throughout the 1980s, and its members had almost unrestricted freedom of movement. This stands in stark contrast to the way in which Israel treated the nationalists, whose members were often persecuted and imprisoned, and whose organizations were outlawed (Shadid 1988, 674–75).¹⁹¹ There are also some Israeli sources supporting this

190 In all the interviews in which the topic of Hamas’s establishment came up, the interviewees—whether from Hamas or not—agreed that the movement was established as a direct response to the first *intifada*.

191 Following the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1967, it took the IDF four years and immense military resources to pacify and root out the nationalist resistance there. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were forced to relocate, thousands were imprisoned, and hundreds of resistance fighters were killed (Filiu 2012,

version of events, such as IDF commander of the Gaza Strip, Zvi Poleg, who is on record claiming that

Hamas was set up by us, in the mid-1980s, as a competitive movement to the PLO. The idea was that Hamas would carry out cultural, educational, and humanitarian activities. Within a few months the movement became more militant and began leading the violent resistance, including the use of guns against the IDF (quote from interview in Mideast Mirror, December 15, 1994, reproduced in Robinson 2004, 137).

Others attempt to moderate Israel's responsibility in creating Hamas, but admit openly that they allowed the Brotherhood to operate far more freely than the PLO factions, exactly in the hope that a strong, Islamist movement could counterbalance the PLO and make the Palestinians within the occupied territories more easily ruled (see e.g., quotes in Higgins 2009). In social movement theory parlance,¹⁹² this tactic pursued by the Israelis led to an opening in the *political opportunity structures* for the Brotherhood. In his analysis of Hamas as a social movement organization, Robinson argues that the "political space provided [by Israel] to the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the 1980s was critical to the development of the Islamist movement in Palestine" (2004, 124).¹⁹³

While Hamas naturally disagrees with the parts of this narrative that puts them in league with Israel, it is impossible to deny that the movement historically did receive preferential treatment.¹⁹⁴ For one, it is well documented that the immediate organizational forerunner to Hamas, the Islamic Center,¹⁹⁵ was established by the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza in 1973, first with the tacit approval of the Israelis, and from 1979 with legal status granted by the occupation (Abu-Amr 1994a, 16; Filiu 2012, 64; Sayigh 1997, 628–29). Understandably, Hamas members prefer to ignore or touch only briefly upon this aspect of

63).

192 See, for example, Tarrow (2011, 32).

193 Robinson points to the victory of the Likud party in Israel in 1977 as the explanation for this *divide et impera* strategy toward the Palestinians, and thus also as a key factor leading to the creation of Hamas (2004, 123).

194 Indeed, some Hamas cadres have expressed a sort of gratitude for Israel's naivety vis-à-vis the Muslim Brotherhood in this period. For example, Muhammad Nazzal, Hamas's representative in Jordan, said in an interview with Robinson that Israel "thought its security was enhanced by allowing us to grow, without thinking what might happen down the road" (1997, 157). See also the section *Hamas at the end of the first intifada* on pp. 136–138.

195 In Arabic the name of the Center was *al-Mujamma al-Islami*, by some authors, e.g., Sayigh (1997, 628–29), translated as the Islamic Complex.

their history. And when they do mention the 1973 establishment of the Islamic Center, it is portrayed as a premeditated decision that would lead to the establishment of an organization such as Hamas.¹⁹⁶

What is often highlighted when Hamas members retell their history is the alleged tradition in the Brotherhood for resisting the Israeli occupation. Admittedly, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood did train and dispatch soldiers to fight in the 1948 war against Israel (El-Awaisi 1998; Mitchell 1969, 55–58), and a number of famous Palestinian resistance fighters were initially members of the Brotherhood in Gaza. However, the Brothers who fought in the 1948 war were few and achieved little success. Furthermore, while people like Khalil al-Wazir and Salah Khalaf, better known by their *noms de guerre* Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, were indeed members in the Brotherhood in the 1950s (Filiu 2012, 60; Hadi 2006, 111 and 205), they left because the Brotherhood refused to take up arms against the resistance (Shadid 1988, 662). Instead, they joined Yasser Arafat—himself close to but probably not a member of the Brotherhood—to found Fatah.¹⁹⁷ So, while there are grains of truth in the Hamas narrative emphasizing the early role of the Brotherhood in resisting the Israeli occupation, their claim of an unbroken tradition of resistance in the Islamic movement in Palestine is clearly an exaggeration.

Another point emphasized in the Hamas narrative was the decision made by Sheikh Yassin and the Islamic Center to begin military work in the early 1980s.¹⁹⁸ In particular, they point to the imprisonment of Sheikh Yassin in June of 1984 as proof of their resistance against the occupation. He was captured by Israel following their discovery of a small weapons cache in a mosque in Gaza. These weapons, however, were intended to aid the Brotherhood in their ongoing fight against other Palestinian movements (Filiu 2012, 65).¹⁹⁹ Among others, Shadid convincingly argues that the Brotherhood saw the Islamization of society as a prerequisite for the coming liberation of Palestine. This prioritization of goals in turn led the Brotherhood to define secularization as a major obstacle to the return to Islam, and consequently their immediate fight was with the communists and nationalists, not Israel and the occupation (1988, 680). As such, Hamas's version of events in this period is somewhat at odds with

196 This was the case, for example, in one interview with Hamas leader Dr. Mohammad Ghazal (interviewed in Nablus, September 29, 2011).

197 According to Sayigh, "his exact status as supporter or member remains uncertain," but it is clear that he was close to the Brotherhood (1997, 81).

198 Dr. Mohammad Ghazal, interviewed in Nablus, September 29, 2011.

199 Both Shadid (1988) and Sayigh (1997, 629), among others, mention and document how the Muslim Brotherhood and their affiliates used violence against other Palestinian movements in the early 1980s.

documented history, effectively questioning the validity of their narrative of being the continuation of a long and unbroken Islamic tradition of resisting Israel.

In addition to the obvious—that the early history of Hamas is contested—the above provides important insights into the self-perception of Hamas, and consequently indications as to how the identity within Hamas was created. It is argued here that the widespread belief within Hamas that it constitutes the last incarnation of Islamic resistance movements in Palestine is indicative of a skillful construction of a historical narrative as a mechanism to produce a collective identity (Porta and Diani 2006, 95–96). By exaggerating their ancestors' role in fighting Israel, Hamas is effectively tapping into the main source of identity formation available to Palestinians, namely the occupation itself.

4.1.2 The founding of a social movement organization

The following pages will account for the deliberations leading up to the decision to establish Hamas, demonstrating that far from being a clear-cut decision—neither by the Brotherhood itself nor Israel—the creation of Hamas was instead largely a result of certain openings in the *political opportunity structures*, followed by exploitation of the available *mobilizing structures*, and the successful *framing* of Islamic ideology and popular political positions.

Exploiting the opportunities

Large demonstrations erupted in Gaza following a road accident there on December 8, 1987, involving an Israeli truck and Palestinian fatalities (Sayigh 1997, 607). Known as the *intifada* (uprising),²⁰⁰ the riots rapidly spread throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, mobilizing an unprecedented number of Palestinians to protest the Israeli occupation.²⁰¹ According to Robinson, the outbreak of the *intifada* was the “most important change in the political opportunity structure” leading to the creation of Hamas. He argues that “[t]he Intifada provided the opportunity for the second stratum [in the Brotherhood] and its Islamist ideology to come to the organizational fore, leading directly to the creation of Hamas” (2004, 125).²⁰²

200 *Intifada* literally means “shaking off”, but is usually translated as “uprising” or “rebellion.” The first *intifada* lasted from 1987 until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

201 For analyses of the causes and catalysts prompting the first *intifada*, see for example Abu-Amr (1994a, 53–58) and Sayigh (1997, 607–37).

202 Robinson identifies three additional changes in the political opportunity structures “that directly enhanced Hamas’s opportunity to organize and mobilize” (2004, 123), namely (1) changes in Israeli policies toward the PLO in the late 1970s that indirectly benefited the Islamist movement (2004, 123–24); (2) the rise of political Islam in the greater Middle East, most saliently exemplified by the Iranian revolution in 1978 and the emergence of Hezbollah in Lebanon in the early 1980s, which proved that Islam could be a viable

For the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, the outbreak of the *intifada* was at first seen as a challenge, not an opportunity. Most of the traditional leaders in the Brotherhood thought they should keep with their current strategy of political abstention, continuing their efforts to create “the preconditions for an Islamic moral code” through the institutions of the Islamic Center (Taraki 1989, 173).²⁰³ Others, in particular the younger and more radical activists, argued that the Brotherhood should change their *modus operandi* and join the *intifada* as an Islamic alternative to the secular PLO (Abu-Amr 1994a, 66–7; Sayigh 1997, 630).

One argument for joining the *intifada* was to counter the competition for the growing Islamic constituency posed by the Islamic Jihad (Kristianasen 1999, 20; Milton-Edwards 1996, 145). As a breakaway group from the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Jihad began violent resistance against the Israeli occupation already in the early 1980s (Abu-Amr 1994a, 90–127), a strategy the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Center had been reluctant to employ (Gunning 2008, 38; Robinson 2004, 122).²⁰⁴ Tied to this was the argument that the Brotherhood needed to consolidate their steadily increasing influence, something they could not do by peaceful means during a popular and violent uprising (Burgat 2003, 117; Milton-Edwards 1996, 146; Tamimi 2007, 52).

The potential political and military consequences of participating in the *intifada* was an important counterargument, and the Brotherhood recognized that the Islamic Center and its network of social and welfare institutions was at stake if the *intifada* failed (Abu-Amr 1993, 11). Furthermore, most of the traditional leadership in the Brotherhood remained convinced that the Islamization of Palestinian society had to precede any liberation efforts, and they were consequently opposed or at least reluctant to join the *intifada*. This generational schism had developed throughout the 1980s, pitting an increasingly impatient young guard favoring political action and active resistance against an old guard advocating patience, quiescence, and Islamization (Robinson 2004, 121–22).²⁰⁵

political force (2004, 124–25); and finally (3) the Oslo Accords signed between the PLO and Israel in 1993, the eventual failure of which proved to be a blessing for Hamas (2004, 125–26).

203 In short, and despite taking a more active role in Palestinian society from the 1970s, the Brotherhood’s *modus operandi* did not differ much from the bottom-up approach of Islamization as a prerequisite for the creation of an Islamic state as originally advocated by Hassan al-Banna.

204 As mentioned, the Brotherhood already had begun military action by the start of the *intifada*. Already in the mid-1980s, Brotherhood leaders, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who later founded and was widely considered the spiritual leader of Hamas, were arrested after a weapons cache was exposed by Israeli intelligence (Filiu 2012, 65).

205 Describing the socioeconomic background of the leaders of the Islamist movements in the Middle East, including Hamas, Robinson argues that they “have virtually the same social profile as those who, a generation earlier, agitated in favor of Ba’thism, Nasserism, and Arab socialism” (2004, 117).

It was finally decided by the leaders of the Islamic Center that the Brotherhood should join the *intifada* through an armed proxy, Hamas (Milton-Edwards 1996, 146; Robinson 2004, 122–23). Participating in the *intifada* through a proxy and not under their own banner allowed the Brotherhood—at least in theory—to deny any involvement with the *intifada*, avoid the reprisals from Israel, and thus protect their infrastructure of social and welfare institutions (Mishal and Sela 2000, 35). The decision to establish Hamas and join in the *intifada* was not a unanimous one, however. Rather, the decision was made by a handful of middle-stratum leaders in Gaza led by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, effectively staging a “palace coup” by establishing Hamas and marginalizing the more quietist old guard (Robinson 2004, 123).

The importance of this generational cleavage within the Palestinian Brotherhood for the creation of Hamas has been reiterated by numerous authors.²⁰⁶ Caridi, for example, argues that

Hamas’s birth took place as a kind of coup within the Muslim Brotherhood: a generational and social coup, an ascent to power by that increasing wing of militants made of refugees, their descendents, and of new young professionals who had reached political maturity in Egyptian and Palestinian universities (2010, 64).²⁰⁷

Interviewees close to the Brotherhood and Hamas account for the establishment of the latter in similar ways. Dr. Nashat Aqtash, for instance, used the term “revolution” to describe how Hamas was founded from within the Muslim Brotherhood. Himself a former member of the Brotherhood, Dr. Aqtash went on to claim that, while Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was important for the founding of Hamas, “he was only a spiritual leader. The real leaders were the younger generation of the Muslim Brotherhood.”²⁰⁸

In sum, it is argued here that the two most important exogenous factors leading to the creation of Hamas can be interpreted as openings and changes in the political opportunity structures. First, the lenient position Israel had vis-à-vis the Brotherhood throughout the 1980s enabled the rise of a new generation of more radical Islamists, and second, the outbreak of the *intifada*

206 “The oldest generation consists mainly of religious leaders with little influence on decision-making. Members of the second generation, which came of age during the First Intifada, hold most of the senior leadership positions in Hamas today. The third generation is the most radical, and maintains ties with Salafist Islamist groups both inside and outside the Gaza Strip” (Fattouh, paraphrased in Wikileaks cable 2010a).

207 Caridi also quotes Imad al-Fauji, a former Brother who allegedly was expelled for being too moderate, as saying that “the young people in the movement were violent and rebellious. They sometimes engaged in actions without consulting the traditional leadership, which was not fully convinced of the need for confrontation” (interviewed by Rashwan [2007], 2010, 64–65).

208 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 11, 2011.

itself proved to be the necessary opportunity for this new echelon of leaders to take over the movement and pursue a more proactive and political strategy (Robinson 2004, 123–25).

Religious mobilizing structures

While Hamas's role in the *intifada* is one factor explaining the movement's popularity, it seems reasonable to assume that the increasing religiosity among Palestinians also played into its rise to prominence. Representing an Islamist alternative to the secular-nationalists headed by Fatah, Hamas could easily make use of the increasing numbers of religious—and politically disenfranchised—Palestinians as their very own constituency (Abu-Amr 1993; Gunning 2008, 39; Knudsen 2005a, 1382–84; Robinson 1997, 149). More specifically, it has been argued that the rising number of mosques in the occupied Palestinian territories and the highly professionalized social and welfare institutions associated with the Islamic movement were crucial for Hamas's rising legitimacy and popularity (Abu-Amr 1994a, 15–16; Robinson 2004, 126–29).

For Hamas, as for the Islamic movements elsewhere in the largely authoritarian Middle East, the mosques function as semi-public spheres suitable for agitation and recruitment. Many of the mosques in Gaza were built and controlled by the Islamic Center itself, and many of them organized social and educational activities in addition to religious ones. The Islamic Center also helped establish medical clinics, professional associations, and eventually labor unions, all with an Islamic hue (Robinson 2004, 127).

The exact relationship between Hamas on the one hand, and the mosques, schools, nurseries, clinics, and other Islamic charitable organizations on the other, is somewhat contested. Authors such as Levitt (2006) argue that the two are synonymous, and that Hamas relies on the various charitable organization—in particular the *zakat* committees—to support its terrorist activities.²⁰⁹ Others, such as Benthall (2010), Roy (2011), Gunning (2008), and Høigilt (2010), provide a more nuanced picture. While these authors agree that the Islamic charities and Hamas are part of the same “Islamic trend” (Høigilt 2010, 7), and that there might be overlap of personnel in certain cases (Gunning 2008, 115, fn. 8), they also emphasize that ideological affinity does not equal official affiliation (see e.g., Roy 2011, 141–44).²¹⁰ Rather, it should be noted that any charitable organization in the occupied territories

209 *Zakat* is an Islamic tax used throughout the Islamic world for redistributive purposes.

210 On a related topic, Kjøstvedt argues that “the majority of the Islamic women’s organisations on the West Bank are isolated groups [and there] is therefore no reason to believe that these organisations constitute a network of any kind, Hamas-affiliated or other” (2011, 3).

would lose legitimacy and credibility if it was too closely associated with any one political faction.

Regardless of the nature or existence of their ties to Hamas, the extensive network of mosques and Islamic social and educational institutions helped the movement to expand and grow (Abu-Amr 1993, 13–15; Tamimi 2007, 53). And while no formalized Islamic network as such can be said to exist in the occupied territories, it is clear that the Islamization agenda pursued by the many Islamic NGOs and civil society organizations there all function directly or indirectly as mobilizing structures for Hamas (Roy 2011, 142–43). As such, it might be fruitful to see Hamas as a social movement *organization* tied to the larger and less organized Islamic social movement in the occupied territories (Diani 1992, 13–15).

An exception to this “affinity, not affiliation” argument is found in the Islamist student lists. Regarded by Robinson as one of the best examples of an explicit mobilizing political institution for Hamas (Robinson 2004, 128), the Islamist blocs found at universities throughout the occupied territories have worked almost as recruitment agencies for Hamas. In the words of a student activists at Birzeit University, “those who join the Islamic Bloc at university often become Hamas when graduating.”²¹¹ Another, somewhat older student activist, claimed to hold dual memberships, both in Hamas and the Islamic bloc.²¹²

Combined, the mobilizing structures provided to Hamas by the various Islamic organizations aided the movement in its expansion, enabling it, in the course of just a few years, to eclipse first the Islamic Center and eventually outgrow and co-opt the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood’s organizational infrastructure (Abu-Amr 1993, 5; Robinson 2004, 123).²¹³

Hamas’s stated aims interpreted as frames

Underlining Hamas’s Islamist roots, the 1988 Charter proclaims its ultimate goal is to raise “the banner of Allah on every inch of Palestine”²¹⁴ and establish an Islamic state throughout what are today Israel and the Palestinian territories. Defining Palestine as an eternal, indivisible *waqf* (Islamic trust), the Charter further admonishes that it is the obligation of all Muslims to protect and liberate Palestine from oppressors and aggressors, and that to give up any part of Palestine would be tantamount to forfeiting Islam. According to Robinson, this use

211 Anonymous Islamic Bloc activists interviewed on the West Bank, October 2011.

212 Anonymous Hamas member, interviewed on the West Bank, October 2011.

213 See Burton (2012, 533–34) for further details on Hamas’s use of education as a strategic tool for recruitment and indoctrination.

214 All quotations from the Charter are taken from Maqdsi’s (1993) translation.

of *waqf* is a prime example of successful cultural framing (2004, 130). Hamas skillfully fuses its nationalistic and religious aims into one effective frame, reaping the support both from the religiously inclined Palestinians and those who for nationalistic reasons were disappointed in Fatah and the PLO.

In the same vein, Hamas also refuses to “[r]ecognise the Zionist existence” or “[c]ede the larger part of Palestine to the Zionist entity” (Hroub 2000, 293). These statements should be seen in light of the 1988 PLO declaration of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, a move that in effect meant Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel, and a surrender of most of historic Palestine to the Israelis (Muslih 1990). By positioning itself firmly in opposition to the accommodating strategy pursued by Fatah and the PLO, Hamas in effect submitted its bid to become the new standard-bearer of the Palestinian nationalist project.

Importantly, the delimited territorial claim to Palestine constitutes somewhat of a departure from Hamas’s Islamist ideological heritage, which by and large rejects the notion that any territory is more sacred than another.²¹⁵ This, in turn, further supports the interpretation of Hamas’s territorial claims as political and not religiously motivated. Similarly, when the Charter states that Hamas’s nationalism “is part and parcel of [its] religious ideology [and based on] material, humanistic, and geographical ties,” the movement also ignores the traditional condemnation of racially or nationally based identity found in much Islamist thought (Nusse 1998, 47–52).²¹⁶ However, by utilizing the language of nationalism, Hamas is well positioned to tap into the national aspirations of Palestinians. And by claiming that the nationalist project pursued by the PLO has failed because it is secular and thus by definition ignores the Islamic nature of Palestine, Hamas went on to frame Palestinian nationalism as an Islamic project—that again enables Hamas to tap into both the increasingly religious segments of the Palestinian population and those disappointed with Fatah and other PLO factions (Robinson 2004, 134–35).

Hamas’s Charter also asserts that “[t]here is no solution to the Palestinian Problem except by *jihād*,” and that attempts to solve the conflict with Israel through negotiations are futile. This call for *jihād* and an uncompromising stance toward negotiations are often taken as proof of

215 Naturally, most Islamist movements accept the existence of the states in which they operate, but in general their ultimate aim is not to create territorially bounded Islamic states, but rather to recreate a larger Caliphate (Brubaker 2012, 13).

216 For Islamists, Islam should of course constitute the main identity marker, which goes counter to the nature of nationalist identities. Indeed, Islamists are often considered to be explicitly “anti-nationalist [or supra-national]” (Brubaker 2012, 14).

both Hamas's extremism and religiosity. However, these positions are here interpreted as religious framings of Hamas's political and strategic positions, i.e., opposition to negotiations and armed resistance as the preferred strategy against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Much of Hamas's early communiqués and documents contain such a religious-political duality.

In a 1993 communiqué entitled *Hamas introductory memorandum*, the organization provided a summary of its ideological basis and established its identity as a religiously motivated liberation movement:

Hamas is a popular struggle movement that seeks to liberate Palestine in its entirety from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Jordan. It bases its ideology and policies on the teachings of Islam and its juridical tradition ... Hamas believes that the ongoing conflict between the Arabs and Muslims and the Zionists in Palestine is a fateful civilizational struggle incapable of being brought to an end without eliminating its cause, namely, the Zionist settlement of Palestine ... Believing in the sacredness of Palestine and its Islamic status, Hamas believes it impermissible under any circumstances to concede any part of Palestine or to recognize the legitimacy of the Zionist occupation of it ... [T]he principal of [a] political settlement, whatever its source and details, entails the capitulative acceptance of the Zionist right of existence on a part of Palestine. Since this matter enters the domain of Islamic jurisprudence, in our view it cannot be accepted. For Palestine is a sacred Islamic land that has been forcibly seized by the Zionists, and it is the duty of all Muslims to conduct a holy struggle to regain it and to expel the invader from it.²¹⁷

In short, it is argued here that Hamas from the outset proved to be quite capable of popularizing its ideology and strategic positions. By fusing Islamic concepts that had increasing reach in Palestinian society with already popular political goals, Hamas skillfully constructed frames that resonated well in the occupied territories. It is noteworthy that these frames were constructed to maximize and not consolidate support. This means that from its early beginnings, Hamas saw itself as a potential mass-movement, aspiring and laboring to garner enough legitimacy and support to eventually take their rightful place at the center of Palestinian politics (Taraki 1989, 177).

217 Translated and reproduced in Hroub (2000, 292–301).

4.2 The building and rebuilding of an organization

As explicated above, Hamas inherited an almost ready-made ideology from the Muslim Brotherhood. To carve out an identity as the religious liberation movement for Palestinians, it needed only to reframe the Islamist ideas and goals of the Brotherhood to better conform to the local Palestinian context (Randall 2007, 645). Exactly how Hamas was organized during these first years, however, remains somewhat vague and unclear, and as a consequence so are the details of its decision-making procedures. This is so partly because the volatile and violent situation brought about by the *intifada* has had negative implications for the reliability of the historical data from this period, and further because of the secretive and clandestine nature of Hamas.

It seems likely, however, that Hamas relied on what was left of the organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip. Initially, the Brotherhood there was organized vertically, with cells (called *usra*, meaning family) as the basic organizational unit, a couple of cells constituting a branch (*shuba*), and with the General Administrative Center running the day-to-day affairs under the auspices of the Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shura*). Because the movement was banned in Gaza by Israel, however, it functioned mainly on the cell level from 1967, with the remaining layers existing in name only (Shadid 1988, 664). The lack of a coordinating leadership was eventually filled by the Islamic Center, which in turn also formed the backbone of the early leadership in Hamas (Milton-Edwards 1996, 151).

Under the initial leadership of Sheikh Yassin, Hamas was organized functionally in three wings, (i) political, (ii) intelligence, and (iii) military (Milton-Edwards 1996, 148), and with Gaza divided into five sub-districts, each with its own commander (Mishal and Sela 2000, 58).²¹⁸ Without the checks and balances of a traditional Brotherhood organization in place, Sheikh Yassin and his colleagues were relatively free to formulate Hamas's goals, strategy, and tactics without interference. They granted each cell a high degree of operational autonomy, however, in an attempt to protect their young and vulnerable movement through organizational compartmentalization.²¹⁹ This was meant to secure continued operation if or when the leaders were arrested (Mishal and Sela 2000, 56).

218 These five districts were probably congruent with the branches (*shuba*) of the Muslim Brotherhood.

219 An organization in which the lower levels enjoy a high degree of autonomy can be labeled a "stratarchy" (Katz and Mair 1995, 21), an organizational state of affairs characterized by a hierarchical or stratified dispersion of organizational power and authority (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950, 219–20).

As will be shown, however, these early organizational designs did not provide sufficient protection for Hamas. The movement was close to being completely obliterated by Israel only two years after it was founded (Tamimi 2007, 59). Furthermore, Hamas had still some way to go in terms of organizational development after being established, both with regard to geographic spread and bureaucratic capacity. Initially, Hamas operated mainly in and from Gaza. This was where the *intifada* first broke out and spread, and it was also where the movement was founded and had the most well-developed organization. Hamas also executed operations on the West Bank in its early years, but because the Brotherhood there was less inclined to take part in the *intifada*, its activities were initially limited (Robinson 1997, 150).²²⁰ In short, Gaza was both Hamas's main base of operations and where its leadership was located (Mishal and Sela 2000, 57).

4.2.1 Persecution and organizational restructuring

The first major strikes against Hamas came in the movement's second year. Until then, Israel had largely accepted its existence and even looked the other way as Hamas orchestrated protests and strikes in its competition with the PLO-affiliated Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) (Abu-Amr 1994a, 69).²²¹ In April 1989, however, Hamas undertook its first mission directed at Israel, kidnapping and murdering two Israeli soldiers. In May, Israel responded by imprisoning some 250–300 of its members, including Sheikh Yassin and a number of Hamas's military commanders (Milton-Edwards 1996, 152; Robinson 1997, 156).²²² Later that year Israel outlawed the movement, and again hundreds of its members were arrested.²²³

The Israeli measures taken against Hamas in 1989 threatened to decapitate the movement, forcing it to overhaul its organizational structure or risk being wiped out (Mishal and Sela 2000, 58). As described above, Hamas initially had a compartmentalized organizational structure. The restructuring was overseen by the exiled Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook,

220 It should also be mentioned that Hamas faced much stronger competition from the secular PLO factions on the West Bank than in Gaza (Gunning 2008, 31).

221 This is not to say that Israel did not capture Hamas activists during this period, only that large-scale persecution did not take place.

222 Sheikh Yassin was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Hamas leader al-Zahhar claims the number of imprisoned members was ten times as high (interviewed by Caridi 2010, 106–7), indicating yet again how Hamas view suffering and persecution as tightly tied to legitimacy and credibility.

223 Different sources give different dates for when Hamas was outlawed. Mishal and Sela claim it was in June (2000, 56), Robinson offers September 28 as the exact date (1997, 155), whereas Milton-Edwards states that “[b]y December the organisation was prohibited and membership in it declared a punishable offence” (1996, 153).

who introduced a much stricter vertical hierarchy. Separate headquarters were established on the West Bank and Gaza, with each territory divided into five and seven sub-districts, respectively. Functionally, the intelligence and military committees were merged, with religious indoctrination and coordination being added as separate committees in addition to the existing political one. A separate coordinating body was also set up to manage the relationship between the branches in Gaza and on the West Bank, which in turn was ruled by the senior leadership (Mishal and Sela 2000, 58).

Importantly, the decision to revamp the organizational structure was made by Hamas leaders outside Gaza, many of whom were close to the Jordanian and West Bank Brotherhood (Mishal and Sela 2000, 58).²²⁴ The new organizational structure thus marked the full incorporation of the West Bank Brotherhood into Hamas, and highlights the close and strong relationship between Hamas and the Jordanian Brotherhood (Mishal and Sela 2000, 58; Tamimi 2007, 72). Up until this restructuring, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and his colleagues in the Gaza Strip had constituted the uncontested leadership of Hamas. But now, the power balance tipped decisively in favor of the newly emerged external leadership (Caridi 2010, 108–9; Tamimi 2007, 60).

Furthermore, it soon became clear that the rapid expansion of the organization throughout Gaza and the West Bank during its early years had strained the organization's underdeveloped and provisional bureaucracy (Abu-Amr 1993, 13; Knudsen 2005a, 1376). The sheer number of newly enlisted members, combined with continued persecution by Israel, made it obvious that a stronger and more advanced bureaucracy was needed, preferably also with a presence outside of the occupied territories (Abu-Amr 1993, 11, 14; Mishal and Sela 2000, 56–57, 154–57; Tamimi 2007, 58–59, 66). And as will be detailed below, Hamas responded to this need by establishing two additional organizational units. For one, and in response to the persecution of its political leadership, Hamas created a new leadership body, the Political Bureau. Located in Amman, Jordan, this executive branch of Hamas's topmost leadership was for most intents and purposes the sole leadership for long periods in the early 1990s. And second, Hamas also isolated its militant activities by creating its own armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades.

224 The nature of the relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood on the West Bank and Jordan during these first years remains somewhat unclear.

Amman and the Political Bureau

There is widespread agreement in the literature that Hamas's presence in Amman, Jordan from 1991–92 was of utmost importance for the organization's survival. Because almost all of its senior leaders were either imprisoned or deported by Israel in the early 1990s, the existing domestic leadership was largely defunct at the time (Caridi 2010, 107; Tamimi 2007, 61). And the supposedly secret and partly exiled Consultative Council was considered an insufficient and ineffective leadership even by members of Hamas. For example, Ousama Hamdan, member of Hamas's Political Bureau with responsibility for international affairs, stated that "back then, the Shura Council assembly [Consultative Council] did not function properly ... It was only later that it became more active."²²⁵ In short, the building of a proper bureaucracy outside the territories was urgently needed at that time.

Exactly how the office in Amman came to be, however, is still somewhat contested. The way most Hamas members tell the story, it was a well-planned operation as they realized the need for an operational base beyond Israeli reach. Others argue that it was more of a lucky coincidence. According to former Hamas leader and current minister of religious affairs in the PA, Dr. Mahmoud Habbash, the establishment of a Hamas office in Amman was not planned at all. He retells the story as follows:

The movement of the Muslim Brotherhood decided to send a delegation to Baghdad to speak with Saddam about his invasion of Kuwait. They wanted a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. But who will say about himself that he is the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine? No one! No one can! Because of the occupation, anyone that says "I am a Muslim Brother," he will be arrested! So, they found a Palestinian member of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood named Ibrahim Ghousheh, and he agreed to join the delegation of the international Muslim Brotherhood as a member of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. And when he went to Baghdad, he found himself the most important member of the delegation because of how Saddam felt about Palestine. So by accident he became a leader of the Palestinian Islamic Movement!

Habbash claims that when Hamas members now say that they carefully planned the establishment of the Political Bureau, they are lying and only trying to place themselves and

²²⁵ Interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011. As discussed in Gunning (2008, 115), the Consultative Council was ineffective as a leadership body because its members were spread throughout the region and could only rarely meet in person.

their movement in a positive light; he even calls Hamas's own version of this part of their history a joke.²²⁶

The version of how the political office in Amman came to be as retold by interviewed Hamas members by and large lend credence to Dr. Habbash's claim that the movement consistently and consciously has sugarcoated its own history. According to Ousama Hamdan, for example, the establishment of a Hamas office in Amman seemed very organized. He stated that "Hamas's presence in Jordan was according to our agreement arranged in 1992 between Hamas represented by Dr. Mousa Abu Marzook and Jordan at that time represented by the Prime Minister Zaid ibn Shaker."²²⁷ It is of course in the interests of Hamas members to project an image of their organizational development as conscious, planned, and professional. Similarly, it can be argued that it is in the interest of former Hamas members such as Dr. Habbash to undermine this version of events. Regardless of whether it was pre-planned, Hamas arguably utilized its presence in Amman well.

For, as a direct response to Hamas's dire need for an operative leadership, the organization used its representatives in Amman as the basis to establish a political bureau (Hroub 2006b, 118). Consisting of approximately ten members appointed by the Consultative Council, the idea was that this Political Bureau should function as the executive branch of Hamas, dealing with the day-to-day management of the organization in an effective and efficient manner, and—importantly—beyond Israel's reach. The larger and more slow-moving Consultative Council would for its part be left in charge of the ideological and principally important decisions (Hroub 2000, 58; Mishal and Sela 2000, 161–62).²²⁸

It should be emphasized that Hamas deliberately kept the exact relationship between the Consultative Council and the Political Bureau opaque. Both the decision-making processes and the division of labor and responsibility between the two are kept secret. The justification for this complexity and secrecy relies on the logic of security-through-obscurity; not knowing who or how Hamas makes its decisions renders it harder for its enemies to effectively target the organization (Hroub 2000, 58; Mishal and Sela 2000, 154, 158).

226 Interviewed in Ramallah, May 27, 2011.

227 Interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011.

228 The founding of the Political Bureau was part of the restructuring efforts led by Mousa Abu Marzook (Mishal and Sela 2000, 58–59), and he also served as its first leader until his arrest in the US in 1995 (Caridi 2010, 110; Zaboun 2009).

The formalization of an executive leadership in Amman was what essentially tipped the internal power balance away from the weakened domestic leadership and toward the exiled Political Bureau (Caridi 2010, 110). Importantly, much of the Political Bureau's organizational influence depended on its good relations to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, who for its part enjoyed a certain amount of political influence in Jordan in the early 1990s. As a result, the Political Bureau initially had generous room for political maneuvering. Exploiting this, it was able to provide its domestic counterparts inside the occupied territories with weapons for the continuing *intifada*. Likewise, the Political Bureau developed the overall fund-raising capabilities of Hamas, which allowed for the continued implementation of social and welfare programs inside occupied Palestine. In addition to channeling weapons and money into the occupied territories, the external leadership also established relationships with countries and movements in the Arab world, Europe, and the US that were sympathetic to their cause (Mishal and Sela 2000, 87–88; Tamimi 2007, 61, 72–78).²²⁹

While the establishment of the Political Bureau in Amman was a response to the persecution Hamas suffered in 1989–1991 at the hands of the IDF inside the occupied territories, it came to play an even more crucial role for the survival of the organization than initially intended. In late 1992, Hamas intensified its military activities, killing six Israeli soldiers inside the occupied territories in December alone. On December 13, Hamas militants kidnapped an IDF soldier inside Israel, planning to exchange him for Sheikh Ahmed Yassin who remained in Israeli captivity. Although the exact details of the mission and the aftermath remain fuzzy, what is clear is that the IDF soldier for some reason was killed almost immediately. This left Hamas without any bargaining chips, thus rendering the initial plan obsolete. Israel responded to the kidnapping and killing of its soldier by launching a massive crackdown on Palestinian militants, arresting some 1 300 people in the span of a few hours. Some days later, Israel deported 415 Islamic resistance fighters to a “security zone” in southern Lebanon (Caridi 2010, 111–12).

The deportation was illegal according to the Supreme Court in Israel (Caridi 2010, 111), and naturally provoked an international outcry. Even a unanimous UN Security Council (UNSC) signed Resolution 799, strongly condemning Israel's actions and demanding that Israel, “the

229 Finance and environmental relations are two crucial zones of uncertainty, i.e., “areas of organizational unpredictability [on which the] survival and functioning of the organization depend” (Panebianco 1988, 33). Control of such zones of uncertainty is in turn considered a “resource that is ‘spendable’ in the internal power games” of any given party or organization (Panebianco 1988, 33–35), and thus helps explain the dominant position of the Political Bureau.

occupying Power, ensure the safe and immediate return to the occupied territories of all those deported” (UNSC 1992). Only in the fall of 1993 did Israel relent and transported the deportees back to their place of origin in the occupied territories (Caridi 2010, 114).

The deportation of the remaining Hamas leaders not already imprisoned by Israel naturally had serious ramifications for the organization’s decision-making capabilities within the occupied territories. If the mass arrest of 1989 had threatened to decapitate Hamas, the events of late 1992 effectively obliterated the domestic leadership. So, while Hamas initially had come to increasingly rely on its exiled Political Bureau, it became completely dependent on it after the deportations in 1992. In essence, then, the establishment and continued operation of the Political Bureau in Amman was crucial for Hamas’s survival, not only as a welfare provider in occupied Palestine and a participant in the ongoing *intifada*, but as a movement organization still in its infancy (Mishal and Sela 2000, 96–97; Tamimi 2007, 60–67).

A militant proxy with an armed wing

Hamas responded to the organizational challenges posed by Israel’s crackdowns by separating its military operations from the political and social work. Sometime in 1991 or 1992,²³⁰ Hamas founded the al-Qassam Brigades as its military wing, complete with decision-making capabilities and an infrastructure of its own. This enabled Hamas to carry out attacks inside Israel, independent of the current whereabouts or status of the political leadership (Chehab 2007, 43, 53, 67; Hroub 2000; Mishal and Sela 2000, 64–66).²³¹

It is noteworthy that Hamas—itsself created as a militant proxy for the Muslim Brotherhood only years before—already felt compelled to isolate its political leadership from the ongoing *intifada*. This indicates that Hamas already had evolved into a full-blown social movement organization with more encompassing goals and a comprehensive portfolio than that of a militant proxy. In short, the establishment of the al-Qassam Brigades suggests that Hamas performed functions as a social movement organization that needed defending from the inevitable repercussions provoked by its military activities (Gunning 2008, 40). And as relayed by former Palestinian Brother and Hamas leader, Dr. Mahmoud Habbash, Hamas had indeed outgrown the Muslim Brotherhood by 1990 and eclipsed its parent organization sometime in 1991: “The Muslim Brotherhood disappeared. Now, you can’t differentiate

230 Various authors provide different dates for the founding of the al-Qassam Brigades, but most seem to agree that it happened sometime between 1991 and 1992 (e.g., Gunning 2008, 40).

231 For a detailed history and discussion of the al-Qassam Brigades, see chapter 3 in Chehab’s book *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies* (2007).

between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.”²³² Another former Brother, Dr. Aqtash, corroborated his claim, stating that he could “100 percent guarantee that there is no more Muslim Brotherhood organization left in Palestine. It disappeared sometime during the first *intifada*.”²³³

Similar to the rationale behind the creation of Hamas itself, then, the al-Qassam Brigades was established as a separate and clandestine military wing both because a specialized organizational unit would be better suited to manage and survive the periodic crackdowns from Israel, and to provide the civil and political wing more leeway (Abu-Amr 1993, 13; Hroub 2004, 23). Following the separation, the political leadership of Hamas has claimed—although with limited credibility—that the al-Qassam Brigades carry out military operations without the leadership’s direct involvement (Mishal and Sela 2000, 159).²³⁴

Just as Hamas has kept the relationship between the Consultative Council and the Political Bureau opaque, it is likewise difficult to ascertain the exact command structure between Hamas proper and the al-Qassam Brigades. Although some authors, notably Levitt (2006), claim that there is no real distinction between Hamas and the al-Qassam Brigades, others, such as Gunning (2008, 40–41), Hroub (2006b, 121–22), and Mishal and Sela (2000, 159), all argue that the Brigades from the beginning was subjugated to the political leadership, and in particular the Political Bureau, which remained in control of much of the financial flows. At the same time, it is widely assumed that the Brigades from the beginning was provided with room to operate freely, exactly so that imprisoned political leaders could not reveal any operative details when detained by Israel (Caridi 2010, 142).

It should be noted that the relatively high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the al-Qassam Brigades indirectly allowed for a number of “strategic mistakes” to take place in 1992–1993, suggesting a lack of discipline within Hamas (Mishal and Sela 2000, 159–60). In essence, the persistent persecution of the political leadership allowed the younger recruits to gain a disproportionate amount of influence within Hamas inside the occupied territories, exploiting the stratified structure of Hamas and further weakening the hierarchical command structure. Furthermore, as many if not most of these younger recruits joined Hamas exactly to resist the Israeli occupation, they naturally found their place within the al-Qassam Brigades.²³⁵

232 Interviewed in Ramallah, May 27, 2011.

233 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 11, 2011.

234 Although more countries designate the al-Qassam Brigades as a terrorist organization than do Hamas, most of the great powers do not distinguish between the two.

235 Numerous interviewed Hamas cadres admitted to joining the organization with the intention of resisting the

Combined with the Brigade's autonomy, then, these developments "help explain the frequent irregularities in Hamas's hierarchical order and even the violations of its official leadership's policies" (Mishal and Sela 2000, 159).

4.2.2 A rudimentary organizational structure

To recapitulate, Hamas was initially rather informally organized, relying heavily on its charismatic founders such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin for authority and decision-making (Mishal and Sela 2000, 153). The original leadership also granted the local branches a high degree of autonomy. This federated and stratified organizational structure was a legacy from the Gaza Brotherhood days, and was retained by Hamas as it would allow it to continue operating even if other branches were dissolved by Israel.²³⁶ However, the harsh Israeli response to the ongoing uprising came to threaten Hamas's very survival in the early 1990s. In response, it took a number of steps to strengthen and institutionalize its organization, so that it no longer would depend on any one particular leader. For one, Hamas established its Political Bureau abroad to ensure that whatever happened to its domestic leaders, the organization would still have an operative leadership.²³⁷ Importantly, the founding of the Political Bureau was accompanied by the formalization of a hierarchical organizational structure. Second, Hamas also tried to protect its political and social work by separating its militant activities into a distinct organizational unit. Ostensibly, this armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, operates autonomously from the political leadership but in accordance with the overall strategy of Hamas.²³⁸

Israeli occupation, notably former Fatah activist and prominent Hamas leader Muhammad Hassan Abu Tir (interviewed in Ramallah, April 21, 2011) and Hamas MP Dr. Ayman Daraghme (interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, May 18, and September 27, 2011).

- 236 The *federated* dimension means that the various geographical branches were given operational and strategic leeway to adjust and prioritize goals and strategies to best fit their particular context, whereas the *stratified* dimension means that the lower organizational units retain a high degree of autonomy, although they remain subjugated to the higher strata (Katz and Mair 1995, 18, 21).
- 237 By establishing its Political Bureau abroad, Hamas's organizational order came to resemble that of the PLO, which for most of its history was led from abroad (Cobban 1984). Other liberation movements were similarly organized, e.g., the South African ANC during the apartheid period.
- 238 The political leadership isolated itself from the activities of the al-Qassam Brigades, although there has been some overlap in personnel between the political and armed wing, most importantly exemplified by Salah Shehadeh, co-founder of Hamas and leader of the al-Qassam Brigades for many years (Hadi 2006, 187–88). Likewise, Fathi Hammad from Gaza has been identified as being both a political leader and an al-Qassam commander (Gunning 2008, 178). According to Hamilton *et al.* (2007), Hamas leaders Fadel Hamdan and Khaled Thouaib have also been involved in the resistance wing, as was Yunis al-Astal according to a list of Palestinian legislators compiled by the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung (quoted in Gunning 2008, 179). Prior to the establishment of Hamas, however, this distinction was rather blurred. In 1984, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin established and personally supervised a military group in Gaza called the Palestinian Fighters, together with the aforementioned Shehadeh and later Hamas leader Ibrahim al-Maqadmeh. The group never gained any prominence, as Israeli security services soon arrested most of those involved

The formal structure

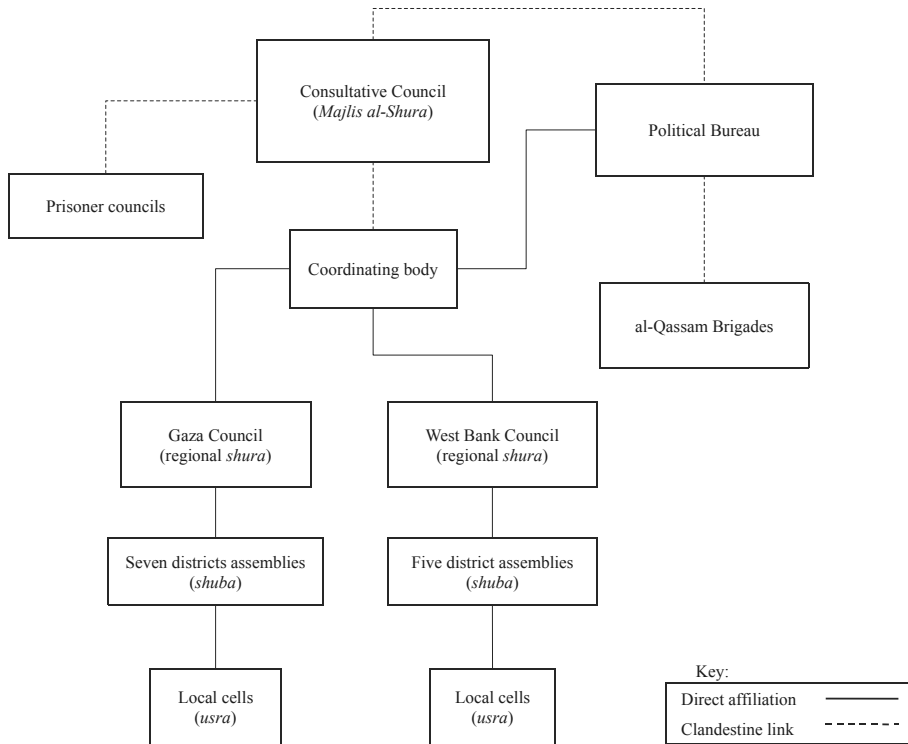
Because Hamas is unwilling to share its bylaws with outsiders for reasons of security, it is impossible to accurately describe its organizational structure, know exactly how its decision-making procedures work, how internal elections are conducted, or how its bylaws can be changed. Based on secondary sources and interviews with both current and former Hamas members, parliamentarians, cadres, and leaders on the occupied West Bank and in Lebanon, Figure 4 below is suggested as a schematic organogram of Hamas as of the early 1990s.

In short, the Consultative Council has been the topmost leadership in Hamas almost from the very beginning. And while accounts differ, it is assumed to have been composed of somewhere between twelve and 24 members in the early 1990s, most, if not all, residing outside of occupied Palestine. As discussed, this Consultative Council is in charge of the overall strategy and ideological development of Hamas, and appoints the ten member Political Bureau to deal with the day-to-day management of the organization. Inside the occupied territories, Hamas has three main wings. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip each has a regional headquarters, further divided into smaller administrative units, while the ever increasing numbers of imprisoned Hamas members and leaders are represented through prisoners committees (Chehab 2007, 30; Hroub 2006b, 118; Mishal and Sela 2000, 156–58). The al-Qassam Brigades, the Consultative Council, the Political Bureau, and the three branches within the occupied territories are considered the major organizational units of Hamas.

Because of the secrecy surrounding Hamas's organizational structure, the below figure is only suggestive and outlines what is assumed to be the formal hierarchical structure of Hamas, not necessarily the *de facto* structure. Furthermore, because accounts of Hamas's organizational makeup for the period in question diverge somewhat, some organizational units depicted in the organogram might not ever have existed or only existed for a short period. In particular, the coordinating body mentioned in Mishal and Sela (2000, 162) is conspicuously absent in other consulted sources and was never mentioned by interviewed Hamas cadres. This does not necessarily mean that such a body never existed, but maybe it was set up sometime in the early 1990s and then became superfluous and was disbanded. And as discussed above, the

(Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 115). See also fn. 235 above.

Figure 4: Schematic Hamas organogram, approximately 1993



(Source: Based on interviewed Hamas members and supplemented by information gleaned from the relevant literature, in particular Mishal and Sela (2000). *Usra* is Arabic for family, *shuba* means division, and *shura* translates into consultation.)

domestic leadership was for most intents and purposes defunct for long periods in the early 1990s due to Israeli assassination, imprisonment, and deportation policies. Also, the Consultative Council was able to operate only intermittently (Gunning 2008, 114–15), meaning that the Political Bureau was the sole remaining leadership body.

While details regarding the leadership levels in Hamas for this period are scant and uncertain, even less is known about the lower levels of the organization. Neither the exact number of levels, nor the operative capabilities or functions of the units at these lower levels are known.

However, given the fact that Hamas inherited the Brotherhood's organizational structure, accounts provided by former Brotherhood leader Dr. Habbash is considered illuminating. Talking about his rise through the hierarchy on the Gaza Strip during his days in the Brotherhood, he detailed the levels of the organization as follows:

I was first in a small *usra*, which contains of three members and a leader, called a *naqib*. And then I became a member of an *usra* of *nouqaba*, a council of leaders. First of all, you have to be a member, then a leader, a *naqib*, and then a *al-Aqib*, which means the leader of a *nouqaba*, the leader of the council of leaders. And after that you can become a member of the local *shura* council, and then you can become a member of the leadership in one of the [seven *shuba*] districts. Those that belong to the group who leads a region can finally be part of the leadership of the movement in the Gaza Strip region.²³⁹

If Hamas kept with the organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood, then, it can be assumed that there were five hierarchical levels below the topmost leadership bodies.²⁴⁰ But this remains speculative. For one, and notwithstanding the credibility of Dr. Habbash, he described the Brotherhood's rather than Hamas's organizational structure. Furthermore, the already oft-mentioned persecution of Hamas would certainly have negatively affected the operational capabilities and even the existence of these lower level organizational units. In short, too little is known about these lower levels for any claims to be made. As such, the organogram in Figure 4 only depicts a generic lowest level, included to illustrate that Hamas had some local presence.

Decision-making

While the internal workings of Hamas also are deliberately kept opaque, some details have emerged, and certain characteristics can be inferred based on Hamas's behavior, secondary sources, and interview data. For one, and as discussed above, it is well established that Hamas from the outset granted its local branches a high degree of decisional autonomy—within the limits of the overall strategic framework. Such a decentralized organizational structure proved invaluable for Hamas's ability to survive and continue their social, military, and political work during the difficult circumstances of the *intifada*. A high degree of local autonomy can lead to factionalism, however, and to counter this Hamas also adopted various decision-making

239 Dr. Mahmoud al-Habbash, minister of Religious Affairs and Waqf, interviewed in Ramallah, May 27, 2011.

240 (1) *usra*, (2) the councils of *usra* leaders, (3) the local *shura* councils, (4) regional leaderships, and (5) the Gaza leadership.

procedures inherited from the Brotherhood.

As in the Brotherhood, ultimate authority within Hamas rests with the Consultative Council. It remains the prerogative of this leadership body to articulate the goals of Hamas, and to make decisions regarding the movement's overall strategy. According to Mishal and Sela, decisions in the Consultative Council were based on a majority vote (2000, 161), whereas decisions "which fundamentally affect the movement's direction require a two-thirds majority" (Gunning 2008, 104). To further increase the internal legitimacy of decisions on such fundamental issues, the leadership at times also consulted its rank-and-file and even conducted internal referendums.

The consultative and democratic nature of these procedures has been repeatedly emphasized both in the literature and among interviewed Hamas members (see e.g., Caridi 2010, 222; Gunning 2008, 101).²⁴¹ In short, Hamas early on implemented mechanisms to consult widely among its rank-and-file when deliberating on important decisions. Such an inclusive process helped ensure internal legitimacy for the final decision, even among those that were initially opposed. Although such a consensual model has its benefits, it is also slow-moving and rather cumbersome. And as Hamas operated in a volatile and unpredictable political environment, it could not always rely on these decision-making procedures (Gunning 2008, 113).

The establishment of the Political Bureau was the foremost organizational response to this challenge, as this executive leadership body was given a rather encompassing and open mandate to run the day-to-day operations of Hamas. And as detailed above, in periods of extreme hardship and political repression in the occupied territories, Hamas largely relied on the Political Bureau for both funding and decision-making. However, there are intrinsic contradictions within a movement seeking to combine a hierarchical with a federated, horizontal organizational structure, and to formalize a vertical chain of command in an informal and stratified organization.

So, while Hamas leaders both outside and inside the occupied territories continuously stressed the unity and coherence of the organization, tensions between the various factions have intensified at various points in time, either because of challenges stemming from changes or shocks in the political environment or internal challenges. In particular, with regard to principally important and overarching issues, such tensions have been well documented

241 The democratic nature of Hamas and its decision-making procedures were recurring themes among almost all interviewed cadres.

(Gunning 2008, 40–41; Mishal and Sela 2000, 163–66). However, there were few examples of Hamas suffering from such intensified tensions between its various factions during the period in question. Because of this, detailed analysis of this issue is left for later chapters.

It is, nevertheless, pertinent to note that the three main sources identified as leading to factionalism in Hamas were all in place by the early 1990s: For one, and as already discussed, factionalism is an expected by-product of organizational stratification, i.e., that the lower, local levels of the organization were given a high degree of autonomy.²⁴² Second, Hamas became increasingly heterogeneous throughout the first *intifada*, both because the persecution of the old guard forced a generational change in the leadership, and because its political vision attracted new recruits, many of whom did not go through the extensive indoctrination process of the Brotherhood (Gunning 2008, 40; Robinson 1997, 170). Third and final, Hamas's federated structure at the topmost levels also led to factionalism. In particular, the internal power struggles have emerged because the various leadership branches operated under widely different conditions: the Gaza wing was continuously targeted by Israel, the West Bank wing and the prisoners' committees were fragmented, while the external leadership operated under comparatively easy conditions, largely out of reach from Israeli persecution (ICG 2004, 11; Mishal and Sela 2000, 161).²⁴³

In summary, the years of the first *intifada* saw Hamas expand and make attempts to formalize and professionalize its organizational order. Despite its best efforts, the challenging environment of the first *intifada*, marked as it was by violence, volatility, dramatic changes, and relentless persecution by Israel, proved to effectively preclude Hamas's attempts to successfully build and develop its organization. Although it survived the *intifada* and to some extent retained the capacity to continue operating as a religiously motivated liberation movement, Hamas emerged from the *intifada* as a weakened organization, almost completely dependent on its exiled leadership.

242 As discussed above, it made sense for the Hamas leadership to provide the lower levels with decisional autonomy for reasons of security. However, the autonomy of the lower levels was also a consequence of the way in which Hamas spread throughout the occupied territories. For, notwithstanding the fact that Hamas was founded in the Gaza Strip, the expansion of the organization throughout the occupied territories relied on the pre-existing network of Brotherhood institutions, meaning that it was partly created through territorial penetration and partly through territorial diffusion. This, in turn, is hypothesized to mean that the local leaders in Hamas had more authority and *de facto* power over their subordinates than would have been the case if Hamas spread through territorial penetration. Consequently, they are expected to be harder to whip into line by the central leadership (Panebianco 1988, 51–53).

243 An important exception was the failed assassination attempt in 1997 on the leader of the Political Bureau of Hamas in Amman, Khaled Meshaal (McGeough 2010). This issue will be covered in more detail in later chapters.

4.3 Hamas at the end of the first intifada

Writing on the eve of the first *intifada*, Shadid and Seltzer concluded their analysis of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Palestine in the 1980s by cautioning that if the secular-nationalist Palestinian leadership—essentially the PLO—failed to “produce tangible [political] results” one could expect their support to be transferred to the Islamic movement, which “undoubtedly would shift its strategy to armed struggle and violent confrontation with Israel [which would mean that the] Palestinian conflict with Israel would take on a religious character” (1989, 297–98).²⁴⁴ And Shadid and Seltzer’s prediction came true when Hamas entered the *intifada* as the armed wing of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, soon thereafter eclipsing its mother organization and rapidly rising to become a player in Palestinian politics in its own right (Kristianasen 1999, 20–22).

While Hamas’s pivotal role in the *intifada* explains part of the movement’s rise to prominence, it should be reiterated that the increasing religiosity among Palestinians also played a part; representing an Islamist alternative to the secular nationalists headed by Fatah, Hamas could easily exploit the increasing numbers of religious Palestinians as supporters and potential recruits (Abu-Amr 1993; Gunning 2008, 39; Knudsen 2005a, 1382–84; Robinson 1997, 149). In short, Hamas inherited an almost ready-made ideological message from the Brotherhood, already resonating among an increasing number of Palestinians. And as argued by Taraki, “Hamas’ active participation in the uprising, then, should best be seen as part of the campaign of a prospective opposition Islamist party in the future Palestinian state.” She goes on to conclude her chapter with a note of caution to those who at the time were unimpressed with the newcomer, stating that “there is no doubt that Hamas should be taken seriously” (1989, 177).

Despite its rapid ascension to the Palestinian political scene and active participation in the *intifada*, Hamas remained the junior resistance movement throughout the uprising. Partly, this was due to the fact that the PLO still enjoyed almost unrivaled legitimacy among Palestinians. For one, the PLO had a much longer history of actively resisting the Israeli occupation, which naturally gave the organization a head-start in terms of popular credibility. Furthermore, both the PLO and its largest faction, Fatah, were led by the charismatic Yasser Arafat, by many

244 An important strategic dimension relates to the discussion of whether the Palestinians supported a two-state solution or still wanted to liberate the whole of Palestine. On this issue, the gap between the strategy pursued by Fatah and opinion among the Palestinian population widened following the PLO’s decision in 1974 to accept a two-state solution as an interim step toward the complete liberation of Palestine.

considered to be the personification of the Palestinian national struggle (Herzog 2006; Karon 2004). And finally, as a testament to its international stature, the PLO was recognized as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” and given observer status in the UN General Assembly in 1974—a feat never reproduced by any other liberation movement.²⁴⁵ In short, and notwithstanding its efforts throughout the first *intifada*, it would take more than a few years for Hamas to be in a position to challenge the PLO in terms of popular legitimacy.

Also, Hamas’s sorry organizational state helps explain its weak position at the end of the *intifada*. Although it can be argued that Hamas competently responded to the persecution it suffered, i.e., by separating its militant activities from its political and social work, and by establishing the Political Bureau as a leadership body outside Israel’s reach, its efforts proved inadequate; as detailed, its domestic leadership was for long periods completely defunct, and even the operational capabilities of the new clandestine armed wing were at times seriously hampered. In essence, the intensity of the persecution Hamas suffered—in particular in 1989 and 1992—combined with the fact that it was still a young movement busy designing and building its organization while operating in an unpredictable, volatile, and violent political environment, all help explain why it emerged at the end of the *intifada* as a weak and wounded, barely operational, movement.

It is therefore noteworthy that when interviewed Hamas members talked about these early years, they often focused on how Israel “helped” them recruit new members and build the organization by persecuting, assassinating, imprisoning, and deporting their leaders.²⁴⁶ Dr. Mohammad Ghazal, for example, called the deportation of Hamas activists to south Lebanon in 1992 “a very good point in our history that helped us a lot.”²⁴⁷ Other Hamas leaders expressed similar sentiments. The explanation behind this gratitude is twofold: First, Israeli persecution is seen as a badge of honor for Palestinian resistance movements. And despite their best efforts to establish a narrative to the contrary, Hamas was for all intents and purposes a newcomer to the Palestinian political scene, to some extent also tainted by having been allowed by Israel to operate rather freely (Milton-Edwards 1996, 152). Hamas was thus in need of credibility as a resistance movement, which Israel in effect granted by persecuting

245 Consult UN General Assembly resolution 3237 for further details (UNGA 1974b).

246 Naturally, gratitude for persecution and imprisonment might come easier for those that avoided it, or as the events grow more distant in history. However, some of those expressing such sentiments in interviews had themselves been incarcerated for long periods of time, often in solitary confinement, and not always so long ago.

247 Interviewed in Nablus, September 29, 2011.

the movement.²⁴⁸

Second, and somewhat more convoluted, Hamas members argue that because their leadership was imprisoned and assassinated, the movement had to evolve and develop as an organization, or risk being destroyed. And although interviewed Hamas members and parts of the literature portray the relationship between persecution and organizational development in an overly mechanic and deterministic way, the above demonstrates that Hamas did indeed survive the first onslaughts mainly because it competently responded to persecution by restructuring its organization. So even if, as argued by Robinson (1997, 173), Hamas “lost its distinct organizational distinctiveness” in the latter years of the *intifada* and developed from a disciplined “cadre-based organization to a large umbrella movement,” it not only survived the persecution of the *intifada*, but had by then managed to establish itself as a viable, if organizationally weak, alternative to the PLO, with a clear ideological message.

On September 13, 1993, Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles (DOP),²⁴⁹ officially ending the first *intifada* and ushering in a new era in Palestinian politics, the most important characteristic of which was the establishment of a Palestinian proto-state, the Palestinian Authority (PA). Although the next chapter will elaborate on the background, institutional makeup, and early development of the PA, and proceed to analyze the consequences for Hamas’s development, it is pertinent to conclude the analysis of Hamas’s development throughout the first *intifada* by stating that Hamas by then already was a recognized player on the Palestinian political scene. And although the so-called Oslo years from 1994 to 1999 also proved challenging for the young movement organization, Hamas’s experiences from and development throughout the first *intifada* were invaluable, and it was well positioned to increase its political reach and stature as a religiously motivated liberation movement in occupied Palestine, step-by-step taking on a more prominent role.

4.4 Hamas’s level of institutionalization at the end of the first intifada

Based on the above analyses and supplemented with data from interviews and the relevant literature, the chapter will end with an overall measurement of Hamas’s degree of

248 By framing their personal suffering as proof of resilience and dedication to the cause, Hamas members attempt—and arguably largely succeed—in using imprisonment to reproduce and strengthen the collective identity of Hamas.

249 Colloquially known as the Oslo I Accord.

institutionalization at the end of the first *intifada*. The analysis that follows relies on the theoretical framework provided by Randall and Svåsand (2002a), who suggest that the degree to which a political party has institutionalized is best measured in the four elements *systemness* (structural, internal dimension), *decisional autonomy* (structural, external dimension), *value infusion* (attitudinal, internal dimension), and *reification* (attitudinal, external dimension). To score Hamas's level in each dimension, criteria and associated indicators from various studies of institutionalization are utilized (e.g., Basedau and Stroh 2008; Huntington 1968; Levitsky 1998; Panebianco 1988; Webb and White 2009a; de Zeeuw 2009).²⁵⁰

As concluded above, Hamas was a religiously motivated liberation movement at the end of the first *intifada*, and had as such not even begun its transmutation toward a political party. However, even if the theoretical framework applied to measure the degree of institutionalization was developed with political parties in mind, any organization will be more or less institutionalized at any given point in time. Furthermore, it will be useful to have a baseline of Hamas's institutionalization for the sake of longitudinal comparison; all later chapters will end with a section detailing Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the respective period under scrutiny.

4.4.1 Systemness

Systemness is the internal, structural dimension in Randall and Svåsand's framework, and refers to the "scope, density and regularity of the interactions that constitute the party structure" (2002a, 13). Suitable criteria for measuring the degree of *systemness* include the routinization of leadership alternation and decision-making procedures, how closely a party's bylaws are followed, and the routinization of informal procedures.

In brief, Hamas is considered to have had a low degree of *systemness* at the end of the *intifada*. For one, and although leadership alternation took place, it happened in a seemingly haphazard and not a routinized manner; because deported, assassinated, or imprisoned leaders had to be replaced at a moment's notice, Hamas was forced to make do with whoever was available from the higher echelons of the organization. Second, and despite the fact that little is known about Hamas's bylaws, it seems safe to conclude that adherence to these was not a priority in a period when the existence of the organization itself was threatened. Rather, the degree to which Hamas relied on the Political Bureau for leadership for much of the period

²⁵⁰ See chapter 1, pp. 42ff. for details.

suggests that it willingly ignored its own formal hierarchy to the benefit of continued operations. Third, and related to the last point, Hamas also seemed to circumvent its own formal decision-making procedures extensively throughout these early years. And fourth, as Hamas essentially was forced to improvise by the persecution it suffered, there was little to suggest routinization of informal procedures.

4.4.2 Decisional autonomy

Decisional autonomy is the external, structural dimension in the applied framework and refers to the extent to which a given organization is free from “interference in determining its own policies and strategies” (Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 14). Essentially, decisional autonomy is a question of how freely an organization can decide on its own, without undue interference from its donors. Importantly, this does not imply that the organization in question must be autonomous *per se* from its donors, but that the nature of their relationship is such that a given sponsor cannot dominate the organization in question. Consequently, the most salient criterion for measuring Hamas’s decisional autonomy is the nature of its relationship with and number of external sponsors.

Given Hamas’s clandestine and secretive nature, data on its relationship to external sponsors remains scarce and speculative. It is, nevertheless, well established that Hamas enjoyed an unexpected windfall of financial and political support from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states in 1990 and 1991. For, following Yasser Arafat and the PLO’s ill-advised support for Saddam Hussein during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (Ibrahim 1990), “aid that had been earmarked for the PLO began to find its way into Hamas’s coffers” (Gleis and Berti 2012, 155). It should be noted, however, that this support was provided without any obvious strings attached apart from the implicit understanding that Hamas did not do as the PLO.

Yet Hamas’s reliance on the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood posed a bigger challenge for its decisional autonomy. Although the Jordanian Brotherhood shared Hamas’s ideological outlook and was sympathetic to its national aspirations, the Brotherhood was not itself free to do as it pleased; it relied on the acceptance of the Jordanian regime in whatever decision it made.²⁵¹ As such, the Brotherhood could only aid their Palestinian brethren to the extent the

251 The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was the sole political group that was allowed to operate legally in Jordan at the time. Note also that the ties between the Jordanian Brotherhood and Hamas were further complicated by the fact that the relationship between the Palestinian liberation movements and the Jordanian Kingdom had been strained for decades, and in particular since the events of Black September in 1970 (see chapter 3 in this thesis for a brief overview, and chapter 11 in Sayigh 1997 for a detailed historical account).

regime in Jordan allowed it to do so. Although there were no obvious indications that Hamas changed course or that the Brotherhood exercised undue influence on its decision-making, Hamas's heavy dependence on the Political Bureau located in Amman is taken to suggest that it in all likelihood let the interests of Jordan influence its strategies out of fear of being deported. To conclude, it is therefore argued that Hamas enjoyed a medium level of decisional autonomy throughout the *intifada* years.

4.4.3 Value infusion

The internal, attitudinal dimension in Randall and Svåsand's framework is *value infusion*, defined as "the extent to which party actors and supporters ... acquire an identification with and commitment to the party which transcend more instrumental or self-interested incentives for involvement" (2002a, 13). *Value infusion* might be the most recognizable dimension of institutionalization, as it captures the degree to which an organization stops being a means to an end for its members and becomes an end in itself. Typically, a criterion to measure *value infusion* is organizational cohesion, i.e., how disciplined and committed the rank-and-file remain in the face of unpopular decisions or fundamental changes in strategy or goals implemented by the leadership.

However, and as is to be expected from a young organization such as Hamas with strong ideological roots, its members were still dedicated to the cause throughout the first *intifada*. The liberation of historic Palestine and the eventual establishment of an Islamist state in the liberated territory were the goals that motivated recruits to join Hamas, as they saw the organization as a vehicle to reach these. And given that Hamas had existed for such a short time, and only experienced the volatility and violence of the first *intifada*, there were no decisions its leadership could have made that would test the cohesion and dedication of its rank-and-file. In essence, it is concluded that Hamas was still seen as a means to an end, and not an end in itself, and as such it is deemed to be infused with value only to a low degree by the end of the *intifada*.

4.4.4 Reification

Reification is the external, attitudinal dimension in Randall and Svåsand's framework, defined as "the extent to which the party's existence is established in the public imagination ... including other parties" (2002a, 14).²⁵² Two criteria suited to measure *reification* are popular

²⁵² Note that Harmel and Svåsand introduced a similar element in their theory on party development phases. According to their theory, a party must, in its third and final phase of development, "develop [a] reputation

support and being recognized as a serious contender by political opponents.

With regard to how popular Hamas was, it should be noted that prior to the Oslo Accords, surveys of political preferences had been conducted among Palestinians only rarely and infrequently. As such, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether Hamas had become any more popular throughout the first *intifada*, or indeed how popular it actually was by the end of the period. Nevertheless, Shadid and Seltzer did carry out a poll among Palestinians in 1986, in which they—among other things—asked 1 024 Palestinians about leadership preferences.²⁵³ And although they found that the vast majority of Palestinians supported the PLO leadership, they found it pertinent to note that

[a] significant minority of respondents (20.8 percent) had no opinion or gave the optional response of “none of the above.” Many of the respondents who gave this response are likely to be supporters of the Islamic groups because the religious groups do not endorse any of the people that we listed (1988a, 23).

While this should not be taken to indicate that the entire 20.8 percent responding “none of the above” in 1986 were supporters of Islamic groups, or that this automatically would translate into support for Hamas following its establishment, Shadid and Seltzer were probably not too far off target; in one of the first polls conducted in occupied Palestine after the Oslo Accords, 13 percent of respondents said they would have voted for candidates affiliated with Hamas “if an election was held tomorrow” (CPRS 1993).²⁵⁴

More generally, it seems likely that Hamas capitalized politically by effectively monopolizing the identity as the one Palestinian liberation movement with an Islamist outlook.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, Islam had become increasingly politicized in occupied Palestine from the early 1980s and onward (see Shadid and Seltzer 1988a, 1988b, 1989),²⁵⁶ and by 1993 it functioned as a source of legitimacy and mobilization in its own right. Likewise, Israel and the PLO—

for credibility and dependability [and] develop ... relations with other parties” (1993, 75).

253 See Shadid and Seltzer (1988a, 18–20) for details about their employed methodology.

254 In another survey conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) in 1993, 12.4 percent of respondents answered the “Islamic movements” (i.e., Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood) when asked who they thought represents the Palestinian people (JMCC 1993).

255 For example, the Islamist alternatives won an increasing share of the votes in elections to professional unions, chambers of commerce, and student councils throughout these years (Gunning 2008, 42; Robinson 1997, 19–27). And although Islamic Jihad admittedly was well established by the time Hamas was founded, the latter surpassed the former in popularity and operational capabilities more or less from the moment it was founded.

256 See the chapter 3 in this thesis, Abu-Amr (1994a), and Løvlie (2014) for discussions on the rise (or return) of Islam in Palestinian politics.

Hamas's sworn enemy and main political opponent, respectively—recognized that Hamas would benefit from these changes. Combined with its already established track record in the first *intifada*, it is therefore concluded that Hamas—notwithstanding its juniority to the PLO—already was highly reified by the end of the *intifada*.

Summarized, Hamas scored low on both systemness and value infusion, medium on decisional autonomy, and high on reification. Hamas was already recognized both by its supporters and competitors as a force to be reckoned with, and enjoyed a medium level of autonomy from its environment. However, the persecution it suffered while attempting to build its organization meant that it lacked routinization and remained underdeveloped organizationally. Moreover, as is to be expected from a young political movement, it was still seen as a vehicle to achieve its stated goals, and as such it is argued that Hamas was only infused with value to a low degree. In conclusion, and based on the above measurements of the four elements, it is argued here that the overall score of Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the first *intifada* was somewhere between low and medium.

Chapter 5: Hamas and the Oslo years (1994–1999)

This chapter will focus on Hamas's development throughout the so-called "Oslo years," i.e., the period from when the Oslo Accords came into effect until the failure of the peace process had become apparent (1994 to 1999).²⁵⁷ The period saw Hamas exposed to unprecedented levels of persecution at the hands of Israel and the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA). The harsh conditions under which Hamas operated throughout these years seriously hampered its organization-building efforts, which in turn had negative ramifications for its overall development and led it to adopt a somewhat erratic and unpredictable behavior.

The analysis will pick up on Hamas's development from the previous chapter, with a particular focus on the consequences of Hamas's militant legacy for its organizational and ideological development (Close and Prevost 2008; de Zeeuw 2008b). In short, after having eclipsed the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas had come to display characteristics similar to that of a conventional social movement, although it still remained a militant resistance movement. Such a dual organizational legacy complicated Hamas's development. Hamas thus faced endogenous and exogenous challenges, both of which hampered its process of transmutation from movement organization toward political party. Hamas did begin this process, however, e.g., by expanding organizationally and attempting to strike a balance between its long-term ideological goals and more immediate strategic aims. Despite its efforts, the challenges posed by the difficult environmental conditions and Hamas's dual legacies effectively obstructed its organization-building efforts. This led to increased factionalism at its topmost levels, which in turn produced a contradictory ideological development characterized by intra-organizational competition and disagreement.

Before delving into the analyses of Hamas's organizational and ideological development in the Oslo years, the chapter provides a short historical overview of the period, with an emphasis on the PA's creation and development. The establishment and expansion of the PA and the return of Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the occupied territories were defining features of the period in question, as these developments fundamentally altered the operational logic of all Palestinian factions, including Hamas.

Then the attention shifts to how these developments affected Hamas's process of institutionalization. Here, the expected effect of Hamas's legacy as a militant movement will

257 This period is referred to as the "interim phase" in the Oslo Accords (Bishara 1999).

be discussed briefly, before covering first its ideological evolution and then its organizational development. The penultimate section of the chapter provides a short discussion on how far Hamas came on its way toward qualifying as a political party in this period, concluding that it still remained more of a movement organization.

The chapter concludes with a brief account of Hamas degree of institutionalization at the end of the Oslo years, finding that, overall, it had increased its level of institutionalization somewhat as compared to the previous period. As mentioned, Hamas was already highly reified by the end of the first *intifada*, and there were no signs that it had become any less so by the end of the 1990s. Moreover, Hamas was still heavily reliant on its sponsors, suggesting that its decisional autonomy also remained unchanged at a medium level. Furthermore, the persecution Hamas suffered throughout this period forced it to rely on informal routines and improvisation in order to persevere. However, by surviving as a united organization despite the ordeals of the 1990s suggests a slight increase in informal routinization and thus systemness as compared to the previous period. And, finally, as both Hamas's new and old members still saw it as a means toward an end, it did not increase its level of value infusion noticeably.

5.1 A new Palestinian politics

The signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) between Israel and the PLO in 1993 ushered in a new era in Palestinian politics.²⁵⁸ Not only did it mark the end of the first *intifada*, but it recast Palestinian politics at its most basic levels (A. S. Khalidi 1995). For one, the Oslo process gave hope for Palestinian self-determination in the not too distant future (Roy 2002, 8). As its name indicates, the DOP was not a peace settlement itself, and it did not deal with any of the contentious issues such as the final status of Jerusalem, the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, or the question of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It did, however, stipulate the principles and time frame for further negotiations, specifying, for example, that further negotiations and the final talks were to be based on UNSCR 242 and UNSCR 338,²⁵⁹ and that final status negotiations should be concluded within five years of the transitional period, specifically on May 4, 1999 (Bishara 1999). In addition, the Oslo Accords specified that Israel should withdraw its troops, first from Jericho on the

258 Numerous works are dedicated to the Oslo process and its aftermath. See, for example, Butenschön (1998), Giacaman and Lønning (1998), and Waage (2002, 2005, 2008).

259 UNSCR 338 reiterates UNSCR 242 and in effect limits the Palestinians' future state to about 20 percent of their historical claim (Abu-Amr 1994b, 77; Butenschön and Vollan 1996, 13).

West Bank and parts of Gaza, and later from other parts of the West Bank and the rest of the Gaza Strip (Usher 1995a, 85). Importantly, the Accords also included the first ever mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel of each others' right to exist (Abu-Amr 1994b, 76; Usher 1995a, 10–11).

Ending the *intifada*, withdrawing Israeli troops from the occupied territories, and promising them a sovereign state resonated well with the Palestinians; optimism and great, albeit cautious, expectations for the future thus marked this new phase in Palestinian politics (Kristianasen 1999, 22). The principles and time frame specified in the DOP and subsequent agreements between Israel and the PLO were therefore important in their own right, as they fundamentally altered the public sentiment in the occupied territories. As will be shown in this chapter, these factors had ramifications for the ideological, strategic, and organizational development of Hamas.

However, the most lasting and arguably important consequence of the Oslo agreements took place at the institutional level. The Oslo I agreement specified that a “Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority” should be established, and this proto-state would take on a limited set of state functions on the West Bank and in Gaza “for a transitional period not exceeding five years” (JPS 1993). Though characterized by its limited authority and divided territory, the Palestinians largely welcomed the establishment of the PA in the summer of 1994.²⁶⁰ The PA was well received in part because it was Palestine’s first recognized national governing body, but more importantly because it was meant to be succeeded by a proper, sovereign Palestinian state in 1999 (Butenschøn and Vollan 2006, 17).

5.1.1 The Palestinian National Authority

The PA was by design a state-like construct, although it had a limited mandate with severely circumscribed powers, and was arguably set up to *manage* more than *govern* the occupied territories. In brief, the PA was given the authority over health, education, and social services, as well as tourism and some of the taxation in the territories it controlled. It had no real sovereignty, however, as external trade relations, foreign affairs, and currency policies all were controlled by Israel.²⁶¹

260 Formally established following the Gaza-Jericho treaty signed between Israel and the PLO on May 4, 1994 (Schad 1994a, 1994b), the PA became operational in July that same year, some six months after schedule (A. S. Khalidi 1995, 5).

261 See also Hilal (1998) for an account of the structure and mandate of the PA, and its effect on the Palestinian political system.

Crucially, the PA did not even have a monopoly of violence. It exercised its already circumscribed authority to varying degrees in the occupied territories, as these were divided into three categories depending on the degree of Israeli control. Area A was to be governed and policed by the PA exclusively, area B was under Palestinian civilian control but policed by the Israeli military, and area C was kept under complete Israeli control.²⁶² Initially, the PA managed about 60 percent of the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho on the West Bank (Rabbani 1996, 4). Israel slowly withdrew from the West Bank as stipulated by successive agreements throughout the 1990s, and by 1999, area A made up 17 percent of the West Bank, area B constituted some 24 percent, leaving 59 percent under complete Israeli control as area C (Butenschön and Vollan 2006, 37).²⁶³

Within its constrained mandate, the PA had an institutional makeup resembling that of a presidential system, with a strong president, a legislative council, courts, and police and security services. Although nominal checks and balances were instituted, the office of the president was, both *de jure* and *de facto*, by far the most powerful branch in the PA. Formally, the executive was vested with the power to appoint and dismiss the cabinet at will and ratify laws adopted by the legislature. The office also controlled the PA's budget and retained exclusive control over the security apparatus.²⁶⁴ The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), on the other hand, suffered from an unclear constitutional mandate. It was intended to function as a parliament, mandated to draft laws for the president to ratify, as well as bestowed with the power to approve major policies proposed by the executive. But as long as the office of the president in effect was "omnipotent" within the limited mandate of the PA, the legislative council's potential to exercise its power was seriously circumscribed (Abu-Amr 1997; Amundsen and Ezbidri 2004). In short, the formal structure of the PA was heavily skewed in favor of the presidency, which had negative consequences for the Palestinian governance of the occupied territories.

Also informally, the PA faced serious challenges. Although intended to be an independent political entity, cadres and guerrillas from Fatah and the PLO filled the political positions and bureaucracy of the PA, and formed the backbone of its security forces. This in effect rendered

262 Consult the map section at the website of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)—Occupied Palestinian territory for details, available at: <http://www.ochaopt.org>

263 Arguably, the PA could be said to resemble the institutions set up by the former colonial powers in which the colonized in effect managed the colony for the colonizers, so-called "indirect rule" (Crowder 1964).

264 The control of the security forces proved to be a highly contested issue. In later periods, Palestinian ministers even resigned in protest of the original system, eventually gaining some control of the security forces. See later chapters for more details.

the PA as the tool of the PLO (Abu-Amr 1997; Usher 1996). And importantly, it was the Chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, who held the office of president in the PA. Without a functioning parliamentary system in place, and with the prerogative to appoint and dismiss cabinet members at will, Arafat in essence wielded unlimited powers within the framework of the Oslo Accords (Amundsen and Ezbidid 2004). Furthermore, Arafat tied the powers of the PA to his own person, exploited the institutional weaknesses of the PA and his exclusive control of the numerous security services of the PA,²⁶⁵ and ignored both the rule of law and the mounting evidence of corruption in the PA. In short, and regardless of whatever institutional arrangements that were theoretically in place, the PA was *de facto* dependent on Arafat's leadership—a leadership characterized as “the antithesis of ... institutionalization,” and by his ignorance of both “the concepts of separation of powers and power sharing” (Abu-Amr 1997, 94).

The PLC and the courts, meant to provide the incipient quasi-state with checks and balances, were left with severely limited powers. The PLC by and large operated as a consultative body as the president time and again refused to ratify their drafted laws, in effect marginalizing the legislative branch. As for the judiciary, it not only had to cope with a number of different legal systems,²⁶⁶ but also a set of Security Courts that overruled whatever sentences and rulings that contradicted the interests of the president and his associates (Amundsen and Ezbidid 2004). In sum, the PA was run as Yasser Arafat's “one-man-show” throughout most of the Oslo period (Abu-Amr 1997; Schulz 2002, 27–29).²⁶⁷

5.1.2 The de-development of occupied Palestine

The aforementioned formal and informal institutional problems had negative ramifications for the development in the occupied Palestinian territories. In addition, a number of interrelated political events and processes that took place throughout the 1990s further exacerbated the problems. First, even if the *intifada* had officially ended, the violence between Palestinian liberation movements and the Israelis continued. Second, the 1996 election in Israel was won by Benjamin Netanyahu from the right-wing Likud party. And third, the 1990s were marked by the “de-development of Palestine,” i.e., “economic decline, social regression, and political

265 For thorough analyses of the Palestinian security services under Arafat, see Lia (2006a, 2006b).

266 The West Bank inherited laws from Jordan, the Gaza Strip from Egypt, while Emergency Laws from the British Mandate period were in effect in the areas where Israel upheld their occupation (Hilal and Khan 2004, 86). There are also laws regulating the occupied territories both from Israel and the PA, as well as the numerous regimes of customary law still enforced at the local level, including Islamic laws.

267 See also Robinson (1997, 174–88).

repression” (Roy 1999, 64). In sum, these factors undermined the peace process, worked to further de-institutionalize the PA, and produced political, economic, and social conditions in the occupied territories void of any positive developments. Naturally, these developments—or de-developments—posed serious strategic, ideological, and organizational challenges for the institutionalization of Hamas.

Continued violence

One prioritized task of the PA as stipulated in the Oslo agreements was to stop Palestinian militants from perpetrating attacks in Israel (Mustaq Husain Khan 2004, 1; Usher 1995a, 19). The president of the PA was in essence asked to secure Israel from Palestinian militants. The task was hard to fulfill partly because the Palestinian security services controlled only a limited portion of the Palestinian territories. In addition, providing security for Israel meant persecuting Palestinians who were fighting for the liberation of Palestine. This, of course, was unpopular among many Palestinians, as it essentially meant that it now was the task of Palestinians themselves to imprison those that were fighting for a free Palestine.²⁶⁸ And the task was made even harder as a number of Palestinian liberation movements were intent on continuing the *intifada*.

For, despite the popularity of the Oslo process in the occupied territories, Hamas and nine other factions banded together in a coalition named the Alliance of Palestinian Forces (APF), determined to subvert the peace process and continue their armed struggle against the occupation (Strindberg 2000).²⁶⁹

During the first half of 1993, in the lead up to the signing of the DOP, Hamas carried out a number of militant operations, attempting to derail the incipient peace process. The attacks included seven shootings, two knife attacks, and the first ever suicide operation carried out by a Palestinian liberation movement (Singh 2011, 1, 55 and note 14 on page 154).²⁷⁰ Following the signing of the DOP, Hamas continued its shooting and stabbing operations, but refrained

268 The developing situation highlighted the fact that the PA was not a state, as it could not effectively monopolize the means of legitimate violence within the occupied territories.

269 In addition to Hamas the APF was made up of the PFLP, DFLP, PFLP-GC, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Fatah-Uprising, Sa'iqa, Palestinian Revolutionary Communist Party (PRCP), Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF), and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front. See Strindberg (2000) for an overview of the APF and its members.

270 This first suicide attack was initially believed to have been a regular suicide, as only the perpetrator himself and a Palestinian bystander were killed. But Hamas later claimed responsibility for the operation, which apparently was a collaborative effort with Islamic Jihad. At the time, “suicide attacks were ‘not yet the policy of the movement’” (al-Qassam commander quoted in Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 122).

from suicide attacks. This, it has been argued, allowed Hamas to “project itself as the standard bearer for Palestinian rights” without attracting “too much attention, and thereby public hostility” (Singh 2011, 56). By not carrying out the most spectacular terrorist operations, Hamas managed to retain its position as the most important opposition movement against the PLO-led negotiations, without provoking too harsh reprisals from the PA and Israel.

This uneasy coexistence and relative calm came to an abrupt halt in early 1994. On February 25 of that year, an Israeli settler named Baruch Goldstein entered the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron on the West Bank and shot dead 29 unarmed, praying Palestinians and injured some 125 others.²⁷¹ Sparking an outrage of unprecedented proportions in the occupied territories, the so-called Hebron Massacre prompted Hamas to carry out its first effective suicide attack inside Israel, killing eight and injuring 44 Israelis on April 16. Hamas carried out three more suicide operations inside Israel in 1994, killing an additional 27 Israelis and injuring 89 (Singh 2011, 56, 138).²⁷²

Israel put pressure on the PA to crack down on the terrorists, a request the newly formed PA and its leader Arafat had some difficulties complying with, as the Hamas operations proved popular among Palestinians as a response to the atrocity in Hebron (Singh 2011, 57). The PA eventually folded under pressure, however,²⁷³ first in August of 1994 when it imprisoned some 20 Hamas activists (Usher 1995a, 68–9), and later, in October, when Palestinian security forces rounded up and arrested some 400 Hamas activists in the Gaza Strip (Kristianasen 1999, 24). But the PA was unwilling or unable to keep the prisoners for long. In effect, the PA was caught between two contradictory interests. On the one hand, it was forced to persecute Palestinians to appease the Israelis so that the peace process could continue. But on the other hand, the PA felt obliged to release these same prisoners so as not to alienate its own constituents. In an attempt to solve this predicament, the PA implemented a “revolving door policy,” first imprisoning Hamas cadres to give Israel the impression that they did something

271 The Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron is situated on top of the Cave of Patriarchs, in which the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah, are buried according to both Jewish and Islamic tradition. Because of this, the mosque is religiously important for Muslims, and second only to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in the Jewish religion.

272 There are some discrepancies in the literature regarding the number of suicide operations carried out by Hamas in 1994. Kristianasen, for example, arrives at the same number killed (35) but cites a higher number of operations (five) and injured Israelis (“more than 135”) (1999, 23). This is probably due to uncertainties regarding which group carried out which operation.

273 It is difficult to pin down exactly who decided what and when in the PA, but it seems clear that there was infighting between different fractions, with some of the so-called returnees (i.e., Arafat and his compatriots from the external leadership) being opposed by a young guard who had operated from within the occupied territories (see e.g., Jamal 2005 for an in-depth analysis of these dynamics).

to stop the violence, and then releasing the prisoners to appease its constituents after serving only a short stint in jail (Kristianasen 1999, 25).

This policy allowed Hamas to retain its military capability throughout much of the 1990s.²⁷⁴ Consequently, the Israelis soon lost their patience with Arafat and the PA's apparent inability or unwillingness to halt the operations. Taking matters into their own hands, Israel therefore returned to its tactic of targeted assassinations (Honig 2007), and arrested, imprisoned, and deported hundreds of suspected Hamas activists in the mid-1990s (Tamimi 2007, 194–95). In particular, the reprisals for Hamas's 1996 bombings were harsh. In themselves a response to the Israeli assassination of Hamas bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash on January 5 1996, the attacks carried out in February and March killed over 46 Israelis and injured 86 (Singh 2011, 139).²⁷⁵ Israel responded by suspending the peace talks, closing down the occupied territories, and forcing the PA to take action. And the action the PA took against Hamas was devastating; Together with the IDF, the Palestinian security forces in effect dismantled the military wing of Hamas, arresting hundreds of al-Qassam members, many of whom were tortured, some to death.²⁷⁶

Following the crackdown on its military wing, there was a hiatus in the violence for over a year. This was probably due to Hamas losing its capacity to carry out suicide operations, and further because such operations had become increasingly unpopular among Palestinians. Responsive to popular opinion, Hamas saw no reason to carry out suicide bombings that provoked harsh responses from the Israelis and the PA and alienated the Palestinians. The calm ended, however, when Hamas carried out three suicide operations in 1997, first in late March, followed by another one in July, and a third in September.²⁷⁷

Then another year of calm followed before Hamas again returned to violence, carrying out a suicide operation in October 1998. This operation coincided with the signing of the Wye River Memorandum, an agreement between Israel and the PLO aimed at implementing previous peace Accords. As such, it seems as if the bombing was an attempt to derail the peace process. Failing that, and responding to the declining popularity of suicide operations

274 See Appendix B in Singh (2011, 138–39) for a list of suicide operations carried out by Hamas.

275 Again, figures vary somewhat, with Kristianasen offering that the bombings claimed 58 lives. Interestingly, she also argues that at least some of these bombings were carried out without the blessing of the political leadership of Hamas (1999, 29).

276 See Amnesty International (1998) for details regarding the treatment of prisoners in PA and Israeli prisons.

277 Singh (2011, 59) speculates that the attacks in 1997 were a way for Hamas to gauge the popularity of suicide missions among Palestinians.

among Palestinians, Hamas all but halted its military operations for the remainder of the 1990s (Singh 2011, 60).²⁷⁸

The rise of Likud in Israel

As in the occupied territories, the Oslo Accords also divided public opinion in Israel. The promise of lasting peace was an easy political sell, but there was also strong opposition to the peace process. In brief, the public opinion in Israel was divided into two blocs: those against Oslo, represented by the right and religious parties, and those in favor of Oslo, largely congruent with the left, which had initiated the peace process in the first place (Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar 2002). The intensity of the conflict between these blocs ebbed and flowed in tandem with the rise and fall in terrorism, and the progress or regress of the peace process.

In late 1995, the anti-Oslo camp was on the rise. They organized huge protests demanding the resignation of the Labor government led by PM Yitzhak Rabin and Oslo I signatory and foreign minister Shimon Peres. In the aftermath of one such huge protest against the government, in the evening on November 4 in Tel Aviv, a lone gunman and religious extremist named Yigal Amir managed to get past the bodyguards and kill PM Rabin. The assassination initially led to a backlash against the anti-Oslo protestors, and acting PM Shimon Peres called for early elections in the hopes of gaining renewed confidence in the peace process.

However, the run-up to the May 1996 elections coincided with the string of suicide bombings that Hamas carried out in revenge for the assassination of Yahya Ayyash. As a result, the Israeli anti-Oslo camp again gained in strength. The increased violence was taken as proof of the futility of making peace with the Palestinians (Bloom 2004). Consequently, Shimon Peres' initially promising lead in the polls diminished dramatically, and in the end he lost the premiership to Benjamin Nethanyahu from the right-wing Likud party (Peretz and Doron 1996).

It is noteworthy that the victory of Nethanyahu took place under quite distinctive electoral rules. The Israeli Basic Law of 1992 introduced a unique electoral system in which the PM was elected directly (Hazan 1996). In the PM elections, Benjamin Nethanyahu won against Shimon Peres by the smallest margin possible; he received just under 30 000 more votes than Peres, less than 1 percent of the votes cast. And in the elections to the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, it was the pro-Oslo Labor party led by Peres that won the plurality, winning 34

²⁷⁸ According to Singh (2011, 60), Hamas only carried out four low-casualty operations from then to December 2000.

seats against Likud's 32.²⁷⁹

Regardless of the peculiarities of the electoral system and the narrow margin by which Benjamin Nethanyahu won, his mandate as PM was not disputed (Peretz and Doron 1996). And although the parliament was rather fragmented,²⁸⁰ he managed to form a majority coalition government with four parties in addition to his own Likud. Although these parties differed in terms of ideology, all were opposed to the peace process to varying degrees. Some opposed only the way in which the agreements with the PLO had been negotiated, but the coalition included parties and parliamentarians opposed to anything from the division of Jerusalem and the removal of the Israeli settlements from the occupied territories (which are illegal according to international law), to those opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state and the withdrawal of the so-called "outposts" built in the Palestinian territories (which are deemed illegal even by Israeli law) (Peretz and Doron 1996, 545–56).

Himself a staunch opponent of the Oslo Accords, the rise to power of Nethanyahu and his anti-Oslo coalition government proved disastrous for the peace process and the overall conditions in the occupied territories. The positions adopted by the Nethanyahu government and the policies it implemented effectively and efficiently worked to revert any positive developments and undermined the chances for any solution to come about.²⁸¹

De-development

The continued violence and the ascendance of Nethanyahu worked to obstruct the peace process, and thus had indirect implications for conditions in the occupied territories. Both factors, however, also had direct consequences for the situation there. For one, the violence provoked the Israelis to adopt a policy of widespread closure of the territories. And second, Nethanyahu and his right-wing coalition allowed and enabled the settler movement in Israel to intensify the expansion of old and establishment of new illegal settlements. Combined, the closures and the building of settlements led in turn to a de-development of the occupied territories (Roy 1999, 2002).

279 With 120 seats in the Knesset, 61 are needed for a majority. The Labor and Likud parties were by far the largest parties, with the third largest party, the religious Shas party, winning ten seats (Peretz and Doron 1996, 534).

280 Eleven parties were represented in the parliament following the 1996 elections.

281 Note, however, that the policies of the Nethanyahu government vis-à-vis the Palestinians by and large were continued after the left leaning electoral alliance led by Ehud Barak won the 1999 elections.

The Israeli closure policy is divided into three levels of intensity. *General closure* refers to the restrictions of movement between the West Bank and Gaza, and between the occupied territories and Israel; *total closure* is the complete prohibition of any movement at all; and *internal closure* restricts movement within the West Bank (Roy 1999, 69). As a response to real or anticipated attacks from Palestinian liberation movements, the occupied territories were under total closure for almost a third of the period from 1993 to 1996. For most of the remaining time, general or internal closure were in effect (Roy 2002, 13).

The closures obviously had negative consequences for the economic development in the occupied territories—to say nothing of the human costs.²⁸² During the supposed heydays of the Oslo years (1993 to 1996) the World Bank estimated that the closure policy led to a loss in the Palestinian gross national product of between 20 to 70 percent (1999, 51). Employment figures also suffered greatly, as the number of unemployed Palestinians inside the occupied territories increased from around 3 percent in 1992, to almost 30 percent in 1996 (Roy 2002, 13; World Bank 1999, 53).

Israel also expanded its illegal settlements in the occupied territories during Nethanyahu's rule. Whereas there were 115 000 settlers living throughout the West Bank in 1993, that figure increased to almost 200 000 by the end of 1999. In addition, Israel continued its "Judaization" program of occupied East Jerusalem, increasing the number of settlers in the Arab quarters of the city by 30 000 people, to a total of 173 000 in 1999 (Roy 2002, 9; Usher 2003, 22).

The expansion of settlements exacerbated the already difficult infrastructure and communication situation on the West Bank. To accommodate the rising settler population, Israel built over 400 km of new roads, reserved for Israeli citizens. Built on confiscated Palestinian land, the roads crisscross around Palestinian villages and further disconnect the different regions of the West Bank. In short, rather than pulling out of the would-be territories of a future Palestinian state as stipulated in the Oslo Accords, the Israelis instead spent the interim years intensifying its confiscation of Palestinian land, making it increasingly difficult to find a solution to the conflict and rendering the everyday life of ordinary Palestinians ever harder.

The continued violence, the election of Benjamin Nethanyahu, and the de-development of the occupied territories all worked to undermined the peace process and led to deteriorating political, economic, and social conditions in the occupied territories. Added to this was the

282 See Human Rights Watch (HRW 1996) for details on the human costs of the closure policy.

lackluster performance of the PA, whose defining characteristics had become administrative mismanagement, political repression, and endemic corruption. Instead of developing and institutionalizing a state-like bureaucracy, the PA was exposed as a mere security and repression tool of Israel (Moussalli 1996, 56; Rabbani 1996, 6). In sum, the overall situation deteriorated dramatically throughout the latter half of the 1990s, and as a result, hope for peace, development, and a sovereign state faded among the Palestinians (Roy 1999, 64, and 2002, 9, 13).

5.2 Arrested development—*Hamas in the new system*

How did Hamas cope with the emergence of a new political system and the de-development of Palestine? And how did these developments affect Hamas's transmutation from movement to party and the process of institutionalization? As discussed in the previous chapter, the *raison d'être* for the establishment of Hamas had been the *intifada* itself, and its legitimacy hinged largely on it being an opposition party; it was its condemnation of the negotiations between Israel and the PLO and its violent resistance against the occupation that provided Hamas with its legitimacy and popularity. The signing of the Oslo Accords and the end of the *intifada* therefore represented a double challenge for Hamas: First, the incipient peace process turned the Palestinian public opinion away from the absolutist goals and oppositional rhetoric of Hamas, and second, the post-*intifada* situation and the establishment of the PA introduced a new tactical and political logic for Palestinian liberation movements.

For, notwithstanding the problematic institutional designs and the effectiveness by which Arafat and the PLO undermined and curtailed the development and functioning of the PA, the introduction of limited Palestinian self-government opened an opportunity to grab "state" power through elections. This produced a fundamental change in the logic of political mobilization in the occupied territories. Whereas politics previously was divided between different strategies and tactics adopted to liberate parts or all of historic Palestine, e.g., violent (militant or popular), non-violent (popular, negotiation), the PA introduced the possibility to at least *manage* the occupied territories. In short, the establishment of the PA altered the political opportunity structures in occupied Palestine for the political actors; and the existence of the PA proto-state led many of the liberation movements—including Hamas—to begin their transmutation toward political parties (Brown 2012).

Both Hamas's stated goals and its operational logic were at odds with these new realities. As such, it had to decide on whether or how it should reformulate its ideology and adopt a rhetoric suited to this new situation, and how—or indeed if—it should adapt its operational logic in response to the new political system. And it had to face these challenges while suffering persecution from both the Israelis and the PA.

5.2.1 From movement toward party and the legacy of violence

A defining characteristic of political parties is their participation in formal and institutionalized politics. Whether their goal is to influence politics by setting the agenda during electoral campaigns, to influence governments and the legislative process from a parliamentary position, or actually govern by winning office, makes no difference in this regard; these are only different forms of conducting institutional politics. And although liberation movements are unlike conventional social movements in many respects, they have a common feature in that neither are established to take part in institutional and formal politics. Where social movements rely on a repertoire of largely non-violent tactics aimed to mobilize people and influence the power that be indirectly (Tilly and Wood 2009), revolutionary liberation movements such as Hamas also rely on non-institutional politics to reach their aims—even if theirs is to replace the *status quo* with their own political system. The conventional movement-to-party thesis is therefore expected to have relevance for explaining Hamas's development. However, it has also been theorized that movements such as Hamas with militant roots take a somewhat different route when shifting toward institutional politics (Close and Prevost 2008).

In general, movement organizations are expected to have flexible structures, providing their members with substantial leeway in terms of participatory strategies and tactics. Parties, on the other hand, organize themselves hierarchically and demand far greater discipline from their members (Close and Prevost 2008, 9). In essence, then, the conventional movement-to-party thesis is focused on organizational routinization and the associated moderation of goals (Close and Prevost 2008; Zald and Ash 1966). Yet movements with militant origins do not necessarily comply with these expectations. Their operational logic requires command structures and discipline from the outset, as orders must be followed—preferably without question. Such movements are therefore not characterized by their flexible structures. Rather, they are organized vertically from the beginning, with top-down command structures and high degrees of discipline. Because of this, when militant movements transform

into political parties, the process is not necessarily defined by increased routinization or the introduction of vertical command structures; instead, they must become increasingly flexible and develop their intra-party democracy to attract new members (Close and Prevost 2008, 9).

The expected moderation of ideology associated with a move from movement to party also differs for those with a militant legacy. Different from conventional social movement organizations, militant movements are predisposed to maximalism, that is, the tendency to seek an unconditional victory.²⁸³ As noted by Close and Prevost, “people seldom take up arms to negotiate the finer points of a contract” (2008, 10). Rather, people resort to violence when aiming to replace the *ancien régime* with one built according to their own ideology.²⁸⁴ And such a violent and maximalist outlook is associated with polarization, i.e., the tendency to adopt a dichotomous worldview where people are either “for us” or “against us.” Finally, violent tactics, maximalist aims, and polarized perspectives go hand in hand with ideological rigidity; fighters willing to shed blood for the cause seem unlikely candidates for ideological flexibility. They are expected to be reluctant to change, remaining instead committed to the movement’s initial goals even in the face of great challenges (Close and Prevost 2008, 10; Ishiyama and Batta 2011).

Whereas the conventional movement-to-party thesis emphasizes organizational routinization and ideological moderation, a movement with a militant legacy is expected to already have a highly routinized and vertical command structure, and to be less inclined to ideological moderation—features that in turn are expected to make militant movements less receptive to ideas of internal democracy and deliberative processes in policy formulations associated with political parties. And Hamas shares qualities with both conventional social movements and militant movements. For, although Hamas itself was established as a militant proxy, it was created by the Muslim Brotherhood, which itself was more of a conventional social movement organization.²⁸⁵ The question, then, is how such a dual legacy affected the ideological and organizational development of Hamas as it began its transmutation from movement to political party.

283 A militant legacy is also expected to affect the behavior and development of a movement when or if it eventually obtains power differently than would be the case for pro-democracy movements (Grodsky 2012).

284 Theoretically, it does not matter if the ideology is Marxist, religious, nationalist, or ethnic. The predisposition toward maximalism is common for revolutionary and liberation movements of all ideological hues.

285 In addition, Hamas had a rather short stint as a militant movement before the PA was established and prompted Hamas to begin its transmutation. As such, hypothesized effects of having a militant legacy could be expected to apply only to a limited degree for Hamas.

If Hamas was mainly a conventional social movement organization, one could expect it to have developed into a political party following a trajectory similar to those of the socialist movements in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Przeworski and Sprague 1986), in other words, to have turned into a mass-based, organizationally broad, strategically and electorally oriented, and ideologically flexible party. If the militant legacy was dominant, however, Hamas is expected to have followed a different path. Then, it would probably develop into an ideologically rigid cadre party, with exclusive membership and a revolutionary and totalitarian strategy.

Irrespective of the impact Hamas's social and militant legacies have had on its transmutation, "the shift from a movement to a party implies a significant change of organizational culture and operational logic" (Close and Prevost 2008, 9). For, as further argued by Close and Prevost, "the hard part of changing from movement, civil or armed, to party is that it requires developing a new and quite distinct institution" (2008, 9). To investigate the development of Hamas from movement toward party in this period, then, the analysis will be broken into two interrelated parts. First, Hamas's ideological development will be analyzed. Here, the overarching question is whether Hamas came to tilt toward either ideological *flexibility* or *rigidity*, and the degree to which it altered its goals in response to the changing political conditions in occupied Palestine.

Next, Hamas's organizational development will be analyzed. Here, the question is how or if Hamas managed to further develop and adapt its organizational structure in the face of widespread persecution and deteriorating environmental conditions, and the degree to which it remained a united organization at the end of the Oslo years. Relevant issues that aid in illuminating these questions include recruitment requirements and advancement procedures; internal democracy and decision-making procedures; formal and informal routinization; and factionalism and organizational dominance.

5.2.2 The question of identity and ideology

Hamas's identity as a religious liberation movement was cemented by its performance in the *intifada* years. And for much of the Oslo years, Hamas remained committed to liberating the whole of historic Palestine, framing its strategies and tactics in religious terms. As mentioned, Hamas's legitimacy and popularity hinged in large parts on its violent and vocal opposition to Israel, denunciation of all negotiations between Israel and the PLO, and refusal to forgo any territorial claims (ICG 2004, 7–8; Usher 1995b, 68). Arguing that the PLO had sold out the

Palestinian national project by signing the Oslo Accords (Kristianasen 1999, 22), Hamas attracted followers not only from the religious segments of the population, but also from those that opposed the negotiations for nationalistic reasons (Mishal and Sela 2000, 67–68; Usher 1995a, 68–69).²⁸⁶ In short, Hamas was identified as a major opposition movement on the Palestinian political scene, pursuing an Islamist agenda and committed to the violent liberation of all of historic Palestine.

Continued commitment

In the first years of the Oslo period, Hamas's stated goals and behavior indicate that its ideological "hunting grounds" remained largely unchanged from that of the *intifada* years and the 1988 Charter. As mentioned above, Hamas carried out numerous suicide missions and other violent operations against Israel throughout the 1990s, demonstrating commitment to its official goals.²⁸⁷ A statement from the Hamas Political Bureau dated April 16, 1994, is indicative of the thinking within the movement at the time.²⁸⁸ Though a considerable part of the document is dedicated to explaining and defending Hamas's suicide operations, most of it is spent on heaping hate and scorn on the Rabin government, and accusing the PLO of "shameful capitulation" by signing the Oslo I agreement. The statement ends by reiterating its religiosity and maximalist goals:

Hamas, as it clarifies its position to refute the allegations and utterances of the prime minister of the enemy, pledges to our people to continue on the road of holy struggle (jihad) and martyrdom until Palestine—all of Palestine—is liberated (Hroub 2000, 305).

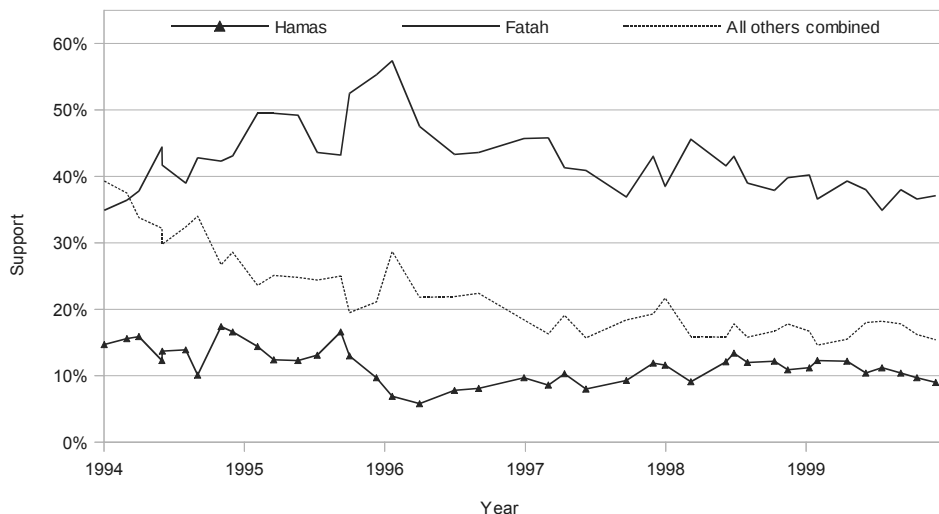
Despite being consistent in both ideology and behavior, however, Hamas paid the price for clashing with the public sentiment. As can be seen from Figure 5 below, which gives an overview of factional support in the occupied territories from 1994 to 1999, Hamas's popularity fluctuated somewhat throughout the Oslo period. At the beginning of the period, when the *intifada* was a recent memory and the outcome of the newly signed DOP remained uncertain, Hamas was supported by some 16 percent of Palestinians in the occupied territories. For the first couple of years, and even after Arafat and the PLO leadership returned

286 A number of the interviewed Hamas members stated explicitly that they had left Fatah for Hamas in the mid-1990s because of the negotiations with Israel.

287 Note that Hamas prefers the term "martyrdom operation" for its suicide missions. The latter is considered more accurate and less apologetic, and is consequently the term adopted in this thesis.

288 The document is titled *Important Statement by the Political Bureau*, and was translated into English by Hroub (2000, 302–05).

Figure 5: Factional support in the occupied territories, 1994–1999



(Source: CPRS 2000).

to the occupied territories, Hamas held its ground in the polls. However, following the suicide missions Hamas carried out in retaliation to the Israeli assassination of its al-Qassam commander Yahya Ayyash in early 1996, Israel closed down most of the occupied territories.

And while most Palestinians blamed “Israel for the difficult conditions imposed on them in the aftermath of the suicide attacks,” close to 31 percent held Hamas accountable (CPRS 1996). As a consequence, Hamas plummeted in the polls, and had the support of only 6 percent of Palestinians in March 1996. And although Hamas gained in the polls toward the end of the 1990s, it was only supported by around 9 percent of Palestinians by December 1999.²⁸⁹

Such a drop in support can be taken as an indication that Hamas chose to—or had to—stay true to its ideological roots. Hamas in essence refused to adapt its ideology for the sake of attracting support from a public whose sentiments and opinions were developing in the opposite direction. This would be in line with the assumptions stipulated by Close and Prevost

²⁸⁹ All polling data, unless otherwise stated, are from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), formerly known as the Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS). See chapter 2 for a discussion on the polls conducted by CPRS and PSR.

(2008) regarding the effect of a militant legacy on ideological rigidity. It would be difficult—if not tantamount to organizational suicide—for Hamas to discard its ideological roots for short term gains in the polls. Its members had already suffered a lot by committing to the goals and strategies of Hamas, and would be loath to see their sacrifices sold out for uncertain political gains.

This effect was further strengthened by the fact that Hamas initially was *externally legitimated* (Panebianco 1988, 51–52). As an outgrowth of a social movement with a clear ideological message, and whose leadership was overlapping, it was difficult for Hamas to change its ideology and rhetoric. The religious dimension of its ideology had to be retained for reasons of continuity and credibility, and because the old guard in the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood still wielded a certain amount of influence over the movement. And the national liberation aspect had to be kept as it had become a crucial identity marker for the rank-and-file of Hamas. This last factor became increasingly important for Hamas as it recruited new members, many of whom were former Fatah members who had become disillusioned with the peace process (Robinson 1997, 171).

Such a commitment to original goals, when reaching these seems either highly unlikely or impossible—or even in the face of defeat, as was the case for Hamas—is also to be expected from a young party. Relevant theoreticians such as Panebianco (1988) and Harmel and Janda (1994) agree that young parties are more likely to be seen by their members as vehicles for reaching certain stated goals. Even if Hamas mobilized only a limited share of the Palestinian population, those that did commit to its cause did so out of proper conviction, with the aim of realizing the goal of Hamas, namely the liberation of historic Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic state (Panebianco 1988, 20).²⁹⁰ As such, Hamas closely resembled the ideal type ideology-advocacy party as defined by Harmel and Janda, i.e., a party for which ideological purity was a primary strategic concern (1994, 270). Or, in other words, Hamas was still a means toward a political end and not an end in itself, and had thus not yet become an institution.

Toward moderation

This commitment to the original goals did not last throughout the Oslo years, however. In particular, its top political leadership labored to adapt the strategic goals of Hamas to better

²⁹⁰ As such, they qualified as *believers* in the lingo of Panebianco, i.e., activists that were part of Hamas because they bought into the collective incentives of organizational identity (1988, 26).

suit the new and changing circumstances (Tamimi 2007, 156–59; Usher 1995a, 31–33). Maybe the most important attempt to moderate Hamas’s ideology came when the imprisoned Hamas founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and the General Secretary of the Political Bureau in Amman, Mousa Abu Marzook, almost simultaneously suggested a long-term ceasefire with Israel in early 1994. The offer asked Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967, dismantle all its settlements, and release Palestinian prisoners (Usher 1995a, 31). Yassin and Marzook probably knew that this would not happen, but the offer itself is taken as evidence of a moderating effort undertaken by certain Hamas leaders.

Another early and important example of these efforts can be found in a memorandum published by Hamas on March 13, 1996.²⁹¹ In it, it is reiterated that Hamas is a “political movement resisting occupation,” and it echoes previous communiqués by spending considerable portions of the text on attempting to legitimize its military operations. However, the document in effect also turns its prioritized strategies upside down, claiming that it now strives to end the occupation first through politics, and only second through military means. Furthermore, the document is riddled with references to international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it even makes explicit reference to UNSCR 242, which stipulates that Israel must withdraw from the areas it occupied in 1967.

The references to international law are important indications that Hamas labored to gain international legitimacy and rid itself of its reputation as a radical, Islamist, terrorist movement. However, it is in particular the emphasis placed on UNSCR 242 that is of relevance here. By calling on the international community to “pressure Israel to implement UN resolutions and respect international conventions pertaining to the occupied Arab territories and force it to withdraw,” Hamas in essence conceded that Israel is there to stay. Yet, note that Hamas refrained from calling an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders a “solution,” preferring instead the term “cease-fire,” echoing the wording from the earlier offer made by Yassin and Marzook (Hroub 2000, 311).

291 Titled *An Important Memorandum from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to the Kings, Presidents, and Ministers Meeting at Sharm al-Sheikh*, the document was translated by Hroub (2000, 306–12). It is noteworthy that this memorandum had a different intended audience than the document discussed on page 159. It is assumed that Hamas will adopt different rhetorics vis-à-vis Palestinians living under occupation, as these are potential recruits with specific hopes and grievances, than toward an international political elite from which Hamas hopes to gain respect.

It is worth mentioning that Hamas's offer of a cease-fire within the 1967 borders can be interpreted as a strategic response to its declining popularity and fear of becoming politically irrelevant. In short, elements within the movement thought it made sense for Hamas to trade some of its more absolutist positions with flexible ones in exchange for increased domestic popularity and strategic maneuverability. Furthermore, by limiting its territorial claims, Hamas might also have hoped to convince parts of the international community that it was a pragmatic and increasingly moderate movement, and through this obtain a certain amount of international legitimacy and thus increased relevance.

In any event, these moderating efforts are considered key to understanding Hamas's ideological development. As mentioned, Hamas relied heavily on its vehement opposition to the ongoing negotiations for its legitimacy and popularity. Its strong-worded condemnation of how the PLO "sold out Palestine" by accepting the two-state solution had long been one of Hamas's more important sources of legitimacy. But the offer from Marzook and Yassin, later reiterated in the 1996 document, implied that Hamas also accepted—at least in the short to medium term—that the solution to the conflict would be two neighboring states, one Palestinian and one Israeli. Although Hamas's version of the two-state solution is worded as a temporary measure, defended ideologically through the Islamic concept of *hudna*, or long-term truce,²⁹² it does imply an acknowledgment of Israel's long-term existence, and is therefore considered a major ideological break (Hroub 2000, 73–86).²⁹³

Importantly, the moderating efforts exemplified by the offer of a long-term cease-fire—both verbally by Hamas leaders, and officially through different documents—remained in effect for the remainder of the 1990s. Late in the decade, yet another document was produced by Hamas, this time on the request of Western diplomats in Amman.²⁹⁴ In it, Hamas reiterated most of its positions from the 1996 document, again devoting ample space to defending its military operations. But the documents went even further in the moderating direction, stating that if Israel

292 See Tuastad (2010) for a thorough analysis of Hamas's use of the concept *hudna*.

293 Even if Hamas officially remained committed to the eventual liberation of historic Palestine at some later stage, this move from complete to sequenced liberation was conspicuously similar to how the PLO changed from complete to sequenced liberation some twenty years earlier (PNC 1974). And that change was in turn a prerequisite for the peace process initiated in the early 1990s (Muslih 1990).

294 The document titled "This is What We Struggle for" is reproduced in Tamimi (2007, 265–70). Although no date except "late in the 1990s" is provided by Tamimi, it is assumed that it was published sometime prior to the expulsion of Hamas from Jordan in 1999. For details on this, see below.

1. withdraws all its troops from the West Bank and Gaza;
2. evacuates all Jewish settlements illegally erected on both the West Bank and Gaza;
3. releases all Palestinian prisoners; and
4. recognizes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination,

Hamas would be willing to “enter into negotiations about the details of the settlement” (Tamimi 2007, 269–70). Admittedly, Hamas did not explicitly state that such negotiations were intended to end the conflict once and for all. But the mere fact that Hamas saw itself as potentially negotiating with Israel must be considered an important step for a movement that at the same time remained committed to the destruction of this same state through violent means if necessary.

Confused ideology

Despite these moderating efforts, the Oslo period did not see Hamas complete its transmutation from movement to party in terms of ideological moderation. Its militant legacy arguably proved too influential. Although Hamas in effect limited its territorial claims from historic Palestine “from the River to the Sea” to a state within the 1967 borders—a reduction of some 78 percent—its military wing continued to carry out suicide operations within Israel with the blessing of its political leadership (Tamimi 2007, 268). And even if there were indications that elements within the top leadership pushed for further moderation, the behavior of Hamas demonstrates unequivocally that the movement as a whole was reluctant to stray too far away from its origins.

One important and powerful indication that Hamas did not complete its transmutation from movement to party was its boycott of the 1996 elections to the PLC.²⁹⁵ In short, Hamas calculated that participating in elections to any PA institution in effect would mean retracting its stated aims while at the same time lending credibility to negotiations it vehemently opposed, which in turn would lead to loss of legitimacy and support (Mishal and Sela 2000, 127). As succinctly summarized by a Hamas cadre, they opted for boycott because “[t]he election in 1996 was seen by Hamas as a referendum over Oslo” and Hamas’s boycott was its “no-vote.”²⁹⁶ By participating, Hamas would not only lend support to a set of agreements and

295 See Lovlie (2013) for a discussion on Hamas’s electoral strategy.

296 Senior Hamas cadre interviewed in Ramallah, August 22, 2007. Hamas leader and Speaker of the PLC, Aziz Dweik, corroborated this explanation of the 1996 boycott, emphasizing that Hamas has no quarrels with the democratic procedures as such, but that it was impossible for them to participate under the framework of the Oslo Accords. Interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011.

a process it had firmly opposed from the outset, but it risked doing so without gaining any political power. For one, the polls suggested that Hamas would have won very few seats in the legislative council if it had participated.²⁹⁷ Second, the power balance between the PLC and the presidency was highly skewed in favor of the latter. And third, Arafat governed the PA as an authoritarian proto-state, basically ignoring whatever powers the PLC had on paper. As summed up by respected expert on Palestinian politics, Dr. Iyad Barghouti, Hamas boycotted the elections because “there was a high degree of institutional uncertainty, the outcome of the elections was predictable, and there was no chance for Hamas to gain access to real legislative power.”²⁹⁸

Despite these straightforward reasons to boycott, Hamas seriously considered running in the elections. Already in 1992, a year before the first Oslo agreement was signed, Hamas anticipated the establishment of a some sort of Palestinian self-rule governed by democratic principles. In response, a policy paper was circulated among Hamas members, inviting “knowledgeable people” to voice their opinions so that “a decision acceptable to the widest possible basis of [their] ranks” could be taken. The question was whether Hamas should participate in elections that “might be held in the [West] Bank and the [Gaza] Strip” (Mishal and Sela 2000, 122–30).²⁹⁹ And a number of important Hamas leaders advocated participation, including such personalities as Mahmoud al-Zahhar,³⁰⁰ Abu Marzook, and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The latter is even on the record promising that the movement would run in the elections because it “wanted to have an influence on the daily lives of Palestinians in the territories” (Robinson 1997, 171).

In response, and as if to underline the ongoing tensions within Hamas, another influential leader, Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, was quoted saying that Hamas would “not take part in any self-rule institution” (Robinson 1997, 171). Eventually, it was Rantisi and his allies that were proven correct. Following an internal referendum in Hamas, it was decided that the movement should boycott the 1996 elections.³⁰¹ Despite this, some Hamas leaders apparently felt

297 Hamas commanded the support of some 6 percent in 1996 (CPRS 2000).

298 Dr. Iyad Barghouti, interviewed August 28, 2007, in Ramallah.

299 This internal Hamas document was obtained by and reproduced in Mishal and Sela (2000). It is one of very few leaked and translated Hamas policy papers available.

300 Hroub reasons that he advocated participation based on personal communication from March 1996 in which al-Zahhar stated that “[m]y personal opinion differs from the opinion of the movement, and I do not wish to state it” (Hroub 2000, 225, fn. 41). Note that most observers consider Mahmoud al-Zahhar to be a Hamas hard-liner.

301 See below for details on the internal referendum. Most interviewed Hamas members emphasized that the decision to boycott the elections in 1996 was a democratic one, for example senior Hamas cadres Dr.

participation to be of such importance that they put forward their candidacy as independents. Among these were Ismail Haniyeh, who would later become the first prime minister from Hamas. They were eventually forced to withdraw from the elections by the top leadership in Hamas (Caridi 2010, 120–22), but not before highlighting the ideological and strategic inconsistencies within Hamas.

Inconsistent identity

Based on the above, Hamas's ideological development throughout the Oslo period can be divided into two phases. At first, Hamas remained committed to its original goals, pushing its maximalist agenda even at the cost of legitimacy and popularity. This was partly due to the uncertain outcome of the Oslo Accords, which prompted Hamas to stay the course, and partly a result of the influential position of its religious cadres and absolutist nationalists. Then, a shift can be observed, after which Hamas—at least to some degree—followed the hypothesized trajectory of ideological moderation as specified in the movement-to-party thesis. Despite moderating, however, Hamas did not complete its transmutation to political party. Even if some of its most influential leaders advocated electoral participation, its militant legacy and ideological rigidity proved too powerful, and Hamas in the end boycotted the elections and as such remained a militant liberation movement. In sum, then, Hamas's ideological development is considered to have been somewhat inconsistent throughout the Oslo period. On the one hand, it remained committed to its initial goals of establishing an Islamic state throughout all of historic Palestine, by violent means if necessary. But on the other, it also tried to maneuver as a pragmatic political movement in an ever-changing and increasingly hostile political landscape. In particular, its offer of a long-term cease-fire, the *hudna*, is considered a salient example of the incomplete, but important moderating efforts.

5.2.3 Organizational development under persecution

One important reason for Hamas's inconsistent ideological development and incoherent strategy throughout the Oslo years can be found in its poor organizational state. Although Hamas initially was a rather well-run organization, its organizational coherence and capacity had suffered serious setbacks during the first *intifada* as its members and leaders were imprisoned and deported *en masse*. And as Israel—now aided by the PA—intensified its persecution of Hamas throughout the Oslo period, both with crackdowns on its militant

Mohammad Ghazal interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011 and Dr. Aziz Dweik interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011. See also Gunning (2008, 112), ICG (2004, 11), and Usher (1995b, 73).

activists and the continued imprisonment of its top leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, its efforts to build and develop its organizational structure was seriously obstructed. The situation made it exceedingly difficult for the movement to respond to environmental shocks and challenges and develop its organization in a well considered and coherent manner. This, in turn, had ramifications both for the way in which it recruited new members, mobilized its current members, and the efficiency and effectiveness of its decision-making procedures.

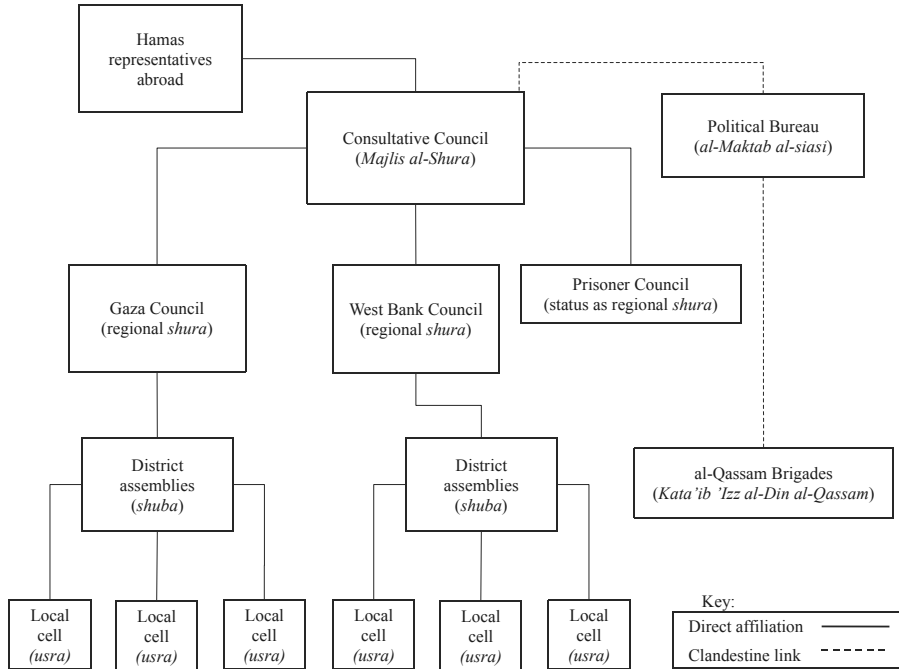
The formal structure and intra-party democracy

Although detailed in the previous chapter, a brief recap of Hamas's organizational structure is in order before delving into the development in the Oslo years. In short, Hamas inherited the organizational structure of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. And while the branches in Gaza and the West Bank at first differed somewhat, having been associated with the Egyptian and Jordanian Brotherhoods respectively, their organizational makeup soon came to be rather similar. By the end of the first *intifada*, Hamas was organized in a federated and hierarchical—if stratified—manner, as indicated in Figure 6 below.³⁰² The description of Hamas's organizational structure is based on data from the relevant literature, in particular Gunning (2008), Mishal and Sela (2000), and Tamimi (2007), supplemented by information provided by interviews with current and former Hamas members. As for the organogram depicted in Figure 6, various versions based on information gleaned from the literature were shown during interviews with Hamas members, and based on their input the one below was created. Note that because the bylaws and exact organizational structure of Hamas are kept secret for reasons of security, both the description and the organogram should be considered as suggestive.

At the bottom of the pyramid was the *usra*, or family. These can be thought of as cells, and are the basic organizational units in Hamas. Each cell has approximately four members, one of which is the elected leader, *naqib*. He, in turn, represents his cell at the district assembly, called the *shuba*. The Gaza Strip is divided into seven districts, while the West Bank has five. The leaders of these district assemblies in turn make up the regional *shura* councils, one on the West Bank and one in Gaza. Together with Hamas representatives abroad and the prisoner committees, these regional councils elect the Consultative Council, called the *Majlis al-Shura*. The Consultative Council is the topmost body in Hamas, responsible for deciding

302 The stratified characteristic of Hamas's hierarchical structure refers to the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the lower organizational units.

Figure 6: Hamas organogram at the end of the 1990s



(Source: Based on interviewed Hamas members and supplemented by information gleaned from the relevant literature. *Usra* is Arabic for family, *shuba* means division, and *shura* translates into consultation.)

on overarching political aims and strategies. Finally, this council elects the Political Bureau, which in essence is the executive branch in Hamas, tasked with the day-to-day management of the organization (Ma'an 2009c).

Hamas's military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, is suspected to operate as a parallel organization, with its own infrastructure and decision-making capabilities. Given the obvious need for the Brigades to operate in secret, the details of its organizational makeup are difficult to ascertain. And while the Brigades ostensibly has no direct ties to the political organization, it is widely assumed that it is subordinate to the political leadership, and more specifically the Political Bureau.

Importantly, the organizational design of Hamas is one in which legitimacy and authority are derived from the bottom-up. Advancement from one level to another takes place through elections. This provides the leadership with a high degree of internal legitimacy. In addition, Hamas has adopted the Brotherhood tradition of consulting its rank-and-file when deliberating on important decisions.³⁰³ Such an inclusive decision-making procedure also gives legitimacy for the final decision, even among those that initially were opposed. The strong emphasis on internal elections and consultation is taken as evidence that Hamas highly valued internal democracy. And by placing a premium on intra-party democracy and internal legitimacy, Hamas has managed to avoid the fragmentation and fractionalization so common among Palestinian liberation movements (Gunning 2008, 112).³⁰⁴

It is also pertinent to note here that there are a number of challenges intrinsic to Hamas's organizational design. For one, the procedures by which candidates rise up through the rungs of Hamas are deemed to be somewhat problematic. Briefly, to be voted into a higher position, a member must first be nominated by an election committee established by the local leadership. Members cannot put forward their own candidacy (Gunning 2008, 107). After nomination, a candidate must be endorsed by the leadership at the level to which he can be elected. This means that a candidate challenging the position of a current leader is unlikely to succeed. In essence, the upwards mobility of Hamas cadres takes on a centripetal motion, in that the only way for a member to advance is by allowing himself to be co-opted by the leadership (Panebianco 1988, 60–61). As such, Hamas does not allow for truly open and free competition for leadership positions (Gunning 2008, 108–9). These limits that Hamas places on its democratic procedures, however, made it more closely conform to the cadre structure associated with revolutionary and militant movements than that of truly democratic movement organizations (Close and Prevost 2008).

Also, the inclusive decision-making procedures through consultation are associated with certain challenges. It is assumed that there is a tradeoff between democracy and legitimacy on the one hand, and decisiveness and efficiency on the other. As long as Hamas's overall strategy allows for a suitable response to a given challenge, there is no need for consultation.

303 The decision to boycott the 1996 elections was, for example, taken in consultation with its base, although, as will be covered below, the dominance of the Political Bureau and the al-Qassam Brigades influenced the outcome of the internal referendum (Gunning 2008, 110–12).

304 This might also be due to the fact that Hamas originated from a social movement with a clear ideological grounding and identity, a legacy many of the other Palestinian liberation movements lack. It is also noteworthy that such an emphasis on internal democracy is not a characteristic Hamas shares with the typical militant and revolutionary movement (de Zeeuw 2008b, 14–15).

Yet, when Hamas has faced more fundamental challenges, the consultative nature of decision-making has negatively affected its responsiveness. Furthermore, these consultative procedures have at times given rise to intra-party competition (Gunning 2008, 110–10). For, although Hamas leaders both outside and inside the occupied territories stress the unity and coherence of their organization, tension and competition between the branches have emerged numerous times—in particular when the movement has faced principally important issues such as the question of electoral participation in 1996 and the merit of suicide operations (Gunning 2008, 40–41, 114; Mishal and Sela 2000, 163–66).

The federated structure of Hamas has contributed to this tendency of organizational infighting. Power struggles between the branches have emerged and intensified partly because they operate under widely different conditions: Israel frequently targets the Gaza wing; the West Bank branch, those in the refugee camps abroad, and the prisoners' committees are fragmented and at times marginalized; whereas the external leadership has largely been out of reach from Israeli persecution (ICG 2004, 11).³⁰⁵ In addition, the branches might adopt different positions because of their distinct legacies. This is particularly relevant for the Gaza and West Bank branches. Because of its historical links to the Egyptian Brotherhood, which has been outlawed by the Egyptian government for large parts of its history, the Gaza branch has experience in running a decentralized and clandestine organization (Robinson 2004, 120). Furthermore, the long history of persecution has forced the Gaza leaders to adopt pragmatic policies simply to survive. However, this same persecution has also worked to instill a commitment to the cause among its leaders. And finally, it has robbed them of the political experience enjoyed by their West Bank brethren. As related by Dr. Mohammad Ghazal,

throughout our history, during the rule of the Egyptians and Jordanians, we in West Bank were more relaxed than Gaza. We in West Bank, we were politically active while those Gaza weren't. So, we were more advanced in politics. Due to their situation, the Gazans were more militant.³⁰⁶

However, as a consequence of being allowed to run its network of religious and social institutions openly, the West Bank branch has less experience in operating underground (Robinson 2004, 120). And having suffered comparatively less from Israeli persecution, many of the traditional West Bank leaders were more focused on the absolutist and religious aims of

305 An important exception was the failed assassination attempt in 1997 on the leader of the Political Bureau of Hamas in Amman, Khaled Meshaal. See McGeough (2010).

306 Dr. Mohammad Ghazal, interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

the movement, and arguably less inclined to pragmatism and compromise.

The above should not be taken as evidence that the branches can be categorized as more or less pragmatic, moderate, or hard-line; they have all at one time or another adopted positions that can be defined as either of these. Rather, it is assumed that their distinct organizational legacies and the respective environments in which they operate can shed light on their thinking and strategizing behind positions adopted on specific issues. Combined with analyses of overall organizational developments, such as changes in the composition of Hamas, as well as investigation of the power balance between the different branches, the above factors can thus aid in explaining the behavior of Hamas.

A new composition: persecution, recruitment, and defection

Initially, Hamas relied on the recruitment procedure inherited from the Muslim Brotherhood. In short, this was a three-tiered system in which prospective members first were asked to sign on as supporters and donate a small amount of money. Through education and training, they could first advance to become cell members with limited voting rights, before finally becoming established members allowed to stand for election to higher positions and with full voting rights (A. Cohen 1982, 159; Mitchell 1969, 183). In the days of the Brotherhood, it would take up to five years to advance from prospective to established member (IkhwanWeb 2007; Trager 2011). Such an elaborate recruitment procedure worked to indoctrinate and homogenize the rank-and-file, and as long as Hamas kept with these recruitment requirements, it was almost guaranteed a disciplined and committed membership. However, already at the end of the *intifada*, it was evident that Hamas had begun recruiting new members in a different fashion, allowing recruits to rise through the ranks more rapidly than previously (Robinson 1997, 173). This continued throughout the 1990s, and arguably had negative ramifications for the discipline of the rank-and-file.

There were both pull- and push-factors forcing Hamas to change its recruitment procedures. For one, Hamas needed new recruits. This demand for new members was primarily created by the intensified persecution of Hamas activists. As hundreds of its members were either imprisoned, assassinated, or deported from the occupied territories, the organizational and military capacities of Hamas were seriously weakened (Tamimi 2007, 195). Hamas could therefore not allow itself to remain too picky when recruiting new members. The demand for new members was also partly a result of a number of Muslim Brothers defecting from Hamas. While it is hard to get an exact overview of why they defected and how many there were, the

reasons given by a former high-ranking leader of the Brotherhood and Hamas, Dr. Mahmoud al-Habbash, can be informative. In short, al-Habbash said he left Hamas because the religious project of the Brotherhood had been replaced by a political one:

I discovered that they just to use Islam as a bridge to achieve political victories, or serve their political interests. I have said it in the past, and I say it now: There is a difference between those who *serve* Islam and those who *use* Islam. There is a big difference. So, in 1994, I made the decision to leave Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, to become an independent, and to serve my religion.

A long-time member of the Brotherhood and a religious scholar, al-Habbash also indicated a certain frustration with the new leadership in Hamas:

Most of the current leaders in Hamas are not religious men. If you ask them “what about your teaching, what did you learn in the school or at university?,” they are all doctors, engineers, or have other regular professions. Few of them are religious teachers or religious thinkers.³⁰⁷

Such a reason for leaving lends credence to the argument that these defections from Hamas might partly have been a side effect of the way in which Hamas was established. As argued by Robinson (1997), the establishment of Hamas can be seen as a palace coup within the Brotherhood, in which a younger, more radical, and impatient generation took over and changed the Brotherhood’s *modus operandi* (McGeough 2010, 234). Naturally, those on the losing end, the old guard from the days of the Brotherhood, grew disgruntled as their religious project became undermined by “petty” politics. In addition, they were surpassed by a younger generation of leaders without religious training. Finally, the intense persecution of anyone associated with Hamas of course made the potential cost of remaining a member high, making an exit strategy far more inviting than both loyalty and voice (Hirschman 1970). In short, they had plenty of good reasons to defect.

There was also an external push to make Hamas change its recruitment procedures. By signing the Oslo Accords, the Fatah leadership in effect replaced resistance with negotiations. This move did not sit well with many Fatah cadres. And as mentioned above, Hamas had positioned itself as the main resistance movement following the signing of the Oslo Accords. As a consequence, those in Fatah who were disenchanted with their own leadership looked to Hamas for a new home in which they could continue their resistance to the occupation. As

307 Interviewed in Ramallah, May 25, 2011.

summed up by Hamas MP Dr. Ayman Daraghme, “I was a member of Fatah because I admired its resistance to the occupation. But in those days, in the mid-1990s, it was Hamas that focused on resistance. And I joined Hamas because of that.”³⁰⁸ And it was activists such as Daraghme from Fatah who provided the supply of recruits for Hamas (Robinson 1997, 170–71).

It is noteworthy that the Fatah cadres who joined did so for ideological reasons. In terms of Hamas’s institutionalization, they joined out of conviction for a *cause*, i.e., a liberated Palestine, not to reap any personal benefits. Hence, their incentives to join might have been *collective*, which stands in contrast to the *selective* incentives associated with institutionalized organizations. In the lingo of Panebianco, they were *believers*, at least in the nationalist element of Hamas’s ideology, if not equally convinced of the religious aspects (1988, 24–27).³⁰⁹

In sum, the composition of Hamas’s rank-and-file changed quite dramatically throughout the Oslo period. At first, the legacy from the Muslim Brotherhood provided Hamas with a disciplined and committed membership base, in effect making it a cadre movement, sharing characteristics with the militant movements described by Close and Prevost (2008). Responding to endogenous and exogenous challenges, however, Hamas eased its recruitment procedures and requirements. Membership recruitment into Hamas extended beyond Muslim Brotherhood affiliates to include many from Fatah. Instead of the Sheikhs and imams, the base of Hamas came to be increasingly made up of entrepreneurs, engineers, doctors, and shop owners (Kristianasen 1999, 22). And as the membership swelled, Hamas lost its distinctive organizational characteristic, turning from a disciplined and dedicated militant movement, into a less cohesive, mass-based, umbrella movement (Robinson 1997, 173).

The dominance of the Bureau and the Brigades—electoral boycott and violence

In contrast to the rank-and-file, the composition of the top echelons in Hamas did not change much for most of the 1990s. The founding fathers and the first generation of leaders largely remained in charge. What did change, however, was the balance of power between the different leadership branches, as it oscillated back and forth in tandem with external shocks and challenges. Despite attempts to compartmentalize its organizational structure so that the

308 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

309 It should be mentioned that the military wing of Hamas often relied on volunteers, not recruits, to carry out suicide operations. As one Hamas leader relayed to Nasra Hassan (2001), “[o]ur biggest problem is the hordes of young men who beat on our doors, clamoring to be sent [as human bombers].”

leaderships in Gaza and on the West Bank could operate independently of each other and with a high degree of autonomy, the effectiveness by which Israel and the PA persecuted Hamas in effect decapitated the organization inside the occupied territories (Kristianasen 1999, 21, 28). As a consequence, the situation for the domestic leadership had become precarious by the mid-1990s.

It was therefore the Political Bureau in Amman that constituted the dominant faction in Hamas from its establishment in 1992 and well into the 1990s. In the words of Ousama Hamdan, a long-standing member of the Political Bureau, “there was no other political leadership in Hamas when the Political Bureau was established.” According to him, the persecution of the internal leadership at the hands of Israel and the PA was so ferocious that they lost most of their operational capacities. This argument is corroborated by numerous sources, both primary and secondary (e.g., Mishal and Sela 2000, 160–66).³¹⁰ And furthermore, Hamdan claimed that even the topmost body in Hamas, the *Shura* council, which is made up of leaders both from within the occupied territories and the diaspora, was not functioning properly at the time.³¹¹ In part, this was because many of its members also were imprisoned or exiled, and in part because the mentioned consultative decision-making procedure rendered the Consultative Council into a rather slow moving and inefficient governing body.

Added to the above, the ability of the Consultative Council to exercise its authority had been further circumscribed by the fact that it relinquished control of what Panebianco termed “zones of uncertainty” when it delegated the day-to-day management to the Political Bureau (1988, 33–35). And in Hamas, as in other organizations, authority ultimately rests with the faction in control of these “zones of uncertainty.” Crucially, the Political Bureau controlled much of the financial flow in Hamas (Gunning 2008, 115), often considered to be one of the most important zone of uncertainty for any organization (Panebianco 1988, 33–35).

Added to this, the Political Bureau has for long been assumed to be the leadership branch that exercises the most influence over the al-Qassam Brigades (Gunning 2008, 115). Admittedly, the mentioned clandestine nature of the Brigades makes it difficult to ascertain its exact relationship with the Political Bureau. However, partly because of the latter’s control of Hamas’s finances, and partly because of ideological and strategic similarities, it is argued here

310 Numerous interviewees from Hamas reiterated this claim.

311 Current member of the Political Bureau in Hamas, Ousama Hamdan, interviewed in Haret Hreik, southern suburb of Beirut, November 18, 2011.

that throughout much of the 1990s, the Brigades operated as if subordinate to the Political Bureau. Crucially, the militant wing mounted operations seemingly in accordance with the preferences of the Political Bureau, but in contrast to and without the official approval of the other political leadership circles, be it the Consultative Council or the domestic branches (Gunning 2008, 115).

In short, the dominant position of the Political Bureau and the al-Qassam Brigades had consequences for the strategy and behavior of Hamas in the mid-1990s. Crucially, it helps explain Hamas's continued use of suicide bombers and its boycott of the 1996 PLC elections, both of which were contentious issues within the organization (Gunning 2008, 112–13).

With regard to the use of suicide operations as a resistance tactic, certain prominent Hamas figures have been outright opposed to it. For example, Sayyed Abu Musameh, PLC member and long-time Gaza leader was opposed “to violence perpetrated against civilians” (Caridi 2010, 140). Ahmed Youssef, another Hamas leader from Gaza, was likewise opposed to such operations, although for strategic and not ideological reasons. He advised the Hamas leadership that another way of fighting the occupation should be found, as the suicide operations had become a public relations problem; otherwise sympathetic voices throughout the world condemned Hamas's suicide operations, as these also target innocent civilians (Caridi 2010, 140–41).³¹²

By and large, those opposed to suicide bombings resided inside the occupied territories; because Hamas members in Gaza and on the West Bank are vulnerable to Israeli repercussions, its leaders there have always had to carefully consider the merit of any military action, and in particular the suicide operations as these provoke the harshest responses. The leaders outside the territories, however, rarely suffer the inevitable repercussions from Israel, and have as a consequence traditionally been more inclined toward military actions (Gunning 2008, 212; Hroub 2000, 59; Mishal and Sela 2000, 166). And as violence is its *raison d'être*, the al-Qassam Brigades would be expected to advocate for suicide operations.

In short, the dominance of the Political Bureau and the Brigades led to continued use of suicide operations despite internal opposition. And not only did these suicide operations take place without the consent of the leaders inside the territories, but some even undermined the political efforts of Hamas. One important instance of this was the wave of suicide attacks

³¹² According to Caridi, Hamas co-founder Sheikh Jamil Hamami left the organization in protest of the suicide operations (2010, 123).

perpetrated by Hamas in the wake of Israel's assassination of its bomb-maker Ayyash in 1996. These attacks "effectively put an end to the tentative rapprochement between the internal leadership and the Palestinian Authority" (Gunning 2008, 113).

Similarly, when Hamas discussed whether to participate in the 1996 PLC elections, the dominant position of the Political Bureau and the al-Qassam Brigades again swayed Hamas in their preferred direction. Both were opposed to electoral participation, and together they shared sufficient organizational clout to overrule the participatory strategy advocated by many domestic political leaders (Gunning 2008, 112; ICG 2006, 5–6; Mishal and Sela 2000, 88, 152, 163).

Their ideological argument was that Hamas should not join "a system they hoped to replace for the sake of coexistence with a state they hoped to destroy" (ICG 2006, 5–6), i.e., that joining the political system was tantamount to forfeiting its opposition against negotiations and thereby defaulting on their aim to liberate historic Palestine. This, it was argued, would lead to loss of support and a subsequent decrease of Hamas's influence. Although they appealed to ideology and legitimacy, another likely reason for the Political Bureau and the military commanders to advocate boycott was a shared concern for power and positions. If political participation superseded armed resistance, many of the al-Qassam commanders could be rendered redundant. And if Hamas participated in elections it would be the domestic cadres that ran as candidates and reaped the political benefits, gaining organizational influence at the expense of the external leadership.³¹³

In short, and in line with the theoretical stipulations (Harmel and Tan 2003), it matters for party behavior who is in charge; the dominance of the Political Bureau and its alliance with the al-Qassam Brigades help explain crucial aspects of Hamas's behavior. It is important to underline, however, that the division was never a simple hard-liner outside vs. soft-liner inside dichotomy, neither with regard to electoral participation, nor the merits of suicide operations. With regard to the former, it was evident that Hamas co-founder Sheikh Ahmed Yasin advocated participation. Others, however, such as West Bank Hamas leader Bassam Jarrar, argued against it (Caridi 2010, 121). And although most in the Political Bureau argued for boycotting the elections, its deputy, Abu Marzook, advocated for participation (Gunning 2008, 112; McGeough 2010, 124).

313 Gunning argues that the Political Bureau also opposed participation for ideological reasons. Many in the external leadership are refugees, a crucial but often sidelined issue in the peace processes (2008, 207; ICG 2004, 6).

Gaza obtains factional dominance—renewed moderation

The dominance of the Political Bureau and the al-Qassam Brigades did not last, however. Three factors are identified as having disrupted the power balance within Hamas in the last years of the 1990s to the benefit of the leadership in Gaza. For one, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, co-founder of Hamas and arguably its most charismatic leader, was released from Israeli prison and returned to Gaza in 1997; second, the Political Bureau was expelled from Amman, Jordan, in 1999; and third, the sustained and intense persecution of the al-Qassam Brigades at the hands of the PA and Israel eventually curbed its operational capabilities. These three factors were all to the benefit of the Gaza leadership, and will be accounted for in what follows.

First, the Gaza leadership capitalized on the return of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. In 1997, Yassin was eight years into his life sentence in Israeli prison. That year, the Israeli national intelligence agency, Mossad, tried to assassinate the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khaled Meshaal, who resided in Amman, Jordan. The Mossad agents failed in their mission, however, and were captured by the Jordanians. Unsurprisingly, King Hussein of Jordan was furious at the Israelis for mounting an assassination operation on Jordanian soil. He requested Yassin's release from prison in exchange for the captured Israeli agents, calculating that by demanding a high price for the safety of her agents, Israel would abstain from such operations in the future. He also hoped that Yassin could counterbalance radical elements within Hamas and moderate the party (Mishal and Sela 2000, 111–12; Tamimi 2007, 110).³¹⁴ The Israelis eventually complied, and with the return of Yassin to Gaza, the leadership there enjoyed a burst of legitimacy and increased organizational influence.

Second, the Gaza leadership indirectly benefited from the Political Bureau's expulsion from Jordan in 1999. Hamas's relationship with the Jordanian regime had always been strained, from the establishment of its Political Bureau in Amman in 1992 onward. But, it took a turn for the worse when King Hussein passed away early in 1999 and was succeeded by King Abdullah II. Whereas Hussein was famous for successfully combining pragmatism and integrity,³¹⁵ his heir Abdullah II was more susceptible to international pressures. In particular, Abdullah II's ascension to the throne meant that the prolonged demand from military and economical donors such as the US for Jordan to "do something" about Hamas finally came to

314 See McGeough's book *Kill Khalid* (2010) for an in-dept and detailed account of the Israeli operation and its aftermath.

315 See Shlaim (2007) for a comprehensive biography of King Hussein.

fruition. By the end of 1999, he had expelled all senior Hamas cadres from Jordan. After temporarily operating from Doha, the Political Bureau eventually settled in Damascus (Kumaraswamy 2001; McGeough 2010, 247–66). This forced relocation hampered the Political Bureau's operations and allowed the leadership in Gaza to further increase their dominance of Hamas.

Third, the al-Qassam Brigades was weakened following prolonged and intense persecution. For the PA, in coordination with the Israelis, had become increasingly effective in their persecution of Hamas's militant cadres in the latter years of the 1990s, and by the summer of 1999, the al-Qassam Brigades was all but neutralized. And as Hamas's military capabilities were weakened, so were the al-Qassam commanders' position within Hamas (Bloom 2004, 68; Hroub 2004, 23; ICG 2006, 9). Importantly, and despite the fact that the political leaders also suffered under the widespread persecution, Hamas's organizational roots provided an alternative strategy to violent resistance: its wide network of associated social and welfare institutions inherited from the Muslim Brotherhood. As the operational capabilities of the al-Qassam Brigades diminished, Hamas increasingly focused its efforts on services provision. The demand for welfare services in the occupied territories had increased proportionally to the failure of the PA to provide for its population, and Hamas gained followers by filling parts of this welfare vacuum (Gunning 2008, 39, 48; Hilal 2006; ICG 2006, 6; Roy 2003).

This tactical reorientation also provided the political leadership with increased organizational influence.³¹⁶ In sum, and combined with Yassin's return to Gaza, the expulsion of the Political Bureau from Amman, and the diminishing capabilities of the al-Qassam Brigades, the above factors all worked to benefit of the Gaza leadership, who had obtained dominance of Hamas by the end of 1999. As stipulated by relevant theories, external shocks and environmental challenges produced a change of dominant faction within Hamas, which, as hypothesized by the same theories, is expected to have had consequences for the behavior of Hamas (Harmel and Janda 1994; Harmel and Tan 2003; Panebianco 1988, 244).

To summarize, the harsh conditions under which Hamas operated throughout the Oslo years posed serious challenges for its organizational functioning and development; despite inheriting a rather well-developed organizational infrastructure from the Palestinian Muslim

316 Note that the expulsion of the Political Bureau from Amman led to a shortfall in funds, and as a consequence, Hamas had to scale back its welfare services. This, in turn, had negative ramifications for Hamas's popularity, as indicated in Figure 5 on page 160. However, the dominance of the Gaza leadership remained intact.

Brotherhood, the intense persecution of Hamas's domestic leadership and rank-and-file undermined its organizational coherence. This, in turn, led to increased factionalism at its topmost levels, which helps explain Hamas's inconsistent and ambiguous ideological development and strategic behavior.

5.3 Hamas after Oslo—still more movement than party

The above sections have detailed the development of Hamas during the Oslo years, indicating that it responded both ideologically and organizationally to the various environmental changes and challenges, but fell short of completing its transmutation from movement to party.

As argued in the preamble to the above analyses of Hamas's ideological and organizational development throughout the Oslo years,³¹⁷ its dual legacy as a conventional religious social movement and a militant revolutionary movement would influence its transmutation toward a political party in contradictory directions. Following the path of a conventional social movement organization, Hamas could be expected to turn into a mass-based, organizationally broad, electorally oriented, and ideologically flexible party. However, depending on the influence of its militant legacy, Hamas would probably remain ideologically rigid, retain its revolutionary ideology and totalitarian strategy, with a top-down command structure, and an exclusive membership.

As will be further demonstrated in the coming sections, this dual legacy exacerbated the already challenging situation in which Hamas found itself, in essence obstructing its transmutation from movement to party. In short, Hamas remained more of a movement than a party at the end of the Oslo years, although it had also come to share qualities of the latter.

5.3.1 Partial ideological moderation

Ideologically, Hamas entered the period in question still committed to its original goals, pushing a maximalist agenda at the cost of internal legitimacy and domestic popularity. This is taken to indicate that its identity initially remained that of a religious and militant liberation movement, with aims more akin to that of a revolutionary movement than that of the incremental changes associated with political parties.

From around 1996, elements within the Hamas leadership attempted to push the organization in a moderating direction, however, for example by offering Israel a long-term cease-fire, the

317 See section 5.2 *Arrested development—Hamas in the new system* on pp. 155ff.

hudna, along the 1967 borders. In later communiqués, Hamas even opened for future negotiations with Israel, although without admitting that such negotiations would lead to a final solution to the conflict (Tamimi 2007, 269–70).

Despite such moderating tendencies, Hamas's militant legacy and ideological rigidity remained dominant, and powerful sections within its leadership stayed committed to its revolutionary goals. In short, Hamas's dual legacies meant that its ideological development took on a somewhat contradictory quality throughout the Oslo period. On the one hand, it remained committed to its initial goals of establishing an Islamic state throughout all of historic Palestine, by violent means if necessary. But on the other hand, it tried to maneuver in an ever-changing and increasingly hostile political landscape, moderating its rhetoric and adopting pragmatic positions to ensure continued survival.

In sum, it is argued that while Hamas did become more ideologically flexible throughout the Oslo years, its legacy as a militant liberation movement remained too influential for it to fully discard its maximalist and revolutionary outlook. The result was an uneasy combination of ideological rigidity and flexibility. As such, it is concluded that Hamas emerged as an ideologically inconsistent organization at the end of the period in question, qualifying neither as a pure movement nor as a proper political party.

5.3.2 Patchy organizational development

With regard to the development of Hamas's organizational structure and order throughout the Oslo years, the picture that emerged in the above analyses also points in contradictory directions. At the beginning of the period, Hamas was still very much a militant liberation movement. It kept with its strict requirements and comprehensive indoctrination of new recruits, which provided a disciplined and committed rank-and-file suitable for a militant organization. Combined with Hamas's federated and stratified structure, these organizational characteristics arguably helped the organization to survive the sustained and intense persecution it suffered at the hands of the PA and Israel. Furthermore, its centripetal advancement procedures ensured a homogeneous leadership, which for a while seemed to be united behind a common message and strategy. Finally, the leadership apparently retained the capability to enforce organizational discipline and issue orders down the command line.

Nevertheless, the increasingly effective persecution of Hamas cadres eventually forced the organization to ease its recruitment procedures to compensate for the shortfall of militants.

And the ensuing influx of new members—many of which were motivated to join solely to fight Israel, not to establish an Islamist state—had negative ramifications for the rank-and-file’s discipline. As a result, and in a short time span, Hamas lost much of its characteristics as a disciplined militant movement. Instead, it developed into a more mass-based, less cohesive movement with a heterogeneous membership base.

Added to this, the federated structure that initially helped Hamas to retain its operational capabilities increasingly turned into a liability toward the end of the 1990s. Despite the homogenizing effect of Hamas’s centripetal advancement procedures, its geographic branches operated under widely different conditions.³¹⁸ This, in turn, explains part of the reason why its various leadership circles disagreed on crucial strategic decisions. Consequently, Hamas suffered a heightened degree of factionalism at its topmost levels, as various leadership branches vied for organizational influence.

This factionalism, in turn, had ramifications for Hamas’s behavior. As argued, Hamas’s decision not to contest the 1996 PLC elections can largely be attributed to the dominant position of the Amman-based Political Bureau and the al-Qassam Brigades, both of which favored boycott over participation. The process leading up to this decision also revealed reduced organizational cohesion; different leaders publicly discussed the pros and cons of participation, openly expressing their differences. While disagreements are to be expected in any political movement, some high-ranking Hamas members not only publicly expressed their discord with the decision to boycott, but even broke line by putting forward their candidacy in the elections. Although these were forced to withdraw their candidacy, such behavior strongly suggests that Hamas no longer had a cohesive and united leadership (Caridi 2010, 120–22).

In sum, it is argued here that Hamas lost much of the organizational characteristics of a militant movement by the end of the 1990s, such as its committed and disciplined rank-and-file and cohesive leadership. However, it did not fully replace its old organizational logic with a new one; rather than transmuting into a mass-based political party, Hamas retained its cell-based organizational structure. Furthermore, Hamas only reluctantly and partly adapted to the new political realities in occupied Palestine. Its militant legacy seemingly remained too influential for Hamas to be able or willing to restructure its organization and take the leap from movement to party.

318 Cf. section *The formal structure and intra-party democracy* on pp. 167ff.

5.3.3 Still movement, not yet party

To summarize, Hamas seemed rather ill-prepared and ill-equipped to cope with the developments of the 1990s. Although the organization survived intense persecution and a host of environmental challenges, Hamas emerged at the end of the 1990s still more of a movement than a political party. But, given the circumstances, such an arrested development was unsurprising. The immense pressure put on Hamas by both the PA and Israel forced it to prioritize survival over politics. Combined with its dual legacies as a militant movement and a religious movement, such a prioritization prompted Hamas to become reactive rather than proactive with regard to both ideological and organizational development. In short, Hamas struggled to retain its identity as a religiously motivated liberation movement as the Palestinian political system developed toward a logic of party politics.

Although a tendency toward ideological moderation could be detected, the indicators were not conclusive. Despite downplaying its most radical goals and opening up for increased pragmatism, partly in an attempt to increase its public appeal, Hamas simultaneously remained committed to the establishment of an Islamist state in the whole of historic Palestine. Hamas's unclear ideological commitments were in turn partly explained by its poor organizational state; persecution of its rank-and-file combined with its federated and stratified structure led to intensified factionalism, which in turn undermined its organizational cohesion and decision-making procedures. Such a state of affairs led to public infighting among its various leadership branches. This was especially evident when Hamas decided to boycott the 1996 PLC elections, and in discussions regarding its interim aims, allowing for a temporary solution along the 1967 borders, and the long-term goal of erecting an Islamist state in the whole of historic Palestine.

In conclusion, Hamas did take steps both ideologically and organizationally on its transmutation from movement to party during the Oslo years, but the combined effect of the listed exogenous (various environmental challenges and shocks) and endogenous (its dual legacies) factors account for why it did not complete this process. By boycotting the 1996 PLC elections, and failing both to develop its organization and to unite behind a consistent ideological message, Hamas remained more of a movement than a political party at the end of the 1990s.

5.4 Hamas's level of institutionalization at the end of the 1990s

Based on the findings from the above analyses and supplemented by data gleaned from the interviews and the extant literature, an overall assessment of the degree to which Hamas had institutionalized by the end of the Oslo period is offered. The analysis below utilizes the analytical framework outlined in the introductory chapter and estimates Hamas's degree of institutionalization by measuring its respective scores in the four attributes, namely *systemness*, *decisional autonomy*, *value infusion*, and *reification*.

5.4.1 Systemness

Hamas's systemness is considered to have reached a medium level by the end of the 1990s. Although the persecution of Hamas throughout the Oslo years undermined its organizational coherence, it had nevertheless routinized its behavior and structure sufficiently to survive as a united organization.

Hamas inherited the organizational infrastructure of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, and could initially rely on a federated, stratified, and hierarchical organizational structure suitable to operate under the dire conditions of occupied Palestine. However, the organizational logic of the Brotherhood, a religious social movement, was arguably incompatible with the militant strategy that remained the *raison d'être* of Hamas. As explicated above, such dual organizational legacies negatively affected its organizational development.

Furthermore, any attempt by Hamas to homogenize and further develop its organization was obstructed by the harsh and persistent persecution it suffered throughout the Oslo years. At times, Hamas was completely governed by the Political Bureau in Amman, as most of its political leaders and military commanders in occupied Palestine were either arrested by the PA or expelled or assassinated by Israel. Given the fact that the Consultative Council was meant to constitute the topmost leadership, such a state of affairs indicate that Hamas for long periods abandoned its formal structure. It should also be reiterated that Hamas suffered factionalization throughout the Oslo years, in part as a result of the challenging circumstances. And the intensity of the organizational infighting, in particular between the Political Bureau and the Gaza leadership, is a powerful indication that Hamas had still not reached a high level of systemness.

However, the fact that Hamas had instituted an organizational structure that enabled it to continue operating and surviving in the face of widespread and intense persecution, is also

indicative of systemness. For, even if the powerful position and crucial role played by of the Political Bureau was in breach of the *formal* structure, it suggests routinization of the *informal* structure. In short, although the state of Hamas's formal structure deteriorated somewhat throughout the Oslo era, all of what it lost in terms of systemness was compensated for by the routinization of its informal structure and behavior. Hamas's level of systemness is therefore considered to have increased to a medium level by the end of the 1990s.

5.4.2 Decisional autonomy

The degree of decisional autonomy can be measured by examining whether the organization in question depends on external sponsors to such an extent that it would forgo its own interests to the benefit of one or more of its benefactors. For Hamas, two main groups of external actors are expected to have had the possibility to influence its decision-making, namely the network of auxiliary religious welfare institutions, and its international sponsors, such as Iran and the Jordanian Brotherhood.

With regard to the former, it should be noted that while Hamas apparently relied on the services provided by the Islamic charitable organizations to increase its popular support throughout the Oslo years, the ties between Hamas and these organizations were never formalized. Although some overlap in personnel have been documented, e.g., with board members from certain Islamic charities also serving as leaders in Hamas (Gunning 2008, 115), there were no indications that these organizations had any effect on decision-making in Hamas (Roy 2011, 141–42).³¹⁹

The various international donors had a somewhat similar relationship with Hamas, i.e., one of ideological affinity and overlapping strategic and tactical interests, but without obvious signs of interference. Hamas certainly capitalized on its ties to the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, as it for long enabled the Political Bureau residing in Amman to procure weapons and transport these to the West Bank (Tamimi 2007, 73–74). However, and as discussed in chapter 4,³²⁰ the Brotherhood itself relied on the acceptance of the Jordanian regime to operate freely. This chain of delicate relations led Hamas to carefully consider the consequences of its decisions for the Jordanian Brotherhood, limiting its decisional autonomy. Other international sponsors include Iran and various Gulf states. These traditionally

319 Nor, for that matter, were there any indications that Hamas exercised any undue influence on the decision-making in these organizations. See S. Roy (2011) for a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the relationship between Hamas and Islami charitable organizations.

320 See section 4.4.2 on page 140.

supported the PLO, but after Yasser Arafat sided with Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War, support for the Palestinian cause was channeled to Hamas instead (Roy 2011, 138). There was nothing to indicate that this financial and political support came with any strings attached apart from Hamas's persistent resistance to the Israeli occupation—something Hamas was set on doing regardless.

It is concluded that Hamas had a medium level of decisional autonomy throughout the Oslo years. While Hamas was relatively free to determine its own policies and strategies, its close ties to the Jordanian Brotherhood made it sensitive to the priorities of the Jordanian regime, thus limiting its level of decisional autonomy.

5.4.3 Value infusion

Two interrelated factors suggest that Hamas only to a limited degree had become infused with value by the end of the Oslo era. For one, both its old and new members remained committed to the goals of Hamas, seeing it as a vehicle to resist Israel and Islamize occupied Palestine. For example, and as discussed, Hamas experienced an influx of new recruits throughout the Oslo years,³²¹ who, by and large, joined Hamas to resist the occupation (Robinson 1997, 170–71). As such, their motivation to join can be said to have been *instrumental*, thus strongly suggesting that they saw membership in Hamas as a way to resist the occupation, and not a goal in itself.³²²

Second, a number of those in the rank-and-file who disagreed with the strategies and tactics Hamas adopted to achieve its goals defected. Mainly, such defections were in protest of the use of suicide operations as a tactic from 1994 and onward.³²³ As the degree to which the rank-and-file remain loyal and disciplined when the leadership alters or replaces ideological elements and adopts new and controversial strategies is a good litmus test of value infusion, the above is taken to indicate that Hamas had not become infused with value by the end of the Oslo years.³²⁴

321 See section *A new composition: persecution, recruitment, and defection* on pp. 171ff.

322 As mentioned, not all those who joined necessarily agreed with Hamas's Islamist project. However, this just further underlines the instrumental nature of their motivation to join, thus strengthening the argument that Hamas was not infused with value.

323 For example, after Hamas retaliated to the assassination of its bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash in 1996 with a string of suicide operations inside Israel, one of its co-founders on the West Bank, Sheikh Jamil Hamami, left the organization in protest (Caridi 2010, 123).

324 This point should not be overstated, however, as most Hamas members remained loyal and did not opt for the exit strategy.

In sum, the instrumental motivation of Hamas's new recruits, and the defections of some of its old members, are both taken to indicate that the organization was still seen a means toward an end, and not an end in itself, and thus was still infused with value only to a low degree.

5.4.4 Reification

As most relevant indicators point in the positive direction, Hamas's level of reification at the end of the Oslo years is considered to be high. For one, Hamas was the second most popular faction in occupied Palestine throughout the period in question.³²⁵ This is taken to indicate that Hamas was highly reified in the public imagination. Second, and despite the fact that support for Hamas declined, it arguably managed to monopolize the identity as the Islamic alternative in Palestinian politics, thus entrenching its position in the public imagination. And third, given the attention granted to Hamas from both Israel and the PA-PLO-Fatah nexus throughout the 1990s, it seems safe to conclude it was recognized as a force to be reckoned with. In short, Hamas was highly reified at the end of the Oslo years, in the public imagination, among its domestic competitors, and by its enemy.

Summarized, Hamas scored low on value infusion, medium on both systemness and decisional autonomy, and high on reification. Hamas was recognized both by its supporters and by its competitors as a force to be reckoned with, and enjoyed a medium degree of autonomy from its environment. However, it remained underdeveloped organizationally, and had to rely on informal routines and improvisation simply to survive the ordeal of the 1990s. Furthermore, as its new and old members still saw it as a means toward an end, it is argued that Hamas was only infused with value to a low degree. Overall, it is concluded that Hamas had reached a medium level of institutionalization at the end of the Oslo years.

325 See *Figure 5: Factional support in the occupied territories, 1994–1999* on page 160.

Chapter 6: Hamas and the second *intifada* (2000–2006)

This chapter is dedicated to detailing Hamas's development in the six year period from the outbreak of the second *intifada* up until the 2006 elections to the PLC. Despite being a highly volatile and violent period, Hamas continued to evolve throughout these years; it finally adopted a coherent ideological message, it matured and stabilized organizationally, and—largely because of its prominent role in the second *intifada*—enjoyed increased popular support. In short, it emerged as a rather mature and confident political organization by the end of the period.

A number of important environmental developments took place in this period, including the much overdue ratification of a Palestinian constitution in 2002 that empowered the PLC, and then the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, which finally allowed the PA to begin institutionalizing. In combination with a number of additional endogenous and exogenous factors, these developments prompted Hamas to take part in the local elections in occupied Palestine in 2004 and 2005. After performing well in these, Hamas also decided to run in the 2006 elections to the PLC, which—to its own and most others' surprise—it won.

The chapter will begin by providing a necessary historical context of the period, focusing in particular on the lead-up to the second *intifada* in September 2000 and the *intifada* itself, including sections on Hamas's return to violence and the inevitable reprisals this provoked from Israel. Next follows a section on the development of the Palestinian political system. Although the outbreak of the *intifada* spelled the suspension of the stumbling peace process, the institutions created by the Oslo Accords not only survived, but also institutionalized while the uprising raged.

The chapter then turns to Hamas, first investigating its strategic-ideological and then its organizational developments. While Hamas's ideological development will be covered in some detail, the movement evolved less ideologically than in prior periods, as no new ideological elements or goals were introduced. However, Hamas left behind the ideological ambiguity of the late 1990s as it cemented its identity and rhetorical frames. And because Hamas suffered massive persecution throughout the second *intifada*, which naturally hampered any organization-building efforts, there are indications that it had to rely on previously instituted organizational structures simply to survive the onslaught. Yet, the mere fact that it did survive the mass arrests of its rank-and-file and the targeted assassination of its

domestic leadership—including that of its founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin—is here taken to indicate that Hamas had developed into a stable, mature, and adaptable organization in this period.

As in previous chapters, this one also has a section discussing how far Hamas came in its transmutation toward a political party in the period in question. In brief, it is argued that Hamas came close but stopped short of qualifying as a political party. On the one hand, and because running in elections is deemed a *sine qua non* for political parties in much of the relevant literature, Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 parliamentary elections is taken to indicate that it inched ever closer to qualifying as a party rather than a movement. However, Hamas was not prepared for electoral victory and was initially not willing to assume government after winning the 2006 elections. At the end of the period covered, Hamas was no longer a pure movement, but neither did it qualify as a proper political party.

Also as in previous chapters, this one will likewise conclude with a brief account of Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the period in question. Overall, Hamas's level of institutionalization increased slightly from the end of the Oslo years to the end of the second *intifada*. Because of the intense persecution Hamas suffered throughout the second *intifada*, both its level of systemness and its level of decisional autonomy suffered. With regard to the former, the persecution made it all but impossible for Hamas to develop and improve its organizational state. This left the organization in a vulnerable state, rendering it sensitive to the priorities and preferences of its donors, in turn limiting its decisional autonomy. Yet, Hamas increased its level of value infusion noticeably, indicated by the fact that it adopted a more pragmatic and moderate ideology without seeing members defect. Finally, with regard to reification, Hamas's rise in the polls and eventual victory in the 2006 PLC elections is taken as proof that it remained highly reified and had cemented its position as one of the main contenders for political power in the occupied territories.

6.1 The second intifada and the death of Oslo

As detailed in the previous chapter, the situation in the occupied territories deteriorated steadily from the signing of the first Oslo agreement in 1993 until the end of the 1990s. Although numerous meetings aimed at keeping the peace process alive took place between Israel and the PLO throughout this period,³²⁶ it was obvious by 2000 that the Oslo process was

326 For example, the Wye River Memorandum in 1998 and the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum in 1999.

in danger of failing completely. In a last-ditch attempt to revive the peace process, US President Clinton hosted the Camp David summit in July 2000.³²⁷ No agreement was reached, however, leaving the conditions in occupied Palestine to deteriorate further, now combined with evermore widespread disillusionment and frustration on the part of the Palestinian populace (Baroud 2006, 19–22; Tamimi 2007, 199).

The situation proved explosive when the leader of the conservative Likud party in Israel, Ariel Sharon, visited the Temple Mount (*Haram-esh-Sharif*) in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000.³²⁸ Frustrated by the lack of progress in the peace process and the overall de-development in the occupied territories, Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount provoked widespread Palestinian protests.³²⁹ The initial heavy-handed response by the IDF against the protesters failed to curb the demonstrations, and the violence rapidly escalated into what became known as the al-Aqsa *intifada* (Baroud 2006, 23).³³⁰ The outbreak of this second *intifada* was widely perceived as marking the end of the Oslo era. While the institutions created by the Oslo Accords survived, the negotiations continued only in principle under the framework of the Accords.

The failure at Camp David, the breakdown of the peace process, and the outbreak of a second *intifada* had consequences for both Israeli and Palestinian politics. In Israel, these developments helped Ariel Sharon win the PM elections on February 6, 2001, beating incumbent Ehud Barak. By pointing to Barak's failure to reach an agreement with the Palestinians at Camp David and campaigning on a promise to secure Israel by cracking down on Palestinian protesters (Eid 2001), Sharon won 62.4 percent of the votes against Barak's 37.6 percent. Because there was no simultaneous election to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, Sharon had to establish a government while Barak's Labor party remained the largest party in the Knesset.³³¹ This forced Sharon to establish a national unity government, with parties from both sides of the aisle. Importantly, Sharon included extreme right-wing,

327 For a detailed and first-hand account of the Camp David summit, see *The Camp David Papers* by Hanieh (2001).

328 The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the third holiest place in Islam after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

329 Ariel Sharon was nicknamed "the butcher of Sabra and Shatila" after his involvement in the slaughter of some 3 000 Palestinian refugees during the Lebanese civil war in 1982. This exacerbated the symbolism of his visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

330 Proposed explanations for the outbreak of the second *intifada* abound, with some focusing on the personal responsibilities of the Israeli and/or Palestinian leadership (see e.g., Pressman 2003), and others giving credence to historical and political developments (Hammami and Tamari 2001). Most authors, nevertheless, agree that Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount was the immediate catalyst or triggering mechanism for the outbreak of the *intifada*, if not the underlying reason.

331 This was the last direct PM election in Israel.

nationalistic parties in his government, such as Yisrael Beiteinu and the National Union (Butler 2009, 110). Combined with Sharon's election promise of securing Israel in 100 days, the influence of these right-wing parties had ramifications for the way in which Israel responded to the Palestinian demonstrations; in essence, it led Israel to adopt an even more heavy-handed approach toward the Palestinians than what was typical. The IDF closed down borders, arrested Palestinian activists indiscriminately, and resumed its policy of so-called "targeted assassinations" (Singh 2011, 60–61).

In the occupied territories, the outbreak of the *intifada* also had dramatic ramifications for the Palestinian leadership. The Fatah-led PA was already considered a failure by many Palestinians, partly because of widespread corruption and mismanagement, but maybe more importantly because it had failed to provide security and services for the Palestinians (Hilal 2006). By insisting on continued negotiations in the face of disproportionate Israeli responses to the uprising, the Palestinian leadership's already frayed legitimacy continued to suffer. As the *intifada* gained momentum, the sorry state of affairs in the PA led to a change in the operational logic in Palestinian politics. Whereas the political landscape had been dominated by the wobbly peace process led by Fatah's old guard since the signing of the first Oslo agreement in 1993, the uprising allowed a younger generation of Palestinian activists and opposition movements to mobilize. Disillusioned by the lack of progress, calls to resume popular and violent resistance against the Israeli occupation could be heard even from within Fatah's own ranks (Usher 2000).

The high level of discontent even among its own rank-and-file, coupled with demands from Israel to put an end to the Palestinian violence, render a difficult position for Fatah and the PA. In essence, the Palestinian leadership found itself with dual and contradictory loyalties. On the one hand, Arafat and his compatriots needed to appease the Israelis and the international community in order to maintain at least the illusion of still being able and willing to negotiate. Without the support of the international community and tax transfers from Israel, the PA would probably go bankrupt in a matter of weeks, which in turn would spell the end of the Palestinian regime.³³² On the other hand, the PA had to take into account the pressures from its own rank-and-file and constituency to respond to the Israeli aggression (Tamimi 2007, 201). Apart from the option of becoming totalitarian, there are limits as to how long a

332 The PA has always been highly dependent on aid (see in particular More 2008). According to figures from the World Bank, international donors provided almost half of the total expenditures of the PA in the first 27 months of the second *intifada* (2003, 21).

regime can survive without being at least somewhat responsive to its own subjects.

The IDF's indiscriminate and hard-handed treatment of Palestinian activists made it increasingly difficult for Arafat and the PA to cooperate with the Israelis while not alienating its own constituents. In late October 2000 the Palestinian leadership succumbed to public pressure. It released some 350 Palestinian activists from its prisons, many of whom were Hamas members (Tamimi 2007, 200). The release of these prisoners, combined with his continued efforts to negotiate with Israel, is taken as an indication that Arafat adopted a two-pronged and contradictory strategy early on during the second *intifada*. While officially remaining committed to the negotiation track with Israel, Arafat also released activists he knew would take part in the violent uprising against the occupation (Tamimi 2007, 200–1).

6.1.1 Palestinian violence and the rise of Hamas

Following a classic tit-for-tat logic, the Palestinian demonstrations and attacks provoked harsh Israeli responses, prompting further, more violent attacks from the Palestinians, in turn giving Israel an excuse to revive its policy of “targeted assassinations.” And with a new, right-wing government in Israel set on ending the *intifada* rapidly and with violent means, and a Palestinian leadership unwilling—and probably unable—to crack down on its own population for the sake of Israeli security, the violence spiraled out of control (Caridi 2010, 147).

On the Palestinian side, Hamas was the first to up the ante, moving from popular demonstrations to military activities. On October 30, 2000, just over a month after Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, Hamas carried out its first suicide operation in two years. The bomber set off his explosive belt in a piazza in Jerusalem, killing 15 and injuring some 130 (Singh 2011, 60, 139). Then, on January 1, 2001, Hamas carried out a second suicide operation, followed by three operations in March 2001, two in April, one in May, and two more in June. This trend continued for the rest of 2001. In total, Hamas carried out 19 suicide operations that year, killing 80 Israelis and injuring 907 more. And in the five years the al-Aqsa *intifada* lasted,³³³ Hamas carried out some 50 suicide operations, leaving over 2 000 injured and 325 dead (Singh 2011, 137–41).

Other Palestinian movements also took active part in the uprising and carried out suicide operations. It is particularly noteworthy that *tanzim*, a Fatah-organization largely made up of

333 Whereas the first *intifada* ended with the signing of the DOP in September 1993, there is no agreed upon end date of the second *intifada*. However, by 2005 the intensity of the conflict had abated to such an extent that it makes little sense to talk about an uprising anymore (Baroud 2006, 120–21).

veterans from the first *intifada* and Fatah's *Shabiba* youth movement was allowed—at least implicitly—by the PA and Fatah leadership to fight in the *intifada*.³³⁴ Although Fatah's loose and incoherent organizational structure makes it difficult to accurately map out its command structure and specify the relationship between its different sub-units and associated organizations (Usher 2000), the *tanzim* played a prominent role during the early years of the second *intifada*. Furthermore, many of the activists from *tanzim* later joined the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, another Fatah-associated militia established to fight in the *intifada* (Bloom 2004, 78).³³⁵ Other factions playing prominent roles in the *intifada* included Islamic Jihad, the DFLP, and the PFLP.

Israel was of course the common enemy to all the Palestinian factions taking part in the uprising, prompting cooperation between them even across the previously important secular-religious cleavage (Caridi 2010, 147). According to the details in the list compiled by Singh of the 50 suicide operations Hamas carried out throughout the second *intifada*, seven were collaborations with either Islamic Jihad and/or the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (2011, 139–42). However, given the nature of suicide operations, it is often difficult to ascertain who was actually responsible for a given operation after the fact. During the second *intifada*, as is common also elsewhere, these difficulties were exacerbated because different Palestinian militias at times claimed responsibility for the same operation (Bloom 2004, 73–75).³³⁶

In total, the Palestinian militias carried out 138 suicide operations from 2000 to 2005, killing 657 and injuring 3 682 (Brym and Araj 2006, 1970).³³⁷ And while it claimed responsibility for only 50 of these, it was Hamas that apparently capitalized the most from the *intifada*. Throughout the period, Hamas saw its popularity rise to unprecedented levels, from around 10 percent in 2000, to almost 30 percent by the end of 2005. Although the polling data from PSR shows that the popularity of the various movements fluctuated somewhat, the trend in Figure 7 below is clear; Hamas inched closer to Fatah throughout the period.³³⁸

334 *Shabiba* translates roughly to “youth,” whereas *tanzim* means “organization” in Arabic.

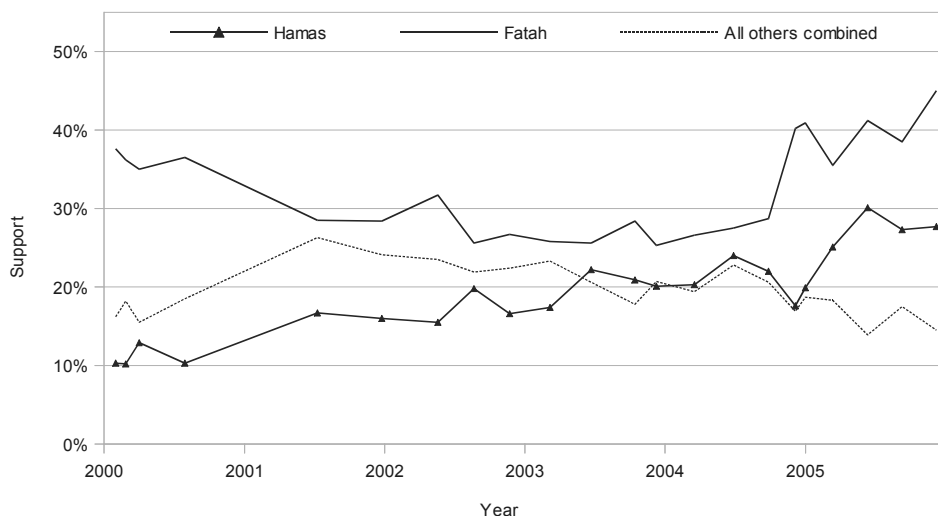
335 It is assumed that the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade fill the same role for Fatah as the al-Qassam Brigades does for Hamas, i.e., that of a clandestine armed wing, operating largely independently from, but still in accordance with, the goals and priorities of the political leadership.

336 In 2011, the al-Qassam Brigades claimed that they had carried out a total of 87 “martyr operations” since the establishment of Hamas (Al-Qassam Brigades 2011).

337 As would be expected, there is no consensus as to how many Israeli and Palestinian lives were claimed by the second *intifada*, with estimates varying quite widely (see e.g., JPS 2004). Most sources, however, indicate that for every Israeli killed, three to four Palestinians were killed. One source deemed trustworthy is Milton-Edwards and Farrell, who estimate that 1 080 Israelis and 3 570 Palestinians were killed from 2000 to 2005 (2010, 107).

338 Consult the methodology chapter for a discussion of the polling data used. The pollsters from PSR

Figure 7: Factional support in the occupied territories, 2000–2005



(Source: PSR 2011).

Hamas’s prominent role in the second *intifada* was not the only reason for this increase in popularity.³³⁹ For one, Hamas’s politico-religious message had come to resonate well among Palestinians. Although difficult to measure accurately, there are strong indications that religion came to play an increasingly important role in Palestinian politics from the mid-1990s onward (Hilal 2006).³⁴⁰ And as Hamas was established as a religious alternative to the secular PLO, it was well positioned to capitalize politically on this trend.³⁴¹

Hamas also benefited from the PA’s shortcomings. Even if the failures of the PA in part can be explained by its circumscribed mandate, continued Israeli aggression, and a steady stream of

speculated that “Hamas’ loss of support [in late 2004 and early 2005] may be due to the fact that the Islamist movement had decided to boycott the upcoming presidential elections while the increase in support for Fateh might be explained by the appreciation people have for the way Fateh dealt with the succession issue [following the death of Arafat]. A bandwagoning [*sic*] effect may have also helped Fateh as new supporters might be expecting gains from supporting the faction that is most likely to win the upcoming elections” (PSR 2004).

339 See Abu-Amr (2007, 169–71) and Hilal (2006) for detailed accounts of Hamas’s rising popularity.

340 Polling numbers and student council election results from the 1980s indicate that this trend of increased religiosity among Palestinians already began then. See in particular Smith (1982), Shadid and Seltzer (1988a, 1988b, 1989), and Robinson (1997, 19–27).

341 This tendency even led the staunch secularists in Fatah to adopt a religious language in an attempt to retain support from the increasingly religious Palestinian populace (Frisch 2005; Løvlie 2014).

impossible to fulfill demands from the international community, the PA *did* default on its contract as a welfare and security provider for its constituents, and it *did* suffer from rampant mismanagement and widespread corruption.³⁴² By filling the welfare vacuum created by the PA's failure to provide for its constituents, Hamas gained new followers from most segments of society. In addition, disappointment and disillusionment with the Palestinian leadership had become a fixture in the minds of Palestinians within the occupied territories. The corruption and mismanagement on part of the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus thus indirectly lend credence to Hamas's claim for credibility, and many Palestinians came to consider the movement as the only viable contender to the incumbent regime. Naturally, this materialized as gains in the polls for Hamas (Hroub 2004, 22). And finally, Hamas profited from Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005—a move perceived by many Palestinians as a victory for Hamas's resistance strategy over the negotiation strategy of the PLO (Milton-Edwards 2005, 131).

It should be noted that it was not only Hamas that gained in popularity during the second *intifada*. As indicated in Figure 7 above, Fatah likewise became more popular throughout the period. Support seems to have flowed to both from the “All others combined” category, which is mainly made up of different leftist factions and independents of various ideological hues.³⁴³ This is taken to indicate that the Palestinian political system developed in a bipolar direction. While the Palestinian party system since the early 1990s most closely resembled the predominant party system as described by Sartori (1976, 173–74), by late 2005 it had for most intents and purposes turned to a polarized two-party system (Hilal 2006).

6.1.2 The institutionalization of the Palestinian political system

While the years of the second *intifada* were marked by political chaos, unprecedented levels of violence, and the emergence of a new power-configuration in Palestinian factional politics, the period also saw the eventual institutionalization of the Palestinian political system. As detailed in the previous chapter, the PA was flawed by design and suffered from both formal and informal weaknesses. *De jure*, the PA was set up as a pure presidential system from the outset, with most of the powers concentrated in the office of the president. The highly skewed power balance between the different branches of government was exacerbated by the strong

342 See Chêne (2012) for an overview of corruption issues in occupied Palestine.

343 The “All others combined” category is the combined support enjoyed by the PFLP, the DFLP, the Palestine Democratic Union (known as Fida), the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), Islamic Jihad, and independent candidates, both nationalists and Islamists.

position of Yasser Arafat and his compatriots. Holding the positions of President of the PA, Chairman of the PLO, and Commander-in-Chief of Fatah, he was in more ways than one the personification of Palestinian politics. From his return to the occupied territories in 1994 and onward, Yasser Arafat did his utmost to exploit and maintain the institutional weaknesses of the PA, tying its powers to his own person. Whatever institutional arrangements were theoretically in place, the PA was *de facto* dependent on Arafat, whose leadership has been characterized as an antithesis of institutionalization. Arafat refused to ratify laws drafted by the PLC, rendering the legislature into a consultative body, and used a set of security courts to sideline the official judiciary (Abu-Amr 1997, 91–94; Mushtaq Husain Khan, Giacaman, and Amundsen 2004; Rabbani 1996, 6).

From presidentialism to semi-presidentialism

Already in 1997, the PLC drafted an interim constitution aimed at securing separation of powers and to limit the unchecked power of the presidency. It was first ratified by Arafat in 2002, and then only after immense international pressure. In 2003 a range of amendments in the Basic Law were introduced and ratified, again only after continued international pressure. The interim constitution and subsequent amendments strengthened the PLC's position by introducing the office of the PM and parliamentary rules, in effect giving the legislature indirect control over the PM and thus the government. Importantly, the president retained the power to dismiss the PM and the government, meaning that the Palestinian proto-state qualified as a president-parliamentary form of semi-presidentialism, "which is where the prime minister is responsible both to the legislature and to the president" (Cavatorta and Elgie 2010, 27).

Semi-presidential systems such as the one introduced in occupied Palestine might face what has been termed the problem of "cohabitation." Initially used to describe the unintended consequences of the new electoral system introduced in France in 1986 (Poulard 1990), cohabitation refers to the political deadlock that might arise when the PM and the president are from different parties or for other reasons pursue radically different agendas. And the PA did indeed suffer such problems following the introduction of semi-presidentialism. The first PM of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, a founding member of Fatah and long-time compatriot of Arafat, was appointed in March 2003, but resigned already in September the same year over disagreements with President Arafat regarding control of the security services. He was succeeded by the speaker of the PLC, Fatah cadre Ahmed Qurei, who also disagreed with

Arafat on numerous issues, including the problem of who should control the security services. Qurei also tendered his resignation over the matter, after which Arafat gave in and agreed to give over some control of the security services to the government.³⁴⁴

While the new constitution on paper introduced power-sharing mechanisms and strengthened the position of the PLC vis-à-vis the presidency, it initially did little to curb the skewed power balance in the PA, or improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the proto-state for that matter. For one, the rampant corruption and systemic mismanagement of the PA was deeply entrenched and continued unabated despite calls from Palestinians and international donors to improve the situation. And second, the introduction of semi-presidentialism exacerbated the problems as the PA now also suffered from intense infighting between the two executive offices. It was not until Yasser Arafat passed away in 2004 that the PA could institutionalize properly. As noted by Palestinian scholar Dr. Giacaman, “Arafat was the glue that bound first Fatah, and secondly the PA.” Because his style of leadership effectively had “deinstitutionalized Fatah [and] deinstitutionalized the PA,” his death left Fatah and the PA without their strongman.³⁴⁵

Following his passing, Arafat was first succeeded as president of the PA by the speaker of the PLC, Rawhi Fattouh. He was in turn replaced by the former PM of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, after the latter won the January 2005 Palestinian presidential elections with 62.52 percent of the votes.³⁴⁶ Abbas had already succeeded Arafat as the Chairman of the PLO, and although he did not immediately succeed Arafat as the Chairman of Fatah,³⁴⁷ he was—and indeed is—widely considered the heir of Arafat. Arafat, however, had been the personification of the Palestinian national struggle for nearly four decades, dominating the Palestinian political scene by strength of his charisma. As is well established in the social science canon, inheriting a position of authority based on charismatic legitimacy is considered to be challenging, to say the least (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007).³⁴⁸

344 Qurei had a short hiatus as PM when he planned to run in the PLC elections in January 2006, during which senior Palestinian negotiator and Fatah cadre Nabil Shaath was appointed Acting PM for nine days in December 2005. Although Qurei served out his term as PM, stepping down in March 2006, the PLC at times had little confidence in him. This was partly because of serious accusations of corruption, such as the infamous “cement gate” incident, when Qurei’s family business was accused of selling cement to Israeli firms responsible for building the separation wall (Harnden 2004).

345 Interviewed in Ramallah, August 16, 2007.

346 Multiple candidates ran in the presidential elections in 2005. Mustafa Barghouti, a former member of the Palestinian People’s Party, member of the PLO Central Council, and leader and founding member of the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI), came in second, winning 19.48 percent of the votes.

347 The Fatah Central Committee elected Faruq al-Qaddumi as their new Chairman (Usher 2005b, 43).

348 See Weber for a thorough and general treatment of the challenges associated with succeeding a charismatic

Although attempts were made to keep Fatah and the PA disciplined and united behind the new leadership led by Abbas, the vacuum left in the wake of Yasser Arafat's demise seemed impossible to fill. No one in the Palestinian leadership could hope to successfully exercise the same degree of independent decision making as Arafat (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007). Nor, for that matter, could any of them continue to resist both international and domestic pressures for change and improvement in the PA without risking their positions. In short, the passing of Arafat threatened that the Palestinian leadership would fragment and lose the control of the PA institutions (Usher 2005b).³⁴⁹ Lacking the charisma of Arafat, the Palestinian leadership under Abbas was forced to look for alternative sources of legitimacy to remain in power. One obvious recourse was to transition the PA from a system of charismatic legitimacy to legal-rational legitimacy, or, in other words, to stop back-paddling and implement and effectuate the power-sharing principles of the new constitution and reform and democratize the PA. In short, after the demise of Arafat, the interests of Abbas and the Palestinian leadership finally aligned with the demands from its constituents and international donors to institutionalize and democratize the PA (Jarbawi and Pearlman 2007).

A new electoral system

As part of the effort to democratize the PA, a new election law introducing fundamental changes to the electoral system in occupied Palestine was adopted in 2005. Under the previous election law from 1995,³⁵⁰ elections to the PLC were conducted according to the block vote system; the PLC was made up of 88 representatives elected according to plurality rules from 16 multi-member districts of varying sizes, with each voter allowed to cast as many votes as his or hers district would elect to the PLC (IDEA 2005, 44–47).³⁵¹ As often is the case in such electoral systems, the largest party, Fatah, won the 1996 elections with a landslide victory, securing two thirds of the PLC seats.³⁵²

leader (1978, 246ff.), and Panebianco for a similar discussion specifically regarding charismatic parties (1988, 143–47).

349 The chaotic situation created by the death of Arafat worked to strengthen the impression that the Fatah-led PA was unsuited to lead the Palestinians, in turn providing Hamas with more supporters.

350 For details, consult the translation of the Palestinian Election Law No. 13 of 1995 (PLC 1995) available at <http://www.elections.ps>.

351 Consult Table 4 on page 339 for an overview of the districts and allocation of seats. See also Butenschön and Vollan for a discussion on the block voting system as used in the 1996 elections to the PLC (1996, 57–62).

352 Specifically, Fatah won 55 seats directly, with a further seven seats secured by Fatah loyalists (see Table 5 on page 340 in Appendix C: Election data in occupied Palestine for details).

Although the elections in 1996 by and large were judged free and fair by international observers (see e.g., NDI 1997), and Palestinians largely considered the election results legitimate, the electoral system used in 1996 had obvious deficiencies. In particular, the block vote system was seen as a potential problem by both international donors and Palestinian NGOs, as it can produce even more disproportionate results than in single-member plurality and majority systems (Butenschøn and Vollan 1996, 29–30). However, it was also noted that the block vote system permitted candidates independent from political movements and parties to win a seat, which, because of the underdeveloped party system and extraordinary situation in occupied Palestine, was seen as a plus (Butenschøn and Vollan 2006, 87–88).

The legislative process for the new electoral law therefore saw the PLC divided into two camps; on the one hand, there were those in favor of keeping with the block vote system, and on the other hand, those wanting to introduce a proportional representation list vote system.³⁵³ In the end, the new electoral law of 2005 must be seen as a compromise between the two camps. It introduced a parallel electoral system combining the block vote and list vote systems. The new law also increased the number of seats in the PLC from 88 to 132 (Butenschøn and Vollan 2006, 25–26; Usher 2005a, 47).³⁵⁴ Under the new law, 66 representatives were elected in a block vote system from 16 electoral districts,³⁵⁵ and the remaining 66 representatives were elected from national lists with the whole of occupied Palestine as one electoral district, using the Saint-Legüe method to allocate seats (CEC 2006a, 15–17). Each voter would cast two ballots; one on the district level following the same rules as in the 1996 elections, and one on the national level by picking one of the multiple party lists.³⁵⁶ In this way, the legislators tried to accommodate both those wanting to retain a pure block vote system, and the reformers advocating increasing the representativity through a proportional representation system.³⁵⁷

Summarized, the introduction of semi-presidentialism, the institutionalization of the PA, and the new electoral law, all worked to change the operational logic of Palestinian factional politics. With real power-sharing mechanisms now in place, and an empowered PLC, the

353 For a detailed account of the various positions adopted by the actors involved in writing the new electoral law, see Butenschøn and Vollan (2006, 89–101).

354 A translated version of the Palestinian Election Law No. 9 of 2005 is available at <http://www.elections.ps>.

355 Consult Table 7 on page 341 for details of the electoral districts and the number of seats in each.

356 The list ballots were closed, meaning that the voters had no influence on the ranking of the candidates (Butenschøn and Vollan 2006, 72).

357 See the section below titled *Internal deliberations, decision-making, and the limits of intra-party democracy* pp. 226ff. for a discussion on the nomination and selection of candidates in Hamas.

previously unchecked power of the presidency was curbed. In addition, the new electoral law democratized Palestinian politics. Such institutional change, it has been hypothesized, “can lower barriers to entry for the rebels, thereby lowering the costs of participation for them” (Shugart 1992, 125). And as will be covered in following sections, both the discussed institutional changes of the PA, and the various environmental developments and events covered above did indeed have consequences for the development and behavior of Hamas.

6.2 Hamas developing—reactive progress

How and in what ways did the aforementioned developments affect Hamas’s continued transmutation from movement to party and its process of institutionalization? Or more specifically, what were the main consequences of the outbreak of the second *intifada*, the suspension of the peace process, and the changes and institutionalization of the Palestinian political system for Hamas’s strategic deliberations and organizational (structural) and ideological (attitudinal) developments?

Even if the second *intifada* was the most violent and destructive period in recent Palestinian history,³⁵⁸ the political developments throughout these years could be construed as positive from the standpoint of Hamas. Whereas the Oslo years had been one long challenge for the movement, with the overall political opportunity structures being to the disadvantage for Hamas, the developments throughout the years of the second *intifada* permitted the movement to evolve organizationally, ideologically, and strategically.

For one, the outbreak of the *intifada* saw the return of violent resistance as a major source of legitimacy and popularity in Palestinian politics, allowing Hamas to again take center stage on the Palestinian political scene as a major liberation movement. While this return to violence can be seen as a step back with regard to Hamas’s transmutation from movement to party, it was arguably an important reason for Hamas’s increasing popularity and the influx of new recruits, both of which worked to elevate Hamas’s confidence as a political actor. Second, the Oslo process was all but declared dead by late 2000. This “death of Oslo” was also important for Hamas’s popularity and confidence; Hamas had in effect tied its identity to its condemnation of the peace process and could now capitalize politically by having been

358 See Baroud (2006) for a general account of the second *intifada*, and Ajluni (2003) for a report on its economic consequences for the Palestinians. For statistics on casualties, consult the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR 2011), the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B’Tselem 2012), and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)—occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA 2007).

proved right in its predictions that the Oslo Accords were flawed and doomed to fail. And third, following first the ratification of the interim Basic Law of the PA and then the demise of Arafat, the Palestinian political system finally began to institutionalize. Crucially, the institutionalization process of the PA included the introduction of proper power-sharing mechanisms, which hitherto had been conspicuously absent from this state-like construct. This, in turn, was important for the integration of Hamas into the political system, as it was one decisive factor inspiring the movement to contest the 2006 elections for the legislative council of the PA (the PLC).

In brief, the period saw Hamas develop from the somewhat conflicted liberation movement of the late 1990s, caught between contradictory or at least ambiguous strategic aims, to a much more confident and mature political movement capable and willing to take part in institutionalized politics. In sum, Hamas took important steps in its transmutation from movement toward party in the years of the second *intifada*. The following sections will first outline how Hamas responded ideologically to these developments, before tracing and analyzing its organizational development in the same period.

6.2.1 The eventual adoption of a pragmatic ideology

As discussed in the previous chapter, certain elements of Hamas's domestic leadership had tried throughout the latter part of the 1990s to moderate the movement's message to make it conform more closely with the political realities on the ground. One crucial aspect of this moderating effort was the suggestion that Hamas could agree to an interim solution with Israel based on the 1967 borders. But as was concluded, these moderates in the Hamas leadership did not have enough organizational clout to succeed in their effort. Powerful factions and persons within Hamas were still set on keeping with the maximalist and subversive ideology as spelled out in the 1988 Charter.

Only months before the outbreak of the second *intifada*, the Political Bureau of Hamas published a memo detailing the movement's history and goals. An authoritative document, it is a good indicator of the ideological and strategic thinking within Hamas at the time. And in it, Hamas reiterates that "military action ... constitutes the strategic means for the liberation of Palestine," and that its goal is "the total liberation of Palestine from the sea to the river" (Tamimi 2007, 278–79). In short, Hamas officially preferred violence to other strategies, and remained convinced that such a strategy was the best way to eventually achieve total

liberation.³⁵⁹

The unsuccessful attempt to moderate Hamas's positions on key issues is taken as an indication that Hamas had not completed its transmutation from movement to party by the beginning of the second *intifada*. In essence, the power of the hard-liners meant that Hamas remained a movement in that it still represented an exclusive segment of Palestinians committed to the pursuit of its originally stated, absolutist, and subversive goals. As theorized, to qualify as a political party Hamas would have to adopt a more centrist message and articulate and take a position on most if not all policy issues which mobilize voters in occupied Palestine (de Zeeuw 2008b, 15).

On the face of it, the political opportunity structures during the second *intifada* seemed to favor the hard-liners in Hamas; violent resistance was again the preferred strategy of most Palestinian liberation movements, and the somewhat accommodating line characteristic of the Oslo years had all but been replaced by absolutist positions by the involved parties. Despite such developments, the years of the second *intifada* saw Hamas adopt a more centrist political message, in essence replacing the radical position from its years as a militant movement with the pragmatism of a political party.³⁶⁰

Theoretically, then, the ideological moderation Hamas underwent in this period was somewhat paradoxical. Most theories purporting to explain the moderation of radical parties rests on various iterations of the inclusion-moderation thesis. Briefly and somewhat crudely put, this thesis states that the inclusion of radical parties into the political system eventually will lead to their moderation because the operational logic of being *within* the system is qualitatively different from staying *outside* the system. Also according to this thesis, repression will most often lead to further radicalization (Schwedler 2011).³⁶¹

Under certain conditions, however, the repression of radicals can also lead to moderation (Turam 2007).³⁶² At the most basic level, if the repression is of such a severity that it threatens the survival of the organization, it can lead to ideological moderation. Furthermore, if the

359 Importantly, the leader of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khaled Meshaal, was a steady and strong proponent of violence and suicide bombings as the preferred strategy of Hamas—even when such operations went out of vogue among Palestinians (McGeough 2010, 404).

360 See, in particular, the section *The (re)articulation of ends* pp. 204ff. for details.

361 See, for example, Schwedler (2007a, 2007b, 2011), Przeworski and Sprague (1986), Wickham (2004), Brocker and Künkler (2013), and Tezcur (2010) for various analyses and reviews of this inclusion-moderation thesis.

362 In her analysis of the moderation of Islamist parties in Turkey, Turam argues that it was state repression that forced the various incarnations of the Islamists to incrementally moderate (2007).

political organization in question aims to retain or increase its popularity and legitimacy, it must be responsive to changes in popular opinion. And as will become clear in the following analyses of the ideological and organizational development of Hamas, both of these conditions were present throughout the second *intifada*.

In brief, the persecution of Hamas during the second *intifada* was at times of such a scale and intensity that it indeed threatened the very existence of the organization. This indirectly led to increased ideological coherence within Hamas, as the various branches of its leadership realized that they had to agree on crucial issues to survive as one organization. Combined with the ambition in Hamas to not only retain its popularity and legitimacy, but eventually take what it saw as its rightful place at the center of the Palestinian political scene, the leadership in Hamas opted to leave behind its most unrealistic goals to the benefit of a more pragmatic ideological message.

Continued ambiguity

However, the back-and-forth between the hard-liners and moderates within Hamas continued for some time into the 2000s, in part because the power balance between the different factions oscillated in tandem with political developments in the occupied territories and the wider Middle East region. Whereas the last years of the 1990s saw both the release of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin from Israeli prison and the expulsion of the Political Bureau from Amman, both of which empowered the domestic leadership at the expense of the external one, the outbreak of the second *intifada* threatened to reverse this.

Primarily this reversal in the power balance was due to the reintroduction of violent resistance as the preferred and most popular strategy for Palestinian resistance movements. The operational logic of the second *intifada* meant that it was through violent resistance that Hamas had reclaimed its role as a major political player. And the military strategy in vogue for much of the second *intifada* years had for long been advocated by those within Hamas subscribing to its initial maximalist aims. As such, the resumption of violent resistance meant that it was the militant wing, led by the exiled Political Bureau, that again made up the dominant faction in Hamas. Because of this, the power balance between those working toward more moderate aims and alternative strategies, and those married to the idea of complete liberation of historic Palestine by violent means, tilted in favor of the latter, in effect threatening the moderating efforts undertaken by Sheikh Yassin and his allies from the mid-1990s.

It is pertinent to reiterate here that the schism between the various factions within Hamas was not a simple matter of hard-liners vs. soft-liners or “moderates” vs. “radicals.”³⁶³ Individual leaders and different branches and factions adopted various positions on issues such as the importance of religion in the struggle for Palestinian liberty, the use of violence, and how much of historic Palestine to liberate. And as will be shown below, the previously tight association between having a maximalist territorial position and favoring violent resistance was weakened, allowing Hamas leaders to continue advocating violent resistance while also arguing for an interim solution based on the 1967 borders.

The reinterpretation and demotion of the 1988 Charter

The 1988 Charter for long remained the reference point for analyses of Hamas’s ideology, despite the fact that the organization has published a number of later documents and communiqués, often outlining much more accommodating and pragmatic positions on various issues.³⁶⁴ This was partly because Hamas has refused to rewrite the Charter, and because it is written in a clear but harsh language, leaving little doubt that the writers indeed advocated the absolutist claims and racism against Jews. This, in turn, has led many observers to conclude that Hamas remains an extreme, absolutist, and uncompromising movement (see e.g., Levitt 2006).

In the early 2000s, however, it became clear that the Charter began losing its status as the *de facto* ideological framework for Hamas. Although the more moderate elements in Hamas had advocated positions contradicting the Charter for many years, now a number of prominent Hamas leaders—including the head of the Political Bureau, Khaled Meshaal—distanced themselves from it. In the words of senior Hamas cadre on the West Bank, Dr. Mohammad Ghazal,

[w]hat was declared by Hamas in 1988 [the Charter] was not *really* Hamas. It was a declaration made by people who grew up in the Muslim Brotherhood, and who were more theoretical than practical. Many of the positions in the Charter, such as Hamas being against the peace process, were conditioned on the specific circumstances of the first *intifada*. But if there was to be an international peace conference now, we might not be against it. We have made many declarations, but

363 Generally, moderates can be defined as “those who seek gradual change by working within the existing political system” whereas radicals are those who “seek to overthrow that system in its entirety” (Schwedler 2011, 350).

364 See, for example, Hroub (2006a) and Tamimi (2007, 265–316).

only some of them are still relevant. Hamas is a political group which plays politics; when the conditions change, so do we.³⁶⁵

In short, the Charter was reinterpreted and its status weakened to suit the needs of Hamas in a new situation. Most Hamas leaders now argued that it was never intended as an authoritative document for instructing the movement's goals and strategies (Tamimi 2007, 149–56), but that it rather should be seen as “a proclamation for *jihad* directed at the Palestinian people and formulated in the context of the 1987–1993 intifada” (Usama Hamdan paraphrased in ICG 2004, 13).

The (re)articulation of ends

This demotion of the 1988 Charter allowed Hamas to articulate new or at least adjusted goals. And the leadership in Hamas made a concerted effort to reformulate their ideological discourse and pick positions more in line with the public opinion in occupied Palestine, both in an attempt to increase Hamas's reach and to obtain a position as a major political—and not only militant or social—actor.

Arguably, the most important development in Hamas's ideology in this period was the apparent consensus reached between the different leadership factions that Hamas could agree to a temporary two-state solution with Israel based on the 1967 borders. As discussed, this idea of an interim solution was initially floated by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in the mid-1990s. Since then, the idea had divided the leadership into two camps, with most of those in favor belonging to the political leadership inside the occupied territories, and those against coming from the exiled leadership and the militant wing. Sometime in the early 2000s, however, these various factions seem to have come to an understanding that the suggested interim solution was a more fruitful—and realistic—approach than keeping the goal of liberating the whole of Palestine in one go (Janssen 2009, 82).

And although Hamas's version of the two-state solution is worded as a temporary measure, defended ideologically through the Islamic concept of *hudna*, or long-term truce, it arguably implies an acknowledgment of Israel's long-term existence (Hroub 2000, 73–86). Considering how important the liberation of Palestine from “the river to the sea” initially was for Hamas, this acceptance of the 1967 borders, if ostensibly only as a temporary measure, must be considered a major ideological development and in effect a re-articulation of its ends as a

365 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

political organization (Panebianco 1988, 16).³⁶⁶

By redefining its final objective into a vague goal to be reached “later” and concentrate on current issues, Hamas conforms to the theoretical expectations both as an institutionalizing party and as a case of movement-to-party transmutation; as a strongly ideological movement obviously unable to fulfill its stated goals, Hamas had either to respond by articulating more pragmatic goals, accept marginalization, or even risk collapse (Harmel and Janda 1994, 281).

Importantly, such an adaptation rarely amounts to a complete ideological reorientation, but implies a reduced focus on the more idealistic goals and the introduction of temporary or additional, pragmatic goals (Panebianco 1988, 16). Hamas’s distinction between an “interim solution” within the 1967 borders and a “final goal of liberating historic Palestine” is here interpreted as such a re-articulation of ends. And interviewed Palestinian analysts and Hamas cadres support such an interpretation. They ascribed changes in the immediate political goals and the strategies adopted to reach these to changing political and security conditions.³⁶⁷ As summed up by a Palestinian scholar, the changing discourse in Hamas came about because of changing political conditions, but it did not constitute a surrender of the ultimate goals.³⁶⁸ These interim goals nevertheless enabled Hamas “to justify its position in normative terms, defining [the] ‘concessions’ as tactical moves” (Mishal and Sela 2000, 86).

And interviewed Hamas leaders remain officially committed to the complete liberation of Palestine, although they admit that this goal cannot be reached today. As explained by Dr. Mohammad Ghazal,

[t]he goal of Hamas is to liberate Palestine. That is our goal. To give the right for people to live freely, and to give the right to the refugees to return back to their homes. This is our goal. It did not change. But how to achieve it? I don’t personally think that we can achieve it now. We never thought that we can apply it at once. Before, we spoke theoretically about the final goal of complete liberty. But, in practice, I know that we can not reach it at once. So I know that it needs

366 By redefining its final objective of the complete liberation of historical Palestine into a vague goal to be reached “later” and by accepting an interim solution based on the 1967 borders, Hamas in effect emulated the ten-point program ratified by the PLO in 1974 that opened for an interim solution and negotiations with Israel as a “supplement” to guerrilla warfare (R. Hamid 1975; PNC 1974).

367 This explanation was offered by most interviewed Hamas members when the topic came up, including an anonymous activist interviewed on the West Bank in August 2007, Hamas MP Dr. Ayman Daraghme interviewed in Ramallah on August 26, 2007, and Hamas cadre Dr. Mohammad Ghazal interviewed in Nablus on April 17, 2011.

368 Dr. Iyad Barghouti, interviewed in Ramallah, August 28, 2007.

time.³⁶⁹

In a similar vein, some lower-ranking Hamas members thought of the interim solution as a tactical ploy suggested by the leadership solely to buy time. In the words of one Hamas activist,

I believe that when Sheikh Ahmed Yassin proposed the *hudna*, he was just using the same language that the occupation is using. Israel is calling for peace. Hamas is calling also for peace. Hamas is buying time. Israel is buying time. The main difference between them is that the Israelis have guns, they have the power to force everything they want on the ground. Hamas doesn't. That's the main difference between them, but both of them are using the same language in order to buy some time for the situation to change.³⁷⁰

While some analysts and observers apparently are convinced by Hamas's official commitment to liberate the whole of Palestine,³⁷¹ the distinction between an interim and final solution is considered here to be pure rhetorical maneuvering. In the words of Dr. Giacaman, Hamas has to remain committed to the complete liberation of Palestine simply because it would otherwise have had to "abdicate what was previously a fundamental principle." However, on the level of political reality,

only people who are completely misunderstanding the politics will not understand what a truce for 20 or 30 years means. It means a permanent situation once the facts are established. And that means a *de facto* acceptance of the two-state solution as being a permanent solution.³⁷²

In addition to the interim solution becoming official Hamas policy, the organization turned increasingly pragmatic and decreasingly religious. Whereas the Charter and other early communiqués were riddled with religious rhetoric and quotations from the Koran, documents from the early 2000s focus almost exclusively on practical politics. Although there are still verses from the Koran in Hamas's communiqués, an analysis of three official Hamas documents from 2005 and 2006 concluded that such religious overtones had decreased

369 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

370 Conversation with anonymous Hamas member on the West Bank, May 2011.

371 Few of the interviewed Palestinian analysts lend any credence to Hamas's official positions, but certain scholars with a neo-Orientalist bend, such as Levitt (2006), as well as other political movements in occupied Palestine, continuously focus on the original goals of Hamas, probably in an attempt to demonize the organization.

372 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 5, 2011.

dramatically, constituting a “‘new’ discourse of diluted religious content [which] reflects genuine and cumulative changes in Hamas” (Hroub 2006a, 26).

Importantly, one of the documents indicating a decreased focus on religion within Hamas was found in its electoral platform for the 2006 PLC elections, which Hroub argues “constitutes without a doubt the broadest vision that Hamas has ever presented concerning all aspects of Palestinian life” (2006a, 9). Although Islam is referenced and verses from the Koran are quoted in the preamble, in the first section (titled “Our Essential Principles”), and in the conclusion of the electoral platform, religion is otherwise conspicuously absent from the document. Instead, the platform focuses on pragmatic politics and realistic policies. In total the platform contains 18 sections, each dedicated to one policy area, from overarching issues such as domestic policy, external relations, and public liberties and citizen rights, to more specific policies regarding, for example, youth issues, housing and health policies, and transportation. As summarized by Gunning, the electoral platform of Hamas was one focused on “law, order, and social welfare” (2008, 1).³⁷³

The pragmatism and policy-oriented nature of the electoral platform are considered important indicators that Hamas no longer saw itself as an Islamist liberation movement, but rather that the organization now thought of itself and acted like a political party.³⁷⁴ By focusing on practical politics in its campaign rather than staying true to its maximalist, subversive, and Islamist roots, Hamas in essence evolved as predicted by the relevant theories. As a strongly ideological liberation movement, Hamas had pursued rather narrowly defined goals, representing a small but vocal segment of the Palestinian population inside the occupied territories. By articulating pragmatic policy goals on most important political issues for Palestinians and leaving its more absolutist demands behind, Hamas moved toward the center of the political spectrum and maximized its support.³⁷⁵ In sum, the years of the second *intifada* saw the ideology of Hamas undergo a significant shift away from the rigidity associated with *movements* toward the more moderate and pragmatic ideology of a *party* (de Zeeuw 2008b, 15).

373 Consult Appendix VI in Tamimi (2007, 292–316) for a translation of the Change and Reform election manifesto.

374 See also the section *The campaign* on pp. 230ff. for further details.

375 As argued by Haboub (2012), Hamas’s electoral success in 2006 was attributable exactly to its increasingly moderate and centrist ideological message.

6.2.2 Organizational survival under persecution

As discussed above, a number of the developments during the second *intifada* were seemingly to the benefit of Hamas. The “death of Oslo” and the return of violent resistance as a major source of legitimacy were both important for Hamas’s increased popularity, whereas the institutionalization of the PA created openings in the political opportunity structures for Hamas to exploit. But at the same time, Hamas suffered unprecedented levels of persecution. A concerted and multi-pronged effort to destroy or at least marginalize Hamas was sponsored by the US and carried out by Israel and the PA. Hamas leaders, cadres, and rank-and-file were all targets of Israel’s assassination policy; both Israel and the PA conducted mass arrests of real and suspected Hamas members; the PA closed down Islamic charitable institutions assumed to be associated with Hamas; and under US pressure, the international community blocked funding channels and froze assets that belonged to various Islamic charitable institutions accused of being auxiliary to Hamas (Hroub 2004, 21–22).³⁷⁶

Suffice it to say, the extent of the persecution seriously hampered any organization-building efforts on the part of Hamas. Indeed, and as will be discussed, the intensity of the harassment and oppression threatened the very existence of Hamas. However, and as covered in previous chapters, Hamas has suffered persecution throughout its history, and therefore had the necessary experience to survive the onslaught even during the second *intifada*. From its initial organization-building efforts during the first *intifada*, when Israel carried out mass arrests and deportations of its members, Hamas responded by compartmentalizing its organization functionally (e.g., by isolating the political leadership from the armed wing), hierarchically (through stratification, i.e., granting the lower organizational units a high degree of operational autonomy), and geographically (by instituting a federated structure, i.e., granting the various geographic branches a high degree of strategic autonomy). As such, it was by design well suited to survive the onslaught throughout the second *intifada*.

This is not to say that the persecution Hamas suffered in these years was without consequences. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, the mass arrests of Hamas members throughout the second *intifada* and the re-occupation of the West Bank by Israel in effect decimated much of Hamas’s military capabilities and indirectly led to a decrease in the discipline of its rank-and-file. Furthermore, the targeted assassination policy pursued by Israel

376 See Benthall (2010) and S. Roy (2011, 97–100) for thorough analyses of the US court cases brought against the Holy Land Foundation, at the time the largest Islamic overseas aid organization raising funds for the Islamic charities in the occupied territories, accused but not proven to be a front for Hamas.

against Hamas leaders seriously threatened the survival of the organization, and prompted fears that it would re-radicalize as the power balance shifted toward the presumed radical external leadership in Damascus.

However, as will be explicated below, the predicted re-radicalization failed to materialize. Hamas not only survived the massive onslaught, thus proving its high degree of adaptability, but emerged at the end of the second *intifada* as a mature and confident political organization. In short, it effectively demonstrated that it would remain a force to be reckon with (Hroub 2004).

Mass arrests and the rank-and-file

The persecution of Hamas during the second *intifada* followed the logic of the 1990s: Using some Israeli aggression against Palestinians as pretext, Hamas carried out suicide operations inside Israel in revenge, prompting the PA to arrest Hamas members and/or provoking Israel to retaliate with targeted assassinations, thus in turn providing Hamas with a new excuse for carrying out further operations (Brym and Araj 2006). Locked in this tit-for-tat pattern, the level of violence and the intensity by which Israel and the PA cracked down on Hamas oscillated in tandem throughout the second *intifada* (Singh 2011, 62).

Two examples of this pattern took place in 2001. First, in late July, Israel assassinated two West Bank Hamas leaders. In response, Hamas carried out a suicide operation in early August, killing 20 Israelis, and in retaliation, Israel pressured the PA to arrest two senior Hamas cadres (Tamimi 2007, 201). Similarly, in November 2001, Israel assassinated a number of Hamas military commanders, prompting Hamas to retaliate with a series of suicide operations. This time around, however, Israel was adamant that Arafat and the PA demonstrate the capacity to control the Palestinian factions, and not only arrest a couple of Hamas members for show. So, while Arafat previously had been reluctant to crack down too hard on Hamas, he now placed its founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, under house arrest in Gaza, and imprisoned some 200 Hamas activists (Tamimi 2007, 201).

But Israel remained unconvinced, claiming that the PA only had arrested low-level activists, and that Hamas remained capable of planning and carrying out suicide operations (Singh 2011, 61). In addition, the house arrest of Sheikh Yassin was cut short. Hamas dispatched armed activists to fight the PA police, successfully freeing him after a brief skirmish. This event demonstrated that Hamas had the capability to effectively project its own power within

the occupied territories, something the PA at times apparently lacked (Singh 2011, 62; Tamimi 2007, 201–2).

Naturally, this left Israel dismayed, as it yet again proved that Arafat was unable to monopolize violence in the occupied territories, and therefore that the PA could not be relied upon to provide security for Israel. In essence, and as discussed above, Arafat and his compatriots had tried and failed to reconcile two contradictory goals, namely that of appeasing the international community by cracking down on military movements to protect Israel, while simultaneously appearing responsive to popular demands by freeing these same militants and reacting to Israeli aggression. As a consequence, the suicide operations continued, eventually provoking Israel to take matters into its own hands.

And Israel did so on March 29, 2002, when it launched the full-scale military Operation Defensive Shield (Hammami 2002). The operation was launched with the stated aim of dismantling the Palestinian “terrorist infrastructure,” and it was the most comprehensive military operation on the West Bank since the Six Day War of 1967 (Brym and Araj 2006, 1981; Hammami 2002, 19; Singh 2011, 62). To achieve this, Israel reoccupied large swathes of the West Bank, including territories nominally under PA control such as the important cities Nablus and Ramallah, as well as scores of villages. By the time the operation nominally ended on May 1, 2002, Israel had carved up the West Bank into disconnected enclaves, and effectively controlled movement between Israel and the West Bank as well as within the West Bank. As a result, the number of suicide attacks originating from the West Bank declined noticeably in the following years (Brym and Araj 2006, 1978).

While Hamas’s West Bank wing undoubtedly suffered serious setbacks during and following the Israeli operation, the operation’s geographic focus left Hamas’s command structure more or less intact on the Gaza Strip. This stands in stark contrast to the fate of the PA and Fatah. For Hamas was not the sole target of Israeli persecution during Operation Defensive Shield. Israel also targeted the PA and the Fatah-associated *tanzim* and al-Aqsa movements, as well as other Palestinian groups taking part in the uprising. And by reoccupying the West Bank, traditionally the stronghold of the PA and Fatah, Israel inadvertently weakened the domestic standing of its presumed negotiating partner in the dormant peace process to the benefit of Hamas, its sworn enemy (Hammami 2002, 23).

Overall, however, findings in the extant literature and the impression from various interviews indicate that it was Hamas that suffered the brunt of the harassment and persecution

throughout the second *intifada* (Hroub 2004, 28).³⁷⁷ And the imprisonment of large numbers of its rank-and-file naturally circumscribed Hamas's organizational and military capabilities, in turn leading to a greatly increased demand for new recruits (Hroub 2004, 33).³⁷⁸

This demand for new recruits was more than saturated by the available supply. For, as outlined above, the combined effect of Hamas's prominent role in the second *intifada*, its politico-religious identity, its role as a welfare provider, and the failures of the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus, all led to an increase in popularity in the period from 2000 to 2005, a popularity that translated into a steady stream of potential recruits (Hroub 2004, 22). In fact, Hamas leaders even claimed that the organization at times was "unable to absorb all the volunteers" (Hroub 2004, 35).

Importantly, many of these new recruits joined Hamas solely to fight the Israeli occupation. In her analysis based on interviews with 15 preempted Palestinian suicide bombers, for example, Argo finds that the motivation for volunteering had everything to do with personal motivation and nationalism, and little to do with religion or ideology.³⁷⁹ Resisting the occupation and exacting revenge on Israel for its humiliating and violent treatment of Palestinians was what provoked ordinary people to join the resistance. Loyalty to Hamas or any of the other liberation movements was not that important; these only facilitated suicide operations, e.g., by providing logistical support (2004, 14).³⁸⁰

The motivation for joining a political organization is important because it is expected to have a bearing on cohesion and discipline. More specifically, an ideologically motivated recruit, indoctrinated for months or even years—as was previously the case for Hamas—is expected to toe the party line, even when in disagreement. These recruits are invested in the survival of the organization beyond their personal interests. Someone joining for opportunistic reasons, such as those joining Hamas solely to resist the Israeli occupation during an ongoing uprising, however, is expected to be less disciplined.³⁸¹ In short, they are not as invested in the

377 Except for a few female Hamas members, all interviewees from Hamas had been imprisoned at one time or another, some having spent decades in Israeli jails.

378 However, it should be noted that at least some imprisoned cadres were not cut off from the decision-making procedures. As previously discussed, one of the main branches within Hamas is its prisoner committees, who traditionally have enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy within the organization.

379 According to Argo, while close to 90 percent of the bombers she interviewed considered themselves religious, they all justified their actions in terms of this world, i.e., as revenge and defense against Israeli aggression. None of them alluded to any next-world rationale (2004, 11).

380 Specifically, Argo concludes that for "none of the subjects was organizational loyalty a necessary or sufficient factor in recruitment or attempted action" (2004, 14).

381 An Egyptian official with in-depth knowledge about Hamas claimed in an interview with the International

organization's survival, but see the organization only as a vehicle to pursue their personal aims. When the interest of the organization as expressed by the leadership clash with their own personal interests, the opportunists are more likely to defect or at least defy the party line.

Due to lack of reliable data, it is difficult to measure organizational cohesion and discipline directly. And as to be expected, interviewed Hamas members would almost never admit that the organization had any problems with rogue elements. Instead, they prided themselves with being a cohesive and democratic organization, echoing what has for long been the received wisdom even among Hamas analysts and observers (see e.g., Hroub 2006b, 119–21). However, some Hamas cadres did admit that “operational mistakes” in breach of the political line did take place.³⁸² And in particular with regard to suicide operations, there were indications that the discipline of Hamas did indeed suffer as the influx of volunteers altered the composition of its rank-and-file.³⁸³

For example, Hamas at times claimed responsibility for operations most likely carried out either by other liberation movements or by individuals without ties to any organization. This could indicate that the Hamas leadership was not informed about what operations its armed wing really carried out. Such claims of responsibility might also have been opportunistic. At times, a number of groups issued competing claims of responsibility for a given operation. Simply because the nature of suicide operations can make it difficult to ascertain with any degree of confidence which group was responsible, various groups competed to be the responsible party and through this bolstered their popularity (Allen 2002; Bloom 2004).³⁸⁴

That known Hamas militants carried out suicide operations without sanctioning from the leadership is, however, an even stronger indication of decreased levels of discipline. Given the extensive persecution of Hamas throughout the second *intifada*, it seems likely that the chain of command sometimes broke down. This left various cells to operate without coordination,

Crisis Group that “[d]uring the intifada, the Qassam Brigades mobilised the youth, without giving them the religious training, which used to last seven years. For some their only creed is their guns and their monthly stipends. It will require time to convince them to integrate” (quoted in ICG 2006, 7, fn. 35).

382 A few free-spoken interviewees from Hamas alluded to this, in particular Dr. Mohammad Ghazal interviewed in Nablus on April 17, 2011, and Dr. Ayman Daraghme interviewed in Ramallah on April 10, 2011.

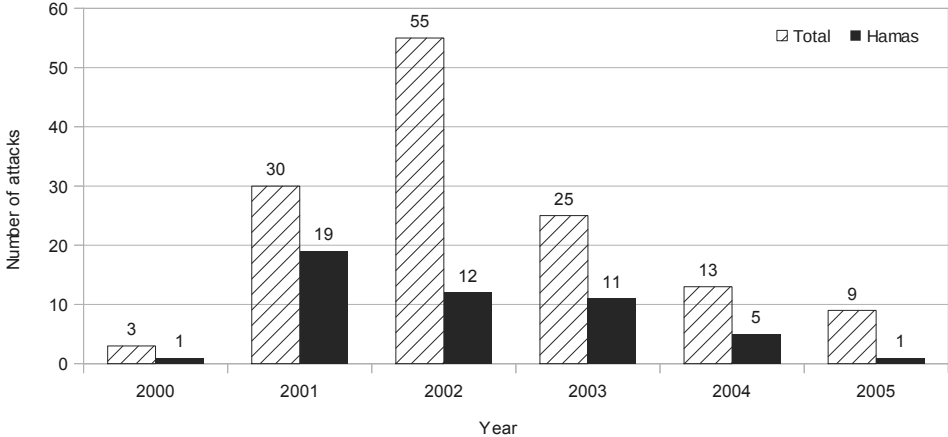
383 The stratified nature of Hamas probably exacerbated the decrease in discipline following the influx of new recruits.

384 For example, both Islamic Jihad and Hamas claimed responsibility for an attack carried out on August 9, 2001; Hamas and the PFLP issued competing claims for responsibility for a suicide operation carried out on May 19, 2002; and four different groups took the credit for a bus bombing on July 17, 2002 (Bloom 2004, 73).

which in turn can explain that some operations were executed without official sanctioning. Furthermore, certain operations are known to have been personal vendettas, carried out in breach of Hamas’s official policy (ICG 2004, 11). One noteworthy example of this was the suicide operation carried out by a Hamas member in Jerusalem on August 19, 2003 in Jerusalem that killed 23 Israelis. The Hamas leadership at first repudiated the attack, but later had to admit that it indeed was a Hamas member who had taken it upon himself to revenge the Israeli assassination of a senior Islamic Jihad leader (Hroub 2004, 37). Crucially, the operation was executed at a time when Hamas had declared and observed a unilateral ceasefire in the fight against Israel, and as such it was particularly damaging to Hamas’s reputation for cohesion and discipline.

This is not to say that Hamas disintegrated into an undisciplined and rogue organization during the second *intifada*. By and large, the political leadership remained in firm control of the organization. But the mass arrests of Hamas members did take its toll. Despite the influx of volunteers, the number of suicide operations mounted by Hamas decreased in the aftermath of Operation Defensive Shield (Hroub 2004, 33). As indicated in Figure 8 below, there was a steady decrease in suicide attacks from 2002 onward, indicative of a circumscribed military capacity.³⁸⁵

Figure 8: Number of suicide attacks and the share of Hamas, 2000–2005



(Sources: Benmelech and Berrebi 2007; Singh 2011, 139–42).

385 Note that this was not only due to the admittedly effective anti-terror policy pursued by Israel, but also a result of the decreasing popularity of such attacks among Palestinians inside the occupied territories (Bloom 2004).

Targeted assassinations and the dominant faction

Although the operational capabilities of Hamas were hampered by the mass arrests, what really threatened the survival of the organization was the assassination strategy pursued by Israel. On November 9, 2000, only a month after the outbreak of the second *intifada*, it became the official policy of Israel to target Palestinian activists and militants for liquidation (Butler 2009, 110). After assuming office in early 2001, Israel's PM Ariel Sharon even presented an exhaustive list to the Knesset of Palestinian activists marked for assassination (or "targeted killings," as it was labeled) (Baroud 2006, 25–26).

In the year following the adoption of this policy, Israel assassinated 33 Palestinian activists. The next year, 37 such targeted assassinations were confirmed (Singh 2011, 62), and by 2004, around 200 officially sanctioned assassinations had been carried out (Hroub 2004, 28). At the end of the second *intifada*, the total official number was 418 assassinations, with an additional 122 widely attributed to Israel (Butler 2009, 110).³⁸⁶ Again, Hamas was not the sole Palestinian group targeted by this policy, but estimates indicate that approximately half of those assassinated by Israel were cadres from Hamas. According to Hamas's own records, Israel assassinated upwards of 320 of its members during the second *intifada* (Hroub 2004, 28).

It seems intuitive to assume that the systematic liquidation of its political leaders and military commanders would negatively affect Hamas, both organizationally and operationally. Also, theoretically, the replacement of leaders has been hypothesized to affect party behavior (Harmel and Janda 1994; Panebianco 1988, 239ff.). But whatever incremental change might have come about as a result of the systematic assassination of Hamas's leadership was overshadowed by the twin assassinations carried out in the spring of 2004. First, on March 22, Israel killed Hamas founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, with a missile fired from a military helicopter.³⁸⁷ Then, on April 17, Israel killed Yassin's successor, Dr. Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, in a similar attack (Hroub 2004).

Although the assassination of Yassin would seem the more serious loss for Hamas, it has been argued that it was in fact more of a blessing in disguise. Yassin had for long been critically ill, and been more of a figurehead than a day-to-day manager of affairs in Hamas. As such, his death was of little practical consequence for Hamas's organizational functioning. However, by

³⁸⁶ According to Butler, 295 bystanders were killed in these operations (2009, 110).

³⁸⁷ Yassin's two bodyguards and nine bystanders were also killed.

assassinating him as they did to Palestinian military commanders, the Israelis inadvertently made Yassin a martyr, resulting in an outpouring of support for Hamas (Gleis and Berti 2012, 147; Hroub 2004, 31).

The assassination of Rantisi, on the other hand, seriously undermined the factional dominance within Hamas that was enjoyed by the Gaza leadership. Considered a “skillful organizer, field leader, and talented orator, he enjoyed both great popular and unquestioned legitimacy as one of the original founders,” his passing left a vacuum that was difficult to fill (Hroub 2004, 31). Combined with the decimation of much of Hamas’s infrastructure on the West Bank during Operation Defensive Shield, large parts of Hamas’s domestic leadership was either incapacitated or killed by early 2004 (Singh 2011, 63).

As detailed in previous chapters, the topmost leadership structure in Hamas is made up of the larger Consultative Council in charge of overall strategy, and the executive Political Bureau, tasked with the day-to-day management of the organization. Membership in both bodies is divided in roughly equal shares between those residing inside the occupied territories and those from outside (Gleis and Berti 2012, 144–46). According to Hroub, the inside leadership have traditionally enjoyed somewhat greater legitimacy and thus power, partly because of Yassin’s presence, but probably more importantly because they are in fact on the ground (2004, 2006b, 117–19).³⁸⁸ And while the overall persecution of Hamas leaders had weakened the domestic leadership since the outbreak of the second *intifada*, the assassinations of Yassin and Rantisi led to a marked shift in the power balance within Hamas. By mid-2004, Khaled Meshaal and his companions in the Political Bureau residing in Damascus emerged as the top leaders of Hamas, both effectively and officially (Gleis and Berti 2012, 147; Hroub 2004, 31–32; Singh 2011, 63).

This shift in power balance arguably constituted a change of dominant faction within Hamas, and could have spelled a re-radicalization of the organization. For one, the external leadership has for long been considered the more radical and militant of the various branches within Hamas (Hroub 2004, 32). This was partly because they rarely had to suffer the inevitable consequences of Israeli repercussions, but also because they were in control of the al-Qassam Brigades. In some ways, the two could even be seen as factional allies, although the latter—at

388 Although, as discussed, the power balance between the various branches and leadership factions have oscillated back and forth in tandem with various environmental shocks and challenges. For example, in 1996, the dominant faction keeping Hamas out of the elections to the PLC was made up of the al-Qassam Brigades and the external leadership.

least nominally—were taking its orders from the former.³⁸⁹ Furthermore, and according to former Minister Mohammad Barghouti, a close associate of Hamas, the assassinations of Yassin and Rantisi prompted even moderate voices within Hamas to call for violent retaliation against Israel.³⁹⁰ Finally, and theoretically, change of dominant faction has been identified as an important source for party change (Harmel and Janda 1994; Panebianco 1988, 247–50).³⁹¹ In sum, the shift in power balance following the decapitation of the domestic political leadership in early 2004 prompted well-founded fears that the increasingly moderate line espoused in Hamas’s communiqués and official statements were at risk (Hroub 2004, 33; Knudsen 2005a, 1373).

Demonstrating maturity and stability

Despite the fundamental challenges facing Hamas and the change in dominant faction, the expected and hypothesized re-radicalization did not materialize. A number of interlinked factors are identified for explaining why. For one, the expectation was itself based on the widespread assumption that the external leadership is more radical than the domestic leadership. This assumption is in turn based on the previously mentioned argument that because Hamas has a federated structure and its various branches operate under different conditions, they also think and behave differently. To recap, the Gaza leadership is considered to be ideologically radical, but politically pragmatic because of the precarious situation there. Interviewed Hamas members on the West Bank would often characterize their fellow cadres in Gaza as more hard-headed than themselves. According to Abderrahman Zaidan,

[t]he people in Gaza have been living in a ghetto for 20–25 years. They are isolated, living as in a pressure-pot. There is no way you can keep such pressure internal, or avoid that it affects your thinking or your feelings! It will affect you! I mean, their chances for education are slimmer than the West Bank, they live in a very limited area, and they cannot leave. These are the circumstances they live in. We here on the West Bank at least have a more widespread area, with scattered villages and cities, and we have more freedom of movement to go to Jordan or the

389 The rationale for making the external leadership responsible for the al-Qassam Brigades was in part to shield the domestic political leadership from Israeli retaliation following armed operations.

390 Barghouti was a minister both in Hamas’s first government formed early in 2006, and in the short-lived National Unity Government in 2007. He was interviewed in Ramallah, August 26, 2007.

391 In short, the existence of factions presupposes differences in ideology or policy within the party. And when a new faction obtains dominance of a party, it will use its newly won power to change the party in accordance with its own convictions (Harmel and Janda 1994, 266–67).

Gulf, to see the world. Of course this affects how we feel, how we think. It's a different situation, and the situation affects the person.³⁹²

Along the same lines, Dr. Ghazal claimed that “although we are all Palestinians, it's easy to see the difference between the Gazans and the West Bankers. Their [the Gazans] personality is different, and this is why Hamas traditionally has been stronger there than here.”³⁹³ Similar sentiments surfaced in a number of other interviews. In short, the Gazans are considered to have a stronger mentality and be more radical because they live under such dire conditions (Hroub 2004, 32).³⁹⁴

The West Bank is considered to be too fragmented and heterogeneous for any meaningful inferences to be drawn regarding the ideological and strategic outlook of Palestinians residing there. In the words of Dr. Ghazal, “the people here are different. Those in Hebron have a different tradition and history than those in Nablus, whereas Palestinians in, for example, Jenin are different from both Hebronites and Nabulsis.”³⁹⁵ This, however, has not prevented analysts and Hamas cadres to claim that the West Bank leaders are the real moderates in Hamas. In fact, the same Dr. Ghazal traced the organizational lineage of Hamas on the West Bank back to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which was active in electoral politics prior to the Israeli occupation in 1967, and used this to explain why the West Bank branch of Hamas traditionally has been more moderate and disposed toward conventional politics than their brethren in Gaza.³⁹⁶

Finally, it is widely assumed that the external leaders are the true radicals and militants in Hamas (Hroub 2004, 32). The explanation for this goes roughly as follows: Because the external leadership largely is out of reach of the inevitable Israeli repercussions following in the aftermath of any armed operation,³⁹⁷ combined with the fact that it controls the al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing, it has traditionally been more inclined to advocate armed resistance over politics (Kristianasen 1999, 29, 35, fn 33; Mishal and Sela 2000, 166). Furthermore, most members in the external leadership are refugees, either from 1948 or 1967,

392 Interview with MP Zaidan in Ramallah, April 17, 2011.

393 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

394 Also, Dr. Nashat Aqtash, a previous Muslim Brother who ran the media campaign for Hamas during the 2006 elections, noted that the distinct mentality of Gazans was reflected not only in Hamas, but also among Fatah cadres and members of Islamic Jihad. Interviewed in Ramallah, April 11, 2011.

395 “Hebronite” and “Nabulsi” are the demononyms for Hebron and Nablus, respectively.

396 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

397 The mentioned failed assassination attempt by Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, of Khaled Meshal in 1997 is of course a noteworthy exception (McGeough 2010).

which in turn is expected to have a radicalizing effect (see e.g., Knudsen 2005b).

According to Khalid Amayreh, a Palestinian journalist and analyst close to Hamas, “it is no secret that the exiled leadership of Hamas is probably more militant than the Gaza leadership.” However, he went on to argue that “this is not a constant, but depends on the situation.”³⁹⁸ Although a seemingly obvious observation, it is noteworthy that the tendency when using these various classification schemes is to omit any temporal variation, i.e., that the various branches change their position on different issues over time and depending on the changing circumstances. As summarized by Hamas cadre Abderrahman Zaidan,

[w]hen we are talking about categories of radicals and moderates, you will find that in one instance, the Gaza leadership are the radicals and the West Bank are the moderates, and then, at another sensitive point, you will find that the West Bank is radical and Gaza became a moderate. With the outside leadership, it is the same. It is sometimes radical, sometimes moderate. Therefore, in my opinion, these categories are not real.³⁹⁹

An illustrative example of how these simplified dichotomous or trichotomous classification schemes fail to accurately describe the positions of the various Hamas branches is found when looking at the origin of most of the suicide missions carried out by Hamas during the second *intifada*. For, rather than originating from Gaza, the Hamas wing often considered to be the most radical and militant, most of Hamas’s suicide bombers in the second *intifada* came from the West Bank (Brym and Araj 2006, 1981). Again in the words of senior Hamas cadre Dr. Mohammad Ghazal,

[a]lthough Hamas always has seemed stronger in Gaza, you have to remember that most of the suicide operations and military operations that harmed the Israelis were carried out from West Bank. So, Hamas on the West Bank gave a lot for the cause, but also sacrificed a lot as they paid a bigger price.⁴⁰⁰

This “bigger price” Dr. Ghazal referred to was Operation Defensive Shield, which focused mainly on the West Bank exactly because this was where most suicide operations were launched from. And as discussed above, the widespread persecution of Hamas on the West

398 Interviewed in Dura, April 9, 2011. In the interview with Hamas leader Dr. Aziz Dweik, he referred to Khalid Amayreh as one “very close to Hamas,” claiming that there were plans to make Amayreh an adviser to Hamas PM Ishmael Haniyeh (interviewed April 13, 2011 in Hebron).

399 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 17, 2011.

400 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

Bank seriously undermined the organization's military capacity. This, in turn, was also an important reason why the expected re-radicalization of Hamas did not take place. Even if the Political Bureau was the more radical branch at the time, and even if it wanted to retaliate for the assassinations of Yassin and Rantisi, the organization simply did not have the capacity to carry it out. Any planned retaliatory operation was in essence prevented by Israel's increasingly effective persecution of Hamas cadres (Gunning 2008, 226; Hroub 2004, 33).

The above should not be taken as a dismissal of the existence of tensions within Hamas. The federated structure of Hamas *has* at times led to organizational infighting and the formation of factions (see e.g., Gunning 2008, 107–16; Mishal and Sela 2000, 166). However, when the shift in power balance occurred following the decapitation of the domestic leadership, the political leadership was probably more cohesive and homogeneous than expected. For, in contrast to the eased requirements to become a member, which led to an influx of new members and produced a less disciplined rank-and-file, advancement to the topmost echelons of Hamas was still very much a regulated affair. As discussed, the way in which a Hamas cadre rises upward through the rungs of the organization is essentially through co-optation; although the regular members in a local cell (*usra*) elect their own leader, any hopeful candidate is vetted extensively by the leaders in the district assemblies (*shuba*) before being allowed to put forward his candidacy. The same goes for those wanting to advance from the district level to the regional council (regional *shura*); although he must be elected by those in the district assembly, this only happens at the discretion of the members in the regional council.⁴⁰¹

Such advancement procedures render Hamas as a rather less democratic organization than what its members prefer to portray it as (Gunning 2008, 108–9). However, the centripetal motion of advancement has mitigated the tendency for factions to emerge, since any new leader becomes so at the discretion of the existing leadership (Panebianco 1988, 60–61).⁴⁰² In other words, while the *composition* of Hamas's leadership might change, i.e., that the individuals making up the leadership change, it is theorized that advancement through

401 According to Sheikh Hassan Yousef, the security situation on the West Bank at times forced Hamas to deviate from its bylaws and directly appoint members for advancement (interviewed in Ramallah, October 16, 2011).

402 Centripetal advancement procedures are associated with a high level of systemness, and thus indicative of a high level of institutionalization. However, it should be noted that high levels of systemness somewhat paradoxically also can pose a risk for the organization, since it might be more vulnerable to environmental challenges and shocks. In short, a disciplined and homogenous leadership has fewer alternative strategies and resources to draw on should it be exposed to fundamental challenges (Panebianco 1988, 57–61).

co-optation only “produces a molecular change [of the leadership], but it does not change internal group power relations and thus does not produce a change in organizational order” (Panebianco 1988, 247–48). So, while the *composition* of Hamas’s leadership changed following the assassination of Yassin and Rantisi in that the power balance shifted geographically in favor of the Damascus leadership, its *conformation*, i.e., the structural order and “distribution of power relationships among the party’s division leaders” (Harmel and Janda 1994, 274), underwent less change. In short, the centripetal advancement procedures in Hamas have been conducive to reproducing ideological coherence, and thus alleviated the expected factionalization that otherwise could have been the result of Hamas’s federated structure.

Also, Hamas’s inclusive decision-making procedures aided the organization in overcoming leadership fragmentation and factionalization, which has been so common among other Palestinian liberation movements (Gunning 2008, 112). By consulting widely in the organization and by instituting transparent and fair decision-making procedures, decisions made enjoy a high degree of internal legitimacy. As explained by Hamas MP Zaidan,

[a]t crucial points and regarding important decisions, our people fight and discuss amongst themselves. At the stage of discussion, we are free to debate vigorously and disagree. We are free to have different opinions. However, when we reach an agreement or make a decision, we are all in favor. It means that we have finished the stage of discussion. Even when the decision is taken by the leadership without consulting the base, it is a legitimate decision because the leadership is democratically chosen. And so we abide by the decision, even if we disagree. It is no question. We go straight forward, and we apply the position or decision without hesitation.⁴⁰³

Similar narratives were echoed by a number of interviewed Hamas members, who all focused on how the organization by design is both democratic and inclusive. There is of course a very real and likely chance that Hamas members—as members in any political organization—will tend to portray their organization in an overly positive light. And given the fact that Hamas keeps its bylaws secret,⁴⁰⁴ and that data on its internal discussions and workings are scarce, it

403 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 17, 2011.

404 West Bank Hamas leader Sheikh Hassan Yousef explained that the bylaws are kept secret for security reasons. If Israel and the PA obtained intimate knowledge about its inner workings, it would be easier for them to target Hamas. Interviewed in Ramallah, October 16, 2011.

is difficult to measure directly and accurately the degree to which Hamas really is as democratic as its members claim. However, some Hamas leaders offered a more nuanced account of the decision-making procedures. For example, the Speaker of the PLC and senior Hamas cadre Dr. Aziz Dweik, admitted that

[o]f course, we have a leadership, and the leaders at some points just have to make a decision. Say for example when you find yourself under attack, there is no time for consultation, you have to react very quickly. But in terms of decisions which move the movement from one stage to another stage, you have to go back to the grass roots. You have to ask the people their opinion. So, like in any organization, any party, there are two types of decisions: first the decision which makes a turning point in the strategy. This takes time because you have to go back to the grass roots. But then there is the rapid decision, when you have to respond quickly and take action. In such circumstances, you don't have time to go back to the grass roots. You'll just have to make a decision and take action.⁴⁰⁵

In any event, it should be noted that there is widespread agreement among scholars and analysts that Hamas indeed is far more democratic than most other political movements in Palestine (see e.g., Caridi 2010; Gunning 2008; Hroub 2000; Mishal and Sela 2000). Also, empirically, there are indications that both Hamas members and leaders indeed observe and respect decisions even if they disagree with them. For example, one high-ranking Hamas member claimed to have been against the decision to participate in the 2006 elections, but was later elected and now serves as a member of parliament.⁴⁰⁶

The tradition for consultative decision-making within Hamas means that the dominance of any given faction or coalition is circumscribed, because decisions and changes in policy need a majority decision in the topmost *shura* council and cannot be taken at the whim of one leader or one leading faction. This, in turn, helps explain why Hamas did not change its behavior or experience any organizational splits as a consequence of the shift in power balance to Damascus following the assassinations of Yassin and Rantisi. It also helps explain why the already ongoing process of moderating its ideology and strategy continued on the course set out early in the 2000s.

405 Interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011.

406 The interviewed Hamas member preferred to stay anonymous for security reasons. Interviewed on the West Bank, August 2007 and April 2011.

Despite the predictions that the moderating tendency observed when the Gaza leadership enjoyed factional dominance would be reverted following the shift in power balance to Damascus, no such reversal took place. Instead, the eventual formulation and adoption of a coherent and pragmatic ideological message as discussed above was finalized at a time when the greatest organizational clout was wielded by the Damascus branch.⁴⁰⁷ At the very least, this is taken to indicate that the Damascus leadership was less radical than the mentioned dichotomous or trichotomous classification schemes would suggest. However, it seems likely that the centripetal advancement requirements and the inclusive and democratic decision-making procedures produced a Hamas leadership far more coherent and homogeneous than assumed.

In the final analysis, the organizational state of Hamas at the end of the second *intifada* is deemed to have been surprisingly mature and stable. The mere fact that Hamas survived the massive onslaught during the second *intifada* is indicative of organizational adaptability and stability. Furthermore, that the Hamas leadership emerged united and disciplined at the end of the *intifada*, despite losing numerous important leaders to Israel's assassination policy, is taken to indicate organizational maturity. And in addition to this, in a time of serious distress, Hamas was capable of further developing, formulating, and finally adopting a coherent ideological message. In short, when responding to the host of challenges during the second *intifada*, Hamas demonstrated a high level of organizational development.

6.3 The dual roles of Hamas—between movement and party

As this chapter has demonstrated so far, Hamas developed both ideologically and organizationally away from that of a movement toward becoming a political party in the years of the second *intifada*. And as will be discussed below, when Hamas decided to contest the 2006 PLC elections, it took yet another crucial step on its way to becoming a political party. However, Hamas was not prepared to complete its transmutation from movement to party; instead of willingly assuming office, Hamas expressed reservations and reluctance to fulfill its role as a responsible and mature political party when it unexpectedly found itself the victors of the elections. As such, Hamas stopped short of completing its transmutation from movement to party by the end of the period in question, remaining influenced by the operational logic of both movements and parties.

407 Consult the above section *The eventual adoption of a pragmatic ideology*, pp. 200ff.

6.3.1 A political party will participate in elections ...

Running in elections is a defining characteristic of political parties. The decision to run in the 2006 PLC elections could therefore be seen as a crucial step in Hamas's transmutation from movement to party.⁴⁰⁸ The following section is dedicated to analyzing Hamas's reasons for finally entering institutionalized politics, first briefly analyzing the effects of the institutionalization of the PA, then discussing a number of factors pushing Hamas toward participation, before finally covering the internal deliberations culminating in the decision to contest the 2006 elections.

The effects of institutions

If parties are organized expressions of interests formed to take part in formal and institutional politics, it is clear that the formal and institutional makeup of the PA has implications for the way Hamas would organize and behave.⁴⁰⁹ In particular, two intertwined dimensions of how the political system in occupied Palestine institutionalized during the second *intifada* had consequences for Hamas's behavior and eventual decision to participate in the 2006 elections; for one, the PA turned from a presidential system to a president-parliamentary form of semi-presidentialism, and next, the electoral system changed from a majority system to a mixed majority-PR system. Both of these developments radically changed the political opportunity structures available to Hamas, and are considered crucial external factors prompting Hamas to take part in the 2006 elections.

For, already when discussing the possibility of taking part in the first elections to the PLC in 1996, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin stated that Hamas's "participation in the PA [is] conditional on the extent of the independent legislative powers it enjoys" (Usher 1995b, 73). As covered in the previous chapter, Hamas eventually decided to boycott the 1996 elections, at least in part because the power of the PLC was seriously circumscribed. With the ratification of the Basic Law, the consecutive amendments, and the new election law, the PLC was strengthened considerably, and to a large degree fulfilled Yassin's conditions for participation. As such, these institutional changes are all considered important for Hamas' decision to participate in the 2006 elections. Real power was attainable, and as argued by a Hamas MP in the PLC, they

408 For two complementing analyses of Hamas's decision to run in the 2006 elections, see Løvlie (2013) and Bhasin and Hallward (2013).

409 See Cavatorta and Elgie for the consequences of semi-presidentialism on the operational logic of Hamas (2010). See also Samuels and Shugart for hypotheses on how semi-presidentialism is expected to affect Hamas (2010).

could now influence not only the political development in Palestine, but also use “[t]he PLC to stop the PA from being a servant for Israel.”⁴¹⁰

Push factors and political opportunism

As discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter, numerous developments took place prior to and during the second *intifada* that might be considered positive from the Hamas’s perspective, most importantly the suspension of the Oslo Accords following the breakdown of the Camp David talks in the autumn of 2000 and the eruption of the second *intifada* soon thereafter. With the end of the “Oslo era,” one of the major ideological obstacles for Hamas to run in elections to a PA institution was removed. Most interviewed members from Hamas underlined the importance of this “death of Oslo” when discussing their participation in the 2006 elections.⁴¹¹ As MP Dr. Daraghme explained, Hamas could now participate without straying too far away from its long-term goals, i.e., without altering position on the peace process and without explicitly recognizing Israel. The suspension of the Oslo Accords allowed Hamas to pursue a participatory strategy without staking too much legitimacy, popularity, or ideological capital.⁴¹² As such, the demise of the Oslo Accords is considered a factor contributing to Hamas’s decision to participate in the 2006 elections (Hamas campaign manager Yahya Nasr quoted in ICG 2006, 5).

The ideological development discussed above added to this, as it made it easier for Hamas to opt for participation. In particular, Hamas’s distinction between an “interim solution” within the 1967 borders and a “final goal of liberating historic Palestine” is considered crucial in this regard, as it allowed elements within the organization to advocate a participatory strategy while apparently remaining committed to the ultimate aims. And interviewed Hamas cadres support such an interpretation, ascribing changes in Hamas’s strategy to altered political and security conditions.⁴¹³ Or, as summed up by a Palestinian scholar, the changing discourse in Hamas came about because of changing political conditions, but did not constitute a surrender of the ultimate goals.⁴¹⁴ By focusing on present problems and postponing its ultimate goals for

410 The interviewee wished to remain anonymous. Interviewed on the West Bank, August 2007.

411 Including the speaker of the PLC, Dr. Aziz Dweik (interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011) and MP Abderrahman F. Zaidan (interviewed in Ramallah, April 17, 2011).

412 Interviewed in Ramallah, August 26, 2007.

413 This explanation was offered by most interviewed Hamas members when the topic came up, including an anonymous activist interviewed on the West Bank in August 2007, Hamas MP Dr. Ayman Daraghme interviewed in Ramallah on August 26, 2007, and Hamas cadre Dr. Mohammad Ghazal interviewed in Nablus on April 17, 2011.

414 Dr. Iyad Barghouti, interviewed in Ramallah, August 28, 2007.

the future, Hamas attracted an increasing number of followers while keeping its hard-line activists, and could supplement violent tactics with electoral participation without compromising on its ultimate aims. This succession of ends is therefore considered a crucial factor for Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 elections (Hroub 2006b, 21; ICG 2004, 13; Panebianco 1988, 16; Strøm 1990).

The decision to contest the elections was not only the product of a softened ideology, however. Dr. Aqtash, a former Muslim Brother who was hired to run the media campaign for Hamas, identified fear as a major reason for why Hamas decided to run in the elections. He quoted an unnamed Hamas leader as saying, “[w]e are participating in the election to save our neck. If Fatah rules alone as before, they are going to slaughter us in the name of democracy. Fatah will outlaw us, and we will be jailed or killed. So we are participating to survive.”⁴¹⁵

Notwithstanding the various motivations for Hamas to contest the elections, its increasing popularity was also a contributing factor. Its efforts in the social sector during the Oslo years, its role in the second *intifada*, and disillusionment among Palestinians regarding the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus, all added to Hamas's popularity. Finally, Hamas capitalized greatly on the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005—a move perceived by many Palestinians as a victory for Hamas's resistance strategy. Hamas came to be seen as a viable alternative to the *ancien régime*, with polls indicating that the party would win considerable influence in the PLC if it took part in the elections.⁴¹⁶ And as a political organization proud of its responsiveness to the grass roots, Hamas could not afford to ignore these implicit demands for it to participate in the elections.

The polling data gave Hamas confidence that real power was obtainable through the ballot box. And Hamas's confidence was further elevated by how well it performed in the municipal elections arranged in 2004 and 2005.⁴¹⁷ Consistently securing just above a third of the votes in each of the four rounds of elections, Hamas for the first time proved that it could rival Fatah in terms of measurable popularity.⁴¹⁸ This, in turn, has been taken by both analysts and

415 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 11, 2011.

416 See Figure 7 on page 193.

417 Note that Hamas has never objected to municipal elections because these were not the creation of the Oslo Accords and thus did not entail any implicit recognition of Israel or acceptance of the negotiation track pursued by Fatah. This position is somewhat paradoxical, however, as the two pre-Oslo municipal elections (in 1972 and 1976) arranged on the West Bank were both organized by Israel with the intent “to delegate management of civil services to locally elected Palestinian figures, betting that the elite that emerged from the voting booths would be satisfied with the organization of the elections and would therefore not be fiercely hostile to them” (Signoles 2010, 16).

418 For more details, see Table 6 on page 340 in Appendix C: Election data in occupied Palestine.

informed Hamas cadres to be a crucial factor in the decision to run in the 2006 elections to the PLC (Usher 2005b). For instance, Zaidan, MP and former Minister of Transportation in the first Hamas government, emphasized the local election results for the decision to run in the 2006 PLC elections, stating that “our participation in the local elections was important for our decision to run in the national elections, because after the results came in, our people started to realize that we could do very well in the general elections.”⁴¹⁹ In short, the 2006 elections provided Hamas with an opportunity to become a relevant player in institutionalized politics (Hilal 2006; Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 232–34 and 244–45; Shikaki 2006).

Internal deliberations, decision-making, and the limits of intra-party democracy

The above could be taken to indicate that Hamas’s decision to participate in the 2006 elections was a straightforward one. However, there were many cadres vehemently opposed to participation, fearing that Hamas would be co-opted into the PA by this and thus lose its identity as a liberation movement truly working for a free Palestine. Many of the interviewed Hamas cadres admitted as much, and as recounted by Dr. Ghazal,

[p]rior to the elections, in 2005, there was a lot of disagreement. We had many voices who said no, and many who said yes to participating. We had campaigns representing the various positions, aiming to convince our people. I was in favor of participating in the elections, and I made many speeches internally to convince people to say yes. And I have friends who were against, and they made an effort to convince people to be against. This is the way we are. We discuss things in our movement; it’s matter of freedom of thought, and everybody is entitled to his own opinion.

This freedom of opinion within Hamas was emphasized by most interviewed cadres, both in general, but in particular when the topic of the 2006 elections arose. Furthermore, it was repeatedly claimed that when the decision to participate was made, it was a democratic and legitimate one. Again according to Dr. Ghazal,

[w]e have institutions, and we have ways of making decisions. After the long debates and discussion, where we found what are the benefits, what are the costs, what are the advantages, and what are the disadvantages, we had a vote and the outcome was to participate. At that time we had the decision of Gaza, and they of

419 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 17, 2011.

course took it based on the opinions of their regional branches and local cells. Similarly, we had the decision of the West Bank, and we had the prisoners' idea. And, added to all these ideas, we have the idea of the people outside, and then all of them went to the *majlis shura* [the Consultative Council] and Political Bureau, and then the decision was made. And when we finally reached our decisions, and once we announced it, that was it; it became the decision of the whole movement.⁴²⁰

Despite such seemingly democratic decision-making procedures, it is difficult to get an exact understanding of how widely the base in Hamas was consulted, and whether the opinions of those consulted counted equally in the final decision. Ousama Hamdan, member of the Political Bureau and responsible for Hamas's external relations, focused on the hierarchical structure of the organization when explaining the procedures leading up to the decision to participate, admitting that not all members were consulted:

When we talk about Hamas, we are talking about an organization which has a hierarchy, and at the top of this hierarchy is the internal parliament, the *majlis shura*. This parliament is responsible for making strategic decisions, and can do so without consulting the wider base. Regarding the question of participation, we discussed more widely, and I believe the highest five or six levels in the hierarchy were asked about their position. This means that everyone was asked in some way, and if someone wasn't asked it means that at that time he wasn't in position to be asked.⁴²¹

It is to be expected that the higher echelons of Hamas wield more organizational influence than the rank-and-file, but for an organization so proud of its grassroots credentials, any such limitations on intra-party democracy is noteworthy. And while it remains difficult to ascertain the degree to which regular members influence decision-making within Hamas, its process for selecting candidates to run in the elections reveals crucial information in this regard. And as will be explicated below, the nomination process instituted in Hamas also indicates that it strategized and behaved as a political party.

420 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011. Note that there is no consensus in the literature or among the interviewees regarding which branch of Hamas advocated what. According to Dr. Nashat Aqtash, the West Bank was against participation, whereas the external leadership and the Gaza branch were in favor. Other sources claim that the "outside" and the West Bank were against, with Gaza the sole advocate of participation, and others yet say that each of the three branches were split, but with the majority coming out in favor of participation.

421 Interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011.

In the theoretical framework of candidate selection proposed by Rahat and Hazan (2001, 300–1), *candidacy* in Hamas seems to be the exclusive end; potential candidates must have obtained a seat at least at the district level (*shuba*) to be allowed to run.⁴²² More crucially, however, is the question of the *selectorate*, i.e., who decides which of the nominated candidates eventually will run in the elections (Rahat and Hazan 2001, 301–3). Also here, Hamas is rather exclusive, for, as relayed by various interviewed Hamas cadres, it is the district level leadership that nominates candidates to run in the elections.⁴²³ And, because self-nomination is frowned upon within the organization (Caridi 2010, 187), the district leaders also have the prerogative to identify and recruit potential candidates. Added to this, the various districts can only nominate candidates from within their territory, making the nomination process within Hamas decentralized (Rahat and Hazan 2001, 304–6).

The decentralized nomination process was probably instituted in response to the electoral system regulating the 2006 PLC elections; recall that in the new electoral system, half of the 132 MPs were to be elected from 16 district elections in a block vote system.⁴²⁴ Given the fact that the block vote ballots allowed for ranking candidates, it was important for Hamas to nominate persons in the districts the respective electorates would recognize. In part because many of Hamas's own profiles were imprisoned or assassinated, and in part because not all of its district leaders were well known, the candidates running in the district elections were not all from Hamas. In the Tulkarem district, for example, Hamas MP Abderrahman Zaidan ran alongside an independent Islamist initially from Fatah.⁴²⁵

The remaining 66 MPs in the PLC were to be elected in a national list PR election. And for this list, Hamas selected many of its most profiled and well-regarded leaders as candidates. Given the fact that the ballots in the national list were closed, meaning that the voters could not change the ranking of the candidates, it made sense for Hamas to place those it deemed most important on the national list.⁴²⁶ Doing so suggests that Hamas—as other parties—used

422 The exact requirements are, however, unknown. Note also that the Election Law of 2005 stipulates that candidates running in the PLC elections must be Palestinian, at least 28 years of age on polling day, registered in the final voter register, and reside permanently within the Palestinian territories (PLC 2005, article 15).

423 Both Ayman Daraghme and Abderrahman Zaidan claimed that this was the case (interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011 and April 17, 2011, respectively). The relevant legislation in occupied Palestine leaves the nomination procedures to the parties. However, the Election Law of 2005 requires the national lists to include no less than one woman among the first three names, then one among the next four, and at least one for each five additional names (PLC 2005, article 4).

424 See section *A new electoral system* on pp. 197ff. for further details.

425 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 17, 2011.

426 Personalities such as Ishmael Haniyeh, Mahmoud Zahhar, Muhammad Abu Tir, and Fathi Hamad all ran on

its safe seats, i.e., the seats it expected to win regardless of the overall electoral outcome, to ensure the presence of its topmost leaders in the legislative council (Rahat 2007, 159).

It should be noted, however, that even if interviewed Hamas cadres repeatedly emphasized—and arguably overstated—the bottom-up nature of the nomination process, the leadership at the regional and national levels retained the right to veto nominees suggested by the district levels. As detailed by Hamas MP Daraghme,

[i]t is the district that nominates, but the nominees need the approval of the leadership of Hamas. For example, the leadership might know something which the district people don't know about a given candidate. So the leadership can veto the nomination, if for example the leadership knows a secret about this person, or if they have something against him. So it is democratic, but the leadership has the right to veto.⁴²⁷

As such, Hamas had a multi-stage candidate selection process; to ensure geographical and hierarchical intra-party legitimacy, the district levels were the initial selectorate, nominating candidates to run in the election. Then, ostensibly to safeguard the quality, but probably also to vet the ideological commitment and discipline of these candidates, the higher leadership retained the right to veto the nominees (Rahat and Hazan 2001, 303).⁴²⁸

In brief, the procedures to nominate candidates to run in the elections resemble the aforementioned centripetal advancement procedures in Hamas, in that it was marked by mechanism likely to lead to co-optation and homogenization. Although such nomination procedures break with the picture of Hamas as a highly democratic, grassroots organization, it does ensure a high degree of party discipline among its legislators, just as the advancement procedures do. In any event, and despite the circumscribed power of the rank-and-file in Hamas's decision-making procedures and nomination processes, both the decision to participate and the candidates eventually selected to represent Hamas enjoyed high degrees of legitimacy within the organization. So when, on March 12, 2005, Dr. Ghazal officially announced Hamas's decision to contest the 2006 elections, it is considered the expressed will of the organization to finally integrate itself and become an intrinsic part of the institutional

the national list (CEC 2006b).

427 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011. Note, however, that when possible, Hamas of course ran well-known candidates in the district elections, e.g., Hassan Yousef in the Ramallah list and Aziz Dweik in the Hebron list.

428 Although interviewed Hamas cadres refused to go into detail regarding the exact procedures for selecting candidates, it was alluded to that some sort of voting system was used, and not a system of appointment.

Palestinian political system (ICG 2006, 5).⁴²⁹

The campaign

That the decision to run in the 2006 PLC elections enjoyed internal legitimacy was made apparent by the quality and professionalism of Hamas's electoral campaign. Hamas relied partly on its own expertise from the local elections in 2004 and 2005, and also hired professionals to create what has been labeled as "the most professional, disciplined and calculating electoral team in the Palestinian territories" (ICG 2006, 8).

To coordinate and manage the campaign, Hamas employed Dr. Nashat Aqtash, a professor in marketing at Birzeit University. He taught Hamas candidates how to speak and behave in ways to increase their popularity, both domestically and in the eyes of the international community. With regard to the latter audience, he instructed Hamas candidates "not to talk about destroying Israel," avoid "celebrating suicide bombings," "to emphasise that they are not anti-semitic or against Israelis because they are Jews," but rather focus on Palestinian suffering and the need for the occupation to end (McGreal 2006).

Of course, the international community was of secondary importance, as it was the Palestinian electorate within the occupied territories that would cast their ballots. And to sway the voters, Hamas made sure to have a three-member electoral team in every city and town of a certain size. These teams were ready to mobilize on short notice, and organized campaign activities such as running public rallies and raising funds. In this way, the Hamas campaign managed to reach the whole of occupied Palestine, including areas traditionally loyal to Fatah (Caridi 2010, 187). Hamas candidates also went door-to-door, meeting potential voters in person, something its competitors in the elections did not do. And finally, Dr. Aqtash devised a comprehensive media strategy, making sure that Hamas became a fixture in the public media throughout the campaign, through political adverts in TV, radio, and newspapers, and by dictating that the Hamas candidates said yes to giving interviews to all media outlets, including the smaller local ones (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 254).

Although resistance to the occupation featured as one element in the electoral campaign, it is noteworthy that Hamas's manifesto and message centered mainly on immediate and domestic political issues (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 254–55). As mentioned in the analysis of

429 Apparently, Dr. Ghazal, a prominent Hamas leader from Nablus, was selected to announce this new strategy to "demonstrate that even though opposition to participation had been highest among cadres in the Nablus region, the debate was finished and—in the best traditions of democratic centralism—the movement now stood united behind the decision reached by the leadership" (interviewed in ICG 2006, 5).

Hamas's ideological development above,⁴³⁰ the electoral manifesto contained elaborate statements regarding most policy areas, including domestic policy, external relations, health services, public education, and agricultural development—all marked by pragmatic and practical policies. Furthermore, Hamas campaigned on issues of good government, promising to reform the administrative, legislative, and judicial sectors as anti-corruption measures (Caridi 2010, 186–87).⁴³¹

In essence, the way in which Hamas conducted its electoral campaign was reminiscent of a seasoned political party (Caridi 2010, 188); professionalized and streamlined, Hamas seemingly did its utmost to maximize support, attempting, as it were, to capture the median voter by promising uncontroversial policies such as improved service provision and anti-corruption, issues favored by all or at least most Palestinians (Haboub 2012).

6.3.2 ... but a movement might refuse to govern

Participating in and winning elections are what political parties do. The above therefore indicates that Hamas took crucial steps in its transmutation from movement to party by contesting the elections. However, there were also indications that Hamas had not completed this transmutation despite running in the elections. In particular, Hamas's immediate and ambiguous reaction to its unexpected victory, and subsequent reluctance to assume office, seems to suggest that the organization was not ready to take on the role of a responsible political party.⁴³²

Surprise victory

Hamas emerged victorious from the elections, winning 74 of the 132 seats in the PLC (Shikaki 2006, 116).⁴³³ Although the consequences of this watershed event will be covered in detail in the next chapter, it is pertinent to note here that the victory came as a surprise for all

430 See section *The (re)articulation of ends* on pp. 204ff.

431 See Tamimi (2007, 291–316) for a translation of Hamas's electoral manifesto.

432 Hamas's continued—and indeed intensified—use of terrorist tactics throughout the second *intifada* could also be an argument against classifying it as a party, as violent resistance and terrorism rarely are considered key functions of political parties. However, and as discussed in the introduction chapter, terrorism is defined as a strategy or tactic available to any political organization (Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger 2008, 3). Rather than disqualifying as a political party, its use of terrorist tactics has led analysts to lump Hamas together with other parties that maintain “armed operations alongside their electoral actions” (Close and Prevost 2008, 4), such as Hezbollah, the Herut party of Israel, M-19 from Columbia, and the Basque ETA (Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger 2008, 75–104).

433 Hamas won 29 of the seats by securing 44.45 percent of the votes on the national lists, while the remaining 45 seats were won in the 16 electoral districts with majority elections. For a complete breakdown of the election results, see the various tables in Appendix C: Election data in occupied Palestine.

involved parties. Prior to the elections, the Israeli military intelligence agency Aman had confidently predicted that Fatah would win (Chehab 2007, 2). Fatah itself had also expected to win a comfortable majority in the PLC. And most, if not all, national and international observers had also anticipated a Fatah victory (Chehab 2007, 3). One important reason for this was that they all relied on the polling numbers from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, which consistently had indicated a Fatah victory (PSR 2011).

But, as argued by Ramallah-based pollster Jamil Rabah, these polls were flawed for a number of reasons. For one, the new electoral system introduced complexities not accounted for in the polling.⁴³⁴ Because the polls failed to take into consideration that the number of elections actually carried out was 17 (one national and 16 districts) when sampling respondents, the margins of error widened dramatically. The electoral system also meant that when a respondent answered “Fatah” to the question of which party he or she would vote for, that could mean either the Fatah list in the PR-elections, a *bona fide* Fatah candidate in one of the 16 districts, or someone the respondent associated with Fatah, but who did not actually run on any Fatah ticket.

In addition, Fatah suffered factionalization, which in turn led the party to field competing lists in the elections. In essence Fatah split its own ticket, losing seats to Hamas that it otherwise would have won (Shikaki 2006). This was a well-known risk prior to the elections, as the internal problems in Fatah was widely publicized (Usher 2006, 22–26). Still, according to Rabah, it could have been accounted for in the polling if more effort had been spent analyzing the specific responses. And finally, almost a fourth of the respondents refused to answer which party they would vote for, which naturally had consequences for the predictive value of the polls. However, by looking at respondent profiles, i.e., how these respondents had answered the other questions, Rabah claims that the polls would have revealed that most of these non-respondents probably would vote for Hamas.⁴³⁵

The outcome of the election came as a surprise even to Hamas. Although some Hamas members and certain authors claim that the organization expected to win,⁴³⁶ well-informed analysts, such as Caridi (2010) and Hroub (2006a), and more importantly most senior Hamas

434 See the section *A new electoral system* on pp. 197ff. for details.

435 Jamil Rabah interviewed in Ramallah, March 23, 2011.

436 Chehab (2007) makes the rather far-fetched claim that Hamas choreographed its own victory by instructing its supporters to hide that they intended to vote for Hamas when asked by pollsters, and thus “fly under the radar” as it were throughout the election campaign. Such a theory lacks credibility, and is, in the words of Jamil Rabah, “a conspiracy theory logistically impossible to carry out in the real world,” and thus considered naïve in the extreme (interviewed in Ramallah, March 23, 2011).

members refute this. For example, the Speaker of the PLC, Dr. Aziz Dweik, stated that “very, very few people expected Hamas to win,” and that he himself only expected Hamas to win 50 out of 132 seats in the PLC. He even likened the victory to “an earthquake which caused a lot of upheaval [inside the movement].”⁴³⁷ Also, Dr. Aqtash, who ran the media campaign for Hamas, claims that he warned Hamas not to field too many candidates because they surely would win—advice Hamas did not heed, according to Dr. Aqtash, because they were convinced they would not win a majority.⁴³⁸

A reluctant winner

Hamas could be accused of being somewhat naïve for not even being prepared for the possibility that it could win the elections. Although the polls were flawed, they *did* indicate that Hamas closely trailed Fatah in terms of popular support. Likewise, Hamas’s strong showing in the 2004 and 2005 municipal elections demonstrated that it could rival Fatah in the national elections. And finally, as briefly covered above, Hamas ran a highly professionalized media campaign, something it knew Fatah did not manage. With the benefit of hindsight, it therefore seems somewhat surprising that the election outcome caught everybody by surprise.

More important, however, was the fact that Hamas initially was unwilling to take the power it had won, thus casting doubt both on its motivation for running in the elections and whether it indeed was mature enough as a political organization to qualify as a political party. There are of course parties that contest elections without the aim of taking office (see e.g., Harmel and Janda 1994; Strøm 1990). However, Hamas’s electoral campaign resembled that of a mass-based, vote-seeking party rather than the typical single-issue or ideology-advocacy party that seeks to influence politics without governing (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 252–56). Moreover, Hamas’s electoral program suggests a vote-maximizing strategy, as it focused on pragmatic policies aimed at rectifying the many public grievances expressed with the current government, i.e., issues resonating well among the Palestinian median voter, rather than speaking to its own base (Haboub 2012; Løvlie 2014).

This begs the question of why Hamas expressed such reluctance to take power after seemingly working so hard to win the elections. One explanation would be that Hamas

437 Interviewed April 13, 2011 in Hebron.

438 Interviewed April 11, 2011 in Ramallah.

wanted to avoid the political costs associated with governing (Deschouwer 2008b).⁴³⁹ As the Palestinian proto-state is less of a governing body than an entity set up to manage the Israeli occupation, the costs of ruling the PA are considerable. For, despite the institutionalization of the PA, it was still essentially the tool of Israel, meaning that the party that assumed office would be perceived as collaborators of the occupation. In short, the *costs* of office in the Palestinian context far exceeds the *benefits* (Strøm and Müller 1999).

Such a straight-forward cost-benefit analysis explains part of Hamas's immediate and peculiar reaction. Furthermore, and as argued by S. Hamid, this logic resembles that of other Islamist parties elsewhere in the Arab region (2011). In brief, fear of state repression has prompted Islamist parties under regimes as diverse as those in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, and Bahrain to systematically contest less than half the seats in parliamentary elections to avoid running even the risk of challenging the regime (S. Hamid 2011).⁴⁴⁰ Although somewhat different from the situation in occupied Palestine, the logic is largely the same; the cost associated with winning elections is so high that parties actively seek to avoid electoral victories. And as argued above, also S. Hamid speculates that Hamas won the 2006 elections by accident (2011, 78).⁴⁴¹

Also relevant for the movement-to-party thesis is S. Hamid's analysis of the electoral behavior of Islamist parties, which provides additional clues to Hamas's reaction after winning the elections. In the same way that Hamas emerged as the armed and political wing of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood during the first *intifada*, most Islamist parties in the region were established as the political arm of various Islamist social movements. And, as discussed in previous chapters, the operational logic of movements at times diverge from that of parties. To recap, a movement is expected to remain ideologically rigid and married to its initial goals rather than follow the electoral calculus of political parties, i.e., adapt goals and ideology in order to maximize electoral support. This, in turn, helps explain why Islamist parties subordinate to their parent movement "act in ways that contradict expectations of how traditional political parties normally behave" (S. Hamid 2011, 74–75).

439 The volume edited by Deschouwer contains a number of chapters analyzing the costs of office specifically for new parties.

440 Most regimes in the region are to varying degrees authoritarian (Diamond 2009), and usually respond to any threat to their position with extensive and hard-handed persecution and repression (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004).

441 Yet another explanation offered by S. Hamid for this peculiar behavior is that Islamist parties "do not necessarily need to rule in order to fulfill their original objective—the Islamization of society" (2011, 71). For Hamas, however, this explanation lacks relevance. As detailed above, Hamas became less religious during the second *intifada*, and in its electoral platform focused on political issues such as anti-corruption and good governance and not Islamization.

This observation is instructive for the behavior of Hamas, even if it is easier to distinguish between most Islamist parties and their respective parent movements than between the party Hamas and the movement Hamas. As discussed in the chapter covering the emergence of Hamas, it early on eclipsed the Palestinian Brotherhood and has since the mid-1990s filled the role of a social movement, an Islamist movement, a resistance movement, and, from the mid-2000s, that of a political party. This fusion of roles and functions makes it difficult to disentangle the potentially contradictory goals of Hamas the movement and Hamas the party.

However, it seems likely that Hamas's reaction to its own electoral victory in part can be explained by its multifaceted organizational nature. Hamas's initially ambiguous response to its own electoral victory seems to indicate that the goals of the *movement* Hamas—at least initially—overruled the goals of the *party* Hamas. Instead of immediately assuming office as would be expected of a political party winning such a comfortable parliamentary majority, Hamas tried in various ways to avoid governing alone, e.g., by inviting Fatah and other Palestinian movements to join in a coalition government (Usher 2006, 21–22). Such maneuvering suggests that Hamas was not prepared to fully integrate into the political system. Rather, it seems as if it wanted to leave Fatah with the ungratifying task of governing while limiting itself to a watchdog role in parliament (Klein 2007, 447).

In short, Hamas wanted political power, but not the responsibility associated with governing. Governing means compromise, and Hamas was reluctant to take office because it knew doing so would force it to retract on important issues, notwithstanding the fact that it had adopted rather pragmatic goals and proved to have stabilized as an organization. In conclusion, then, Hamas seemingly remained influenced by the operational logic of movements, i.e., being ideologically rigid and averse to compromise, even after participating in and winning the elections as a party. As such, it is difficult to definitely define Hamas as either a movement or a party even after the 2006 elections. Instead, this analysis of Hamas's transmutation from movement to party agrees with the somewhat inconclusive but telling definition offered by MP Dr. Ayman Daraghme:

It is like a cocktail—you can't say that it is a real movement and you can't say that it is a pure political party. Hamas is working as a political party, as an underground resistance movement, and as a charitable organization.⁴⁴²

442 Interviewed in Ramallah, September 27, 2011.

6.4 Hamas's level of institutionalization at the end of the second intifada

Based on the above analyses and supplemented with data from interviews and the existing literature, the following section will briefly outline Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the second *intifada*. Employing the analytical framework discussed in chapter 1, the respective scoring of the four attributes identified by Randall and Svåsand (2002a) suggests that Hamas overall still was institutionalized to a medium degree.

6.4.1 Systemness

By the end of the second *intifada*, Hamas remained at a medium level of systemness. On a general level, and as covered in the above analyses, Hamas proved to have developed into a mature and adaptable organization by surviving the massive onslaught it suffered throughout the second *intifada*. More specifically, Hamas survived after losing much of its domestic leadership, including its founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, without suffering factionalization or outright organizational splits. This is suggestive of an organization with internally legitimate routines for leadership alternation, and in turn indicative of a rather high degree of systemness.

Furthermore, and notwithstanding the apparent democratic deficits in the decision-making procedures, Hamas successfully organized referendums on crucial strategic issues, most prominently the decision to participate in the 2006 elections. The fact that even the vocal opponents to the adoption of an electoral strategy respected the decision to participate, is taken as an indication that Hamas had routinized legitimate decision-making procedures. Also, the internal legitimacy of the Hamas candidates running in the election is suggestive of a routinized candidate selection process, and in turn a positive indicator for systemness.

While Hamas survived the onslaught, the intensity of the persecution did negatively affect its level of systemness. In particular, and as covered above,⁴⁴³ the extensive persecution of Hamas on the West Bank effectively broke its chain of command there. This left the many new recruits without clear instructions and the leadership without control, leading to a number of unsanctioned suicide operations. Such a state of affairs is indicative of a rather low level of systemness.

443 See section *Mass arrests and the rank-and-file* on pp. 209ff.

In terms of material resources and financial independence, the picture is somewhat blurred. Data on the financial and material resources of Hamas are scarce and often unreliable. Some sources claim that Hamas “never had any problems with money,”⁴⁴⁴ but this seems to be a rather naïve or a selective interpretation of events. For example, on April 9, 2004, Hamas organized its first ever fund-raising drive in Gaza, appealing to the public for donations to continue its political and military work. According to Hamas sources, they collected USD 3 million in that one day, despite the fact that 60 percent of the population in Gaza lives below the poverty line (Hroub 2004, 35–36). Resorting to such methods to raise funds seems to indicate a certain level of financial vulnerability, suggestive of an organization not as autonomous from its environment as a high degree systemness would require. However, and despite the best efforts of Israel, the US, and the PA to the contrary, Hamas was able to find alternative sources of income and secure continued operations, demonstrating that it had the ability to remain more or less financially self-sufficient.

In sum, it is argued here that although Hamas did slightly increase its level of systemness from the late 1990s, it did not reach a high level. While most criteria point in a positive direction, the extensive persecution of Hamas at the hands of Israel and the PA undermined its organizational structure and hampered further organization-building efforts to such an extent that its level of systemness is still measured to be medium.

6.4.2 Decisional autonomy

As there were only a few indications that Hamas suffered “interference in determining its own policies and strategies” (Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 14), the organization is considered to have remained at a medium level of decisional autonomy by the end of the second *intifada*. Traditionally, this issue has been discussed in relation to Hamas’s various sponsors and patrons. In particular, its close ties to the regime in Iran has prompted various analysts to claim that Hamas—at least at times—operates as a proxy (see for example Levitt 2006, 172–78; Schanzer 2009, 182–83). Iran has for long been suspected to be Hamas’s “largest supporter and supplier of money, weapons and training” (ICG 2012, i). Together with Syria and Hezbollah, Iran and Hamas make up the so-called Axis of Resistance, a loose alliance “based almost exclusively on the rejection of Israeli and US hegemony in the region” (El Hussein 2010, 812).

444 Dr. Nashat Aqtash, interviewed in Ramallah, April 11, 2011.

Given the clandestine nature of much of Hamas's activities, it is impossible to ascertain with any certainty whether it acted on behalf or at least in accordance with the wishes of its patrons, e.g., carrying out military operations it would otherwise not have embarked upon. However, the amount of financial and material support provided by Iran and the other members of the Axis of Resistance was substantial, and because of the intense persecution, Hamas dearly needed the assistance. As such, it seems more likely than not that its patrons, and in particular Iran, held some sway over Hamas. Whether Iran had to actively exercise its influence is, however, doubtful. Hamas probably acted in accordance with the priorities of its main patron on its own accord, prompting observers to conclude that it worked *with* Iran rather than *for* Iran (ICG 2012, 11).

Another discussion relevant for Hamas's decisional autonomy relates to its ties to various Islamic charitable societies. The alleged close relationship was what prompted the PA to freeze the bank accounts of numerous Islamic charities on the West Bank and in Gaza during the second *intifada*. The idea was that by cutting off the funding to these charities and welfare organizations, the PA could harm the operational capabilities of Hamas (Hroub 2004, 30–31).

Despite the fact that Hamas capitalized on the welfare services provided by these Islamic charities in terms of popularity, official ties have been the exception, not the norm (Gunning 2008, 115, fn. 8). According to Dr. Ghazal, "most of the time there was no official connection, there were no ties. People connect them to Hamas simply because they are religious organizations, but many of them don't even like Hamas!"⁴⁴⁵ And as discussed in previous chapters, it is more fruitful to see Hamas and these charitable organizations as part of the same "Islamic trend" (Høigilt 2010, 7), rather than being part of the same organization or network. In this regard, the observation that ideological affinity does not equal official affiliation is considered instructive (Roy 2011, 141–44).

In sum, the various civil society organizations probably had no or little influence on Hamas's strategizing and decision-making during this period, whereas some of its sponsors might have to a limited degree interfered with or at least influenced Hamas in particular operations. As such, it is concluded that Hamas remained at a medium level of decisional autonomy by the end of the second *intifada*.

445 Interviewed in Nablus, September 29, 2011.

6.4.3 Value infusion

In terms of value infusion, most relevant criteria also point in a positive direction for Hamas during the period under scrutiny. The years of the second *intifada* saw Hamas adopt rather pragmatic and moderate goals. And these changes in Hamas's ideology departed radically from its original objectives; Hamas was founded as an armed liberation movement aiming to free the whole of historic Palestine and erect an Islamist state in the territory. By the mid-2000s, however, Hamas had distanced itself from the founding Charter, accepted an "interim" solution to the conflict with Israel along the 1967 borders, and focused less and less on the role of religion. In short, Hamas left behind many of the issues and goals which initially had attracted supporters. Despite these fundamental changes, there were few recorded defections in the years of the second *intifada*, suggesting that the instrumental incentives that had prompted recruits to join Hamas in the first place had been superseded by the value of Hamas itself. In other words, it seems as if Hamas had become increasingly infused with value.

Still, the lack of defections following the adoption of a more pragmatic and moderate ideology can be a somewhat misleading indication of value infusion. Many of the new recruits joining Hamas in this period did so not because of its ideological outlook, but rather for its role as a liberation movement; for some, loyalty to the organization was contingent solely upon its resistance to the Israeli occupation. And it seems likely that this was the case also for existing members. Some might initially have joined for ideological reasons, but stayed for the sake of the resistance. As such, it is concluded that Hamas had reached only a medium level of value infusion by the end of the second *intifada*.

6.4.4 Reification

There is little doubt that Hamas still scored high in terms of its level reification. Already prior to the second *intifada* Hamas enjoyed a steady level of support, and as discussed above and indicated in Figure 7 on page 193, this rise in the polls continued unabated in the years of the second *intifada*, demonstrating that Hamas indeed had become a fixture in the public imagination. Finally, its electoral victory in 2006 is taken as definitive proof that Hamas had not only reached a high level of reification, but cemented its position as one of the main contenders for political power in the occupied territories.

Summarized, Hamas scored medium on three of the four elements of institutionalization, and high on reification. Hamas was recognized both by its members, supporters, and competitors as a force to be reckoned with, despite obvious changes in its ideology. Moreover, it enjoyed a relatively high degree of autonomy from its environment, even if it remained dependent on its external sponsors. Hamas also proved to be rather well organized and adaptable, despite the fact that its systemness suffered somewhat under the persecution of the second *intifada*. Overall, it is concluded that Hamas had reached a medium level of institutionalization by the end of the second *intifada*, and as such was well positioned to retain its role at the center of Palestinian domestic politics for the coming years.

Chapter 7: Hamas—between government and resistance (2006–2011)

The focus of this penultimate chapter is on Hamas's first five years in government, from its electoral victory in 2006 until the Arab Spring spread to occupied Palestine in 2011. Hamas crossed a crucial threshold in its development as a political party by assuming office; governing is an end-point in the evolution of a political party, as it ostensibly means that it finally has obtained the power to implement its political program. Governing, however, also poses a host of unique ideological and organizational dilemmas and challenges. And in its effort to respond to and solve these, Hamas was forced to both alter its mode of thinking and restructure its organizational order, which in turn affected its behavior and future development.

The chapter will begin, however, by providing a contextual backdrop of the period in question, focusing mainly on the immediate aftermath of the 2006 elections. Although Hamas won a clear parliamentary majority, the organization feared assuming office alone, anticipating an international backlash if it did. Yet Hamas's overtures to other Palestinian factions to establish a coalition government were rebuffed, forcing it to do exactly that. As expected, the international community subsequently boycotted the PA, creating a deteriorating situation in the occupied territories. To rectify this, Fatah agreed under the Mecca Agreement to form a National Unity Government with Hamas, in the hopes that international aid would be resumed. The unity government was, nevertheless short-lived, and the rising tension between the two factions culminated in an all-out civil war in the summer of 2007. Hamas emerged victorious after a few days of fighting, having taken complete control of the Gaza Strip, leaving the West Bank in the hands of Fatah. In sum, the Palestinian political system degenerated from what had promised to become an increasingly well-functioning democratic statelet to a completely disintegrated, territorially and politically divided system, in the course of less than two years.

The chapter then turns to Hamas's development while in power, first outlining some theoretical expectations regarding the consequences of assuming office, most saliently of which include ideological moderation and organizational restructuring. These aspects are then dealt with in turn, beginning with an analysis of the assumed ideological moderation. Although Hamas's behavior while in power suggests that it conformed to the hypothesized

ideological moderation to some degree, the trend was far from clear-cut. Arguably, its legacy as a religious nationalist resistance movement remained too influential, effectively curbing the expected tendency; both with regard to resistance and to the role of religion in politics, Hamas acted rather incoherently. In essence, the behavior of Hamas in power indicated that its leadership prioritized self-preservation over policy implementation, but that its ideological legacy and the commitment of its activists stopped Hamas from adopting a wholly pragmatic and responsible behavior.

Next follows an analysis of how Hamas coped with the multitude of organizational challenges and dilemmas facing the organization as a first-time office holder. Initially, a brief review of the inadequacies of Hamas's decision-making procedures is provided, before covering some of its fumbling attempts to rectify this. Then the horizontal power struggles between the Hamas *government* and the Hamas *organization* will be analyzed, demonstrating that the resources of office provided those in government with the means to obtain factional dominance. However, being in office also gave rise to intensified vertical power struggles, with activist groups demanding the implementation of various policies lest they defect from Hamas. And that the leadership partly caved in to the pressure from the activists in turn explains the mentioned erratic and contradictory behavior of Hamas in government.

Based on the analyses of Hamas's ideological and organizational development, the second-to-last section briefly discusses how far Hamas had transmuted from movement to party by the outbreak of the Arab Spring in occupied Palestine. In brief, it is concluded that neither its ideology nor its organizational structure developed sufficiently away from the logic of a liberation movement toward that of a political party for the transmutation to be considered complete. Instead, Hamas added yet another function to its repertoire, which now included that of liberation movement, governing party, and party-state. As such, Hamas had turned into an ideologically awkward, but organizationally sustainable entity, containing its various factions and ideological strains behind a united front.

The chapter ends with a brief section outlining Hamas's level of institutionalization at the end of the period in question. Based on the findings of the chapter and supplemented with additional analyses, the section concludes that after five years in office, Hamas had increased its overall level of institutionalization somewhat since 2006. Crucially, its level of systemness remained largely unchanged, as the erratic behavior Hamas displayed while in office was strongly suggestive of insufficiently routinized decision-making procedures and command

structures when faced with the demands of governing. And, by not actively pursuing its Islamist agenda while in government and by brokering ceasefires with Israel instead of resisting the occupation, Hamas provoked a number of its members to defect. However, the fact that so many members remained loyal, despite its broken promises, suggests that Hamas was similarly infused with value as in the previous period. In terms of decisional autonomy, its level increased slightly, as the organizational and financial resources made available to Hamas as the sole authority in Gaza decreased its reliance on external sponsors, and conversely undermined any influence such actors might have had.⁴⁴⁶ Finally, being the second most powerful political faction in occupied Palestine and the sole authority in the Gaza Strip was taken as proof that Hamas remained highly reified.

7.1 The disintegration of the Palestinian political system

As outlined in the previous chapter, the PA had just recently institutionalized properly when the elections of 2006 were held. From the outset, the PA had suffered a number of formal and informal design problems. After international pressure to remedy these, and following the passing of Yasser Arafat in 2004, long overdue power-sharing mechanisms and various other improvements of the PA were finally implemented. And as previously argued, this institutionalization of the PA was crucial for Hamas's decision to contest the 2006 PLC elections in the first place. In the years following Hamas's 2006 electoral victory, however, many of these improvements were undone. The international response to Hamas's electoral victory eventually caused Palestinian factional infighting, which in turn divided the Gaza Strip and the West Bank into two political as well as geographic entities, governed by Hamas and Fatah, respectively. This split deepened divisions inside occupied Palestine, and the various attempts at reconciling the two parties have all failed (Ezbidi 2013; Hilal 2010; Tuastad 2013).

This new situation, with two, parallel, occupied "Palestines," proved detrimental to the Palestinian cause in multiple dimensions. The split between the West Bank and Gaza lowered the cost of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, as a divided Palestine is easier to occupy and dominate than a united one (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 289, 291–92). The stalemate also worked to halt the peace process, partly because the two parties have different sponsors and pursue different strategic and tactical goals, partly because a divided

⁴⁴⁶ Added to this, the number of donors increased, as various Arab regimes stepped in to compensate for the shortfall of aid following the international boycott of the Hamas government.

Palestine has little clout to bring to the negotiating table, and partly because a solution negotiated by one of the leadership factions would have insufficient legitimacy to succeed in lieu of a united Palestinian leadership.

In short, the Palestinian political system disintegrated, which naturally had consequences for the development of Hamas as one of the two governing factions. In the following, the process of this disintegration will be traced, beginning with the immediate aftermath of the 2006 elections and the international boycott of the Hamas government, followed by a brief account of the short-lived National Unity Government, before ending with a more detailed discussion of the background for and consequences of the Palestinian civil war.

7.1.1 Failed government negotiations and international boycott

Immediately following Hamas's victory in the 2006 PLC elections, the Middle East Quartet, a diplomatic outfit consisting of the US, Russia, the EU, and the UN, put forward their so-called Quartet Principles, which require any Palestinian faction seeking international support to first recognize Israel, adhere to previous agreements, and renounce violence. Although not overtly expressed, it was fairly clear that failure to comply with these principles would have ramifications for the Palestinians, for example by reduced or even halted aid. As such, the principles were an obvious attempt to threaten Hamas into compliance with the diplomatic track led by the US (Goerzig 2010, 7).

But Hamas was not willing to submit to these principles. Doing so would in effect mean retracting three of its defining strategic positions, i.e., its refusal to recognize Israel, its condemnation of the Oslo Accords, and its insistence on the right to utilize whatever strategic method it sees fit to achieve Palestinian liberty, including violence. These positions were and are crucial sources for Hamas's organizational legitimacy and political popularity, notwithstanding the adoption of rather pragmatic and moderate short- to medium-term political goals discussed in the previous chapter. Succumbing to external pressure and relenting on such fundamental issues could spell the end of the organization or at least render Hamas as a second Fatah, only with a more Islamic bend (Hovdenak 2009, 70).⁴⁴⁷

Hamas took the implicit threat in the Quartet Principles seriously, however. Combined with the fact that Hamas was unprepared to govern alone, the threat prompted it to seek to include other Palestinian factions in a national unity government. Already on January 28, only days

447 See also Baumgarten (2005) for a similar argument.

after the election results were official, Khaled Meshaal held a press conference in Damascus, inviting all Palestinian factions—including Fatah—to come together and agree on an inclusive government platform (Tamimi 2007, 224). As mentioned, Hamas had not expected to win the elections, and Fatah had not expected to lose. It therefore made sense for Hamas to reach out to Fatah and look for a way to form a coalition government, and thus divide the responsibility—and inevitable costs—of governing.

Hamas’s attempt to establish a coalition government is noteworthy, given the fact that it had won a comfortable majority in the PLC. Taking into account the parliamentary rules introduced when the new Palestinian Basic Law recreated the PA as a semi-presidential system, the 2006 electoral outcome can be seen as the Palestinian people’s expressed wish for a Hamas government. However, Hamas’s reluctance to form a government alone is also understandable given the fact that it never intended to win the elections and probably foresaw some of the likely repercussions from forming government alone while lacking international recognition. In addition, the circumscribed powers of the PA might have played into Hamas’s calculations; despite the strong symbolic effect of being in government of the PA, it is arguably more a *management* position than an *executive* position. As such, the costs of being in office of the PA can easily exceed the benefits.⁴⁴⁸

In any event, Hamas’s overtures vis-à-vis Fatah were rebuffed. For one, Fatah saw itself as the rightful ruler of the Palestinians, regardless of the outcome produced by the democratic process (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 263). Even those Fatah cadres expressing some interest in the overtures from Hamas were “cajoled and threatened by their leadership not to join any” coalition government with Hamas (Tamimi 2007, 228). And second, Fatah soon came under strong pressure from the international community to stay away from Hamas. As long as Hamas refused to accept the Quartet Principles, major donors to the Palestinians—and most crucially the US—explicitly instructed Fatah to refrain from joining any government containing Hamas members (de Soto 2007, 21).

Fatah was not content with leaving Hamas to form a government, however. The election’s losers also went to great lengths to undermine the coming Hamas government. For example, only days before the new parliament was sworn in, the outgoing Fatah-dominated PLC introduced a number of crucial pieces of legislation in an effort to sabotage the incoming Hamas-dominated parliament. Fatah mainly focused on empowering the office of the

⁴⁴⁸ In short, Hamas’s behavior following its electoral victory goes to demonstrate that politics under occupation at times can be quite different from the ordinary experience.

president at the cost of the PM, in effect reversing the checks-and-balances introduced in the early 2000s.⁴⁴⁹ Hamas overturned these laws and regulations after the new parliament was sworn in on February 18, 2006. But Fatah still had the presidency and exploited this to undermine the Hamas government by issuing a number of decrees aimed at strengthening the office of the President (Tamimi 2007, 227–29).⁴⁵⁰

International boycott

Such behavior from the political opposition was hardly a promising start for the new parliamentary period. Added to this, Hamas also faced a debilitating international boycott. When Hamas eventually took office alone on March 29, 2006, Western aid to the PA was promptly cut as punishment for its failure to accede to the aforementioned Quartet Principles. With international aid quickly drying up, and given the degree to which the PA always has been dependent on foreign aid, the newly formed Hamas government faced a dire financial situation, with the Gaza economy on the verge of collapse and Hamas unable, for example, to pay its public servants (Qarmout and Béland 2012, 41).⁴⁵¹ Instead of supporting the PA government, the Quartet decided to channel funds through the PA President. The West was thus perceived as propping up Fatah and the presidency, in effect ignoring the expressed will of the Palestinian people (Caridi 2010, 248–49; Hovdenak 2009, 70). This further polarized the already precarious domestic political situation.

Hamas was not surprised by the US-led boycott, although the intensity was unexpected. In the words of Khaled Meshaal,

[w]e perhaps did not anticipate the level of severity of the U.S. and international reaction, which violates known norms and values. We knew that democracy ultimately is not a serious issue for Americans, that in Bush's greater Middle East scheme, democracy is only an instrument for maintaining control of the region. The proof is that regional leaders are not dealt with on the basis of whether or not they are democratic ... If it's a dictator who supports U.S. policy, there's no

449 See the previous chapter for details.

450 Crucially, President Abbas claimed control over the various police and security forces. As discussed in the previous chapter, Abbas had served a short stint as PM under President Arafat in 2003, but resigned after failing to obtain shared control of the security forces. By reclaiming control of the security forces as President and when faced with a non-Fatah government, Abbas demonstrated that the power-sharing mechanisms he had fought for had little to do with institutionalization, but rather was about personal power, influence, and status (Tamimi 2007, 228–29).

451 According to some sources, Iran responded by increasing its funding of Hamas, although not to the extent that it compensated fully for the shortfall (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 224–253).

problem, but if it's a democratic leader who's against U.S. policy, he's treated as an enemy (interviewed by Rabbani 2008, 72).

However, a number of Hamas cadres are on record expressing disappointment and to a certain extent surprise at the European participation in the boycott. In essence, they had expected the EU to take a different stance than the US. Nasr al-Din al-Shaer, deputy PM in the first Hamas government, argued that "Europeans prefer to talk with the whole Palestinian people. And they prefer an agreement to be signed by all Palestinian factions, including Hamas. They see that if there is an agreement without Hamas, it will not work." Another Hamas cadre complained that "[t]hey [the Europeans] defended democracy everywhere, but when democracy brought Hamas to power, they changed their position" (both quoted in Hovdenak 2009, 73).

Without delving into a detailed analysis of the power balance within the Quartet or between the US and the EU, it should be noted that Hamas—and indeed most Palestinian factions—share unrealistically high expectations from EU foreign policy. Although things have changed since the EU was described as "an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm" (Whitney 1991), the US remains a much more powerful international player than the EU (Jervis 2009; Toje 2011). Furthermore, and as detailed in the leaked *End of Mission Report* of UN official Alvaro de Soto,⁴⁵² the US has a long tradition for exercising undue influence on the Palestinians in general and Fatah in particular. In the report, de Soto goes on to label the Quartet as "pretty much a group of friends of the US—and the US doesn't feel the need to consult closely with the Quartet except when it suits it" (de Soto 2007, 24). Whatever the Quartet used to be or nominally is, de Soto argued that it had come to be little more than a "grouping that operates on the basis of consensus at the mercy of the lowest common denominator, and that denominator is defined by the US" (2007, 25).

Persecution

On top of the international boycott, Hamas legislators and cabinet ministers were continuously harassed, both by the Fatah-controlled security forces and the Israeli occupation. In some ways, this was "business as usual" for Hamas. For, as detailed in previous chapters, Hamas has throughout its existence suffered persecution at the hands of both Israel and the

⁴⁵² The secret report was obtained by *The Guardian* newspaper in the summer of 2007 (McCarthy 2007). The former full title of Alvaro de Soto was Under-Secretary-General of the UN, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, and Envoy to the Quartet. In short, he was a person with unique access and overview of the developments and situation.

PA. But in contrast to earlier periods, Hamas now found itself in a position of power, which paradoxically meant that its domestic political leadership was more vulnerable (Tezcur 2010, 71). Whereas Israel and the PA previously had arrested real and alleged Hamas members, often indiscriminately, many senior Hamas cadres were now elected officials and therefore also publicly known.

This allowed Israel to easily round up and arrest 64 Hamas officials, including members of parliament and cabinet ministers, on June 29, 2006. The arrests were a direct response to the kidnapping of the Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit from a military base close to the Gaza Strip on June 25.⁴⁵³ Israel also shelled various targets in Gaza, including the office of the Hamas PM, Ishmael Haniye, as well as bridges and a power station (Caridi 2010, 238–39). As covered in previous chapters, this tit-for-tat pattern was established soon after the signing of the Oslo Accords, as Israel since then had held the PA responsible for its own security. However, the consequences for Hamas were more intense than before. From taking office in 2006 and onward, senior Hamas cadres and legislators have routinely been arrested and imprisoned by Israel as punishment for a military operation, regardless of whether Hamas was involved.⁴⁵⁴

7.1.2 The Mecca Agreement and the National Unity Government

Although it was the Israeli occupation and the international response to the election results that were to be blamed for the steadily deteriorating situation (de Soto 2007), most of the diplomatic effort aimed at alleviating the perilous development was focused on breaking the stalemate between Hamas and Fatah (Caridi 2010, 240–41). Probably the most noteworthy attempt to reconcile the two parties was the so-called Prisoner's Document. Officially titled *A Covenant for National Reconciliation* and published in May 2006,⁴⁵⁵ the document was a joint statement by imprisoned leaders of Hamas, Fatah, and other Palestinian political movements, calling for reconciliation and national unity (Caridi 2010, 230–31). While there was no reconciliation as a direct consequence of this document,⁴⁵⁶ it holds a unique position in Palestinian politics. While numerous other failed attempts were made to reconcile the two

453 The kidnapping was itself a response to the arrest of two Hamas members by Israeli forces on the day before. The kidnapping was a joint venture led by Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades together with two other Palestinian factions (Tamimi 2007, 241–44).

454 Since the 2006 elections, the PLC has for long spells not been able to operate because too many of its legislators have been in Israeli jails. See the website of Addameer (<http://www.addameer.org/>) and B'Tselem (<http://www.btselem.org/>) for more details on Palestinian legislators in Israeli jails.

455 Consult JPS (2006) for the full text of the Prisoner's Document.

456 The initiative laid out in the Prisoner's Document failed largely because the US pressured Fatah not to reconcile with Hamas (Caridi 2010, 242).

parties, most had been carried out with regional or international sponsors (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 225; Tamimi 2007, 254). The Prisoner's Document, however, was negotiated by imprisoned cadres from all the major Palestinian parties and factions without any external meddling, and as such enjoys a high degree of legitimacy among Palestinians.⁴⁵⁷

As a testament to its importance, the Prisoner's Document is still referred to by Palestinian politicians today as an authoritative document outlining the official consensus of the various factions (JPS 2011). But more immediately important, the document was the basis on which the successful Mecca Agreement was negotiated in early 2007 (ICG 2007, 16). Under the auspices of King Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia,⁴⁵⁸ the Agreement was negotiated by Khaled Meshaal and Ishmael Haniye from Hamas, and Mahmoud Abbas and Mohammed Dahlan from Fatah (Caridi 2010, 244–46). Signed on February 8 in Mecca, the Agreement promised to end the intra-Palestinian fighting, form a national unity government, and reform the PLO (JPS 2007).⁴⁵⁹

Three distinct factors are identified that explain why the Mecca Agreement succeeded where other reconciliation attempts had failed. First, the Palestinians in the occupied territories demanded reconciliation (ICG 2007, 16). The quarrel between Fatah and Hamas had descended into armed fighting already in the summer of 2006, and by late October of that year, “the intra-Palestinian violence had begun to take on characteristics of a civil war” (Butler 2009, 118).⁴⁶⁰ Also, the international boycott threatened to cripple the economy. In short, widespread fatigue and frustration with the situation put pressure on the parties to stop the armed infighting and establish a national unity government to end the boycott. Second, the Mecca Agreement was sponsored by the Saudi king. This was important because Saudi Arabia is a regional power, a close ally of the US in the Middle East, and has a good relationship with the European powers. Also, because of its religious authority, Saudi Arabia commands respect among the Islamists in Hamas—at least compared to other likely mediators in the region, such

457 One can speculate that the Prisoner's Document never would have seen the light of day had it not been for Israel's intense persecution of Hamas legislators.

458 Saudi Arabia decided to get involved partly because Egypt—traditionally the regional mediator of intra-Palestinian conflicts—was busy dealing with domestic issues, and partly because they feared increased Iranian influence in Palestinian politics, a very real possibility given that the Iranian regime had boosted their financial support of Hamas in the wake of the international boycott (Caridi 2010, 245–46).

459 According to de Soto, “a National Unity Government with a compromise platform along the lines of Mecca might have been achieved soon after the election ... had the US not led the Quartet to set impossible demands, and opposed a NUG [National Unity Government] in principle” (2007, 21).

460 Stories of Hamas members tortured at the hands of Fatah militias abound. See for example the testimonies retold in Rose (2008).

as Egypt or Jordan (ICG 2007, 19). Neither the international community nor the warring parties could ignore the agreement without rebuffing an important political player. Third and finally, both Hamas and Fatah had come to realize the urgency of the situation, and seemed more motivated to avoid a civil war rather than pursue more short-sighted political interests (Tamimi 2007, 257).

The Mecca Agreement succeeded in creating a period of relative calm in the occupied territories. Although skirmishes between militias from the two ruling factions continued, the intensity of the fighting declined considerably (Tamimi 2007, 258). Furthermore, the Agreement led to the establishment of the National Unity Government, which was sworn in on March 17, 2007, after a month of negotiations.⁴⁶¹ Following the establishment of the National Unity Government, President Abbas asked the international community to lift the boycott against the PA. The response from the Quartet was cautious and somewhat disparate, with Russia seemingly intent on lifting the sanctions, whereas the US remained reluctant. The European donors, such as France, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland, were largely willing to end the boycott and resume their funding of the PA (Tamimi 2007, 262).⁴⁶² Israel for its part refused to deal with any Palestinian government in which Hamas played a part.

Despite the initial decline in Palestinian infighting and the resumption of at least some international funding of the PA, the National Unity Government did not survive. Only three months after its establishment, in June 2007, it broke down amidst intensified fighting between Fatah and Hamas on the Gaza Strip (Milton-Edwards 2008b, 1586–87).

7.1.3 A Palestinian civil war and the political-territorial split

Already in May, clashes again broke out in Gaza between PA security forces loyal to Fatah and Hamas's own Executive Support Force (Caridi 2010, 258).⁴⁶³ The fighting intensified in the following weeks, and on June 11, Hamas launched a full-scale military campaign with the aim of taking control of the Gaza Strip. After five days of fighting, Hamas emerged victorious in assuming control of the Gaza Strip. By then, some 145 Palestinian militants had been

461 Ishmael Haniye continued as PM and Mahmoud Abbas as President in the National Unity Government. Hamas retained eight ministerial posts, Fatah got six, with a further five going to independents, and four to other political groups.

462 Norway was one of the first states to recognize the National Unity Government (UD 2007), and the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Raymond Johansen, traveled to Gaza and met with PM Ishmael Haniye as the highest-ranking European official to do so (BBC 2007).

463 The Hamas government established the Executive Support Force as its own police corps in 2006, because the various existing PA forces all were loyal to Fatah (Butler 2009, 117–18).

killed, and Fatah had fled Gaza (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 286).⁴⁶⁴

Background for the war

Retrospectively, the civil war in Gaza might appear inevitable; Hamas and Fatah had been on a collision course ever since the time of former's founding, and their ideological and political goals have always been irreconcilable (Cavatorta and Elgie 2010, 24). And while both parties have gone to great lengths to avoid military clashes, realizing that this would undermine the Palestinian national project,⁴⁶⁵ their rivalry became increasingly difficult to contain following Hamas's victory in the 2006 elections (Milton-Edwards 2005, 311). In particular, two exogenous factors are identified here as having contributed to the outbreak of the civil war: the institutional design of the PA, and undue interference from the US.

Cavatorta and Elgie (2010) convincingly detail how the PA's institutional design contributed to the intensification of the conflict. Their analysis shows that the semi-presidential system introduced in the 2003 Basic Law helps explain why the competition between Hamas and Fatah culminated in an all-out war. In brief, they argue that the challenge of cohabitation associated with semi-presidentialism, i.e., the problems arising from having two executives from opposing parties, took the competition between the two parties to a new, institutional arena.

Whereas the two previously had competed on an unequal footing, with Fatah in control of and forming the backbone of the PA and the PLO, and Hamas as an outside opposition group, both parties could now claim a popular and democratic mandate to rule the PA, Hamas because it had won a parliamentary majority and thus the right to form government, and Fatah because it retained control of the presidency. In essence, the PA's semi-presidential system increased the chances of armed conflict between Hamas and Fatah because "it provided the opportunity for both actors to use constitutional prerogatives and popular legitimacy to validate their respective positions and demands" (Cavatorta and Elgie 2010, 34).⁴⁶⁶

While the semi-presidential system of the PA cemented the conflict lines and made it increasingly difficult for Hamas and Fatah to escape their differences, it was interference from

464 For accounts of the Palestinian civil war of June 2007, see Caridi (2010, 254–62) and Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010, 286–88). For a day-to-day chronology, consult the Conflicts Forum report *The Failure of the Palestinian National Unity Government and the Gaza Takeover* (CF 2007).

465 Consult chapter 4 in Mishal and Sela (2000, 83–112) for a detailed analysis of how Hamas and Fatah/PLO previously had avoided armed conflict despite their irreconcilable differences.

466 Note that Cavatorta and Elgie make no claim to explain the whole reason for the Palestinian civil war, only that the semi-presidential system helps explain the "timing and scale of the confrontation" (2010, 38).

the US that proved to be the immediate catalyst for the outbreak of the war in Gaza. Having effectively halted all previous reconciliation attempts, the US was surprised by the Mecca Agreement in February 2007, and dismayed by the establishment of the National Unity Government in March. In the wake of the 2006 elections, the US had spent considerable effort undermining Hamas and propping up Fatah (Hogan 2008; Rose 2008; de Soto 2007).⁴⁶⁷ The developments in early 2007 were thus seen as setbacks to US policy, and it tried to remedy the situation by increasing its pressure on Fatah and redoubling its efforts to topple Hamas.

As detailed in a number of confidential documents left behind by US State Department officials in Ramallah, the US and Fatah discussed various ways in which the National Unity Government could be replaced by a government without Hamas.⁴⁶⁸ In essence planning a *coup d'état* in occupied Palestine, the US administration covertly transferred funds to train and equip an expanded Palestinian security force loyal to President Abbas and Fatah. And aided by Israel and Egypt, US-funded military equipment found its way into the otherwise isolated and closed Gaza Strip (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 283; Rose 2008).

Rumors spread that “something” was brewing, and on April 30, excerpts from one of the secret US-Fatah documents were leaked to the Jordanian newspaper *al-Majd* (Rose 2008). What would otherwise have been refuted as a conspiracy theory suddenly seemed like a real possibility; the US and Fatah apparently *did* have something nefarious planned for Hamas and Gaza. And when 450 Egyptian-trained Fatah militants entered the Gaza Strip in mid-May, what had been a suspicion became a certainty.⁴⁶⁹ Ostensibly there to maintain law and order, Hamas saw the troop movement as a thinly veiled preparation by Fatah to take over the Gaza Strip (Caridi 2010, 258).

Against this background and from Hamas’s perspective, launching a preemptive military campaign to take over the Gaza Strip seemed like the only viable option. In breach of the Mecca Agreement and ignoring the existence of the National Unity Government, Fatah pursued an obviously subversive strategy aimed at reclaiming the power of the PA. In essence, Fatah and the US forced Hamas’s hand. They did so probably feeling confident that Fatah

467 The articles by Hogan and Rose cited here were published in *Vanity Fair*. Although not necessarily recognized as the most reputable source in the social sciences, the articles are based on documents left behind in Ramallah by the US State Department, and are therefore considered to give unique insights into the events leading up to the 2007 Palestinian civil war.

468 See Hogan (2008) for a brief presentation of the various leaked documents.

469 It should be noted that the Gaza Strip at the time was isolated, with its border crossing controlled by either Israel or Egypt. All movement of troops and equipment would necessarily need the permission of these states, which in turn indicated US involvement.

would be victorious in a military confrontation with Hamas; officially, Fatah had some 70 000 loyal forces in Gaza, compared to approximately 17 000 militants under Hamas's command (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 286). When the fighting commenced, however, the forces loyal to Fatah proved badly organized and without any clear command structure; they belonged to a plethora of security services, all with their own mandate, officers, and strategic goals.⁴⁷⁰ Faced with the highly disciplined Hamas militants, believers in the cause, and fighting for the survival of their organization, the outcome seemed all but given. Already on the second day of fighting, Fatah soldiers began fleeing Gaza, and Hamas rapidly gained control of crucial parts of the Strip. By the fifth day, Hamas had successfully rooted out Fatah and taken complete control of Gaza (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 288).⁴⁷¹

Consequences of the war

Immediately following Hamas's takeover of Gaza, President Abbas declared a state of emergency, dissolved the National Unity Government, fired Ishmael Haniye as PM, and swore in a new cabinet of technocrats (Roy 2011, 45). The international community labeled the takeover as a *coup d'état*, sided with Abbas, and declared him "legitimate president of all Palestinians" (Butler 2009, 119). Hamas for its part rejected the dismissal of PM Ishmael Haniye as unconstitutional, maintained that the parliament was still in session, and that the Gaza government consequently was the legitimate one (Roy 2011, 45).

Notwithstanding the legal wrangling, the civil war *de facto* produced a situation with two competing PA governments; Hamas was in firm control of the Gaza Strip, and after spending the remainder of the summer of 2007 working with Israel in removing Hamas there, Fatah was in control of the West Bank (CF 2007, 58). The international community responded to the new situation by suspending all humanitarian and development aid to Gaza, and lifting the boycott of the Fatah-led PA on the West Bank. This policy—to politically and financially support one side and boycott the other—arguably exacerbated the political-territorial split. International backing also emboldened President Abbas, prompting him to order 70 000 PA

470 Reportedly, Hamas had also infiltrated various forces thought to be under Fatah command, and a number of assumed PA and Fatah loyal militants switched sides when it became clear that Hamas would be victorious (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 289–90).

471 It can be little doubt that the US policy of sponsoring Fatah with the aim of toppling the Hamas-dominated National Unity Government backfired badly. Instead of weakening or removing Hamas from the equation, the organization has been in control of the Gaza Strip since the summer of 2007. As such, the US policy pursued seems to fit with the blowback theory, i.e., "the [negative] unintended consequences of the ... government's international activities" (Johnson 2001). Consult Johnson's book *Blowback: the costs and consequences of American empire* (2000) for a thorough analysis of this effect.

public servants in the Gaza Strip to not serve under the Hamas government. Finally, Israel sealed off the borders of Gaza, leaving the coastal enclave in close to total isolation (Brown 2012, 10; Butler 2009, 119; Qarmout and Béland 2012, 36–37).

In short, Hamas found itself the state-bearing party of the Gaza Strip, but—as a result of the almost unanimous international boycott—without the necessary political and financial support needed to govern effectively. What Hamas did have, however, was the capacity to monopolize violence, and it used this capacity to effectively uphold law and order. Initially, the increased security proved popular among Gazans (Roy 2011, 47), as the population still placed the brunt of the blame for their hardships on the Israeli blockade and on the international community for sponsoring Israel (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 292).

Losing ground ...

The positive effect of upholding law and order for the legitimacy of Hamas's rule did not last, however, and soon its popularity began to suffer. Despite widespread consensus that Israel was to blame for the sorry state of affairs in Gaza, Hamas was the governing party and thus also in a position of responsibility. Consequently, it had to take an increasing share of the blame for the lackluster economic performance and the failure to secure even the most basic needs for its constituents, apart from security (ICG 2008, 20–21). Also, as documented by various human rights organizations, Hamas exploited its military supremacy in Gaza to enforce a strict security regime, effectively curbing internal dissent (Roy 2011, 48).⁴⁷² As a result, Hamas came to be seen as increasingly authoritarian and corrupt, which worked to discredit the organization in the eyes of regular Palestinians (ICG 2012, 14).⁴⁷³ In addition, the lack of Palestinian reconciliation was naturally partly blamed on Hamas, leaving increasing numbers of Palestinians in Gaza disillusioned with both Palestinian leadership factions. The results can be discerned from Figure 9 below, which trace factional support among Palestinians in the occupied territory from 2006 to 2011.⁴⁷⁴

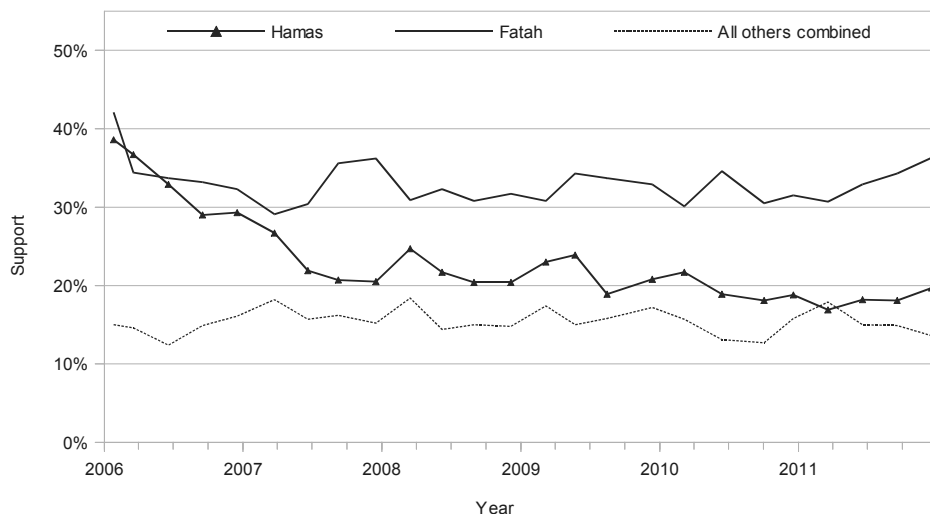
In short, and although support for Hamas fluctuated somewhat, the trend is clear; in early 2006, Hamas enjoyed the support of approximately 38 percent of Palestinians in the occupied

472 Consult the various publications from Human Rights Watch (HRW 2008, 2009, 2011), the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR 2007), and its successor, the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012), for detailed reports on the state of human rights under the Hamas government in Gaza. See also Mukhimer (2013) and Allen (2013, 157–84) for analyses of Hamas and human rights.

473 Sa'id Siyam, minister in the Hamas government, admitted on record that mistakes had been made by the security forces when consolidating its control over the Gaza Strip (Ma'an 2008).

474 Consult the methodology chapter for details regarding the polling data used.

Figure 9: Factional support in the occupied territories, 2006–2011



(Source: PSR 2011).

territories. By the end of 2011, this figure had dropped by around half, to about 19 percent.⁴⁷⁵ And as indicated in Figure 9, Fatah held steady and at times gained somewhat in this period. Note also that approximately half the score of the “all others combined” category are different Islamist movements, crucially including the various *Salafi* jihadists.⁴⁷⁶ In essence, Hamas lost support to Fatah and the *Salafi* jihadists because it pursued three contradictory goals: remain in power, attain international legitimacy, and implement its political program.

Hamas became increasingly authoritarian in order to stay in power. This proved unpopular in the longer run, and support flowed from Hamas to both the previous rulers, Fatah, and the new opposition, the *Salafi* jihadists. To attain international legitimacy, Hamas used its military supremacy to stop rogue resistance fighters from firing rockets into Israel, and in the summer of 2008, it even brokered ceasefires with Israel (Butler 2009, 120). This also proved

⁴⁷⁵ The sudden and temporary increase in support in early 2008 was explained by the pollsters as a result of Hamas tearing down the wall between Gaza and Egypt, thus breaking the siege. Although the wall was rebuilt and Gaza again became isolated, it demonstrated determination and ability on the part of Hamas to actually do something, while simultaneously underlining inability of the Fatah government on the West Bank to change “the bitter reality in the West Bank or ending Israeli occupation through diplomacy” (PSR 2008).

⁴⁷⁶ *Salafism* is an umbrella term for a literalistic and puritanical sect of *Sunni* Islam. *Salafi* jihadists, in turn, are adherents of *Salafism* who employ violent tactics to achieve a return to the pure form of Islam as “practiced by the Prophet and his Companions” (Wiktorowicz 2001, 20).

unpopular, in particular among Palestinians supporting violent resistance as a means to liberate Palestine.⁴⁷⁷ Again, Hamas lost support to both Fatah and the radicals from the *Salafi* jihadist movements.⁴⁷⁸

Hamas also tried—to a limited extent—to implement parts of its Islamist ideology, e.g., by prohibiting alcohol and prostitution, deciding how weddings should be conducted, and pressuring women to wear the veil (ICG 2008).⁴⁷⁹ However, Hamas did not go very far in these attempts, partly to avoid a domestic backlash, and partly to demonstrate to the international community that it could govern responsibly (Brown 2012, 12). And yet again, this meant that Hamas lost support to both Fatah and the radical *Salafists*. Secular Palestinians felt that Hamas went too far, and thus left Hamas to support Fatah. More religious Palestinians felt that Hamas did not go far enough, and they shifted their allegiance to the more radical *Salafists* instead (Roy 2011, 221–22). In brief, as a first-time holder of office, Hamas fell victim to the expectation gap; as the governing party in a violent and volatile *milieu*, it was forced to balance opposing interests, and saw its support and legitimacy erode regardless of which strategy it opted for.

With the benefit of hindsight, then, Hamas's 2006 victory can be construed as having been a curse in disguise. Although Hamas hardly can be blamed alone for the sorry state of affairs in occupied Palestine following the political-territorial split in 2007, it can all be traced back first to the decision to participate, and then to its watershed victory in the 2006 elections.⁴⁸⁰ Naturally, interviewed Hamas members refused to admit as much, as it would be tantamount to taking the blame for the current impasse. Responding to the assertion that it might have been a mistake to run in the elections given the aftermath, Hamas MP Zaidan said that

I don't think that Hamas committed a strategic mistake by going full power into the elections. We did not expect to win 60 percent! Not a full majority like that. But we expected to do well. And I don't see that as a mistake. I think that we are making history here, and you cannot make history when you are hesitant. So I'm

477 See Shamir and Shikaki for in-depth analyses of Palestinian support for violent resistance (2010, 76–77, 162–64).

478 By emulating Fatah and leaving behind most of its resistance tactics, some of those supporting Hamas because of its resistance became disillusioned and went back to supporting Fatah.

479 It should be reiterated, however, that Hamas's Islamist ideology was largely absent in its electoral platform. As such, these efforts to enforce an Islamist order were probably done to placate its activist members, and not the electorate as such.

480 Importantly, the international boycott of the election results has had negative consequences for the position and allure of democracy in occupied Palestine, as the experience for many Palestinians is that electoral outcomes are only respected if they are to the liking of the donor community.

not sorry for what happened, even if I know that the election produced a lot of hardship for Palestinians.

Instead, he claimed that the experience gained from running in the elections and governing the Gaza Strip has been good for the development and maturity of Hamas as a political party:

I think that the whole experience has lots of bright sides, and will bear a lot of fruit. While they are not all clear now, they will be in the future, in the next five to ten years. For we have not lost, we have won, and I'm talking about the Palestinian issue as a whole. If things continued like they were in 2005, it would all be worse. Fatah had already failed back then, having nothing more to give to the people or to the Palestinian issue. There had to be some changes. And Hamas could not live forever "on the shore." It had to go into the water and learn to swim. The people would not accept Hamas to stand on the shore and just look at the people swimming and drowning! Hamas had to go into deep water and we knew that some of us would drown, and that only some of us would learn how to swim. And we did, and we reached the other side safely. This is life. I'm not sorry for it, I think things are coming in a good way.⁴⁸¹

Khaled Meshaal, leader of the Hamas Political Bureau, expressed similar sentiments, admitting that "I am not going to claim that the experience has been all positive, but it also cannot be claimed to have been all negative, and at the end of the day we do not regret the experience." Rather, he claimed, "if Hamas had not participated, things would perhaps have been even worse ... The circumstances in which we operate today are not the product of our participation in the elections. Our present circumstances result from the fact that we have an enemy that wants to eliminate us" (Rabbani 2008, 69).

Of course, the leaders of any given party would be loath to admit that their mistakes are what led to such a precarious situation as the one in occupied Palestine post-2007. It is therefore noteworthy that Ghazi Hamad, a well-known Hamas leader from Gaza, labeled the takeover of Gaza as a "strategic error" that "produced a thousand other political problems that Hamas could have done without" (Caridi 2010, 262). Also, Hamas MP Dr. Ayman Daraghme admitted that the takeover had produced a difficult situation:

The split of course harmed both Fatah and Hamas. We both lost because of the split. For one, the Palestinians, especially the young, are not happy, are not

481 Interviewed May 19, 2011, in Ramallah.

pleased with this situation. They want unity. They want people to come back together. And they don't blame Hamas alone, or Fatah alone. They blame both. The second thing is that Hamas in Gaza will lose because the situation there is very bad, and Hamas is responsible.⁴⁸²

... but surviving nevertheless

Suffering from a debilitating international boycott, political isolation from the rest of occupied Palestine, fraying popularity and legitimacy, and domestic competition from both Fatah and *Salafi* jihadists, the challenges facing Hamas seemed insurmountable. Added to this, Israel launched a massive military offensive against Gaza on December 27, 2008. Dubbed Operation Cast Lead, the campaign included continued airstrikes, bombardment from the sea, and a limited ground invasion into Gaza. Lasting for three weeks, the offensive left Gaza in ruins, the population destitute, and the international community with a humanitarian disaster on its hands. Indeed, 1 417 Palestinians were killed, most of whom were civilians, and over five thousand were wounded (Roy 2011, 226–27). In short, the campaign inflicted enormous destruction on Hamas's territory, killed many of its constituents, and left the organization severely weakened (Caridi 2010, 288).

Hamas, however, not only survived the Israeli onslaught, but managed to hold on to its power over Gaza. In sum, ever since it won the 2006 PLC elections, Hamas has faced off relentless attempts by the US, Israel, and Fatah to topple it in Gaza. And as Hamas continues to rule Gaza in the face of such enormous challenges, it strongly signals that it has the organizational and strategic capabilities to remain in power and continue to play a key role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

7.2 Hamas—a reluctant rebel in power

How and in what ways have the developments following in the wake of Hamas's electoral victory affected its process and degree of institutionalization? More specifically, what were the consequences for Hamas's ideological and organizational development after first unexpectedly winning the elections, then forming government while suffering international boycott, and finally taking control of the Gaza Strip?

As was to be expected, the developments and events in occupied Palestine from 2006 onward have had fundamental consequences for Hamas's development, both ideologically and

482 Interview with Dr. Ayman Daraghme in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

organizationally, not least because it found itself in *position* rather than *opposition*. For, as succinctly summarized by Deschouwer,

being in government is a different role and position than being in opposition. A governing party needs to defend policies rather than criticize them. A governing party needs to defend compromises rather than criticizing the concessions that were made to strike the agreement. Being in government creates a new relationship with the voters, with the different party organs and with the other parties (2008a, 10).

In short, assuming office is expected to force about changes in political parties both at the ideological and organizational levels. Ideologically, a party in government is hypothesized to adjust its behavior and rhetoric to fit the political realities. This, more often than not, means compromise and moderation, as implementing a political program inevitably is more difficult than articulating one (Deschouwer 2008a, 4–5). Governing also entails being held responsible by the electorate and the party activists alike, both of whom expect something in return for either their vote or their efforts and sacrifice.⁴⁸³ These demands, in turn, force the government into a balancing act, prompting further compromise and moderation.⁴⁸⁴

The expected ideological moderation also hinges on certain organizational developments forced about by the role of governing. In particular, for political organizations such as Hamas that operate in volatile and violent conditions, the threat of repression and persecution prompts the leadership to tame their ideological commitments in the interest of organizational survival (Tezcur 2010, 71).⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, the spoils of office—however limited—are to be distributed among the various factions within the organization. This tends to produce new and escalate old horizontal power struggles between the various leadership bodies. In addition, governing means implementing actual policies, which means that the battle for which policy to prioritize intensifies, pitting the demands of the electorate against those of the party activists and forcing the government into a delicate balancing act. Added to this, the role of government demands rapid responses, which inevitably empower the government at the expense of the party leadership. In short, and although parties only change reluctantly

483 Consult Przeworski and Sprague (1986) for illuminating analyses of the various dilemmas facing socialist parties when entering institutionalized politics for the first time.

484 See also the below section *Organizational challenges and dilemmas* on pp. 272ff. for analyses of how the role of governing affects the organization itself.

485 Threat of repression and persecution is not a condition for party leaders to prioritize organizational survival over other aims. This is a tendency in most parties after reaching a certain level of institutionalization, as there is no point in staying true to the cause if it spells the end of the organization.

(Panebianco 1988, 243–47), being in government—and in particular for the first time—tends to produce alterations in the organizational structure and introduce new and intensified power struggles, both of which affect party behavior (Deschouwer 2008a).

It should be noted, however, that in contrast to the conventional—or European—party experience, in which some time is spent acquiring political skills in opposition before forming government, Hamas went straight from outside the electoral arena to government. This is expected to have had consequences for Hamas’s development and institutionalization, both ideologically and organizationally. In essence, the normal and incremental development of a political party was compressed, robbing Hamas of the experience of being in opposition before being forced into government (Svåsand 2013, 7–8). And although Hamas has matured rapidly, and skillfully maneuvered in a highly volatile and challenging political milieu, this lack of experience in institutionalized politics meant that the intrinsic conflict observed between a party’s stated ideology and the political realities of government, as well as the numerous organizational challenges facing any party forming government for the first time, all affected Hamas to a larger extent than might otherwise have been the case.

The section is divided into three parts. First, the ideological development of Hamas while in government will be detailed. Then, Hamas’s responses to the organizational challenges and dilemmas from being in government are covered. And finally, a concluding section analyzing the degree to which Hamas had transmuted from movement to party by the end of the period in question will be provided.

7.2.1 Governing for survival, not politics

As the sole authority and state-bearing party on the Gaza Strip since its takeover in 2007, Hamas has arguably been well positioned to implement its ideological program. As such, an analysis of Hamas’s behavior during its years in power is assumed to be illuminating in terms of its ideological development for the period in question. Crucial clues regarding Hamas’s ideological rigidity will also be revealed by contrasting its actual behavior with its stated goals.

When Hamas initially assumed office and subsequently took over the Gaza Strip, the organization was expected to develop in one of two directions. In one version, as Israel, Fatah, the US, and many others anticipated and feared, Hamas would use its newly won power to enforce its Islamist liberation ideology as closely as possible, and thereby prove to be the

radical and extremist party its detractors assume it to be. This could have meant that Hamas would establish the “Islamic Republic of Hamastan” in Gaza (Milton-Edwards 2008b, 1586), i.e., implement a radical Islamist ideology and use the infrastructure of the PA to intensify its violent resistance against the Israeli occupation.

In another, more theoretical version, the expectation went in the opposite direction. It is commonly hypothesized that when a party assumes office, it will moderate. Somewhat simplified, this is because a party in government must deal with actual political realities, and if failing to do so, will be held responsible by the electorate, i.e., lose its position in power (Deschouwer 2008a).⁴⁸⁶ For Hamas, this would mean that, when faced with the political realities of occupied Palestine as the party in government, it would be forced to leave parts of its stated positions and ideological legacy behind in favor of pragmatism and realistic policies.⁴⁸⁷ And according to parliamentarian Dr. Daraghme, this was more or less what happened to Hamas in this period:

There are changes inside Hamas regarding our ideological theory. When any movement starts, they will be radical. But with the time, you will find that they are changing. They will become more realistic as they discover the realities as they are on the ground, and they have to deal with the world. Before, Hamas was dealing only with Palestinians and with the enemy, Israel. But now, when Hamas is in government, it deals with the international community, with the Arab states, and with the Europeans. And so, Hamas has to take the opinions of all of these into considerations.⁴⁸⁸

A brief look at the behavior of Hamas while governing Gaza provides an appropriately blurred and ambiguous picture. While there were indications that Hamas tried to implement certain Islamist policies, it did not go very far in those efforts. And although Hamas continued to resist the Israeli occupation, it also negotiated ceasefire agreements with Israel and went to great lengths to stop other liberation movements from mounting resistance operations from

486 Also, governing parties often move toward the center of the political spectrum to avoid alienating too large a part of the electorate, as this would undermine its legitimacy and thus reduce its chances of reelection. This, in essence, is part of the median voter theorem put forward by Downs (1957), and assumes that centrist policies rather than radical positions have public appeal (Tezcur 2010, 71).

487 Parties are not unbounded utility maximizing actors, however. As argued by Deschouwer, the ideological profile of a party “is not a peripheral attribute. It is an important reference point for party militants, members, voters and party elites,” meaning that their ideological profile has a bearing on their behavior, making sudden and dramatic moderation unlikely and rare (2008a, 13).

488 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, while Hamas revealed a tendency toward pragmatism while in power, e.g., as indicated in the way it organized public service institutions,⁴⁸⁹ it retained crucial elements of its resistance ideology and remained officially committed to the liberation of Palestine. In short, Hamas behaved somewhat in accordance both with the anticipation that it would prove to be a radical party when given the chance, and that it would moderate as a consequence of being in government.

It is pertinent to note that, as with all parties in government, Hamas was also constrained by both organizational and environmental factors (Strøm and Müller 1999). Hamas could neither freely implement its political program even if it had wanted to, nor could it completely discard its ideology for the sake of moderation. For one, the environmental conditions were hardly conducive for Hamas to implement its political program; an almost unanimous international community boycotted the Hamas government, and both Israel and Egypt closed their respective borders to Gaza. Given how dependent the PA is on aid, no Palestinian government can provide for its constituents without the support of the international community. In short, Hamas simply did not have the necessary political and financial support it would need for governing effectively.

Second, both Hamas's rank-and-file and its constituency had legitimate, but sometimes contradictory, demands that the leadership tried to accommodate. In particular Hamas's legacy as a violent liberation movement and its new role as a governing party, produced widely divergent demands. Combined with Hamas's effort to hold on to power, the various demands help explain Hamas's ambiguous behavior. And finally, as discussed above, Hamas did not expect to win the elections, and took over the Gaza Strip preemptively in anticipation of a US-sponsored *coup d'état*. As such, Hamas assumed power only reluctantly, and its behavior in office might therefore not conform to that of a conventional party in government.

The above points to some reasons why Hamas at various times behaved radically, pragmatically, and moderately while in power. Next follows three sections dedicated to providing a deeper analysis of Hamas's ideological development and rigidity from 2006 to 2011. First, Hamas's efforts to balance the contradictory aims of resisting the occupation and governing Gaza will be discussed. Then, the religious aspects of Hamas's ideology as espoused in actual politics will be analyzed. And finally, the degree to which the stated and official goals of Hamas became relegated to a tool for organizational survival, rather than

489 See Brown (2012) for a discussion on how Hamas dealt with public education, and ICG (2008) and Sayigh (2011) for analyses of Hamas's efforts in public policing.

ends in themselves, will be investigated.

Reconciling governing and resistance

After winning the 2006 elections, assuming office, and taking control of the Gaza Strip, Hamas found itself caught between its traditional role as a resistance movement and its new role as a governing party. Both because the respective operational logics and goals of resistance and governing diverge, and because their sources of legitimacy differ, the two roles are irreconcilable (Close and Prevost 2008; de Zeeuw 2008b). As will be outlined below, Hamas nevertheless attempted to combine the two roles, leading the organization to behave somewhat erratically and contradictorily, and leaving questions regarding its ideological development and rigidity difficult to answer.

With regard to legitimacy, Dr. Ziad Abu-Amr summed it up nicely: “Resistance used to be Hamas’s main source of legitimacy. But suddenly, the election was their source of legitimacy.”⁴⁹⁰ Although Hamas ventured into conventional politics only after careful considerations, and despite winning a clear democratic mandate to form government, Hamas did not leave behind its role as a resistance movement. In part, this can be explained by the fact that Hamas did not expect to win the 2006 elections, and only assumed office reluctantly and later took over Gaza preemptively. Added to this, Hamas’s traditional source of legitimacy had been crucial for the survival of the organization; much of its rank-and-file as well as its most loyal followers support Hamas because of its resistance to the Israeli occupation.

To complete the transition from resistance movement to governing party could therefore have led to organizational splits within Hamas, and quite certainly to a dramatic loss of popularity. Consequently, Hamas did not discard its traditional source of legitimacy, but tried instead to combine governance and resistance.⁴⁹¹ According to Hamas MP Dr. Daraghme, this was the official strategy adopted by the political leadership from the outset:

Meshaal used to say that we will show people, we will show the world, that we can combine the two; the resistance and the government. So I think this was the message from Meshaal and the political wing to the armed al-Qassam Brigades,

490 Dr. Ziad Abu-Amr, interviewed in Ramallah, April 27, 2011.

491 In the words of Dr. Ali al-Sartawi, Minister of Justice in multiple PA governments, “Hamas went from resistance to politics—or more correctly, to politics *and* resistance.” Interviewed at An-Najah University in Nablus, August 27, 2007.

that the resistance would continue even if we took office.⁴⁹²

Notwithstanding the seemingly sound rationale and understandable political calculus behind Hamas's attempt to combine the two roles, the operational logic and goals of governing differ from that of resistance. As a government, Hamas was tasked with the protection of its citizens in Gaza. But as a liberation movement, Hamas felt obliged to continue resisting the occupation, inevitably provoking Israeli repercussions against the same citizens it should protect. Furthermore, as a government, Hamas would be expected to provide various public services for its constituency, but as long as it also remained a liberation movement, it would not receive the aid or political support needed to fulfill this role. As summarized by Dr. Giacaman,

Hamas cannot be both a resistance movement and in government indefinitely. That's their dilemma. They can be in government, but they cannot continue to claim to be a resistance movement while not resisting occupation, and they cannot realistically resist the occupation while being in government.⁴⁹³

Rhetorically, the contradictory goals of Hamas as *governing party* and Hamas as a *resistance movement* became particularly visible with regard to its commitment to the proposed interim two-state solution along the 1967 borders. As established in previous chapters, the official positions of Hamas on these crucial issues were well established by the time it took power in 2006. And as reiterated by Ousama Hamdan in a 2011 interview, these positions are as follows:

[C]omplete Israeli withdrawal to the June 1967 lines, including East Jerusalem; the dismantling of settlements; the refugee right of return; and an independent sovereign Palestinian state. This is still the Hamas position—we have signed on it and repeatedly declared it. This is one of Hamas's clearest positions. (quoted in JPS 2011, 66).

Despite the unequivocal framing of these positions,⁴⁹⁴ Hamas's commitment to the interim solution along the 1967 borders seemingly waned after the organization assumed power.

492 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

493 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 5, 2011. Palestinian analyst Hani al-Masri argued along similar lines, stating that "Hamas thought they could mix participation in the PA and resistance, but resistance it is not suitable for the PA. You cannot mix the two. If you want resistance, you have to dismantle the PA" (interviewed in Ramallah, March 31, 2011).

494 Interviewed by *The Economist* in 2009, Hamas leader Ahmed Yousef repeated that "[w]e have said we accept a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders" (2009).

Interviewed three months after Hamas had formed its first government, Usama al-Mazini, a senior Hamas leader in Gaza, stated that

[w]e accept a state on the 1967 borders without recognizing the legitimacy of the occupation. They [Israel] can have their state on the 1948 lands, but I don't recognize it ... That is not a recognition of Israel, and there is no acceptance of the two-state solution. We will not recognize its legitimacy. We will deal with them on daily matters, but not at a practical level (quoted in Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 263).

Such statements and rhetorical gymnastics indicate that the official positions adopted by Hamas were at odds with crucial stakeholders within the organization, despite the inclusive and democratic decision-making procedures assumed to produce internally legitimate decisions and strategies.⁴⁹⁵

It is noteworthy that these positions were all articulated and adopted as the official line prior to Hamas's electoral victory and ascension to power. As discussed, being in opposition is generally easier in terms of ideological maneuverability and commitment to official goals than being in position (Sánchez-Cuenca 2004). This is often taken to mean that opposition parties are more ideologically rigid and committed to their initial—and sometimes unrealistic—goals than parties in office. The same goes for movements prior to transmuting into parties; they are assumed to be committed to their initial aims, as their leaders and members still see their organization as a vehicle to reach these aims, rather than an end in itself. It is somewhat puzzling, therefore, that Hamas moderated when in opposition, and then backpedaled when in position.

This peculiarity can in part be explained, however, by Hamas's motivation for contesting the elections in the first place. Hamas ran hoping to do well and be part of a strong opposition able to rein in the corrupt and too accommodating Fatah-dominated PA. To maximize its electoral chances and thus strengthen its future position in the PLC, Hamas behaved as a Downsian party; it moderated its most radical and absolutist goals, and moved to the center of the political spectrum in the hopes of capturing the median voter (Downs 1957; Løvlie 2014). But Hamas did not envisage or wish for an electoral victory, and was therefore not prepared to act in accordance with these moderated goals. Hamas aimed for influence, not responsibility, but having obtained both, its various leaders felt compelled to try—with limited success—to

495 See Klein (2007, 453–58) for further examples of what he labels Hamas's "heterogeneous discourse."

strike a credible rhetorical balance between its interim and long-term goals.

Also, in practical terms, Hamas's dual roles as a government party and resistance movement led to contradictory behavior. On the one hand, and as briefly discussed above,⁴⁹⁶ Hamas used its authority in Gaza to stop other liberation movements from mounting attacks against Israel and even negotiated ceasefire agreements with Israel (Butler 2009, 120). In part, Hamas did so in an attempt to appease the international community and obtain some legitimacy, and in part to establish a monopoly of violence on the Gaza Strip and thus ensure its continued stay in power. On the other hand, however, Hamas remained committed to the liberation of occupied Palestine, and actively and violently resisted the occupation (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 294). Although Hamas understandably did so given the fact that resistance was such an important source of legitimacy and popularity, its resistance activities effectively undermined its efforts to gain international legitimacy.

One event exemplifying the contradiction between governing and resistance took place in the summer of 2006. On June 25, together with two other Palestinian liberation movements, Hamas's al-Qassam Brigades carried out "Operation Dispel Illusions," entering Israel through a tunnel from the Gaza Strip and kidnapping the Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit (Esposito 2007, 205). The operation drew international condemnation and provoked harsh Israeli responses; Shalit was the first Israeli soldier kidnapped by a Palestinian movement since 1994, and to punish Hamas and push for his release, Israel captured some 64 Hamas officials on the West Bank in the days that followed, including eight ministers and scores of legislators (BBC 2006).⁴⁹⁷

The operation naturally reduced Hamas's chances of gaining international legitimacy, and combined with the Israeli retaliatory policies, its governing efforts were made ever more difficult. Anticipating this, some political leaders from Hamas called for the release of Shalit immediately after the operation, knowing that his capture would spell problems for the organization (Esposito 2006, 205). However, when confronting Hamas leaders about this contradictory behavior in 2011, they remained adamant that governing and resistance were compatible roles, and they refused to admit that the kidnapping of Shalit had created any problems for the organization. Dr. Ghazal's response was especially telling:

496 See *Losing ground ...*, pp. 254ff.

497 Gilad Shalit remained in Hamas captivity for over five years. In October 2011, Hamas freed him in exchange for the release of 1 027 Palestinians from Israeli prisons.

When Hamas managed to arrest Gilad Shalit, it was after at least fifty failed attempts. One of the main goals of the Qassam Brigades and Hamas since it was founded was to kidnap Israeli soldiers, because this is the only way to for us to liberate Palestinian prisoners. And as you know, our slogan was that we need both government and resistance at the same time. This was the difference between us and Fatah. Fatah said “either this or that, either government or resistance,” but we said “no, we can do both together.” And the arrest of Shalit was an application of having both together.⁴⁹⁸

Such inconsistent strategy and behavior stemmed in part from the fact that Hamas tried to balance its role as a liberation movement and the associated long-term aim of erecting an Islamic state in the whole of historic Palestine, versus its role as a governing party set on staying in power (Brown 2012).

Finally, it should be reiterated that armed movements such as Hamas do not necessarily follow the conventional movement-to-party trajectory in terms of ideological development, i.e., that of softening and moderating its goals. Violent tactics and maximalist territorial aims go hand in hand with ideological rigidity, at least in part because cadres willing to shed blood for the cause seem unlikely candidates for ideological flexibility. Instead, they are expected to be reluctant to change, remaining instead committed to the movement’s initial goals even in the face of great challenges (Close and Prevost 2008, 10). As such, Hamas’s ideological and organizational legacy as a liberation movement worked to counteract the hypothesized moderating tendency of being in government, producing instead rather contradictory rhetoric and behavior as it tried to reconcile governing with resistance.

The unclear role of religion

Similar to how its legacy as a liberation movement limited the maneuverability of its leadership and led to the rather futile attempt to reconcile governing with resistance, so did its role as a political-religious organization also pose ideological dilemmas for Hamas. Even a cursory look at how Hamas has governed the Gaza Strip from June 2007 onward reveals its intentions regarding the relationship between Islam and politics to be ambiguous. As the sole ruler of Gaza, Hamas could be expected to have implemented its allegedly Islamist ideology. And Hamas did at times enforce an Islamist social order. Examples of this include prohibiting alcohol and prostitution, instructing how weddings should be conducted, deciding which

498 Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

imams were allowed to preach, trying to pressure women to wear the veil, and giving the Islamic conciliation committees wide-ranging powers as civil arbitrators (ICG 2008, 15–16).⁴⁹⁹

Despite the above and some well-publicized events related to gender segregation,⁵⁰⁰ however, Hamas did not labor hard to establish an Islamic state in Gaza. Even if some Hamas leaders are on record admitting that they would prefer more Islamization, e.g., that the courts should apply *sharia*, they openly expressed reluctance to force about any fundamental change in the way Gaza is governed and organized for fear of popular opposition (Marwan Abu Ras quoted in ICG 2008, 15). And although the political calculus behind Hamas’s behavior seems sound, i.e., that remaining in power is a prerequisite for governing, its reluctance to implement its ideology when given the chance still needs explaining.

When confronted with this apparent contradiction, interviewed Hamas members—senior cadres, elected officials, and youth members—claimed that the organization in fact did *not* want to establish an Islamist or Islamic state, but rather a “civil state.” Exactly what the distinguishing characteristics of such a “civil state” are, however, remains somewhat elusive. Some interviewed Hamas members seemed to interpret the concept as interchangeable with an Islamic—but not theocratic—state, making references to the Prophet Mohammad and the early Caliphs. Or, as outlined by Hamas MP Dr. Daraghme, “we want a civilian state, but because we, the Muslims here, are the majority, we will take the Islamic law in their consideration.”⁵⁰¹ Only on rare occasions did interviewees employ the term “Islamic state,” however.

Others emphasized qualities such as democracy, human rights, an independent judiciary, equality before the law, and religious freedom.⁵⁰² But they always stopped short of invoking the term “secularism,” even if what they described easily would fit the bill of a secular democratic state. This reluctance to employ the term *secularism* might relate to the fact that it

499 According to the referenced International Crisis Group report, some of these attempts at Islamization in Gaza were carried out by non-Hamas groups (ICG 2008, 16).

500 One example was when Hamas ruled that women would not be allowed to compete in the Gaza Marathon in 2013, which led the UN organizers to cancel the event (Akram 2013; BBC 2013; Greenwood 2013). Another example was when Hamas allegedly closed down a water park in Gaza in 2010, apparently because it allowed men and women to bathe together. The water park was subsequently torched, supposedly by Hamas-affiliated gunmen (Putz 2010; Sherwood 2010).

501 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

502 Dr. Mohammad Ghazal was one interviewed Hamas leader expressing such sentiments, explaining that “our [Hamas’s] understanding of Islam [is an] Islam which represent democracy, freedom of expression, freedom of worship, an Islam that doesn’t harm any people, but in which all citizens are equal. This is the Islam we will offer the people.” Interviewed in Nablus, April 17, 2011.

is considered a Western concept, often conflated with *atheism* (Tamimi 2002).⁵⁰³ Furthermore, many Islamists see no need to import such a concept, as Islam and *sharia* have dealt with religious minorities for centuries through the *dhimmi* system, which provides non-Muslims with almost the same rights and responsibilities as Muslims (Bahlul 2004).⁵⁰⁴ In any event, the interviewed Hamas members were by and large unable to clearly articulate what kind of state the organization wants to establish, resorting instead to the rather ambiguous term “civil state” seemingly without having agreed on what this really entails.

Hamas’s halfhearted attempts at Islamizing Gaza combined with its rather confusing rhetoric with regard to its goals while in government both work to strengthen the hypothesis that when faced with political realities, governing parties move toward the center of the political spectrum and moderate to avoid alienating too large parts of its constituency. Instead of implementing its ideological program, Hamas focused its efforts on staying in power, which—given the international boycott, strict Israeli blockade, and presence of powerful opposition groups within Gaza—was no easy task (Brown 2012, 12). In essence, Hamas prioritized security over politics and survival over ideology, monopolizing violence and persecuting all opposition movements, both secular and Islamist, while only to a limited degree pursuing its Islamizing agenda (ICG 2008, 8–12; Sayigh 2011).

However, Hamas could not leave behind its ideology or previously stated goals. As mentioned above, the ideological profile of a given party is expected to have a bearing on its behavior also after it assumes power, to various degrees counteracting the expected moderating tendency associated with being in government (Deschouwer 2008a, 13). And it is hypothesized that for religious parties, this resistance to change and moderation might be even stronger. This is due to the fact that religious parties do not enjoy a monopoly over their ideological and rhetorical frames, but must rely on religious institutions and authorities outside the party organization for their religious credentials (Gunther and Diamond 2003, 182). Despite the fact that it did not fully qualify as a political party at this time, this resistance to change stemming from its religious legacy is expected to have had an effect also on Hamas; it could not freely rephrase or re-frame the religious elements of its ideology to make its governing efforts easier, but had to take into account its ideological inheritance from the days of the Brotherhood. In short, there were limits as to how far Hamas could stray away

503 *Atheism*, or *kafir* in Arabic (meaning non-believer), has negative and even offensive connotations for many in the Arab world.

504 *Dhimmi* translates roughly as “protected minority.” Such protected minorities often have to pay an extra tax in exchange for residency, but are also exempt from certain duties.

from its Islamist roots without losing credibility, legitimacy, and potentially power.

In sum, both the rhetoric and practice of Hamas leave its intentions regarding the role of Islam in politics unclear. And these uncertainties regarding Hamas's goals have ramifications for the ability of observers and analysts to explain its behavior and ideological development. In turn, these uncertainties have fostered both the perception that Hamas remains a religious extremist movement, cleverly avoiding concepts with negative connotations in the West, and the view that Hamas has matured and moderated, moving toward political pragmatism while leaving its overly religious goals behind.

As is often the case when such diametrically opposed interpretations emerge, the truth probably lies somewhere in between. Based on impressions from long-term fieldwork in the occupied Palestinian territories and among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and through careful analysis of numerous interviews with Hamas members from these localities, it is argued here that the movement has indeed matured and turned increasingly pragmatic. However, it is equally obvious that there are limits to how far from its Islamic roots Hamas can stray without losing its core supporters. As such, it is argued that while Hamas was established as a religion-nationalistic liberation movement with absolutist territorial claims, it has since developed into a more pragmatic political party with *a less pronounced* focus on religion (Hroub 2010).

Self-preservation and -preparation

Based on the analyses in the previous two subsections, Hamas arguably did not take the leap from resistance movement to governing party after assuming power. Its leaders were anxious—and probably rightly so—that if Hamas did abandon resistance for governing, it might have risked organizational splits, and certainly a loss of popularity. Also, Hamas's Islamist credentials took a blow after it assumed office and took control of the Gaza Strip. The organization tried only to a limited degree to enforce an Islamist order, fearing both international and domestic repercussions (Brown 2012, 12). But by hesitating to follow up on its Islamist promises, Hamas left its more religiously inclined members and supporters disappointed.

The picture that appears, then, is that of a political organization caught between the divergent strategic goals of a governing party, a resistance movement, and a religious movement. On the one hand, Hamas's efforts to strike a balance between these goals and roles explain its

sometimes rather contradictory behavior. But on the other, they also indicate a high degree of pragmatism and a strong sense of self-preservation. As observed by Brown after his visit to Gaza in May 2011,

[m]uch less than an Islamic emirate or a guerilla encampment, I found an emerging party-state that bore some resemblance to that which emerged under Fatah in the 1990s: unaccountable and authoritarian, with democratic mechanisms atrophying (2012, 4).

Neither Islamizing nor utilizing its control over Gaza to intensify its resistance activities, Hamas instead prioritized organizational survival in the face of both exogenous and endogenous challenges. As such, the behavior of Hamas after its rise to power partly conforms to the hypothesized ideological development of a political party having reached a high level of institutionalization. Rather than being a vehicle for pursuing its ideological goals, Hamas seems to have become an end in itself as it only implemented as much of its policies as needed for it to remain in power.⁵⁰⁵ Or, in other words, Hamas's *manifest* ideology—i.e., resistance, liberation, and Islamism—had seemingly become *latent*, as organizational survival took precedence over ideology implementation (Panebianco 1988, 16, 54–65).

This should not be taken as proof that Hamas had abandoned its goal of a liberated Palestine governed in accordance with Islam, however. As argued by Ezbidi and discussed above, the harsh environmental conditions under which Hamas operated was a major factor explaining why it prioritized maintaining organizational unity and to preserve its rule in Gaza rather than implementing its political program (2013, 104). And prioritizing self-preservation over policy-implementation when the organization's survival is at stake does not signal that Hamas had abandoned “its conception of ‘resistance’” or for that matter “accepted that its statelet in Gaza is anything like an end point for its ambitions” (Brown 2012, 4).

Rather, there were indications that Hamas had ambitions beyond upholding the *status quo*, and that its focus on self-preservation was a necessary survival tactic. For the reason behind Hamas's sometimes contradictory and erratic behavior—i.e., its attempt to balance the role of governing party, liberation movement, and religious movement—also suggests that crucial elements within the organization remained committed to its ideological goals. As explained by Dr. Aziz Dweik,

505 This is similar to the Downsian parties, which “formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies” (Downs 1957, 28).

[w]e in Hamas say that “sometimes you must bow down to the wave.” But that doesn’t mean you *surrender* to the wave. You just have to wait until the situation changes, until things improve. And we in the Islamic movement are different from the nationalist; they are living in a hurry all the time, trying to achieve something now. We are just moving along steadily but slowly in order to achieve our goals. In religion you shouldn’t be in a hurry. If you think of Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, and the rest of the Prophets and messengers, they suffered very much before they achieved their goals. We are also suffering and cannot reach our goal today, but in the long run we will achieve what we want. But we are patient; we are not in a hurry.⁵⁰⁶

In short, Hamas’s roots as a religiously motivated liberation movement meant that it only with great difficulty could escape its ideological legacy. So, while Hamas’s stated goals appeared to be relegated to tools for organizational survival rather than ends in themselves, it is argued that it to a large extent was the environmental conditions that forced the organization to focus on self-preservation rather than policy implementation. And while its ideological credentials were weakened following its erratic behavior when in power, its manifest ideology became latent probably only as a temporary measure. In conclusion, Hamas was biding its time, prioritizing survival over ideology so that it still would be around as a political force to be reckoned with if or when conditions improved, ready to again pursue its ideological goals.

7.2.2 Organizational challenges and dilemmas

While the environmental conditions discussed above account for part of the ideological ambiguity exposed by Hamas while in government, various organizational challenges added to its erratic and sometimes contradictory behavior. As stipulated by relevant theories, a party assuming office—and in particular for the first time—is under immense pressure to adjust its organizational order and structure to better accommodate the demands of its new role (Deschouwer 2008a).⁵⁰⁷ And the way in and degree to which the party alters its organizational structure in response to the pressures of office will naturally have ramifications for its

506 Interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011.

507 Also, V. O. Key argued half a century ago that “[t]he party that runs the government is ... a party different from the one that won the elections” (1964, 651). In short, Key observed that political parties fulfill various functions vis-à-vis the electorate, as an organization in itself, and in office (see Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, 5–10 for a brief discussion of these functions). And as convincingly demonstrated by Katz, these three “faces” of the party force the party in public office “to serve two masters [the electorate and the party organization] with competing objectives and making incompatible demands” (2014, 183), which in turn has consequences both for the behavior of the government, and the development of the party organization.

behavior.

For one, being in government entails a great deal of responsibility, which in turn necessitates a different organizational structure than that of the comparatively free and independent role enjoyed by opposition parties or movements operating outside of institutionalized politics. Governments—and in particular in violent and volatile situations such as in occupied Palestine—are at times required to react swiftly to rapidly developing situations, an ability first-time office holders such as Hamas often lack. To accommodate this need for rapid decision-making, the organizational structure and order must be adjusted, which in turn threatens to upset existing horizontal and vertical relationships within the organization, and thus leads to altered behavior.

Second, and somewhat related, assuming office tends to alter the established horizontal power balance within the organization, away from the party leadership and toward the government (Katz 2014, 188–89). This is partly because the agenda of the government increasingly takes precedence over the agenda of the party itself, and partly because those in government by nature of their position command organizational, political, and financial resources not available to the party leadership.⁵⁰⁸

And third, the role of government gives rise to vertical power struggles within the organization. This is so because by assuming office, a party ostensibly obtains the power to implement policies. As a consequence, the stakes become higher in the internal battles over political prioritizations, thus intensifying these battles. Depending on the cohesion, discipline, and organizational clout of the party activists, these battles can ebb back and forth and lead to unpredictable behavior on part of the government.

The organizational dilemmas produced by assuming office and Hamas's responses will be analyzed in the following four subsections. First, the inadequacies of Hamas's decision-making procedures for its new role in government will be discussed briefly, followed by a subsection covering its fumbling attempts to rectify these organizational deficiencies by establishing a new executive committee. Then, the horizontal power struggles will be analyzed, essentially concluding that the Hamas government in Gaza obtained factional dominance by asserting control of certain crucial organizational zones of uncertainty previously in the hands of the Political Bureau. Finally, the vertical power struggle between

508 The intensity of these horizontal power struggles depends largely on the degree to which the leadership of the party and those forming government overlap.

the Hamas government and the various activist groups will be discussed, focusing in particular on the challenges arising from the increasing influence of the third generation radicals.

Inadequate decision-making procedures

Interviewed Hamas cadres frequently expressed pride in the organization's inclusive and democratic decision-making procedures. As discussed in previous chapters, both the decision to boycott the 1996 elections and the decision to participate in the 2006 elections were taken after extensive consultation with the rank-and-file and the various organizational units within Hamas. However, such inclusive and democratic decision-making procedures are slow-moving. As such, one can argue that there is an inherent tradeoff between intra-party democracy and efficiency, between the aims of organizational legitimacy and the need to sometimes respond rapidly to an environmental development or event.

As long as Hamas operated outside the political system and without responsibility to anyone but its own members, it made sense to consult the wider base before deciding on the way forward. By and large, a social movement or a party in opposition does not have to make rapid decisions in response to sudden political developments in the same way as governing parties; it can rely on previously agreed upon strategies.

The above is not the case for parties in position, and consequently not for Hamas after it won the 2006 elections. Quite suddenly, Hamas found itself in a situation for which its inclusive decision-making procedures were ill-suited. In particular, the situation in the spring of 2007 was pressing. Hamas had to respond to the military buildup of Fatah forces in Gaza, but the rapidly escalating situation barred the organization from utilizing its inclusive decision-making procedures; it had to decide then and there on how to act. And according to Ousama Hamdan,

[t]he decision to fight Fatah was taken in the field, not in any committee. The situation became worse very fast, and so someone had to make a decision. And it was a field decision made by the Hamas leadership in Gaza. They didn't put themselves in the position of the Political Bureau, but acted according to their responsibility at that moment, which was to respond to a difficult situation. So they have a mandate to do so, and to make a decision fast. But if they had decided a week in advance without consulting the rest of the movement, the decision

would not be accepted, because they don't have the mandate to do so. But since the situation was so bad, we had to react, and that was what the leadership in Gaza did.⁵⁰⁹

Also, according to Dr. Nashat Aqtash, a former Muslim Brother and close associate of Hamas, the takeover of Gaza was an exception to the regular decision-making procedures in Hamas. "It was not a normal situation. It was a 'to be or not to be' situation for Hamas. That was the problem there."⁵¹⁰

The mentioned kidnapping of Gilad Shalit also suggests that Hamas's decision-making procedures and organizational design were badly suited for its new position in government. As argued by Prof. Helga Baumgarten,

[t]hat very day [June 25, 2006] Hamas was supposed to sign the agreement with Fatah based on the Prisoner Document. Now, this very day, this military operation takes place. There is an obvious contradiction. The standard answer you get from Hamas will be that "we are in government, we are using a political strategy, but because we're under occupation, we're still following the option of resistance." And, number two, "we give a green-light to that operational wing, they decide when right moment comes." Now, obviously, this can't be. The political leadership would not green-light an operation of such a scale and importance at such a critical juncture.⁵¹¹

In short, the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit at that exact point in time might have served the interests of Hamas as a resistance movement, but was obviously not in the interest of Hamas as a political party (ICG 2007, 27); while it is unlikely that the kidnapping had any role in the failure to form a national unity government in the summer of 2006, it did no favors for Hamas's efforts to gain international legitimacy or demonstrate political maturity, as indicated by the immediate attempts by various leaders from the organization to secure the release of Shalit (Esposito 2006, 205).

Naturally, interviewed Hamas members by and large refused to admit any mistake or miscalculation on their part, neither in relation to the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit in 2006 nor the takeover of Gaza in 2007. However, both events strongly suggest that Hamas was

509 Ousama Hamdan, interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011.

510 Dr. Nashat Aqtash, interviewed in Ramallah, April 11, 2011.

511 Interviewed at Birzeit University, March 17, 2011.

ill-prepared organizationally to combine its new role as a governing party with that of a resistance movement. The organizational design and decision-making procedures that for long had served Hamas as a liberation movement operating outside the political system would have to be adapted to better suit the needs of Hamas in government. As a liberation movement, Hamas had benefited from having a federated and stratified organizational structure with its various branches and cells at times operating autonomously, as this had secured continued operations in the face of intense persecution (Zaboun 2009). But as a governing party, the leadership needed to assert control to ensure strategic consistency and a heightened degree of discipline both to avoid acting against its own interests and to increase its credibility as a governing party.

Internal elections and organizational development

And Hamas ostensibly had a good chance to adapt its organization to better fit its new role in government, when the organization arranged internal elections to its various leadership bodies in 2009. However, although certain leaders were replaced in the election, meaning that the *composition* of the Political Bureau changed, analysts close to Hamas argued that the elections were unlikely to produce any political or organizational changes (Ma'an 2009c).⁵¹²

Given Hamas's centripetal advancement procedures, a lack of change despite alteration in the leadership composition was to be expected. For, even if Hamas members rise through the ranks by way of elections, any cadre aiming for advancement must let himself be co-opted by those above him even to become a nominee. And advancement through co-optation is expected to produce and reproduce a homogenous leadership, which in turn has a stabilizing effect on the organization (Panebianco 1988, 249).

Added to this, there are no term limits for any position within Hamas.⁵¹³ Khaled Meshaal was, for example, reelected as leader of the Political Bureau for the fourth time in 2009. Without term limits, the conserving tendency stemming from the centripetal advancement procedures might be exacerbated, as the advantages of incumbency means that those already in powerful positions within Hamas are likely to be reelected time and again.⁵¹⁴

512 Khaled Meshaal was reelected as head of the Political Bureau, Mousa Abu Marzook stayed on as his deputy, and Ousama Hamdan, Hamas's representative in Lebanon, was given the Political Bureau's external relations portfolio. According to the source quoted in *Ma'an*, a number of the members in the Political Bureau reside on the West Bank and in Gaza, but their identities remain undisclosed for fear of Israeli assassination (2009c).

513 The lack of term limits was confirmed by senior Hamas leader Ousama Hamdan, interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011.

514 Advantages associated with incumbency include access to organizational resources, experience, and a lack

In sum, the effect of the centripetal advancement procedures is expected to produce an ideologically homogeneous leadership that, because of the lack of term limits, is likely to be reproduced in subsequent elections. And given the fact that leadership alternation is theorized to be one of the main sources for internally initiated party change (Panebianco 1988, 248–50), the opposite is expected to be true for Hamas; rather than initiating changes from the inside, Hamas will largely change only in response to external challenges and shocks (Harmel and Janda 1994).

Crucially, elements within Hamas realized that its decision-making and advancement procedures potentially could pose problems for the organization's performance and adaptability. Specifically with regard to changes in the composition of the leadership and the lack of term limits, Ousama Hamdan explained that

I would estimate that about 40 percent of the Political Bureau has been replaced in the last 23 years without Hamas having any term limits. But I have to admit that we're discussing it. There is a debate about limiting some specific positions to, for example, 2 or 3 terms. It's an important discussion to have, and it might be an improvement for the organization, but the institution which is supposed to make this decision is the Shura Council [Consultative Council], and so far there's no decision.⁵¹⁵

Although Hamas did not implement any term limits,⁵¹⁶ the discussion referred to by Hamdan indicates that the organization had realized that there were drawbacks associated with its current decision-making and advancement procedures.⁵¹⁷

What Hamas did to rectify its apparent organizational deficiencies was to establish a new executive committee charged with tackling exactly the kind of rapidly escalating situations as led to the 2007 takeover, i.e., situations in which Hamas could not rely on its traditional and inclusive decision-making procedures. As with other aspects of Hamas's internal workings and leadership, however, few certain facts have emerged about this new committee, and its exact role remains shrouded in secrecy (Yaari 2012).

of challengers (Cox and Katz 1996). Given the fact that Hamas always has framed itself as more professional and legitimate than the sclerotic and personality dependent Fatah—which still suffers from the passing of Arafat back in 2004—it is somewhat surprising that Hamas had not done more to rectify such an obvious organizational deficiency.

515 Interviewed in Beirut, November 18, 2011.

516 Khaled Meshaal was reelected as head of the Political Bureau for a fifth time in 2013 (Al Jazeera 2013).

517 Given the violent and volatile conditions under which Hamas for long has operated, it is not surprising that the organization has placed a premium on leadership stability.

Claims both about the Executive Committee's size and relation to the two pre-existing leadership bodies vary according to different sources. Hamas MP Nizar Ramadan,⁵¹⁸ for example, claimed that the Executive Committee has five members, all drawn from the approximately eleven members of the Political Bureau. According to a Hamas source quoted in *Ma'an* (2009c), however, the new committee has 25 members, including all seven members of the Political Bureau, the chair of the Consultative Council, his deputy and secretary, with the rest elected from the approximately 50 regular members of the Consultative Council. And finally, in a publication by PASSIA,⁵¹⁹ it was claimed that the Executive Committee contains 15 members elected from the 70 representatives in the Consultative Council, and that the seven-member Political Bureau in turn is elected by the Executive Committee from its own members (2013, 9–10).⁵²⁰

Suffice it to say, confusion and uncertainty abound regarding the top echelons of Hamas. And in lieu of verifiable details about the Executive Committee, it is difficult to ascertain with any confidence its exact role, mandate, and composition. But by looking at what is known about the structure, function, and behavior of the leadership prior to the establishment of the Executive Council, it is possible to deduce some of Hamas's organizational needs, and based on this evaluate the credibility of the various claims regarding the role and composition of this new committee.

To recapitulate, the two pre-existing leadership bodies had complementary roles. Whereas the Consultative Council was in charge of overarching ideology and strategy, the Political Bureau was tasked with the day-to-day management of the organization. Faced with the need to make rapid decisions with far-reaching consequences, such as the Gaza takeover in 2007, none of these leadership bodies were suitable to respond; the Consultative Council would have been too slow given that it is both large and geographically dispersed, whereas the Political Bureau lacked both the mandate and legitimacy to react to such a fundamental challenge on its own. This, in essence, left the Gaza leadership to its own devices, which obviously was an unsatisfactory state of affairs for Hamas.

Based on the above, it is assumed that the new committee would be designed so that it struck a balance between the efficiency of the Political Bureau and the legitimacy of the Consultative

518 Interviewed in Ramallah, May 8, 2011.

519 PASSIA is the acronym for the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs. See www.passia.org.

520 The Consultative Council has somewhere between 50 and 90 members, depending on which source is consulted (Ma'an 2009c; PASSIA 2013; Yaari 2012; Zaboun 2009).

Council. For the Executive Committee to achieve the necessary degree of legitimacy, it would have to include members from the Consultative Council, but it would obviously also need to be smaller to increase efficiency. The source quoted in *Ma'an* (2009c), that this new committee is a body made up of the Political Bureau and the leadership and a number of members from the Consultative Council, seems to fit the needs of Hamas and is thus considered the most credible claim. Such a committee would be sufficiently small to be efficient,⁵²¹ and by including members from the Consultative Council, it would also enjoy increased internal legitimacy.⁵²²

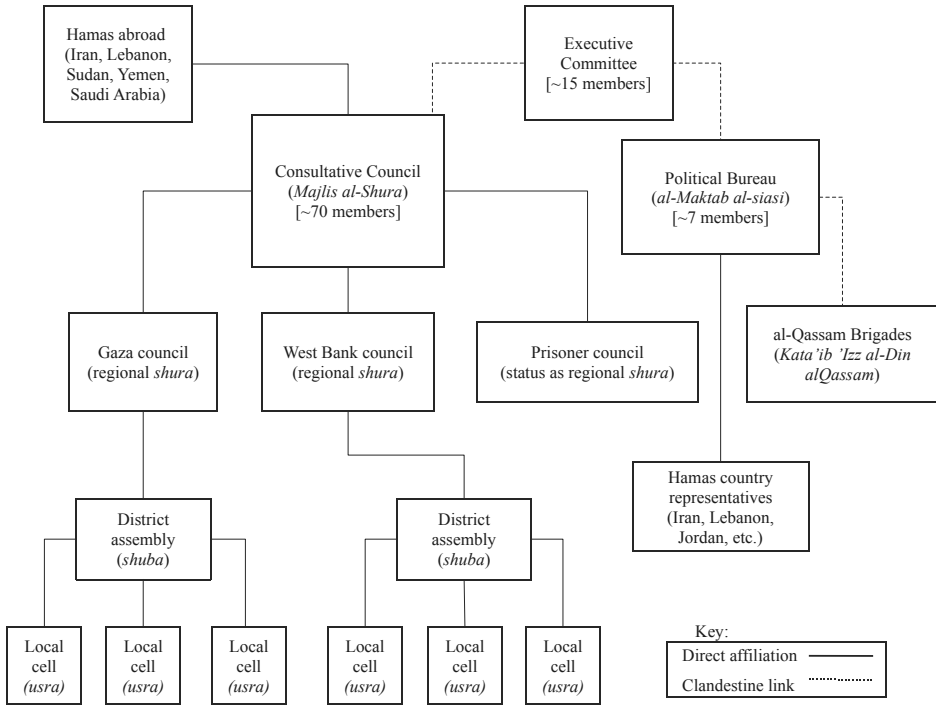
Too little is known about this new committee in particular and about the topmost leadership of Hamas in general for the above deductions and speculations to be anything but suggestive of the composition of this new Executive Committee. Neither the secondary literature nor interviewed Hamas members provide sufficient details regarding the internal workings of the organization for any categorical claims to be made. However, some interviewed Hamas leaders would confirm and negate the validity of various alternative organograms presented to them. Based on their responses and the above analysis, the organogram in Figure 10 below is proposed as a schematic representation of Hamas's organizational structure after the internal elections in 2009.

In any event, the formation of this new Executive Committee is taken to indicate that Hamas realized that the organizational structure that had served it well in the past was in need of a revamp; Hamas's new role as a governing party demanded other things than before, and although the organization struggled with conservative and self-perpetuating tendencies, the leadership still proved to be willing and capable of responding to this new situation by restructuring parts of the leadership so that the organization would be better suited for handling the realities of being in government.

521 While the source in *Ma'an* claims the committee had 25 members (2009c), Yaari suggests it has 19 members (2012).

522 In short, the claim by Nizar Ramadan that the Executive Committee in essence is a sub-committee of the Political Bureau is considered to be unlikely. The Political Bureau itself would have been efficient enough to respond, but lacked the mandate and legitimacy to do so, something a sub-committee would do nothing to rectify. Also, the claim by PASSIA that the new committee was elected by, but not from, the Consultative Council, and that the seven-member Political Bureau in turn is elected by and from the Executive Committee, badly fits the needs of Hamas and is thus also considered unlikely. While such a larger committee potentially might be more legitimate, it would resemble the Political Bureau in too many respects, and thus seems to be a rather superfluous committee.

Figure 10: Schematic organogram of Hamas, post-2009



(Source: Based on interviewed Hamas members and supplemented by information gleaned from the relevant literature. *Usra* is Arabic for family, *shuba* means division, and *shura* translates into consultation.)

The horizontal power struggle and factional dominance—from abroad to Gaza

By forming government and later taking over the Gaza Strip, Hamas went straight from being a movement to becoming a party-in-government. As for most parties taking office for the first time, this posed organizational challenges for Hamas (Deschouwer 2008a, 10–12). In short, assuming office—and in particular for the first time—often creates new power dynamics at the topmost echelons in political parties, pitting the leadership of the party organization against the cabinet ministers. For Hamas, this meant that new relationships had to be formed between the government, made up mostly of Hamas cadres from the Gaza Strip, and the

leaderships both on the West Bank and in exile.

Similar to the conventional party experience, Hamas did not alter much of its structure as a consequence of assuming office. Apart from the creation of the Executive Committee discussed above, the command structure formally stayed the same; the government in Gaza, made up primarily of the senior leadership there, remained nominally subject to the existing leadership, and primarily the Political Bureau (Rafat Nasif interviewed in Zaboun 2009).

However, the government in Gaza needed—and was given—ample leeway in the day-to-day governance of the Gaza Strip. In the words of Dr. Daraghme, “our government should do what the Political Bureau says when it comes to the larger political agenda and strategy of Hamas, but it has the right to do as it pleases in questions related only to Gaza.”⁵²³ In short, the Hamas government in Gaza was free to act according to its own prioritizations within the parameters laid down by the topmost leadership.

Although the delegation of day-to-day management of Gaza to the Hamas leadership there was an organizationally sound decision, the exact division of responsibilities and authority between the various branches within Hamas remained unclear. And the political realities associated with governing inevitably clashed with the broader and more long-term interests of the larger organization, prompting an intensification of internal power struggles within Hamas. As discussed in previous chapters, most analysts have looked to Hamas’s federated structure as the main source of disagreement and factionalism within the organization, assuming that because the respective branches operate under different conditions, they tend to adopt divergent positions on various issues (see e.g., Y. Cohen and White 2009). And although it was concluded in the previous chapter that the factionalizing effect of Hamas’s geographic dispersions has been overestimated, tensions between its geographic branches did intensify in the wake of its 2007 takeover of Gaza (ICG 2008, 26).

From 2007 onward, the internal power balance tilted heavily in favor of the Hamas leadership in Gaza, whose personnel largely overlapped with that of the government. The external leadership, and mainly the Political Bureau, constituted the other main contenders for organizational dominance. The West Bank branch, the other main power center in Hamas, was weakened in the years after the 2007 takeover.⁵²⁴ Fatah-dominated Palestinian security forces,

523 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

524 West Bank Hamas leaders interviewed by the International Crisis Group said that their weakened position and the dire conditions under which they operated had prompted their local leaders to adopt radical positions more often associated with the Political Bureau (ICG 2012, 17).

assisted by Israel and sponsored by the US, arbitrarily detained both assumed and *bona fide* Hamas officials *en masse*, looted their offices, and closed down organizations alleged to be affiliated with Hamas (HRW 2008, 20).⁵²⁵ In short, the organizational influence of the West Bank branch was severely reduced as a consequence of the suppression it suffered (ICG 2012, 16–17).⁵²⁶

Although the Hamas government was nominally subservient to the Political Bureau, it was in firm control of Gaza. And controlling the Gaza Strip—however isolated and poor—provided the leadership there with two crucial sources of authority and power, namely that of monopoly of violence and the capability to extract taxes (Pelham 2012b, 3). These sources of authority in turn had ramifications for the power balance between the Political Bureau and the Gaza leadership. Two of the main reasons the Political Bureau had enjoyed such a powerful position within Hamas stemmed from its influence over the al-Qassam Brigades, and the fact that it controlled much of the financial flows. And as in other organizations, authority in Hamas ultimately rests with the faction in control of such crucial “zones of uncertainty” (Panebianco 1988, 33–35).⁵²⁷

After assuming office in 2006, the Hamas government was naturally expected to uphold law and order and ensure at least a semblance of domestic security. But, as the pre-existing PA security forces were filled with Fatah loyalists who refused to serve under Hamas, the government had initially no way to fulfill its electoral promise of increased security. To rectify this, Hamas founded the Executive Force in May 2006 as its own, parallel police force (Sayigh 2011, 50).⁵²⁸ Initially 3 000 men strong, the Executive Force rapidly expanded to at least some 5 800 men by mid-2007, most of whom were recruited from the ranks of Hamas (Milton-Edwards 2008a, 666).

525 The head of Preventive Security in the West Bank explained that “our arrests and measures against Hamas came because of threats to our existence here and our political interests ... we are concerned that something may happen here like in Gaza” (HRW 2008, 20).

526 Although Hamas’s Prisoners Committee traditionally has enjoyed a high degree of internal legitimacy, e.g., as indicated by the status bestowed upon the aforementioned Prisoners Document (see section 7.1.2 on pp. 248ff.), it has never been able to compete for organizational dominance.

527 Zones of uncertainty refers to “areas of organizational unpredictability [on which the] survival and functioning of an organization depend,” and the control of such zones, e.g., finance and the armed wing, constitute a “resource that is ‘spendable’ in the internal power games” in an organization (Panebianco 1988, 33–35).

528 According to Milton-Edwards, one reason for Hamas to establish a new force rather than rely on its own armed wing for policing the Gaza Strip was that “Hamas saw a need to establish a domestic policing force that, unlike its resistance arm, would have a public face and presence” (2008a, 665).

Nominally, the Executive Force was created as a regular and neutral police force tasked with upholding law and order in Gaza. However, it was accused of partisan policing and extra-judicial persecution, in particular targeting Fatah cadres (Milton-Edwards 2008a; Sayigh 2011). Additionally, it played an important role as a paramilitary group supporting the al-Qassam Brigades when Hamas won the June 2007 war in Gaza. As such, the Executive Force seemed to be neither neutral nor purely a police corps. Despite such obvious shortcomings, it was considered an effective and efficient police force, successfully reducing both regular and violent crimes in Gaza and thereby restoring public confidence in the police (Milton-Edwards 2008a, 672).

The creation of this Executive Force was what gave the Hamas government the capability to project its power inside of Gaza, and a chance to monopolize legitimate violence. And while the force itself was dissolved after it officially became part of the regular PA police forces in Gaza in the fall of 2007, this restructuring and reorganization of the various police forces effectively led to the integration of Hamas members and loyalists in the police force. Hamas thus gained control of what had previously been Fatah strongholds, and kept in firm charge of the Gaza Strip (Milton-Edwards 2008a, 669–70).

By first establishing its own police force, and later gaining control of the regular police forces, the Hamas government increased its powers, not only within Gaza, but also in Hamas's internal organizational power struggles. In essence, the police force broke the monopoly over Hamas's means of violence previously enjoyed by Political Bureau, and thus gave the Gaza branch increased maneuverability vis-à-vis the exiled leadership of the organization (Pelham 2012b, 3).

Hamas also needed money to govern.⁵²⁹ But because of the international boycott, aid to the PA institutions in Gaza had all but dried up (Qarmout and Béland 2012). This had direct budgetary consequences for the Hamas government, which had to look for alternative sources of income to compensate for the shortfall in aid (Milton-Edwards 2007, 308). But tax hikes, perhaps the most obvious recourse, would have done little to remedy the situation; the international boycott had severe ramifications for the tax base in Gaza, as the economy there was highly dependent on the now reduced flows of international aid.

529 Even if Hamas as an organization had revenues of its own, these were far from sufficient to cover the expenses of governing and managing the Gaza Strip.

Paradoxically, the boycott and isolation of Gaza indirectly helped the Hamas government avoid almost certain bankruptcy. In response to the embargo effectuated by Israel and Egypt, Gazans had resorted to digging smuggling tunnels into the neighboring and sparsely populated Sinai region in Egypt. In 2010 it was estimated that 1 000 such tunnels were in operation, employing some 7 000 people (Zanotti 2010, 8). Everything from weapons, construction material, electronic appliances, vehicles, and livestock are smuggled through these tunnels (Muhaisen and Ahlbäck 2012; Pelham 2012a). By collecting import duties on goods smuggled through these tunnels, the Hamas government managed to keep afloat and pay only somewhat reduced wages to its civil servants (ICG 2012, 34; Sayigh 2010).⁵³⁰

A side effect of being in charge of the economy and controlling crucial parts of the financial flows within Hamas, however, was the inevitable accusations of cronyism and corruption (McGreal 2011). Hamas's various detractors, and in particular the Fatah government on the West Bank, would be expected to level such accusations against the organization. And stories like this one abound:

A Qassam guy [member of Hamas's military wing] who used to be arrested by PA intelligence now has several cars and everything he wants. You're going to take that from him? There are many interests in the status quo; I remember when those involved in fuel smuggling through the Rafah tunnels arranged for mortar attacks against the Nahal Oz fuel terminal bordering Israel because they didn't want competition (Egyptian official interviewed in Cairo, 21 February 2012 by ICG 2012, 35).

Hearsay and accusations from the enemies of Hamas are hardly reliable proof of corruption, but surveys conducted by the Palestinian branch of Transparency International did indicate that bribery for public services was widely perceived to be a problem, in particular in areas of Gaza traditionally loyal to Fatah (Aman 2012, 18–19). There were also indications that government corruption was deemed a problem within Hamas,⁵³¹ prompting some of its leaders

530 The so-called "tunnel economy" was estimated by local bankers in Gaza to have provided Hamas with income in the range of USD 150–200 million in 2009 (Sayigh 2010, 6). Estimates by an economics professor relayed in a report by the International Crisis Group in 2012 were a bit more conservative, at somewhat below USD 100 million per year (ICG 2012, 34).

531 Critical voices were also heard from within the organization. In a leaked letter to the head of the Political Bureau, Khaled Meshaal, al-Qassam commander Ahmed Jabari warned that a faction within the Gaza leadership "has taken a liking to governing and tasted its pleasures [and] amasses booty" (Sayigh 2011, 124).

to defect.⁵³² In any event, it is considered likely that many of the leaders in Gaza did gain personally from the spoils of office (ICG 2012, 34).

Notwithstanding the validity of these accusations of corruption, the Hamas government remained fiscally responsible and continued to provide most public services for its constituency. According to various in-depth studies, public education (Brown 2012), health services (Malka 2012), and policing (Sayigh 2011) were provided at a level comparable to the pre-2007 situation. In short, the Hamas government secured sufficient revenues from various sources to continue operating as a statelet in Gaza, despite suffering international boycott and almost complete isolation.

To summarize, the Hamas government in Gaza essentially robbed the Political Bureau of its two most important assets for upholding its dominant position, namely control over financial flows and monopoly over the organization's means of violence. And as control of these crucial "zones of uncertainty" moved from the Political Bureau to Gaza, so did the organizational power balance. In short, the Hamas branch in Gaza became increasingly powerful from 2006 onward, and can be said to have obtained factional dominance of Hamas after the 2007 takeover of Gaza.

The vertical power struggle—the power of activists

As discussed above, the Hamas government behaved somewhat erratically and unpredictably, as it tried to balance the immediate aim of remaining in power with its stated goals of resisting the occupation and enforcing an Islamist order in Gaza. It is argued here that this behavior in part can be explained by the competing aims of the leadership in Gaza and the activists within Hamas. In essence, and in line with the moderation thesis, the leadership seemed to prioritize organizational survival after assuming power, therefore taming their ideological commitments (Tezcur 2010). However, the Hamas government could not act unencumbered; it had to take into account the preferences of its rank-and-file to ensure continued internal legitimacy and organizational survival. In particular, it had to accommodate the activists and believers within the organization, as these were the ones who had sacrificed the most for Hamas. And as theorized, because these organizational strata are expected to be most invested in the collective identity of the organization, they are also hypothesized to be the most radical and ideologically committed (May 1973; Panebianco 1988, 26–27).

532 One such defector implicitly compared the behavior of his own organization with that of Fatah, stating that "[e]ven Hamas does not now represent the people ... Four or five years ago we did. But now many are against Hamas, especially in Gaza" (ICG 2012, 14).

In addition to the political pragmatists in charge of Hamas, two ideologically and somewhat overlapping groups can be identified, namely the religious radicals and the militants (Sayigh 2011, 119–20). Prioritizing Islamization and violent resistance respectively, it was these activist groupings who reined in the pragmatism of the leadership. Crucially, these groups partly coincided with the generational cleavages in Hamas, which in turn helps explain why the infighting along these ideological and strategic lines intensified in the years after the takeover of Gaza.⁵³³ In a somewhat crude categorization, the three generations and their associated ideological profiles are as follows:

The first and oldest generation are those who initially were members of the Muslim Brotherhood. They have traditionally been proponents of the religious aspect of Hamas's ideology (Robinson 1996, 2004). The second generation came to the fore during the first *intifada* and the early Oslo years, and eventually came to prioritize pragmatic politics over both religious credentials and maximalist territorial claims (Wikileaks cable 2010a). The third generation were those who rose through the ranks in the latter part of the 1990s and during the second *intifada*. These have been credited with the re-militarization of Hamas, and increasingly also associated with a radical interpretation of political Islam (Sayigh 2011, 119–20).

The leadership essentially belongs to the second-generation Hamas cadres; most of the political leaders both inside the occupied territories and abroad belong to this cohort, including head of the Political Bureau, Khaled Meshaal, and the Gaza PM, Ishmael Haniye. By and large, this generation has been considered to be politically motivated and pragmatically inclined, and have come—at least in part as a product of their elevated position—to prioritize organizational survival over ideological aims (Sayigh 2011, 119). Somewhat simplified, it was these leaders and their preferred policies that were challenged by the first- and third-generation cadres (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 127).

The first generation include personalities such as Hamas co-founder Abdel Fatah Dukhan and former leader Dr. Habbash. These Brothers largely constitute the religious leadership of

533 While various authors have advanced the argument about generational cohorts in Hamas (e.g., Robinson 2004), the former speaker of the PLC, Rawhi Fattouh, during communication with the American consulate in Jerusalem, made an especially strong case for its relevance (Wikileaks cable 2010a). His analysis was leaked by the whistleblower organization WikiLeaks as part of the so-called Cablegate incident, which saw the release of 251 287 classified United States diplomatic cables. Various newspapers were involved in the release of these cables, including *The Guardian* (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/the-us-embassy-cables>), *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/statesecrets.html>), and *Der Spiegel* (http://www.spiegel.de/international/topic/wikileaks_diplomatic_cables/). WikiLeaks also maintains a dedicated site for the release of these cables, found at <https://wikileaks.org/cablegate.html>.

Hamas, but for many years they have lacked real influence in day-to-day decision-making (Wikileaks cable 2010a). As Dr. Habbash explained, he left Hamas exactly because he and his compatriots from the Brotherhood days had become sidelined by the second-generation leaders, who “are not religious men” but “just use Islam to achieve political victories or political interests.”⁵³⁴ Importantly, Hamas’s takeover of Gaza further undermined the already waning influence of this generation; the cost-benefit analysis underlying the political pragmatism adopted by the Hamas government was incompatible with the ethical and religious principles advocated by these religious leaders (ICG 2008, 26).

Hamas’s halfhearted attempts to enforce an Islamic order in Gaza, as discussed above, can in part be explained by the lacking influence of this generation of religious leaders; many of their attempts to Islamize Gaza were successfully stopped by the political leadership. As explained by second generation Hamas leader and speaker of the PLC, Dr. Aziz Dweik,

I was one of the people who asked the Gaza government not to apply *sharia* rules. You know they tried to make the ladies inside in Gaza to cover their heads! And I sent a message saying this is the wrong way to approach this issue! We need people to accept the ideology as well as the religion itself from inside; we cannot hope to convince anybody of the merits of Islam by imposing it from the top down.⁵³⁵

In contrast to the first generation Hamas leaders, those in the third and youngest generation saw their organizational influence increase during and after the second *intifada*. This generation is considered to be both the most militant and ideologically radical, and as those from the first generation, also skeptical of the political leadership’s accommodating line (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 129–30). Most third-generation activists are found among the rank-and-file and commanders of the al-Qassam Brigades, and include leaders such as Sheikh Nizar Rayan and Ahmed Jabari (Sayigh 2010, 4). In particular, Ahmed Jabari’s career in Hamas is considered instructive and typical of the third-generation activists.

Initially a militant activist in Fatah, Jabari was recruited to Hamas while spending time in Israeli prisons in the early 1990s. It seems likely that he joined Hamas because he—as with many Fatah activists at the time—was unhappy with the accommodating line adopted by the

534 Interviewed in Ramallah, May 27, 2011.

535 Interviewed in Hebron, April 13, 2011.

Fatah leadership during the Oslo process.⁵³⁶ Steadily rising through the ranks of the al-Qassam Brigades after his release in 1995, Jabari was eventually made operational head of Hamas's armed wing in 2002. From this position he planned a number of the most lethal suicide attacks Hamas carried out inside Israel during the second *intifada* (Ginsburg 2012). Jabari has also been credited as the mastermind behind the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit in 2006, and as the strategist leading Hamas to victory over Fatah in the 2007 intra-Palestinian war over Gaza (AFP 2011).

Jabari belonged to the first of a number of waves of new recruits in Hamas's history that have largely been absorbed by the al-Qassam Brigades (Argo 2004; Hroub 2004). And many of these recruits joined to actively resist the occupation, not necessarily because they believed in the political project pursued by the leadership, or the traditional Islamist ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. It should also be reiterated that the al-Qassam Brigades was established as a distinct and partly isolated organizational unit within Hamas, complete with its own infrastructure and command structures. By design, it was intended to operate autonomously from the political leadership (ICG 2007, 27).⁵³⁷ While such an organizational structure made sense as long as Hamas remained a liberation movement, it was incompatible with the governing efforts of Hamas. In the words of Hamas MP Dr. Daraghme, "Hamas is responsible for the lives of people in Gaza, and therefore we have to make truce with Israel. This means there will be a contradiction between the ideology of resistance and the political program in Gaza."⁵³⁸

Because of the dominant position of second-generation Hamas leaders, their pragmatic political program took precedence over this ideology of resistance. Consequently, the al-Qassam Brigades was asked to comply with the various short- and medium-term ceasefire agreements with Israel (Esposito 2010, 196, 2012, 237). Although some "mistakes were made" by the militants (Ma'an 2008), most complied with the decisions made by the political leadership.⁵³⁹ Given their commitment to violent resistance, the militants were naturally loath to see their role in Hamas be sidelined; by upholding the ceasefires and moratoriums, the al-Qassam Brigades thus demonstrated a high degree of discipline.⁵⁴⁰

536 See section *A new composition: persecution, recruitment, and defection* on pp. 171ff.

537 Note, however, that it for long has been widely assumed that the al-Qassam Brigades take its instructions from the Political Bureau (Hroub 2006b, 121–22).

538 Interviewed in Ramallah, April 10, 2011.

539 The previously discussed kidnapping of Gilad Shalit is a prime example of how Hamas's role as government clashed with its role as resistance movement.

540 It should be mentioned that rogue elements from the third-generation activists have been accused of taking

A number of al-Qassam fighters did, however, leave Hamas because of the moderate line adopted by the government (Sayigh 2011, 124). These defectors left not only because they had been relegated to conduct border patrols instead of actively resisting the occupation, but also because many of them were adherents of *Salafism*, a radical interpretation of Islam characterized by its literal reading of the Koran (Milton-Edwards and Farrell 2010, 129). Similar to the religious leaders from the first generation, these *Salafists* were disappointed with their government's halfhearted efforts to enforce an Islamist order in Gaza (ICG 2011, 19). Those who left Hamas often joined one of the smaller *Salafi* movements that had surfaced in Gaza since the early 2000s.⁵⁴¹ Most of these groups opposed Hamas for its lack of religiosity, and many also actively resisted Israel in breach of the various ceasefire agreements.⁵⁴²

In sum, the second-generation Hamas leaders in charge faced a number of organizational challengers after assuming control of Gaza. While in opposition, Hamas capitalized from allowing for a wide range of divergent opinions to co-exist, as this meant it could recruit and draw support from various constituencies. But once in position, Hamas could no longer “let a thousand flowers bloom;” to stay in power and actually deliver on some of its promises, it had to prioritize some aims over others, promising to disappoint not only a part of the electorate, but also activists within the organization. And while Hamas in Gaza indeed lost popular support and legitimacy throughout the period in question as it became increasingly authoritarian,⁵⁴³ it remained unchallenged and in firm control for the same reason. Rather than from the electorate, then, the main challenge came from within the organization.

And the main challengers were the third-generation militant *Salafists*.⁵⁴⁴ Disatisfied with both the accommodating line adopted by their government vis-à-vis Israel and the halfhearted efforts to enforce an Islamist order in Gaza, some of these activists defected, and many of those who stayed became increasingly vocal in their disapproval of the middle-of-the-road

it upon themselves to enforce an Islamist order in Gaza (ICG 2008, 16).

541 See Milton-Edwards (2014) for a thorough explication of the various Islamist groups operating in Gaza.

542 A plethora of such groups exist, including the al-Qaeda sympathizers in Jund Ansar Allah, which Hamas tried to violently close down in 2009 (Ma'an 2009b), and the more nationalistic umbrella organization Jaljalat, made up of movements such as the Swords of Truth Brigade, the Shari'a Council of the Army of Islam, the Salafi-Islamic Jama'ah, and the Islamic Liberation Army (Ganor 2013, 123). See Cragin (2009) for an analysis of the ideological differences between Hamas and those sympathetic to al-Qaeda.

543 See Figure 9 on page 255.

544 The power struggle between the Political Bureau and the leadership in Gaza will probably also continue to affect the organizational and ideological development of Hamas. Also, the first generation Brothers continue to exercise a limited but crucial influence, pushing for further Islamization of Gaza.

pragmatism adopted by their government. The rising influence of these third-generation radicals thus pose a serious dilemma of the “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” type for Hamas; if the leadership stay their course, they risk losing additional activists to the *Salafi* groups, which means losing its most committed members to the opposition. But by accommodating the third-generation activists, Hamas risks not only provoking the more moderate rank-and-file, but also losing additional popular support and domestic legitimacy, as well as any hopes of gaining international recognition.

In short, whichever response the leadership opts for, it will inevitably provoke protests and discontent within the organization. The way in which the Hamas leadership responds to or manages to contain the challenges posed by the third-generation radicals will thus have a direct bearing on the future nature of the organization. In the end, the particular ideological nature of the intra-Hamas faction that comes out on top will have consequences for the willingness and ability of the organization to reconcile with Fatah, reunite the two “Palestines,” and eventually become part of the negotiations with Israel (Sayigh 2011, 127).⁵⁴⁵

7.3 The triple roles of Hamas—government, statelet, and liberation movement

Based on the above analyses, it is concluded that, despite assuming office in 2006 and ruling the Gaza Strip as the sole authority since 2007, Hamas did not complete its transmutation from movement to party by 2011; neither its ideology nor its organizational structure developed sufficiently away from the logic of a liberation movement toward that of a political party. For one, its erratic and contradictory behavior in government revealed a lack of the ideological and strategic consistency expected from a party in government. Rather than articulating a coherent political program, Hamas instead fell back on what Ezbidi has argued is its “default position of ambiguity on key issues” (2013, 104).⁵⁴⁶ And second, its organizational structure remained underdeveloped and ill-suited for governing (Younis 2012). Although Hamas tried to rectify its deficient decision-making procedures, unclear divisions of responsibility between its various leadership bodies remained, and certain activist groups exercised a degree of influence that threatened to destabilize the organization.

545 The experience of Hamas thus resembles that of other Islamist movements obtaining power. As argued by al-Anani, the responsibility of government threatens the “organizational cohesiveness and discipline that seemed to characterize Islamist movements” (2012, 469).

546 According to Ezbidi, Hamas resorted to such ambiguity in an attempt to “maintain the movement’s internal unity and to preserve its rule in Gaza” (2013, 104).

Importantly, Hamas's arrested transmutation had consequences for its behavior in government. Its legacy as a religious liberation movement remained such a crucial marker of organizational identity that it arguably led Hamas to govern Gaza with "a movement's mentality," which in turn sped up the "evolution of a 'party state,' where the government is seriously confused with the political movement" (Younis 2012). So, not only did confusion reign supreme regarding where the Hamas *organization* ended and the Hamas *government* began, but also the demarcation lines between the organization as such and the statelet of Gaza were unclear.

Ostensibly, Hamas had ambitions of avoiding this confusion.⁵⁴⁷ To achieve this, Hamas initially required that anyone taking up a government position had to resign their leadership position within the movement (Brown 2012, 15). However, whether this requirement ever was honored is difficult to say, for it was abandoned early on. As is often the case for political parties in government, ministers from Hamas capitalized on their positions, translating government power into organizational power (Ware 1995, 349). It is well known, for example, that Ishmael Haniye, by nature of his position as prime minister, also became a powerful movement leader (Brown 2012, 16).

Crucially, such dual roles gave rise to dual loyalties, which in turn exacerbated the already intensifying power struggle between the Hamas government in Gaza and the Political Bureau in Damascus. For, as detailed above, after taking over the Gaza Strip in 2007, the Hamas leadership there effectively broke the monopoly previously enjoyed by the Political Bureau over important policy portfolios, such as diplomatic relations and military and economic decision-making (Pelham 2012b, 3). And as the Hamas leaders in Gaza enjoyed increasing organizational influence, they curbed the maneuverability of the Political Bureau.

The dual roles and loyalties of the Hamas leaders in Gaza, combined with unclear divisions of responsibilities between the various organizational units within Hamas, led to conflicting interpretations of authority and mandates. In particular, with regard to various attempts to achieve national reconciliation with Fatah, the unclear mandate and internal squabbles within Hamas had a negative bearing; whereas the Political Bureau officially remained the topmost executive body within Hamas, and thus was mandated to negotiate with Fatah, the leadership in Gaza proved powerful enough to stop the implementation of national reconciliation

547 At least in part, this was motivated by the need for Hamas to prove that it could do better than the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus, which for long had drawn severe criticism for failing to distinguish between its various roles as proto-state, government, liberation organization, and political party.

agreements negotiated by Khaled Meshaal on behalf of the movement (ICG 2012, 18).⁵⁴⁸

By and large, the Hamas leadership in Gaza pointed to differences in ideology and strategy as the major sticking points; reconciliation with Fatah would entail admissions along the line of the Quartet Principles, i.e., recognition of Israel, adherence to previous agreements, and the renunciation of violence. It would also mean integration of Hamas into the PLO, decisions regarding the functioning of the PA, and, crucially, a joint Palestinian security strategy, in turn implying a unification of the various factional security services. And while the Gaza branch ostensibly could agree to some of these points, they complained that they had not been sufficiently consulted during the negotiation process, and thus that the agreements lacked internal legitimacy (ICG 2012, 18).⁵⁴⁹

Although lack of internal legitimacy, differences in ideology, and disagreements over the preferred strategy all might explain part of the reason why the Gaza branch proved reluctant to agree to the reconciliation attempts, it seems likely that these were mostly convenient excuses hiding the real rationale behind their intransigence. For, the organizational interests of the Gaza branch and the Political Bureau diverged at the most basic levels; the former prioritized self-preservation and entrenchment of their authority in Gaza, whereas the latter pursued national unity as a way to reclaim organizational dominance (Pelham 2012b, 3–4).⁵⁵⁰ Crucially, because of the failure to distinguish between Hamas the organization and Hamas the government, the Gaza branch had obtained sufficient organizational clout to secure that their interests were not encroached upon. If the ministers in Gaza had given up their leadership positions within the organization as was initially intended, the Political Bureau would probably have retained its dominant position.

In short, such a confusion of roles and mandates is strongly suggestive of an organizational order insufficiently developed to bear the responsibility of real power and authority. Lacking an established division of labor between the various leadership bodies, and without vertical command structures being honored by the different organizational units, the divergent interests of the Hamas leadership in Gaza and the Political Bureau were allowed not only to play out and affect the political development in occupied Palestine, but also become

548 Note that Hamas leaders on the West Bank at times were also skeptical toward the reconciliation line adopted by the exiled leadership (ICG 2012, 33).

549 The respective aspects of the reconciliation process have been covered by various scholars. See in particular Tuastad (2013), Challand (2009), PASSIA (2013), and Ezbidi (2013).

550 In most reconciliation scenarios, the Hamas government would be replaced by a national unity government populated with technocrats.

increasingly entrenched, promising to remain a source of division for the time being.

Of course, the regional, domestic, and organizational developments might eventually force Hamas to shed the mantle of resistance and continue its transmutation toward a proper political party (ICG 2012, 36).⁵⁵¹ However, Hamas has managed to cling onto power in Gaza in the face of domestic discontent and decreasing popularity, international boycott and territorial isolation, as well as the discussed organizational dilemmas and power struggles. And although there is little reason to believe that Hamas has abandoned its goals of a liberated, Islamist Palestine, its overriding priority seems clearly to be the consolidation and entrenchment of authority and territorial control of Gaza, and continued organizational survival (Sayigh 2011, 122). In conclusion, Hamas seems to have reached an awkward but apparently sustainable equilibrium between that of a liberation movement, a governing party, and a party-state (Brown 2012, 15).

7.4 Hamas's level of institutionalization in 2011

As in previous chapters, the above analyses, supplemented with data from interviews and the existing literature, form the basis for the following brief assessment of Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the period in question, as measured in the four elements of *systemness*, *decisional autonomy*, *value infusion*, and *reification*.

It is pertinent to note that being in power is assumed to affect the degree of institutionalization for any given party. More specifically, being in power is expected to strain the degree of systemness, exposing potential weak points in the routinization of the organization, whereas the decisional autonomy probably increase when an organization obtains real power and access to the organizational and financial resources of office. In terms of value infusion, being in office might lead to decreased organizational cohesion, as the governing party is forced to make unpopular decisions. And finally, being in power is expected to increase or at least cement the degree to which a party is reified in the public imagination.

551 The end of the Israeli occupation would probably be a condition for Hamas to renounce its resistance ideology.

7.4.1 Systemness

By 2011, Hamas's level of systemness is seen as having remained more or less at the same medium level as at the end of the second *intifada*. While a number of indicators, such as becoming increasingly financially self-reliant, pointed in a positive direction,⁵⁵² certain crucial indicators patently indicated decreased systemness, most importantly the lack of routinization in Hamas's decision-making procedures revealed by its erratic behavior while in government.

Although data on Hamas's financial situation traditionally have been scattered and unreliable, this changed after it assumed office, as large parts of its budget became a matter of public record.⁵⁵³ According to figures compiled by the Israeli domestic intelligence service, Shin Bet, Hamas's budget in 2010 totaled to some USD 390 million, divided between USD 200 million for government operating expenses, USD 50 million for Hamas's civilian and political organization, and USD 40 million for its military wing (Wikileaks cable 2010b). Corroborating these figures, sources quoted in a report by the Palestinian newspaper *Ma'an* claimed that Hamas's 2012 budget was around USD 540 million, a 13-fold increase since its USD 40 million budget in 2005 (Ma'an 2011).

And while it is difficult to trace the source of this money, it is clear that being in office provided the Hamas government with new sources of revenue. And even if various accounts and speculations point in contradictory directions,⁵⁵⁴ it seems likely that Hamas did increase its level of financial self-reliance after assuming office, and thereby decreased its dependency on international sponsors.

However, and as explicated in the above discussions regarding Hamas's organizational developments while in power, both its decision-making procedures and command structures were found wanting, indicating a decreased level of routinization. Its leaders in Gaza were forced to improvise when faced with various challenges, as the topmost leadership proved incapable of responding in time to rapidly escalating situations. And while the new Executive Committee was established to rectify this organizational deficiency, it was too little, too late; the Gaza branch had, by way of its access to financial and organizational resources in government, obtained factional dominance and refused to let the exiled leadership continue to

552 Arranging internal elections is also indicative of routinization and thus systemness.

553 Given that Hamas had not completed its transmutation to a political party, certain budget posts nevertheless remained secret.

554 According to Hamas leader Salah Bardawil, Iranian funding had, for example, decreased steadily from 2009 onward (quoted in ICG 2012, 10, fn. 83). Others sources, e.g., Sayigh, claims that the opposite was the case, and that Iran increased its support for Hamas after its takeover of Gaza (2011, 18),

dictate the direction of Hamas. This was in breach of the assumed division of responsibility between the government and the Political Bureau, as the former ostensibly was subjugated to the latter. In short, the leadership of Hamas the *organization* had too little influence to force the Hamas in *government* to comply with the formal organizational order. And such unclear divisions of responsibility and defunct command structures are strongly suggestive of a lack of systemness.⁵⁵⁵ In sum, these negative indicators cancel out the positive ones, and it is concluded that Hamas did not overall increase its level of systemness by 2011.

7.4.2 Decisional autonomy

Although Hamas at times behaved erratically and incoherently throughout its first five years in power, this was not due to the lack of decisional autonomy. As discussed, Hamas's degree of systemness, and in particular its routinization, was insufficiently developed to meet the challenges of governing, which in turn helps explain this behavior. In short, it is argued that Hamas's degree of decisional autonomy increased to a high level by 2011, despite the contradictory behavior.

In particular, its relationship with Iran has often been used to discredit Hamas's autonomy. However, while Iran for long has been suspected to be Hamas's main sponsor, and probably continued to provide crucial support after it assumed office, there is little to suggest undue interference. In short, it is assumed that Hamas's relationship with Iran is one of tactical convenience, not ideological conviction, and consequently that the influence exercised by Iran on Hamas is limited (Løvlie and Knudsen 2013, 57). As long as the interests of Hamas and Iran do not diverge, there is little to suggest that its dependence on Iran will affect its decisional autonomy. And if or when their interests do begin to diverge, Hamas has can rely on the support of other sponsors, for example Qatar, and thus probably retain large parts of its decisional autonomy.

Furthermore, and as also argued above, Hamas's new role as a governing party reduced its dependence on external sponsors and thus increased its decisional autonomy. The organizational and financial resources made available to Hamas as the sole authority in Gaza decreased its reliance on external sponsors, and conversely undermined any influence such actors might have had.

⁵⁵⁵ Along similar lines, the intensity and mentioned consequences of the vertical power struggles also suggest that Hamas was not sufficiently routinized organizationally to manage the challenges of government.

7.4.3 Value infusion

In terms of value infusion, certain crucial indicators pointed in a negative direction. In short, Hamas suffered increased defections after assuming office. And organizational cohesion is arguably the litmus test of value infusion, measured as the degree to which the rank-and-file remain loyal and disciplined after the leadership has made unpopular decisions. In particular, the degree to which an organization is infused with value is tested if central elements of the organizational ideology and identity are challenged.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, the Hamas government did exactly that; both with regard to resistance and Islam, the two core components of its ideology and identity, the Hamas government essentially broke with its stated aims. Hamas refrained from upsetting the established political order and did not actively work to Islamize Gaza. While the rationale behind this was sound, as Hamas probably rightfully calculated that it would suffer both an international and a domestic backlash had it enforced an Islamist order, its religiously motivated cadres were naturally disappointed. Consequently, a number of the younger radicals left. And rather than actively resisting the occupation, Hamas brokered ceasefires with Israel, and also enforced unilateral moratoriums on fighting. This, in turn, proved unpopular with parts of Hamas's military apparatus, prompting additional defections (Sayigh 2011, 124).

Given the fact that Hamas was established as a strongly ideological social-religious liberation movement, there are limits as to how much value it can be infused with, i.e., how much of its ideological legacy it can leave behind without losing its religiously and nationalistically motivated members. It should, nevertheless, be noted that the problem posed by the defections did not threaten the organization as such; there was never any chance that Hamas would not survive as an organization despite adopting overly pragmatic and moderate positions on key issues. Although the defections could be taken to suggest that Hamas's level of value infusion decreased, the fact that not more of its rank-and-file defected when the leadership so glaringly broke with its stated aims indicate rather that it remained infused with value to a medium degree.

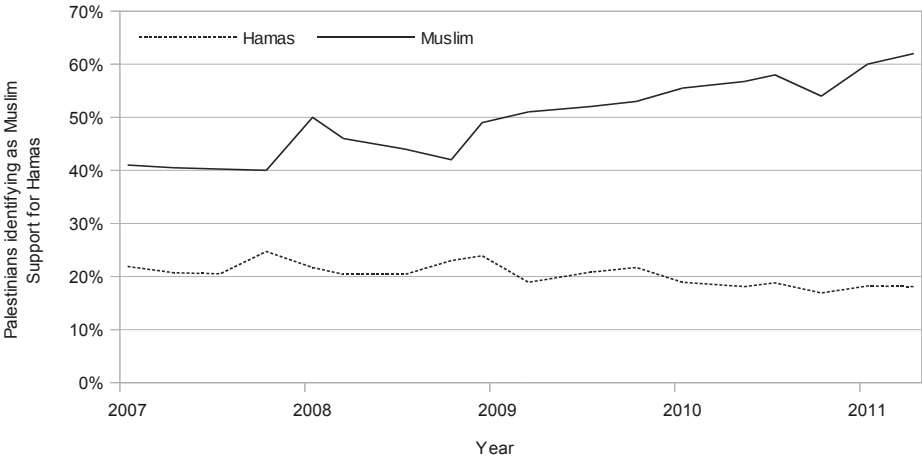
7.4.4 Reification

As for *reification*, the relevant indicators pointed largely in a positive direction; as the second most powerful political faction in Palestine and the sole authority in the Gaza Strip, Hamas was arguably highly *reified*, i.e. its existence was established in the public imagination.

Despite Hamas’s erratic behavior, its position in the Palestinian public opinion as the major Islamist liberation movement arguably remains secure.

It is, nevertheless, pertinent to note that Hamas did lose support throughout the period in question,⁵⁵⁶ suggesting that its high degree of reification was under threat. And more crucially, as indicated in Figure 11, Hamas seemingly had lost its appeal to the increasing number of Palestinians identifying primarily as Muslims. Although part of this can be accounted for as the cost of office, it seems likely that the rise of various *Salafi* movements undermined Hamas’s near monopoly as the prime proponent of political Islam. This point should not be overstated, however, as the question of reification is not about positive valence, but public recognition. As such, loss of support and increasing number of competitors are not sufficient to degrade Hamas from a high to a medium level of reification.

Figure 11: Religiosity and support for Hamas, 2007–2011



(Source: NEC 2010, 2011; PSR 2011).

In sum, Hamas scored medium on both systemness and value infusion, and high on both decisional autonomy and reification. Hamas was still recognized both by its supporters and competitors as a force to be reckoned with, and it enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from its

556 See Figure 9 on page 255 for details on Hamas’s decline in the polls.

environment with little proof that any external actors influenced its decisions. Hamas also proved to be somewhat well organized, although the demands of government revealed that its systemness—in particular with regard to routinization—was at a lower level than expected. Being in government also had a cost for Hamas’s level of value infusion, as a number of its activists defected in protest of its pragmatic and moderate behavior. Overall, it is concluded that Hamas had reached a medium to high level of institutionalization after its first six years in power, and as such was well positioned to retain its role at the center of Palestinian domestic politics for the coming years.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation has been to analyze the development of Hamas as a case of party institutionalization. It was advanced in the introductory chapter that such theoretically grounded analysis would contribute to an improved understanding of how Hamas developed from its modest beginnings to the political force it is today.⁵⁵⁷

The overarching finding of the thesis is that Hamas's development from its establishment as the armed wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1987 to the governing body of the Gaza Strip in 2011 closely followed the trajectory hypothesized by the theories employed, even if it has yet to complete its transmutation from movement to party and instead reached an awkward but somewhat institutionalized equilibrium between that of a liberation movement, a governing party, and a party-statelet. That Hamas has neither completed its transmutation into a political party, nor institutionalized further, does not detract from the explanatory power of the applied theories or the relevance of the findings; the theories have aided the analyses in providing a de-exoticized account of Hamas's development, adding nuance to the extant knowledge, as well as demonstrating that the theories employed can yield interesting findings when applied outside their intended scope, provided that the need for contextual sensitivity is properly appreciated.

To conclude the thesis, this chapter will set out with a summary of the analyses and findings from the previous four chapters. First, the sequential element of the analysis will be covered, i.e., the development of Hamas from its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood movement to its establishment as a movement organization, and then on to the transmutation phase toward a political party. Then follows a short section briefly detailing Hamas's fluctuating but steadily increasing degree of institutionalization. Next, a section purporting to explain the reasons for Hamas's arrested development is provided, including brief discussions on the applicability of the theories employed, the ramifications of the occupation for the quality of the data used, and certain context-specific reasons for Hamas's state in 2011. Finally, the chapter ends with a section briefly outlining the developments in occupied Palestine since 2011, looking at how Hamas has handled the Arab Spring and the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in 2014, with a specific view on how the findings of the thesis holds up.

⁵⁵⁷ *Contribute* and *improve* are the key words here, as it was recognized that the extant literature already has mapped out and detailed crucial aspects of the history, development, and current state of Hamas.

8.1 Summary of findings

To analyze the development of Hamas from its establishment as the armed wing of the Muslim Brotherhood during the early stages of the first *intifada* to that of a governing party in Gaza by 2011, an analytical framework combining theories of social movements and party institutionalization was adopted. Theoretically, the process was divided into five phases, tracing Hamas from its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood movement to its establishment as a social movement organization, and then following its transmutation process from social movement organization to political party, followed by the three phases party institutionalization, i.e., identification, organization, and stabilization. As noted, no *a priori* thresholds between these phases could be expected; in particular, the transmutation from social movement organization to political party overlapped with both the identification and organization phase of the institutionalization process. Anticipating this, and given the need for contextual sensitivity, the longitudinal comparison was organized according to the political development in occupied Palestine.

At the most basic levels, the analyses focused on Hamas's ideological and organizational developments. Both the social movement literature and the theories dealing with party institutionalization focus on and expect changes in these dimensions as political organizations develop. More specifically, it is commonly hypothesized that as political organizations develop, they go from being vehicles for pursuing some political aim to becoming ends in themselves, i.e., they *institutionalize*. And as they do this, they tend to moderate ideologically and formalize organizationally. Note that such a development seldom is linear, and as was discussed at some length in chapter 5, organizations with a legacy of violence such as Hamas might develop somewhat differently at certain stages. Theoretically, however, the overall tendency was expected to be that of ideological moderation and organizational bureaucratization.

8.1.1 The first *intifada*—Hamas emerging

Chapter 4 covered the emergence of Hamas as a movement organization, based partly on the account provided by Robinson (2004) and supplemented with primary data and original research. In short, the analysis found that by the end of the first *intifada*, Hamas had successfully established itself as *the* religiously motivated Palestinian liberation movement, albeit with an underdeveloped and weak organization.

It is noteworthy that Hamas's establishment and rapid rise to prominence had all but been predicted by scholars. Shadid and Seltzer concluded their analysis of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Palestine in the 1980s by cautioning that if the political strategy of the PLO failed to "produce tangible results" their support could be transferred to the Islamic movement, which for its part "undoubtedly would shift its strategy to armed struggle and violent confrontation with Israel" (1989, 297–8). And in her analysis of Hamas's first years, Taraki argued that both the establishment of the organization and its participation in the first *intifada* "should best be seen as part of the campaign of a prospective opposition Islamist party in the future Palestinian state," adding that "there is no doubt that Hamas should be taken seriously" (1989, 177).

Both the emergence and rise of Hamas, then, was partly ascribed to its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood; for one, Hamas inherited an almost ready-made ideology from the Brotherhood, and second, this ideology found a ready and waiting constituency among the increasing numbers of religious Palestinians. Added to this, Hamas played an important role in the *intifada*, which also helped elevate and cement its stature as a major resistance movement in the opinion of the Palestinian public.

Although Hamas suffered persecution at the hands of the Israeli forces throughout the first *intifada*, the young movement survived the onslaught by restructuring and compartmentalizing its organizational structure. And while Hamas emerged organizationally weak at the end of the *intifada*, it had successfully established itself as a viable alternative to the PLO, with a clear identity as the largest religiously motivated Palestinian liberation organization.

8.1.2 The Oslo years—commence transmutation

Chapter 5 detailed Hamas's development during the Oslo years, and found that although Hamas responded both ideologically and organizationally to the various environmental changes and challenges and began its development in the direction of a political party, it remained more of a movement organization at the end of the period.

In essence, the latter half of the 1990s saw Hamas suffer intense persecution at the hands of both the PA and Israel, forcing it to prioritize survival over politics. Combined with its dual legacies as a militant and religious movement, this prioritization prompted Hamas to turn reactive rather than proactive with regard to both its ideological and organizational

development. In short, Hamas struggled to retain its identity as a religiously motivated liberation movement simultaneously as the Palestinian political system developed toward the logic of party politics.

While a tendency toward the hypothesized ideological moderation was detected, the indicators were not conclusive; although Hamas downplayed some of its most radical goals and opened for increased pragmatism, it was still officially committed to the establishment of an Islamist state in the whole of historic Palestine. Such an ambiguous ideological rhetoric was partly explained by Hamas's poor organizational state. Persecution of its rank-and-file, combined with its federated and stratified organizational structure, led to intensified factionalism, which in turn undermined its organizational cohesion and decision-making procedures. This state of affairs led to infighting among its various leadership branches, infighting which turned rather public both when Hamas decided to boycott the 1996 PLC elections and with respect to its interim vs. long-term aims.⁵⁵⁸

In brief, Hamas did begin on its transmutation from movement to party in the latter half of the 1990s, but the effect of the harsh conditions of the Oslo years, combined with its dual legacies, account for why it did not come very far in this process. By boycotting the 1996 PLC elections, and failing both to develop its organization and to unite behind a consistent ideological message, it was therefore concluded that Hamas still remained more of a movement organization than a political party at the end of the 1990s.

8.1.3 The second *intifada*—ideological pragmatism, organizational maturity

The analysis in chapter 6 demonstrated—somewhat counter-intuitively—that Hamas continued to develop both ideologically and organizationally in the direction of a political party throughout the years of the second *intifada*. On the face of it, the political opportunity structures during the violent second *intifada* would favor the radical elements in Hamas, i.e., those that subscribed to an absolutist and maximalist ideology and preferred armed resistance as the main strategy.

Instead, Hamas came to finally adopt a coherent and rather pragmatic ideology, largely void of both religious absolutism and territorial maximalism. By demoting the status of its founding Charter and eventually adopting the interim solution along the 1967 borders as its

558 The interim aims would allow for a temporary solution to the conflict with Israel along the 1967 borders, whereas the long-term goals of Hamas remained that of erecting an Islamist state in the whole of historic Palestine.

official position, Hamas took important steps in its transmutation from the ideological rigidity of a movement to the pragmatism and ideological elasticity of a party. Also organizationally, Hamas proved to have routinized and matured; despite losing a number of important leaders to Israel's assassination policy, its leadership emerged united at the end of the second *intifada*, capable of enforcing discipline in its rank-and-file while radically altering its political strategy by taking part in the elections to the PLC. Both ideologically and organizationally, then, Hamas spent the years of the second *intifada* inching closer to the behavior of a political party.

And Hamas's decision to contest the 2006 elections to the PLC could have been seen as the final step of this process, as participating in elections is widely considered a defining characteristic of political parties. However, it soon became apparent that Hamas had miscalculated its own strength and popularity and the weakness of Fatah; instead of willingly assuming office when it suddenly and unexpectedly found itself as winners of the elections, Hamas expressed reservations and reluctance to fulfill its role as a responsible and mature political party. As such, it was concluded that Hamas stopped short of having completed its transmutation from movement to party by the end of second *intifada*. It was still too influenced by the operational logic and identity of a movement organization to be considered a political party.

8.1.4 In power—between government and resistance

Chapter 7 analyzed Hamas's development from its electoral victory in 2006 to the spread of the Arab Spring to occupied Palestine in 2011. The analysis demonstrated that, although Hamas assumed office in 2006 and ruled the Gaza Strip as the sole—and increasingly authoritarian—authority since 2007, it had still not completed its transmutation from movement to party by 2011; neither its ideology nor its organizational structure developed sufficiently away from the logic of a liberation movement toward that of a political party.

In summary, its erratic and contradictory behavior while in government revealed a lack of the ideological and strategic consistency expected from a party in government. Rather than articulating and pursuing a coherent political program, Hamas instead fell back on its “default position of ambiguity on key issues” (Ezbidi 2013, 104). Furthermore, its organizational structure remained underdeveloped and ill-suited for governing; unclear divisions of responsibility between its various leadership bodies led to inconsistent rhetoric, erratic behavior, and factionalism, whereas the influence of certain activist groups within Hamas at

times threatened to destabilize the organization.

In part, Hamas's lackluster performance in government was explained by its failure or unwillingness to discard its identity as a religious liberation organization; without leaving the operational logic and organizational identity as a movement behind, Hamas came to govern Gaza as a movement and not as a party, which in turn led it to confuse the Hamas *government* with the Hamas *movement*. Added to this, the lines between the organization itself and the statelet of Gaza became increasingly blurred.

In addition, power struggles between various leadership branches intensified following Hamas's ascent to power; the leaders in Gaza were the ones that filled the government positions and then used their newly won power to seize control over certain zones of uncertainty previously held by the Political Bureau, such as external relations, command of the military forces, and economic decision-making and fund-raising. In essence, the Hamas government undermined the formal organizational hierarchy, leading to the conclusion that the organization was insufficiently developed to bear the responsibility of real power and authority. Lacking an established division of labor between the various leadership bodies, and without vertical command structures being honored by the different organizational units, the divergent interests of the Hamas leadership in Gaza and the Political Bureau were allowed to play out and affect both the political development in occupied Palestine and effectively block the further development of Hamas.

However, Hamas managed to cling to power in Gaza in the face of domestic discontent, international boycott and territorial isolation, and organizational dilemmas and power struggles. While there is little reason to believe that Hamas has abandoned its religious ideology and goal of liberating occupied Palestine, its overriding priority in 2011 seemed clearly to be that of consolidation and entrenchment of its authority and territorial control of Gaza, and of course continued organizational survival. Based on these findings, it was concluded that by 2011, Hamas had reached an awkward but apparently sustainable equilibrium between that of liberation movement, political party, and party-statelet.

8.1.5 Hamas's level of institutionalization through the years

While the sequential element of the analytical framework made up the brunt of the analyses, i.e., the *institutionalization process* of Hamas from movement to movement organization and onward in the direction of a political party, each analytical chapter offered a measurement of

its *degree of institutionalization* at the end of the respective period covered. According to the analytical framework employed, institutionalization as a property is defined as an organization's structural and attitudinal qualities in its internal and external dimensions, i.e., *systemness, decisional autonomy, value infusion, and reification*.

Relying on these four elements of institutionalization, the level of Hamas's systemness in each period was scored according to the degree to which it had routinized leadership alternation and decision-making procedures both formally and informally, how closely its bylaws were followed, and the degree to which it was financially and materially self-sufficient. Its level of value infusion was measured through its degree of party cohesion, i.e., how disciplined its members remained in the face of unpopular decisions taken by the leadership, whereas its level of decisional autonomy was measured through investigations of the nature of its relationship with and number of external sponsors. Finally, the degree to which popular support for Hamas fluctuated, and whether its political opponents came to recognize it as a serious contender, indicated its level of reification.⁵⁵⁹

For want of higher quality data, the analysis of Hamas's degree of institutionalization was measured on an ordinal scale from *low* to *high*, and without making any claims of score comparability. Although this means that the assessments were rather rough and subjective, the scores do provide a clear picture of the changing degree to which Hamas had institutionalized in the various periods of analysis.

Hamas's degree of institutionalization at the end of the first intifada

The period-specific scoring of Hamas's level of institutionalization is summarized in Table 2 below. Starting at the beginning, and as could be expected from a recently established organization, Hamas had only reached a low to medium level of institutionalization at the end of the first *intifada*. The organization scored low on both systemness and value infusion in this first period. In terms of systemness, it was clear from the analysis of Hamas during the first *intifada* that the persecution it suffered, combined with its young age, meant that routinization of various organizational procedures and the formulation and adherence to bylaws were rather low on its list of priorities. As for its low level of value infusion, it was argued that Hamas had existed for such a short time that there were no decisions its leadership could have made that would test the cohesion and dedication of its rank-and-file, and it was further assumed that because of Hamas's young age, its members still saw it as a means to an end rather than an

⁵⁵⁹ See the section *The criteria* pp. 42ff. in the introductory chapter, and Appendix D, page 343, for details.

end in itself.

Hamas’s level of decisional autonomy at the end of the first *intifada* was estimated to be of a medium degree. It could have been expected that a young organization such as Hamas would be highly autonomous and free to decide and prioritize without undue interference from external actors. However, Hamas early on relied on support from the Jordanian Brotherhood, which was taken as an indication of curbed decisional autonomy. Finally, Hamas’s level of reification at the end of the period was measured to be of a high level, as it successfully had monopolized the identity as *the* religiously motivated Palestinian liberation organization despite its young age.

Table 2: Scoring of Hamas’s degree of institutionalization, 1993–2011

	Overall institutionalization	Internal		External	
		Systemness	Value infusion	Decisional autonomy	Reification
1993	low to medium	low	low	medium	high
1999	medium	medium	low	medium	high
2005	medium	medium	medium	medium	high
2011	medium to high	medium	medium	high	high

Hamas’s degree of institutionalization by the end of the Oslo years

By the end of the Oslo years, Hamas had reached an overall medium level of institutionalization. Although its formal routinization was undermined because of the intense persecution it suffered throughout this period, Hamas routinized informally and allowed its Political Bureau—formally subjugated to the Consultative Council—to take charge of the organization, which in turn helped the organization survive this testing period. Hamas had thus reached a medium level of systemness. Because most of its members and new recruits still saw it as a vehicle for resisting Israel and Islamize Palestine rather than as an end in itself, its level of value infusion continued to be low.⁵⁶⁰

Hamas’s decisional autonomy remained at a medium level by the end of the Oslo years. Although Hamas increased its number of donors, and having multiple donors would decrease its dependence on any one of them, its close ties to the Jordanian Brotherhood made it sensitive to the priorities of the Jordanian regime, thereby blocking it from increasing its

⁵⁶⁰ Added to this, Hamas suffered a number of defections, in particular following its 1994 adoption of suicide operations as a tactic.

decisional autonomy. As for Hamas's degree of reification, it remained at a high level as it retained the monopoly as the religious liberation organization in occupied Palestine, an argument further strengthened by its strong standing in the polls.

Hamas's degree of institutionalization by the end of the second intifada

Hamas remained at an overall medium level of institutionalization by the end of the second *intifada*. While Hamas had routinized procedures for both leadership alternation and decision-making, the persecution it suffered throughout the second *intifada* was of such an intensity that it negatively affected its systemness; at times it operated without a functioning chain of command, which in turn led to a number of unsanctioned suicide operations. In sum, Hamas's level of systemness therefore remained at a medium level. In terms of value infusion, Hamas increased its level from low to medium, indicated by Hamas adopting a more pragmatic and moderate ideology without seeing members defecting. However, it was also argued that many of its new members had joined not because of its ideological outlook, but rather for its role as a liberation movement; as such, loyalty to the organization seemed contingent solely upon its resistance to the Israeli occupation.⁵⁶¹

The intense persecution Hamas suffered throughout the years of the second *intifada* made the organization susceptible to appeasing its patrons to ensure continued support. While there was no proof of direct interference, Hamas's vulnerable position made the organization sensitive to the priorities of its donors. As such, it is concluded that Hamas remained at a medium level of decisional autonomy by the end of the second *intifada*. With regard to reification, Hamas's unabated rise in the polls throughout the years of the second *intifada* demonstrated that it remained a fixture in the public imagination. Added to this, Hamas won the 2006 PLC elections, which was taken as definitive proof that it had not only reached a high level of reification, but cemented its position as one of the main contenders for political power in the occupied territories.

Hamas's degree of institutionalization by 2011

Hamas reached a medium to high level of institutionalization after its first five years in power. Hamas's level of systemness remained at a medium level, despite positive signs such as increased financial self-reliance. In short, Hamas's erratic behavior while in office indicated that much of the routinization became undone. Moreover, its command structures were found

⁵⁶¹ Even those that initially had joined for religio-ideological reasons, the second *intifada* probably prompted them to stay for the sake of the resistance.

wanting, indicating a decreased level of routinization and thus systemness. In terms of value infusion, Hamas remained at a medium level. While in government, Hamas largely avoided pursuing its Islamist ideology, brokered ceasefires with Israel, and even enforced unilateral moratoriums on resistance. Consequently, both Hamas's religious activists and a number of its militants defected and joined more radical and militant groups.

Hamas's degree of decisional autonomy increased to a high level. The organizational and financial resources made available to Hamas as the sole authority in Gaza decreased its reliance on external sponsors, and conversely undermined any influence such actors might have had. As for reification, the indicators pointed overwhelmingly in a positive direction; as the second most powerful political faction in Palestine, and the sole authority in the Gaza Strip, Hamas was highly reified.⁵⁶²

Summarized, Hamas's level of institutionalization has gone from a low to medium level in 1993, to a medium to high level in 2011. Given the unpredictable nature of the Palestinian political environment, it seems unlikely that Hamas could have institutionalized further. Its organization-building and efforts to routinize and bureaucratize have consistently been hampered by the Israeli occupation and associated persecution, and the influential role played by various international and regional actors have curbed the degree to which any Palestinian faction could become independent from its environment.

8.2 *Transmutation interrupted*

As demonstrated throughout the analyses and summarized above, the first 25 years of Hamas's existence saw the organization develop away from the operational logic and rigid ideology of a movement organization toward that of a strategically opportunistic and ideologically pragmatic political party. Step-by-step, Hamas also became increasingly institutionalized, taking on value in and of itself. In short, Hamas seemed to follow the hypothesized trajectory of a movement organization transmuting into a political party, and then institutionalizing as a political party, i.e., becoming a valued end in itself, acquiring both stability and persistence, and obtaining the organizational capacity to pursue its aims.

562 Note, however, that Hamas seemingly had lost part of its appeal to the increasing number of Palestinians identifying primarily as Muslims. Although part of this can be accounted for as the cost of office, it seems likely that the rise of various *Salafi* movements has broken Hamas's near-monopoly as the prime proponent of political Islam in occupied Palestine.

It was concluded, however, that Hamas did not complete its transmutation from movement organization to political party within the time frame of the analyses; rather than leaving behind its identity as a liberation movement when it ventured into institutional politics, Hamas tried to reconcile party politics with violent resistance. And even after becoming the sole authority in the Gaza Strip in 2007, Hamas proved unable or unwilling to shed its organizational and ideological characteristics as a movement organization, instead adding yet another function to its already encompassing repertoire. By 2011, Hamas filled the roles as a liberation movement, a governing party, and a party-statelet.

8.2.1 Theory and occupation

The thesis has demonstrated that the applied theories can yield interesting findings when utilized outside their intended scope. It is nevertheless recognized that the peculiarities of the Palestinian political system has limited their applicability. Analyzing Hamas as a case of party institutionalization when the organization is an intrinsic part of a political system that escapes clear classification obviously has consequences for the confidence of the conclusions drawn. For although the PA shares certain crucial characteristics with a state, it does not qualify as one. Even when the Palestinian political system came to resemble a more-or-less regular democratic political experience in the early 2000s, the fact remained—as it still does—that the Palestinian proto-state enjoyed little or no real authority even in the small patches of land ostensibly under its domain; instead, authority and power in occupied Palestine ultimately rests with the occupying force, Israel.

Such as state of affairs naturally—and fundamentally—affects both the operational logic and development of all Palestinian political actors, and thus also Hamas. Furthermore, the ongoing occupation and Palestinian resistance to it lead to a volatile, unpredictable, and at times violent, situation. In short, the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine has ramifications for how politics is conducted there, both in the institutional arena and otherwise.

These characteristics of the political system in which Hamas emerged, developed, and matured has consequences for the applicability of the selected theories; the theories purporting to explain the emergence of movement organizations, those covering the development of movement organizations into political parties, and the various theories developed to account for different aspects of political parties, all commonly assume rather stable and predictable political systems—qualities occupied Palestine patently lacks. As covered in the introductory and methodology chapters, this had consequences for the

analyses. Traveling to occupied Palestine with theories mainly developed to explain political phenomena in Europe and the US necessitates a high degree of contextual sensitivity, and even though this need is heeded, the applied theories could not be expected to exhaustively explain the subject matter.

Attempting to mitigate some of these challenges, frameworks developed to trace and explain the transmutation of militant and revolutionary movements into political parties were also employed. Given the fact that the purview of these theories and the focus of the thesis largely coincided, their explanatory power were deemed promising. However, even if these theories allow for a certain degree of environmental volatility, unpredictability, and violence—conditions similar to that of occupied Palestine—they nevertheless assume a post-conflict situation. Clearly, a post-conflict situation differs fundamentally from that of occupied Palestine, where Israel continues to dictate the conditions for political development. As such, even the theories which capture cases similar to Hamas still do not fully fit with the subject of this thesis, thus potentially limiting their explanatory power.

Given these potential theoretical limitations, the finding of this thesis, i.e., that Hamas has developed in the direction of a political party, rather closely following the trajectory hypothesized by the selected theories, is therefore considered relevant and interesting, both empirically and theoretically. Empirically, as will be discussed further below, the theoretically grounded analyses have offered a more nuanced account of Hamas's development than previous studies, covering both its ideological and organizational development, as well as its increasing level of institutionalization. By consciously applying an interpretative, comparative case study method, aided by theories developed to explain the emergence and evolution of political organizations, the thesis has offered a de-exoticized account of Hamas's development; while staying sensitive to the context in which it operates, but without focusing on or elevating the peculiarities of the Palestinian political experience, the analyses have helped uncover both the uniqueness of Hamas and how it shares properties with conventional political organizations.

In line with the aims of this thesis, and despite the above caveats, it has been demonstrated that the employed analytical frameworks—mainly developed to explain political phenomena in the Western hemisphere—can be applied to cases in regions outside their intended purview and return fruitful results, provided the need for contextual sensitivity is properly appreciated. While social movement theory previously and successfully has been applied to Islamist

movements such as Hamas—and indeed Hamas itself—the application of a variety of theories intended to explain various aspects of political parties and their development have also yielded interesting findings. Theories dealing both with institutionalization as a process and as a property, supplemented by analytical frameworks developed to account for the development of militant movements into political parties, have all proved relevant and helpful to explain the development of Hamas from its founding as a liberation movement in 1987 toward that of a political party in 2011. As will be covered after briefly discussing the consequences of data quality for the findings, the theoretical approach has also helped explain Hamas’s arrested development, i.e., the fact that it so far has failed to complete its transmutation and institutionalization as a political party.

8.2.2 Quality of occupied data and consequences for the findings

It was discussed at length in the methodology chapter, but it merits reiteration when concluding the thesis; the ongoing occupation of Palestine undermines the quality of the data collected and thus also the confidence of the inferences drawn, both directly and indirectly. Directly, the occupation made access to interviewees difficult or even impossible, and indirectly, the occupation prompted interviewees to refuse to divulge certain kinds of information, either out of fear for their personal safety or for the security of the organization.

Crucially, the Israeli isolation of the Gaza Strip made it impossible to conduct fieldwork in what must be considered the heartland of Hamas. Efforts were made to enter Gaza, but despite aid from diplomats and liaisons inside the Strip, they all failed. Likewise on the West Bank, where getting access to interviewees was relatively straightforward, Israeli occupational policies had direct and negative bearings on data collection. Many of the Hamas leaders remained in Israeli prisons throughout the fieldwork periods, rendering access impossible.⁵⁶³ In short, data that could have improved the analyses further and strengthened the inferences drawn, collected through interviews in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip or from high-level Hamas leaders on the West Bank, was unavailable due to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

At the same time, even if data had been collected on the Gaza Strip and if more high-ranking leaders of Hamas on the West Bank had been interviewed, the indirect consequences of the occupation for the data quality would still have been in effect. The security concerns most often cited when interviewees refused to share information they considered sensitive are

⁵⁶³ Most of those interviewed had previously been imprisoned for shorter or longer terms, and a number of the interviewees were later imprisoned.

expected to be more or less the same in Gaza as on the West Bank. As such, it seems unlikely that higher quality data on, for example, the internal workings of Hamas will be available as long as the occupation is upheld.

Importantly, these security concerns mean that certain aspects of Hamas, such as its organizational structure, decision-making procedures, as well as its financial sources, remain shrouded in secrecy. And while it was possible to deduce some details regarding its internal workings by triangulating information provided by certain free-spoken interviewees with secondary sources and by critically observing the behavior of Hamas, it is recognized that the quality of the data on these aspects have weakened the overall confidence of the findings.

In particular, lack of reliable data on the following three aspects of Hamas have worked to undermine the confidence of the overall findings. For one, the exact relationship between the al-Qassam Brigades and the political leadership of Hamas remains blurred. Although most observers seem convinced that the al-Qassam Brigades is isolated from the political leadership, it is impossible to confidently conclude that this indeed is the case. Even if it ostensibly makes sense for Hamas to distinguish organizationally between its militant and political work, neither Israel nor the PA on the West Bank has paid this claim any heed; political leaders have routinely been arrested in response to operations carried out by the al-Qassam Brigades. Added to this, the opaqueness of the relationship between the militant and political wings has consequences for the confidence with which it is possible to ascertain Hamas's level of institutionalization and potential future trajectories; if, for example, the militant wing has more organizational influence than argued in the analyses, the risk of re-radicalization or even de-institutionalization of Hamas might be greater than assumed.

Second, the secrecy surrounding the internal workings of Hamas also has bearing on the question of intra-party democracy; whereas interviewed Hamas members were proud of and almost always emphasized the consultative decision-making procedures and meritocratic advancement mechanisms within their organization, too little is known to simply conclude that what they claim is true. In lieu of access to Hamas's statutes, it is impossible to measure its degree of intra-party democracy.⁵⁶⁴ Furthermore, as transparency is a condition for democracy, the opaqueness of Hamas voids its claims regarding intra-party democracy.⁵⁶⁵

564 In their framework for measuring intra-party democracy, Berge, Poguntke, Obert, and Diana (2013) rely mainly on party statutes.

565 The opacity of Hamas's leadership structures and decision-making undermines any claims for accountability and democracy, and, as argued by Brown, strongly indicates that "Hamas is still in many ways an underground movement even as it has moved into ministerial offices" (2012, 16).

Although the hostile and unpredictable conditions under which it operates might, for reasons of security, merit such opaqueness, it simultaneously weakens Hamas's claim to being a democratic organization.⁵⁶⁶

Third, knowledge regarding Hamas's financial situation remains uncertain as a result of the secrecy surrounding its revenue sources, budgetary details, and exact expenditures. While some details have leaked from Hamas and Israeli intelligence sources, the overall picture remains blurred. Following Hamas's takeover of Gaza, for example, reports diverged as to the amount of Iranian support for Hamas, with Hamas leader Salah Bardawil claiming that Iranian funding had decreased (quoted in ICG 2012, 10, footnote 83), and others sources claiming that the opposite was the case, i.e., that Iran increased its support for Hamas after its takeover of Gaza (Sayigh 2011, 18). Suffice it to say, such divergent accounts render it impossible to draw any solid conclusions regarding the state of Hamas's financial situation.

Although the above caveats need mentioning, neither should their importance be overstated, nor should they be taken as proof that the findings from the analyses are incorrect or false. That the deficient quality of data makes it impossible to map out the *exact* organizational structure of Hamas and describe *in detail* its internal workings and financial situation are noteworthy limitations, but does not detract substantially from the overall theoretical and empirical contributions of the thesis.

8.2.3 Contextual and theoretical explanations for Hamas's interrupted transmutation

As observed by Panebianco, "no organization can institutionalize beyond a certain point; no organization can become completely independent from its environment" (1988, 76). And in a volatile and unpredictable environment such as the one in occupied Palestine, this observation becomes doubly true. It is therefore argued here that Hamas's arrested development—most saliently exemplified by its unwillingness or incapability to free itself from the organizational identity as a liberation movement and complete its transmutation and institutionalization as a political party—in part is explained by the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Although Hamas already has left behind much of its religious extremist rhetoric and eased its previously maximalist territorial claim, it would be a tall order for a political organization

566 As argued by Gunning, "[t]he fact that, for security purposes, the movement's decisions are clouded in secrecy undermines the capacity of elections and consultations to hold leaders accountable" (2008, 114), thus undermining Hamas's claim of intra-organizational democracy.

founded and recognized as *the* religious liberation movement for the Palestinians to discard such crucial tenets of its founding ideology. Indeed, given the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine, it would probably be tantamount to political and organizational suicide for Hamas to abandon its liberation goals. Added to this context-specific reason, the theoretical frameworks employed offer complementary explanations for the arrested development of Hamas.

Imprinted legacies, both religious and violent

As discussed in the introductory chapter, a political party's origins is considered to be of utmost importance for its later development and institutionalization. In the words of Gunther and Diamond, the "'founding context' [of a given party] can leave a lasting imprint on the basic nature of the party's organization for decades to come" (2003, 173). It is further hypothesized that the origins of a party affect its development differently depending in part on its ideological and organizational identity at the time of its founding. In particular, two aspects of Hamas's origins are identified as aiding in explaining its arrested development, namely that of its religious ideology and its violent history.

As discussed in chapter 3, Hamas traces its ideological heritage directly to the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement whose overarching goal is the establishment of an Islamic order in which the principles of *sharia* will regulate society. Notwithstanding the fact that Hamas incrementally came to have a less pronounced focus on Islam in its political statements, there is little reason to question its credentials as a religiously motivated organization. And Hamas's religious ideology, it is hypothesized, has had consequences for its ideological development. In short, religious parties are not in charge of their ideological development, but must instead rely on and adapt to religious institutions and authorities outside the organization to retain their religious credentials (Gunther and Diamond 2003, 182). The effect of its religious legacy, then, helps explain Hamas's reluctance or inability to moderate its ideology further; it could not freely rephrase or re-frame the religious elements of its ideology, but had to take into account its ideological inheritance from the days of the Brotherhood. In short, there are limits as to how far Hamas can stray away from its Islamist roots without losing its core supporters, credibility, legitimacy, and potentially power.

Added to this, Hamas's militant legacy has also curbed its ideological moderation and eventual transmutation into a political party. For, whereas a conventional movement-to-party transmutation is associated with ideological moderation, a movement with a militant legacy

such as Hamas is expected to be resistant to such change; political organizations resort to violence when aiming to replace the *ancien régime* with one built according to their own ideology. Militancy therefore goes hand in hand with a maximalist ideological outlook, which in turn is associated with ideological rigidity. Furthermore, partisans willing to shed blood for the cause seem unlikely candidates for ideological flexibility. As discussed in the chapter 7, the continued influence of the militant activists was one reason for why Hamas was seemingly unable to adopt a coherent strategy and behavior while in power.

In sum, the theoretical frameworks provide complementary explanations for why Hamas seems stuck in its transmutation from movement to party; although the continued occupation of Palestine must bear the brunt of the blame for Hamas's reluctance or inability to complete its transmutation into a political party, its origins, along with its organizational and ideological legacies, also explain part of Hamas's interrupted transmutation from a religiously motivated liberation movement to an institutionalized political party.⁵⁶⁷

The development of Hamas summarized

Summarized, then, Hamas has developed as it did due to both endogenous and exogenous factors; it is the interplay between environmental opportunities and constraints and Hamas's internal ideological and organizational development that accounts for the specific trajectory it has followed on its transmutation away from a movement organization and toward that of a political party.

As discussed in chapter 4, the outbreak of the first *intifada* provided an opportunity for certain elements within the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood to establish Hamas as their armed wing and through this adopt a militant tactic and pursue an explicit political strategy. Following the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993 and the subsequent establishment of the PA in 1994, the de-development in occupied Palestine and the overall contraction of the political opportunity structures forced Hamas to prioritize organizational survival. Simultaneously, the movement attempted to expand and routinize its organizational structure and agree on a coherent

567 It is pertinent to reiterate that Hamas was not predetermined to develop as it did. As briefly discussed in the introductory chapter, the transmutation toward a political party is but one theoretically possible trajectory available to social movement organizations (Kriesi 1996). And some Palestinian liberation movements did follow a different trajectory; in the wake of the Oslo accords, a number of PLO organizations developed in the direction of commercial enterprises or voluntary organizations rather than parties. They founded or transformed into NGOs in an effort to capture aid money from international and Western donors (cf. Hammami 1995, 2000; Hanafi and Tabar 2004). And even those PLO organizations that did develop in the direction of political parties, e.g., Fatah, have followed different trajectories and reached different end points from that of Hamas (see Baumgarten 2005; Kurz 2005; Løvlie 2014).

ideological message, both of which proved difficult in such a hostile environment. With the outbreak of the second *intifada* and the institutionalization of the PA in the early 2000s, the opportunity structures again changed, most crucially in that the benefit of entering institutional politics rose and the costs decreased. These structural changes, combined with Hamas's democratic decision-making procedures and increasingly moderate ideology, account for its decision to participate in the 2006 elections to the PLC.

The overwhelmingly negative response from Israel, Fatah, and the international community to Hamas's electoral victory in 2006 dramatically constricted the political opportunity structures. Added to this, Hamas was itself initially reluctant to assume power, as it wanted to avoid bearing the responsibility of governing alone. Combined, these external and internal factors exacerbated the already difficult situation facing parties in government for the first time. Essentially, the organizational and environmental constraints placed on Hamas as a governing party led it to behave rather erratically as it tried to balance the contradictory aims of resisting the occupation and governing Gaza to accommodate the divergent interests of its militant activists with that of its larger constituency—all while suffering international boycott and isolation.

While in government, Hamas has failed both to act consistently and to convincingly demonstrate commitment to its ideological goals. Instead, Hamas seems to have relegated its stated aims to tools for organizational survival, suggesting in turn that it has followed the hypothesized trajectory of an institutionalizing party; from a movement organization with a manifest ideology, Hamas had transmuted toward that of an institutionalized political party with a latent ideology, prioritizing survival over other concerns. However, while Hamas's ideological credentials were weakened following its erratic behavior when in power, its manifest ideology became latent probably only as a temporary measure. It was the hostile environmental conditions that forced the organization to focus on self-preservation rather than to pursue its ideological goals.

Based on the above, the theoretically grounded and contextually sensitive analyses have provided a nuanced account of the development of Hamas. Taking into account both exogenous and endogenous factors, it is concluded that Hamas *anno* 2011 retained important elements from its identity as a religiously motivated liberation movement, and that as long as the occupation is upheld, it cannot free itself of this identity without risking organizational splits and possible demise. Furthermore, if or when the occupation ends, it seems likely that

Hamas will retain a streak of ideological rigidity because of its ideological imprint as a religious and militant liberation movement. In conclusion, then, Hamas was still biding its time in 2011, prioritizing organizational survival over ideological credibility so that it still would be around as a political force to be reckoned with if or when conditions improved, ready to again pursue its ideological goals.

8.3 Hamas after 2011—euphoria, dashed hopes, and uncertainty⁵⁶⁸

A major challenge when researching Hamas stems from the fact that the organization is a key player in a political conflict yet to be resolved.⁵⁶⁹ In addition to the aforementioned factors directly affecting the situation in occupied Palestine and thus the development of Hamas—e.g., the fluctuating intensity of the Israeli occupation, the continued intra-Palestinian violence, and international meddling—the unresolved nature of the conflict has made occupied Palestine particularly vulnerable to changes in the international and regional order.

Because of this, even when the situation takes on a semblance of stability and predictability, there is always a real risk that developments beyond the control of the involved actors will have sudden and dramatic effects. In early 2011, for example, the situation appeared stable enough; although calls for Palestinian reconciliation and bridging of the political-territorial split from 2007 was repeatedly voiced, both Israel, Fatah, and Hamas seemed content with the upholding the *status quo*. Despite numerous efforts to reconcile the Palestinian factions, intermittent attempts by various international actors to mediate and get the dormant peace process back on track, as well as semi-regular Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip,⁵⁷⁰ the situation had taken on an appearance of order and normality.

However, as will be explored briefly below, the upheavals and revolts that spread throughout the Middle East in 2010 and 2011 effectively and fundamentally destabilized the regional

568 The following paragraphs draws on the introductory essay to a special section titled *Hamas and the Arab Spring*, edited by the author and Dr. Knudsen, published in *Middle East Policy* (Løvlie and Knudsen 2013).

569 Although the study of any on-going political phenomenon is difficult at the best of times (Büthe 2002), the volatility and unpredictability of the political environment in occupied Palestine is of such a magnitude that this challenge has proved particularly testing throughout the analyses.

570 Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, three major Israeli military operations have been carried out, attempting to destroy or at least limit the military capabilities of Hamas. The first, in the winter of 2008–2009, was dubbed Operation Cast Lead, the second, named Operation Pillar of Defense, was carried out in November 2012, whereas the latest, titled Operation Protective Edge, took place in the summer of 2014. All three operations have had dramatic consequences for the Palestinians living in Gaza, leading to widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure. In total, somewhere between 2 892 and 3 610 Palestinians have been killed in these operations, depending on which sources to believe. The majority of those killed were civilians, according to the UN.

order. Consequently, the analyses, inferences, assumptions—both explicit and implicit—and knowledge previously considered relevant to explaining Palestinian politics in general and Hamas’s development in particular, were suddenly thrown into doubt. This is not to say that the findings from the analyses of this thesis are fallacious or invalid, only that caution should be exercised when generalizing temporally based on how the situation was as of 2011. Furthermore, the consequences that the Arab Spring had for Hamas are still not known, both because events are still unfolding in parts of the region, and even where the situation has taken on an appearance of business as usual, the situation remains flammable and can easily erupt again.⁵⁷¹

8.3.1 Hamas and the Arab Spring

Since the outbreak of the Arab revolts in December 2010, the political landscape of the Middle East has been recast, forcing Hamas to respond to a host of fundamental challenges. Although too little time has passed for any conclusive inferences to be drawn regarding the consequences that the Arab Spring had for the development of Hamas, some observations regarding its responses to the revolts reverberating throughout the Middle East are in order. Furthermore, given the fact that the thesis found that Hamas had reached a moderately institutionalized state between that of movement organization, party, and party-statelet by 2011, it follows that it also should be rather independent from its environment and be expected to survive and continue operating in the face of fundamental environmental challenges. As such, the developments since 2011 onward can be construed as a test of Hamas’s institutionalization and thus of the finding of the thesis.

In short, and as could be expected, the regional changes ushered in by the Arab Spring has seriously affected Hamas, both in terms of its ideological and organizational development. However, the organization has so far proved resilient and capable of adapting to and even influencing the environment in which it operates. Ideologically, the Arab Spring initially led to a sudden increase in the confidence of the Islamist project among Hamas leaders, prompting a brief but noteworthy ideological re-radicalization. Organizationally, the years since 2011 have seen Hamas continue to battle with horizontal and vertical power struggles, both of which have had consequences for its development and behavior.

571 This section will not provide an in-depth and encompassing analysis of Hamas in the years since the Arab Spring; rather, it will only focus on certain select events and developments deemed illuminating in relation to Hamas’s degree of institutionalization and interrupted transmutation.

Euphoria and optimism

Many interviewed Hamas leaders initially saw the Arab Spring as the inevitable rehabilitation and realization of their Islamist ideology. Indeed, throughout the region, various branches, incarnations, and allies of the Muslim Brotherhood fared well in the polls and eventually came to do well in the post-revolution elections, prompting interviewed Hamas leaders to argue that the Arab Spring demonstrated that Muslims—and according to them therefore Islamists, used synonymously with the Brotherhood, and by extension Hamas—finally were in the process of deposing their Western-sponsored despots.

This euphoria gave Hamas increased confidence in terms of its political program, stature in Palestinian politics, and overall future prospects.⁵⁷² A small but telling indication of the resulting boldness was the sudden presence of Hamas flags at various events and demonstrations throughout the West Bank—the first time these flags were seen there since the intra-Palestinian split in 2007.⁵⁷³

During the campaigns for the student council elections at Bir Zeit University in 2011, Hamas flags were prominently displayed (see Figure 12 below). And as shown in Figure 13, also in the main square of Ramallah, the al-Manara, supporters carried Hamas flags in celebration of the successful prisoner swap with Israel in October 2011.⁵⁷⁴

572 This apparent increased confidence in the Islamist project could feasibly—taking its ideological roots into consideration—lead Hamas to become more assertive and proactive in its politics, which in turn might have negative consequences for the moderation of Hamas and thus the democratization of the Palestinian proto-state.

573 Recall that Hamas has suffered intense persecution at the hands of both the PA and Israel on the West Bank since 2006–2007, and largely operated underground since then.

574 This was a deal in which Israel released 1 027 imprisoned Palestinians in exchange for the kidnapped IDF corporal Gilad Shalit who had been in Palestinian captivity in Gaza since 2007.

Figure 12: Hamas flag at Birzeit University



(Photo by author, October 13, 2011).

In particular, the developments in Egypt were perceived as positive by both interviewed Hamas leaders and analysts.⁵⁷⁵ For one, the ousting of President Mubarak was expected to ease access between Gaza and Egypt, alleviating the dire conditions there. Second, Mubarak had long favored Fatah over Hamas, a favoritism that had been detrimental to the reconciliation efforts. And third, Hamas anticipated that the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt would translate directly into increased support (Ezbidi 2013).

575 The consequences of the Arab Spring for Hamas was touched upon in numerous interviews. For example, analyst Khalil Shaheen argued forcefully that the fall of Mubarak was detrimental for Fatah, whereas the rise of the Brotherhood in Egypt was to the benefit of Hamas (interviewed in Ramallah, May 3, 2011). Also, Hani al-Masri, director of the Palestinian think-tank Badael and member of a committee mandated to negotiate Palestinian reconciliation, said that Egypt changed its take on Palestine and Hamas following the revolts (interviewed in Ramallah, May 16, 2011).

Figure 13: Hamas flags downtown Ramallah



(Photo by Hilde Kjstvedt, October 18, 2011).

Although Hamas’s interpretation of the events revealed an overly optimistic and Palestine-centric worldview, the Arab Spring did have a direct bearing on domestic Palestinian politics, and in particular on the stalled reconciliation process between Hamas and Fatah. For one, the Arab Spring sparked protests also within occupied Palestine. These protestors primarily called for national unity, and neither Fatah nor Hamas could be seen to ignore popular demands for reconciliation lest they would risk a similar fate as the ousted regimes elsewhere in the region. And second, the fall of Mubarak prompted Egypt—the main mediator in the negotiations between Hamas and Fatah—to adopt a more balanced position toward Palestinian reconciliation. Both of these factors led to the eventual signing of an Egyptian-sponsored reconciliation agreement in Cairo in April 2011. The agreement stipulated that a national unity government should be formed, with both Hamas and Fatah represented. Furthermore, it was agreed that elections for the PA presidency, the PLC, and, significantly, for the PNC, the parliament and supreme political body of the PLO, should take place exactly one year after signing the agreement (Tuastad 2013).⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁶ See Al Mubadara (2011) for a translated version of the signed agreement. Note also that by agreeing to hold elections to the PNC, Hamas aimed—for the first time—to join the PLO without preconditions. An eventual implementation of the 2011 Cairo agreement would certainly have reshuffled relationships among

Obstacles to reconciliation

Despite the optimism following the signing of the 2011 agreement and apparent intent by the involved parties to implement its stipulations, the promised reconciliation failed to materialize. One crucial reason for this was the organizational disorder of Hamas. As noted in the previous chapter, Hamas suffered both horizontal and vertical power struggles after it assumed power. And these struggles threatened to destabilize Hamas and had ramifications for the attempt to achieve national reconciliation with Fatah. In short, the Political Bureau in Damascus officially remained the topmost executive body within Hamas, and thus was mandated to negotiate with Fatah. However, the leadership in Gaza was reluctant to follow through and proved powerful enough to stop the implementation of agreement (ICG 2012, 18).⁵⁷⁷

This state of affairs continued in the years following the Arab Spring. Just as Khaled Meshaal led the negotiations and signed the agreement in Cairo in 2011 (Black and Urquhart 2011), later attempts to push the reconciliation process along, including the 2012 Doha Agreement and the 2012 Cairo Agreement, also took place under his auspices. Despite the obvious benefits a united front would bring for the Palestinian cause, the promised reconciliation did not materialize. The Hamas leadership in Gaza pointed to differences in ideology and strategy as the major sticking points; reconciliation with Fatah would entail admissions along the line of the Quartet Principles, i.e., recognition of Israel, adherence to previous agreements, and the renunciation of violence. It would also mean integration of Hamas into the PLO and, crucially, a joint Palestinian security strategy. And while the Gaza branch claimed they could accede on some of these points, they complained that they had not been sufficiently consulted during the negotiation process, and thus that the agreements lacked internal legitimacy (ICG 2012, 18).⁵⁷⁸

To solely blame Hamas in Gaza for the failure to reach national unity would nevertheless be both too simplistic and erroneous. For one, various elements within Fatah were similarly opposed to the planned reconciliation with Hamas. Second, and more importantly, Israel and the US were both vocally opposed to Palestinian reconciliation. US opposition was likely due

Hamas, Fatah, and Israel. For details, consult Tuastad (2013).

577 Also, Hamas leaders on the West Bank were for long skeptical toward the accommodating line adopted by the Political Bureau (ICG 2012, 33).

578 The belief by many in Hamas that the rise of the Islamist movements throughout the region would be to their benefit also worked to obstruct the reconciliation process. For in-depth analyses of the reconciliation process, consult Tuastad (2013), Challand (2009), PASSIA (2013), and Ezbidi (2013).

to its official designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization,⁵⁷⁹ its commitment to the Quartet Principles, and its unwavering support for Israel. In the event of a successful Palestinian reconciliation, the US would either have to cut its ties with Fatah and thus be without a client in occupied Palestine, backpedal on the Quartet Principles, or reconsider its designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization. None of these options seemed particularly attractive.

As for the Israeli opposition to Palestinian reconciliation, a quote by Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu is illuminating: “The PA [i.e., Fatah] must choose either peace with Israel or peace with Hamas. There is no possibility for peace with both.” Netanyahu was unequivocal in his opposition to any Palestinian reconciliation, on the grounds that Israel could never negotiate or obtain peace with a movement that “aspires to destroy Israel,” a reference to Hamas’s 1988 Charter (Jerusalem Post 2011). However, Israel probably remained opposed to Palestinian reconciliation for tactical reasons as well. The Palestinian political-territorial split has been to the benefit of the Israeli occupation, as a divided Palestine is easier to occupy and dominate than a united one and is in a weaker bargaining position at the negotiating table.

8.3.2 Miscalculations and dashed hopes

The optimism following in the wake of the Arab Spring prompted Hamas to take certain strategic decisions with far-reaching, and ultimately unfavorable, consequences. Pushed to pick sides in the escalating civil war in Syria, Hamas opted to side with the revolutionaries and was promptly forced to leave Damascus and saw its support from Iran cut. Partly, this decision was made with the belief that the ascending Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt would take over as the main patron of Hamas. However, the attempted switch of benefactor backfired. For one, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt proved less interested in the question of Palestine and Hamas than assumed, and the anticipated increased support fell short of compensating for the cost incurred by abandoning the Syrian regime. Then, the Brotherhood in Egypt was ousted from office only a year after winning the elections, and the incoming military government reinstated the old isolation policy of Gaza and outlawed Hamas.

In short, the high hopes Hamas had held for the Arab Spring were dashed, and instead of the anticipated improvements, the organization suddenly found itself in a precarious situation. Its executive leadership, the Political Bureau, was scattered throughout the region, it lacked a

⁵⁷⁹ As long as it designates Hamas as a terrorist organization, the US government is legally barred from supporting any unity government in which it plays a part (Cook 2014).

regional sponsor, domestic support was eroding, and Gaza faced an imminent economic crisis. To escape the impasse, Hamas handed over power of Gaza to the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus on the West Bank, effectively abdicating, in the hopes that fewer responsibilities would allow it to regroup and reclaim some of its lost support and legitimacy.

However, following a kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers from the occupied West Bank, the incipient reconciliation was at least temporarily derailed. A large-scale manhunt on the West Bank was initiated by the IDF, provoking retaliations from Hamas, which eventually pushed Israel to launch a massive and destructive military operation against Hamas and Gaza. After seven weeks of Israeli bombardment of Gaza, a long-term ceasefire agreement was eventually agreed upon, effectively returning the situation to the *status quo ante*. And while the reconciliation process resumed in the following days, its success remains uncertain, as is the future of Hamas.

Miscalculations

As discussed throughout the thesis, Hamas has never been a simple proxy for its various sponsors. However, in later years its relationships with the Syrian and Iranian regimes have at times been crucial, both in terms of political and financial support. So, it must be considered a major strategic change when Hamas in February 2012 sided with the revolutionaries in the Syrian civil war, left Damascus, and quit the so-called Axis of Resistance. Indeed, by opposing Assad and leaving Syria, Hamas also weakened its ties to Iran (Napolitano 2013).⁵⁸⁰ And the calculus behind this attempted switch of benefactor seemed sound; as the Palestinian offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood,⁵⁸¹ Hamas shares a common history and ideology with the Brotherhood in Egypt. Intuitively, then, Hamas could expect to benefit from the rise of the Brotherhood in Egypt.⁵⁸²

As mentioned above, however, the hopes that the rise of the Brotherhood in Egypt would translate directly into increased support for Hamas were soon dashed. For one, even if the

580 Note that Hamas for a long time refused to pick sides in the Syrian conflict, adopting instead a wait-and-see attitude. Cf. Napolitano (2013) for a detailed analysis of Hamas's responses to the Syrian crisis.

581 The Democratic Alliance, the electoral alliance dominated by the Freedom and Justice Party, which in turn was the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood, won a plurality (235) of the 498 seats in the 2011–2012 elections to the Egyptian People's Assembly (M. Hassan 2013).

582 Added to this, it can be argued that Hamas's alliance with Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran was always one of tactical convenience, not ideological conviction. The other members of the alliance are all Shiite Muslims (or members of its offshoots), an increasingly salient factor given the rise of Sunni groups and intensified sectarianism throughout the region.

Brotherhood government did ease access restrictions to Gaza somewhat, the new Egyptian government remained preoccupied with domestic politics; the social, political, and economic challenges facing Egypt were substantial, prompting the regime to adopt and reinforce past approaches to the question of Palestine (Ezbidi 2013, 100–101).⁵⁸³ Second, even the slightly improved relationship between Hamas and Egypt would not last. In July 2013, just over a year after the Brotherhood's ascendance, the army again took control in Egypt. The leader of the incoming military government, General Sisi, blamed the deposed President Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas for conspiring to destabilize Egypt, and promptly outlawed both organizations (Thrall 2014). Hamas leaders were subject to travel bans, access to Egypt from Gaza was again restricted, and the tunnels through which goods had been smuggled into the Strip were closed (ICG 2014, 4).

The situation in Gaza deteriorated quickly; shortages of fuel and electricity increased rapidly, garbage and sewage soon flowed in the streets, and what little drinking water was available to Gazans subsequently became contaminated (Thrall 2014). In short, conditions were dire for the civilian population in Gaza, and the Hamas government was unable to alleviate the situation. Having abandoned its former sponsors in Syria and Iran, and without a new ally ready to compensate for the shortfall of political and financial support, Hamas found itself isolated and seriously weakened. Added to the multitude of challenges arising from abroad, Hamas also faced contenders for power inside the Gaza Strip. The general public was naturally dissatisfied with the deteriorating situation, but more critically, the *Salafi* movement continued its incremental expansion and popular reach in Gaza. As discussed in the penultimate chapter, many of Hamas's younger militants subscribe to the radical ideology of *Salafism*, instilling fear in the leadership that if the organization appeared too conciliatory vis-à-vis either Fatah or Israel, it would suffer defections and possibly even organizational splits (Sayigh 2014).

Forced reconciliation and de facto abdication

Still boycotted internationally, lacking a regional sponsor, and with domestic support eroding, Hamas found itself in dire straits. And because of these challenges, Hamas realized that it was

583 While Hamas leaders expressed disappointment with the lack of change in Egypt's approach to Palestine, it should be noted that throughout his election campaign, President Morsi of Egypt had promised that he would not touch the 1979 Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty or in other ways destabilize the precarious regional balance. Morsi won the presidential elections in Egypt in June 2012, taking 51.73 percent of the votes against Ahmed Shafik's 48.27 percent. However, only a year later, Morsi was ousted from office, and the military again took the reigns in Egypt (The Economist 2013).

in no position to improve the lot of its subjects in Gaza, which was deteriorating rapidly both because of the ongoing Israeli isolation of the Strip and the recent *coup d'état* in Egypt. Beleaguered on all fronts, Hamas was compelled to alter its reactive and default wait-and-see attitude to find a way out of the quagmire, both for its own sake and for the sake of its subjects. And out of the more or less viable and attractive alternatives available to Hamas,⁵⁸⁴ the organization opted for abdication; in a reconciliation agreement with Fatah signed April 27, 2014,⁵⁸⁵ Hamas handed over power and responsibility of Gaza to the Fatah-PLO-PA nexus on the West Bank to escape the current impasse (Brown 2014).

In essence, the reconciliation agreement entailed an almost complete surrender on the part of Hamas, and thus an almost complete victory for Fatah. For one, the new unity government would not contain a single Hamas member or ally. Although most cabinet members would be independents and technocrats, Fatah retained control of important ministries as well as the overall leadership of the PA. Second, Hamas agreed to let PA security forces from the West Bank—presumably Fatah-loyalists—to operate in Gaza. Hamas would not be allowed to move any of its security forces to the West Bank in return. Third, the new government promised to comply with the Quartet Principles, i.e., adhere to past agreements, recognize Israel, and refrain from violent resistance, issues to which Hamas previously had proved unable to accede (Thrall 2014).⁵⁸⁶

International reactions to the agreement were more positive and optimistic than usual; the Arab regimes, Russia, and the EU all expressed cautious support for the attempt to mend the Palestinian split, and even the US seemed intent to work with the incoming unity government, provided that Hamas remained on the sidelines.⁵⁸⁷ Israel for its part reacted negatively and punished the Palestinians by approving 3 300 new settler homes on the West Bank,

584 Thrall (2014) identified four potential exit strategies for Hamas. The first was rapprochement with Iran, but at “the unacceptable price of betraying the Brotherhood in Syria.” The second was to levy new taxes, at the “risk [of] stirring up opposition to Hamas rule.” Third, Hamas could instigate a new war with Israel, hoping that a new ceasefire agreement would improve conditions. However, “Hamas felt too vulnerable, especially because of Sisi’s potential role in any new conflict between Gaza and Israel, to take this route.” Finally, Hamas could do as it did, namely “hand over responsibility for governing Gaza to appointees of the Fatah-dominated Palestinian leadership in Ramallah” and thereby escape from the current impasse.

585 While the importance should not be overstated, it is noteworthy that this time around it was not Khaled Meshaal, head of the Political Bureau, who signed the agreement with Fatah, but rather Ishmael Haniye, Hamas’s PM since 2006 and long-time leader in Gaza.

586 Recall that the international boycott of Hamas from 2006 and onward initially was attributed to its refusal to accede to these same Quartet Principles. Cf. chapter 7.

587 According to Booth and Gearan (2014), the US had apparently “worked behind the scenes to suggest terms for the new coalition government that would not trigger the U.S. ban, reasoning that the money helps preserve American leverage.”

implementing economic sanctions against the PA, and vowing to cut all diplomatic ties with any PA government supported by Hamas (Booth and Gearan 2014; Cook 2014).

Reconciliation derailed

As a first step in the reconciliation process, the Hamas government in Gaza officially stepped down on June 2, 2014, handing power over to the newly appointed technocratic government mainly based in Ramallah on the West Bank. In the face of Israeli objections and threats of continued sanctions, the Palestinian leaderships were set on implementing the reconciliation agreement, hoping that the seven year political-territorial split finally was coming to an end. Although a number of obstacles were yet to be overcome, such as the promised elections to be held within six months after the agreement went into effect (Cook 2014), the signals from the US that it would support the new government as long as it proved committed to the Quartet Principles gave the Palestinians hope for improvements.

The situation soon took a turn for the worse, however. During the night between June 12 and 13, 2014, three teenagers were kidnapped from an Israeli settlement close to Bethlehem on the occupied West Bank. The response from Israel was swift; by June 14, the IDF had initiated Operation Brother's Keeper and entered the West Bank in force. In the following days and weeks, the IDF and Shin Beth, Israel's internal security services, carried out a massive manhunt on the West Bank. Thousands of houses were searched, large parts of the West Bank were closed off, and some 530 Palestinians—including most of Hamas's leadership there—were arrested. Eventually, on June 30, the bodies of the three teenagers were found, close to where they had been reported kidnapped (The Economist 2014).⁵⁸⁸

From the outset, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu had confidently and consistently blamed Hamas for the kidnappings. Even when it was revealed that the men arrested for the kidnappings were known Hamas members, however, the political leadership vehemently denied the allegations. While admitting the kidnappers were from Hamas, Khaled Meshaal and others from the leadership claimed no prior knowledge of the operation and argued that the kidnappers had acted on their own initiative. Then, in late August, Saleh al-Aroui, an exiled Hamas leader residing in Turkey, claimed that the operation indeed was carried out at the orders of Hamas's armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades. Although the seniority and actual influence of al-Aroui was called into question, his claim naturally weakened the credibility of

588 On July 2, in what appears as an act of revenge, Israeli youths kidnapped and set fire to a 16 year old Palestinian from East Jerusalem, eventually killing him.

Hamas's denial of involvement (Crowcroft 2014).

One possible explanation for the divergent claims made by Hamas lies in its organizational structure. As discussed in previous chapters, Hamas separated the al-Qassam Brigades from its social and political branches early on, precisely so that the political leadership could more or less credibly claim no knowledge of the military operations, and so that the organization would retain its operational capabilities independent of the status of its public leaders. However, even if the operation was carried out by the al-Qassam Brigades without prior knowledge from the political leadership, the timing was rather delicate and somewhat suspicious. The reconciliation process that would see Hamas marginalized—at least in the short-term—was just underway. It stands to reason that those elements within the organization that had sacrificed the most during Hamas's seven years in power, i.e., the militants, would be loath to see their hard-won power and position exchanged for an uncertain future.⁵⁸⁹ As such, if the kidnappings were planned and ordered by the al-Qassam Brigades, and given the adamant denials from the political leadership, at least the timing of operation might suggest a widening rift between the political and armed wings of Hamas.

The return to the status quo ante

Regardless of who actually carried out the kidnappings, the persecution of its leaders on the West Bank prompted Hamas to retaliate and fire rockets from Gaza into Israel. Eventually—and predictably—Israel responded to the rocket fire. On July 8, the IDF initiated Operation Protective Edge with the stated aim of ending the rocket attacks and destroying or at least limiting Hamas's military capabilities. The ensuing seven weeks of bombardment by the IDF inflicted unprecedented destruction in Gaza.⁵⁹⁰ Critical infrastructure, including the main power plant and sewage pumping stations, factories, livestock, and farmland crucial for the economy, as well as numerous schools, hospitals, and health clinics, were destroyed by the bombardment.⁵⁹¹

Figures of casualties and injured are naturally disputed. According to one reputable source, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2 104 Palestinians were killed,

589 Recall that a somewhat similar situation developed in June 2006. Just as Hamas and Fatah were about to establish a national unity government, the al-Qassam Brigades, together with militants from other Palestinian liberation movements, kidnapped the IDF Corporal Gilad Shalit.

590 Bollier and Ali (2014) provide a general overview of the destruction visited upon Gaza.

591 For details of the destruction, consult the daily Situation Reports by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)—Occupied Palestinian territory found at <http://www.ochaopt.org>. For a less detailed overview, see Knell (2014).

including 1 462 civilians, of whom 495 were children and 253 were women.⁵⁹² Sixty-nine Israelis were killed, including four civilians.⁵⁹³ Over 10 000 Palestinians were injured, including approximately 3 000 children, around 1 000 of whom are expected to suffer permanent disability. By contrast, 123 Israelis were injured. Added to this, 108 000 people in Gaza had their homes destroyed or severely damaged, and some 475 000 people were internally displaced (OCHA 2014).⁵⁹⁴

Despite the military supremacy of Israel and the consequent asymmetry of the conflict, with limited Israeli losses but extensive destruction of Gaza and thousands of civilian Palestinians killed, the fighting helped Hamas reclaim much of its legitimacy. In a poll fielded on the West Bank late in July, 31 percent of respondents considered their political views to be closest to Hamas.⁵⁹⁵ Although largely attributable to the rally-around-the-flag effect, this increased popularity also stemmed from Hamas's surprisingly resilient resistance to the Israeli ground incursions.⁵⁹⁶ That Hamas willingly resigned from power was patently neither proof of military weakness nor a declaration of capitulation, but rather a strategic decision to escape the responsibilities of office and to regroup as a liberation movement.

After a number of failed attempts to end the hostilities, Israel and Hamas entered a long-term, open-ended cease-fire agreement on August 26. As in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead in 2008–2009, Hamas was again hailed as the victor. Despite suffering enormous losses, Palestinians throughout the occupied territories celebrated the end of the fighting as a victory for their cause. In a poll conducted by PSR in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, 79 percent of Palestinians said they believed Hamas won the war (2014b).⁵⁹⁷ However, the

592 Based on these figures, roughly 70 percent of the Palestinians killed were civilians. According to the IDF, 2 000 Palestinians were killed, approximately half of whom were militants (Laub and Alhlou 2014).

593 Consult the monthly reports by the Israeli Security Agency (Shabak) at <http://www.shabak.gov.il> for detailed figures of Palestinian attacks against Israel and Israeli casualties.

594 For similar estimates, consult BBC (2014). See also Heyer and Mittelstaedt (2014).

595 The respective score for the other alternatives were as follows: Fatah (24 percent), leftist groups (7 percent), Islamist groups (6 percent), and independents (33 percent). In lieu of a “none” alternative, it seems likely that respondents who did not consider their political view as being close to any of the categories opted for the “independents” alternative. This would explain why independents got such a high score in this poll when compared to polls by PSR and CPSR. Note that only 300 randomly selected Palestinians were interviewed face-to-face for this poll, all from the West Bank. The reported margin of error was ± 5 percent (AWRAD 2014).

596 During Operation Cast Lead in 2008–2009, Israel ventured far into Gaza but lost only ten soldiers, four of whom were killed by friendly fire. In the 2014 conflict, Israel stayed at the outskirts of Gaza but still lost more than 60 soldiers (Thrall 2014).

597 Only 3 percent thought Israel emerged as the winner, whereas 17 percent believed both sides to be losers. Interviewed face-to-face in 127 randomly selected locations, 1 270 adult Palestinians were randomly sampled from the West Bank and Gaza. The reported margin of error was ± 3 percent (PSR 2014b).

ceasefire agreement essentially meant the return to the *status quo ante*; none of the underlying factors explaining the intermittent fighting between Hamas and Israel were addressed. Notwithstanding the necessity of resolving the larger conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, a continued Israeli stranglehold on Gaza is all but certain to provoke renewed fighting between Hamas and Israel—regardless of the outcome of the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process.

8.3.3 Concluding remarks

In face of the fundamental challenges introduced by the Arab Spring, the apparent equilibrium Hamas had reached by 2011—filling the roles of liberation movement, political party, and party-statelet—proved unsustainable; in short, and as explicated above, Hamas eventually resigned from office and handed governance of Gaza over to the West Bank government in order to escape an increasingly precarious situation. While the dire conditions in Gaza and the unfavorable regional developments were the immediate reasons for Hamas to abdicate, it should be reiterated that the organization from the outset had been hesitant to both assume and remain in power. As discussed in chapters 6 and 7, Hamas did not aim for victory when it decided to contest the 2006 PLC elections, assumed office reluctantly after Fatah rebuffed its overtures to join in a unity government, and became the sole authority in Gaza only after emerging victorious in the 2007 Palestinian civil war.

Added to this, Hamas had abandoned neither its identity nor capabilities as a liberation movement, despite simultaneously filling many of the functions of a political party, *inter alia* nominating candidates for office, participating in and winning elections, and governing for seven years. As demonstrated by its performance when resisting the 2014 Israeli Operation Protective Edge, Hamas was still a committed and able liberation movement. And as discussed at length in previous chapters, it was the attempt to balance being in government with resistance that led Hamas to behave erratically and fail to convey a coherent ideology. The decision to resign from power and return to a grassroots organization committed to non-institutional resistance can thus be partly explained by the finding of the thesis; exactly because Hamas had not completed its transmutation into a political party but retained its identity as a liberation movement, reversing the transmutation process was a viable recourse that gained traction as the problems and challenges of being in government mounted.

However, it is doubtful that Hamas's abdication from power should prove to be the beginning of a de-institutionalization process or a permanent reversal of the transmutation process. In

terms of institutionalization, the decision to resign from power might even have a positive effect. While the unpredictability of the Palestinian political environment partly accounts for why Hamas had not achieved a higher degree of institutionalization by 2011, its efforts to balance the incompatible roles of governance and resistance also have been detrimental to its institutionalization. By discarding its role as a governing party and focusing on its role as a grassroots organization, Hamas is better positioned to build and routinize its organization, and again articulate a coherent ideological message, both of which have the potential to mitigate the horizontal and vertical power struggles that for long have plagued the organization.

As for the transmutation process, Hamas's resignation from power could be understood as a reversal to its roots as a movement organization. However, the decision to abdicate was probably taken only as a temporary measure. There is little to indicate that Hamas has discarded its political goals or ambitions, and it is therefore doubtful that it will remain content on being relegated to the sidelines of Palestinian politics in the long run. Instead, Hamas's abdication is interpreted as a tactical maneuver, aimed at escaping an increasingly difficult situation as the governing party in Gaza. Free of the responsibilities of government, Hamas can now assume a less prominent and demanding role, focus its energy on recuperating from its costly years in office,⁵⁹⁸ and bide its time for a more conducive situation to emerge.

No longer shackled to the obligations of office, it is possible that Hamas will regain some of its strategic and ideological consistency, as it no longer needs to juggle the incompatible demands of governance and resistance. For similar reasons, Hamas might also re-radicalize; without the moderating effects stemming from being the responsible party in office, and eager to reclaim the legitimacy and popularity it has lost, a return to its ideological roots—both as a religious movement and a liberation movement—is a distinct possibility. Added to this, Hamas gained dramatically in the polls following Operation Protective Edge in 2014, for the first time in eight years surpassing Fatah as the most popular Palestinian faction.⁵⁹⁹ As stated in the report by PSR (2014b), such spikes in popularity have been observed in the aftermath of previous Israeli operations in Gaza, and “things might revert in the next several months to

598 While Hamas's years in power have taken its toll in terms of domestic legitimacy, it remains the second most popular Palestinian faction by a wide margin. In the polls by PSR (2014a), Hamas has hovered around 20 percent factional support since 2011, consistently outperforming the combined support for all other Palestinian factions, barring Fatah.

599 Forty-six percent of those polled said they would vote for Hamas if elections were held today, compared to 31 percent who said they would vote for Fatah. All other parties combined would receive 7 percent, and 17 percent remained undecided (PSR 2014b).

where they were before the war.” Yet, it is feasible that the militant activists within Hamas might interpret this as the rehabilitation of their *modus operandi*, lending force to any tendency of re-radicalization.

Notwithstanding this potential for re-radicalization, the experience from being in power will probably continue to affect the ideological and strategic thinking within Hamas. The organization spent seven years holding on to power in Gaza, despite the best efforts of Israel, Fatah, and much of the international community to oust it from office. And throughout these years, Hamas and its ministers gained crucial political experience, such as the need to compromise, necessary for any future role in government. As such, the forced moderation observed in this period is expected to have had a real and lasting effect on Hamas, although it might intermittently seem absent when the militants enjoy a spell of increased influence.

As demonstrated by this thesis, Hamas has matured ideologically, strategically, and organizationally since its emergence in 1987. Notwithstanding the current uncertainty surrounding its immediate future and the real risk of re-radicalization, it is clear that Hamas throughout its history has laid a strong foundation to remain a key actor. In the event of a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and a subsequent emergence of a real and free Palestinian polity, Hamas will most likely be a constituent player in any party system. And until such a development transpires, Hamas will certainly remain both an intrinsic part of Palestinian politics and a force to be reckoned with in the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Appendix A: List of abbreviations

DFLP	–	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DOP	–	Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements
Fatah	–	Palestinian National Liberation Movement (<i>Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini</i>)
Hamas	–	Islamic Resistance Movement (<i>Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya</i>)
IDF	–	Israeli Defense Forces
NUG	–	National Unity Government
PA	–	Palestinian National Authority
PFLP	–	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLA	–	Palestine Liberation Army
PLC	–	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	–	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	–	Palestinian National Council
UN	–	United Nations
UNGA	–	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	–	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	–	United Nations Security Council Resolution

Appendix B: List of interviewees

Table 3. Alphabetical list of interviews from fieldwork episodes in 2007 and 2011

Name	Affiliation	Position/profession	Date(s)	Place
Anonymous	Hamas	MP (national list)	August 2007 and April 2011	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas	Senior Hamas member on the West Bank	August 2007	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas	Activist	October 2011	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas	MP (national list)	August 2007 and April 2011	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas / Islamic Bloc at Birzeit	Activist	October 2011	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas / Islamic Bloc at Birzeit	Activist	October 2011	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas / Islamic Bloc at Birzeit	Activist	August 2007	West Bank
Anonymous	Hamas	MP (national list)	April 2011	West Bank
Anonymous	Fatah	Cadre	May 2011	West Bank
Abderrahman F. Zaidan	Hamas	MP (Tulkarem district)	April 17 and May 19, 2011	Ramallah
Adly Yaish	Independent, Islamist	Mayor of Nablus	October 15, 2011	Nablus
Ali Barakeh	Hamas	Country representative, Lebanon	November 11, 2011	Beirut
Ali Hweidi	Independent, Islamist	Activist	November 14, 2011	Beirut

Name	Affiliation	Position/profession	Date(s)	Place
Anwer al-Zboun	Hamas	MP (national list)	May 4, 2011	Ramallah
Dawoud Kamal Abu Sair	Hamas	MP (Nablus district)	April 3, 2011	Nablus
Dr. Ali al-Jarbawi	Independent	Minister of Administration and Planning, PA Ramallah	October 6, 2011	Ramallah
Dr. Ali al-Sartaawi	Hamas	Minister of Law in the now defunct National Unity Government	August 27, 2007	Nablus
Dr. Ayman H. Daraghme	Hamas	MP (national list)	August 26, 2007 and April 10, May 18, and September 27, 2011	Ramallah
Dr. Aziz Dweik	Hamas	MP (Hebron district). Speaker of the PLC	April 13, 2011	Hebron
Dr. Basem Ezbidi	N/A	Assistant professor at Birzeit	March 8, 2011	Birzeit University
Dr. George Giacaman	N/A	Professor at Birzeit, director of Muwatin	April 5, 2011	Ramallah
Dr. Helga Baumgarten	N/A	Professor at Birzeit	March 17 and May 19, 2011	Birzeit University
Dr. Iyad Barghouti	N/A	Director of Ramallah Center for Human Rights	August 28, 2007 and April 30, 2011	Ramallah
Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi	N/A	Director of PASSIA	May 10, 2011	Jerusalem
Dr. Mahmoud al-Habbash	Independent (former Hamas)	Minister of Religious Affairs and	May 27, 2011	Ramallah

Name	Affiliation	Position/profession	Date(s)	Place
Dr. Mohammad Ghazal	Hamas	Waqf, PA Ramallah	April 17 and September 29, 2011	Nablus
Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh	Independent, Islamist	Cadre, West Bank leader General manager, Al-Zaytouna Centre	November 16, 2011	Beirut
Dr. Najat Umar Sadiq Abu Bakir	Fatah	MP (national list)	May 22, 2011	Ramallah
Dr. Nashat Aqtash	N/A (former Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas)	Assistant professor at Birzeit, General manager Aqtash PR	April 11, 2011	Ramallah
Dr. Nasser Eddin al-Shaer	Independent, Islamist	Deputy PM and Minister of Education and Higher Education in the first Hamas government	April 18, 2011	Nablus
Dr. Ziad Abu-Amr	Independent	MP (Gaza district)	April 27, 2011	Ramallah
Fareed Taamallah	N/A	Media coordinator for the Central Elections Commission	April 28, 2011	Ramallah
Fathi Hussein Abu Ardat	Fatah	Country representative, Lebanon	November 8, 2011	Saida (Lebanon)
Ghassan Abdullah	DFLP	Independent analyst	May 24, 2011	Ramallah
Hani al-Masri	N/A	General Manager of Badael, the Palestinian Media, Research and Studies Center	March 31 and May 16, 2011	Ramallah
Hisham Abu Ghosh	DFLP	Political Bureau member	May 18, 2011	Ramallah

Name	Affiliation	Position/profession	Date(s)	Place
Jamal Chehabi	Hamas	Cadre / leader	November 12, 2011	Tripoli (Lebanon)
Jamil Hilal	N/A	Independent analyst	April 4, 2011	Ramallah
Jamil Rabah	N/A	Director of Near East Consulting	March 24, 2011	Ramallah
Joharah Baker	N/A	Editor-in-chief of Miftah	May 16, 2011	Ramallah
Khalid Amayreh	N/A	Journalist	April 9, 2011	Dura (near Hebron)
Khalil Shaheen	N/A	Independent analyst	May 3, 2011	Ramallah
Mohammad Barghouti	Hamas	Minister of Local Affairs in the now defunct PA Unity Government	August 26, 2007	Ramallah
Ms. Olfat Hammad	N/A	Director of administration at PCPSR	March 23, 2011	Ramallah
Muhammad Mahmoud Hassan Abu Tair	Hamas	MP (national list, no. 2)	April 21, 2011	Ramallah
Muheet Salameh	Fatah	MP (Ramallah district, Christian quota)	May 26, 2011	Ramallah
Nizar Ramadan	Hamas	MP (Hebron district)	May 8, 2011	Ramallah
Omar Shehade	PFLP	Media coordinator for PFLP	May 11, 2011	Ramallah
Ousama Hamdan	Hamas	Political Bureau member	November 18, 2011	Beirut

Name	Affiliation	Position/profession	Date(s)	Place
Qadura Fares	Fatah	Cadre, Tanzim leader	September 28, 2011	Ramallah
Reyadh Ali Amlah	Hamas	MP (Nablus district)	April 17, 2011	Qabalan (near Nablus)
Riyad Raddad	Hamas	MP (Tulkarem district)	October 22, 2011	Saida (Palestine)
Sameera Halayqah	Hamas	MP (national list)	May 8, 2011	Hebron
Sheikh Hassan Yousef	Hamas	MP (Ramallah district)	October 16, 2011	Ramallah
Sheikh Khalid (Tafish) Dweib	Hamas	MP (Bethlehem district)	May 1, 2011	Bethlehem
Sheikh Mahmoud Musleh	Hamas	MP (Ramallah district)	April 21, 2011	Ramallah
Sheikh Mohammad Totah	Hamas	MP (Jerusalem district)	October 4, 2011	Jerusalem
Wahji Nazzal	Hamas	Former mayor	October 23, 2011	Qalqiyah
Wissam al-Hassan	Hamas	Cadre	November 8, 2011	Saida (Lebanon)
Yasser Azzam	Hamas	Leader of Hamas's refugee office in Lebanon	November 3, 2011	Beirut

Appendix C: Election data in occupied Palestine

Table 4: Allocation of seats per district, 1996 PLC elections⁶⁰⁰

Gaza Strip	
Gaza North	57
Gaza City	12 (1 reserved seat for Christians)
Gaza Central / Deir el-Balah	5
Khan Younis	8
Rafah	5
Gaza Strip total	37
West Bank	
Jerusalem	7 (2 reserved seats for Christians)
Jericho	1
Ramallah	7 (1 reserved seat for Christians)
Bethlehem	4 (2 reserved seats for Christians)
Jenin	6
Hebron	10
Nablus	8 (1 reserved seat for Samaritans)
Tubas	1
Salfit	1
Tulkarem	4
Qalqilya	2
West Bank total	51
Total	88

(Source: CEC 1996).

600 Reliable percentages for the votes cast in this election have proven difficult to locate, but e.g., Bhasin and Hallward claim that despite winning a majority of the seats, Fatah only received around a third of the votes (2013, 79). They cite a Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre website, which has no further references backing up this claim (JMCC 2008). Official numbers are probably unavailable because the organization responsible for the 1996 elections is now defunct.

Table 5: 1996 PLC election results

Alliance or Party	Seats
Fatah	55
Independent Fatah	7
Independent Islamists	4
Independent Christians	3
Independents	15
Samaritans	1
Others	1
Vacant	2
Total	88

(Source: CEC 1996).

Table 6: Percent of vote in four rounds of local elections in occupied Palestine⁶⁰¹

Party	First round (Dec. 2004–Jan. 2005)	Second round (May 2005)	Third round (Sept. 2005)	Fourth round (Dec. 2005)
Fatah	30	39	45	35
Hamas	31	32	31	44
Others	39	28	20	18

(Source: Shikaki 2006, 119).

601 The exact results from the local elections are not readily available. Attempts have been made both by the author and others to reconstruct and compile a detailed overview of the results (see for example Butenschön and Vollan 2006, 14 and 119ff.), but the lack of official information has made this a futile exercise.

Table 7: Allocation of seats per district, 2006 PLC elections

Gaza Strip	
Gaza North	5
Gaza City	8 (1 reserved seat for Christian)
Gaza Central / Dier el-Balah	3
Khan Younis	5
Rafah	3
Gaza Strip total	24
West Bank	
Jerusalem	6 (2 reserved seats for Christians)
Jericho	1
Ramallah	5 (1 reserved seat for Christians)
Bethlehem	4 (2 reserved seats for Christians)
Jenin	4
Hebron	9
Nablus	6
Tubas	1
Salfit	1
Tulkarem	3
Qalqilya	2
West Bank total	42
Total	66

(Source: CEC 2006a, 31).

Table 8: 2006 PLC election results

Alliance or Party	Percent of PR vote	PR seats	District seats	Total seats
Hamas	44.45	29	45	74
Fatah	41.43	28	17	45
PFLP	4.25	3	0	3
The Alternative	2.92	2	0	2
Independent Palestine	2.72	2	0	2
Third Way	2.41	2	0	2
Others	1.81	0	0	0
Independents	N/A	0	4	4
Total	100	66	66	132

(Sources: CEC 2006b; Shikaki 2006, 118).

Table 9: 2006 PLC election results—Mixed System alternative

Alliance or Party	Percent of PR vote	PR seats	District seats	Total seats	If the system had been a truly mixed system
Hamas	44.45	29	45	74	58
Fatah	41.43	28	17	45	54
PFLP	4.25	3	0	3	5
The Alternative	2.92	2	0	2	4
Independent Palestine	2.72	2	0	2	3
Third Way	2.41	2	0	2	4
Others	1.81	0	0	0	-
Independents	N/A	0	4	4	4
Total	100	66	66	132	

(Source: Butenschön and Vollan 2006, 142).

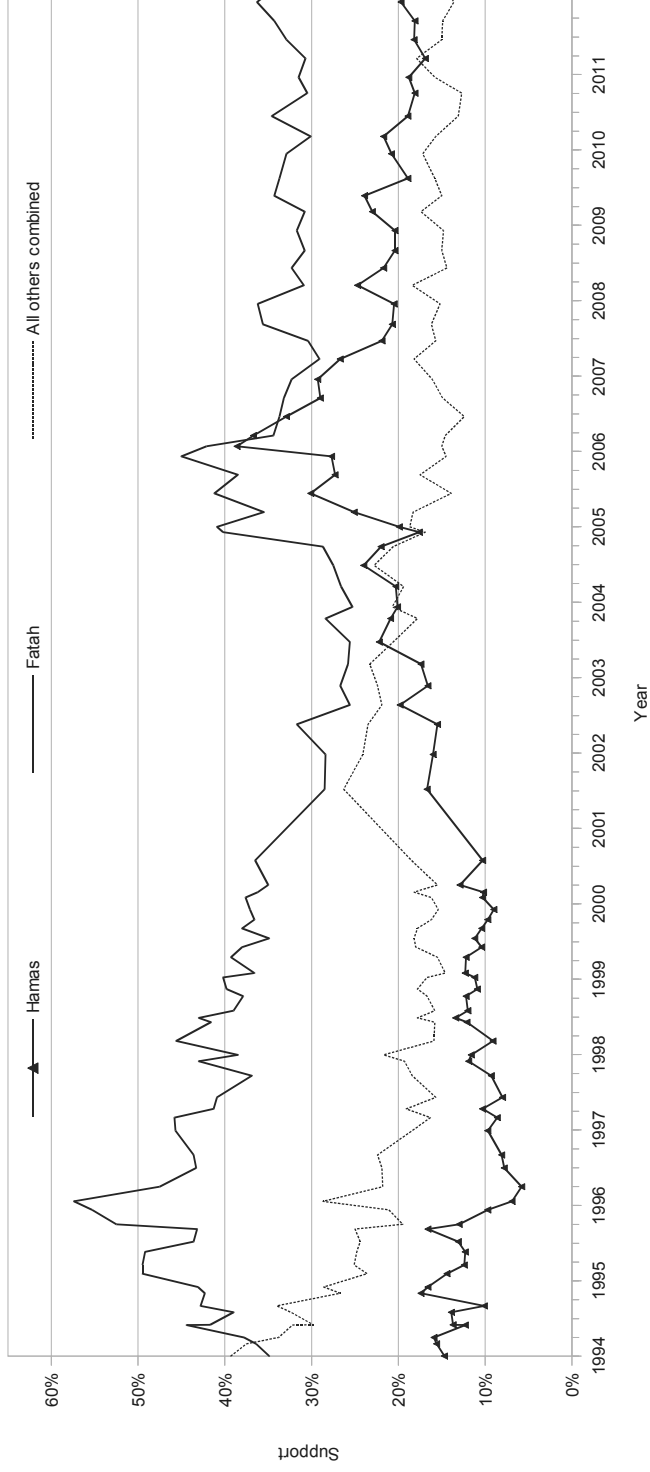
Appendix D: Criteria and indicators of party institutionalization

Table 10: Elements, criteria, and indicators to measure institutionalization

Conceptual element	Criteria	Indicator
Systemness	Coherence	Tendencies, not factions
		Lack of power-struggles (both horizontal and vertical)
	Routinization (both formal and informal)	Routinization of leadership change
		Routinization of decision-making procedures
		Routinization of recruitment and advancement procedures
	Correspondence between actual power structure and statutory norms	
Material resources	Financially self-sufficient	
Decisional autonomy	Links to civil society organizations	The more dominant the party, the more institutionalized
	External sponsors	Linkage, not dependency
		Number of donors
Value infusion	Cohesion	Lack of defections after unpopular decisions
Reification	Support	Lack of fluctuation in popular support
	Identifiability	Monopolizing important symbolic values
		Recognized as serious contender by political competitors

Appendix E: Factional support

Figure 14: Factional support in occupied Palestine, 1994–2011



(Source: CPRS 2000; PSR 2011, 2014a).

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