

THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAMISM AND ITS MODEL OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY (1987-2006)

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ABSTRACT: *The Palestinian national identity, as well as national movement, have experienced significant changes and passed through serious crises as a result of revolts, wars, occupation, uprisings and, finally, a failed peace process following Oslo Accord. Such destabilizing huge events have resulted in vast indecision and ambivalence that had debilitated once dominant forms of secular nationalism and paved the way for new collective identities, namely Islamic, to emerge. This study was intended to explore Palestinian endeavors to establish a national identity and an independent state in Palestine. Focus will be on the Palestinian cause and the role of Islamism in the construction of Palestinian national identity. Hamas provides a case study as Islamism utilizes religion as a socio-cultural and political system. Islam is employed as a means of constructing or maintaining identity. The researcher concluded that the Palestinian national identity and national movement developed not only as a product of external historical developments (e.g. Zionism, British Mandatory or even Arab and Palestinian secular nationalism), but also through directed efforts by the Palestinian intellectuals and elite, religious and otherwise, to provide the ethnic community with a Palestinian national consciousness.*

KEYWORDS: Islamism; National Identity; Nationalism; Palestine; Secularism; Zionism

INTRODUCTION

Arab nationalism had been adopted as an attempt to resist the Ottoman rule which was considered as a symbol of religious regime and/or authority. The Arab nationalists, whether Muslims or Christians, began to promote a secular trend of nationalism that aims at getting rid of the Turkish hegemony. Despite the fact that the Arab world was divided into various nation-states, pan-Arabism continued to have a cultural as well as a political significance. This significance was stronger than Islamism until the 1967 war with Israel and later the Gulf war in 1991. Secularism started to be deconstructed due to Arabs' inclination to traditions, ancient civilization of Islam and the failure of modernization and democratization that were imported from the West.

The Palestinian national movement passed through several stages sometimes stressing the language dimension, other times the broader Arab nationalism, and finally it turned to territorial nationalism mingled with senses of patriotism. But in the contexts of struggle with imperial powers, the British Mandate and Zionism in the Palestinian case, "religion provides a national identity" Ernest Gellner (1992: 15). Religion became a factor not only because of Zionism, but as a part of cultural tradition and consciousness.

The conflict in Palestine began in the form of a clash between Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms and was deeply influenced by the increasing presence of the Zionist activists in Palestine. After the mid 1930s the conflict started to encompass Arabs in the neighboring states. Following 1950s the conflict was conceived as a struggle between Israel and Pan-

Arabism which regarded Israel as a threat to Arab unity. Later the emergence of territorial nation-states in the Middle East led to the development of such a trend into a conflict not between the two movements, Palestinianism and Zionism, but between states. At the end, the conflict has been Islamized and the struggle began to be between two rival religions.

Before proceeding with Hamas, the researcher found it useful to present a brief definition of Islamism. The first scholar who used the term 'political Islam' was Martin

Kramer in the aftermath of Iranian Revolution led by Khomeini in 1979 (Bangstad, 2002). Kramer used the term to any adoption of Islamic approach in the whole Muslim World.

Karame (1996) argued that political Islam refers to "the religion of Islam as applied to a militant, political purpose" (p. 199). Other scholars (e.g., Ayubi, 1991) had been more limited in using this expression when he stressed the traditional concern in Islam for the collective enforcement of morals. The historical connection between Islam and politics can be explained as an attempt by the rulers to legitimize their actions. Ayubi suggested that radical Islamists are shifting this position; and therefore, they mould politics to fit their specific religious views.

The expression political Islam is often substituted by other terms including Islamism and Islamic Fundamentalism. Olivier Roy (1994) for instance, preferred the term

Islamism and looked at it as a "contemporary movement that conceives of Islam as a political ideology...integrated into politics, leaving its marks on mores and conflicts" (p. ix). The aim of all Islamic movements, including Hamas, has been the creation of a state where the Islamic *Shari'a* is applied to all aspects of life to the extent that this approach had brought the Islamists into disputes with secular forces and groups in the Middle East (Bjorn Utvik, 1993).

Inside Islamism itself, there are several attitudes on the way it should be brought to the Islamic world. Kepel (2002) differentiated between "Islamization from below" which entails the creation of the Islamic state through Islamic revival among the members of the community and "Islamization from above" which entails getting rid of existing regimes for the sake of establishing an Islamic state. The former was proposed by Hassan Al-Banna while the latter was envisaged by Sayyid Qutb. The two were prominent founders and leaders of Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt (Litvak: 149).

In the Palestinian territories there had been a number of Islamic movements that advocated Islamization from below (e.g. Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Liberation Party) and other movements that followed the other approach especially Islamic Jihad. The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) came to embody both approaches (Bangstad: 3). The majority of these groups dominated the social services which ensured popular support for them. Hamas, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, "provided a modicum of social security for underprivileged Palestinians" (Hroub, 2000: 238).

The Egyptian Muslim Brethren and its Influence

According to Mitchell (1993) the Muslim Brethren or Brotherhood is considered as the oldest and the largest Islamist movement in the Arab world despite its humble and easy creation in 1928 in Egypt. Hassan Al-Banna decided to create a group of Muslims to revitalize the Islamic call by stressing the notions of "revival, organization and upbringing" (Abu Amr, 1993: 6). Within two decades of time, the Muslim Brotherhood became an international mass

group. In Egypt itself, two million people advocated the movement in 1948 (Christina Harris, 1964: 159). In other Arab states, particularly in the occupied territories, Jordan and Syria, more groups emerged bearing the same name and motivated by the Egyptian model. Furthermore, the original Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt formed the basis for more Islamic groups in the Muslim world.

According to Walid Abd al-Nasir (1994) three factors led to the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood: the dissolving of the Caliphate in 1924; the colonization of the Arab and Muslim worlds by European states, and the growing westernization process of the Arab communities. The Muslim Brotherhood had adopted an approach of nationalism that was consistent with the ideas of its founder, Hassan al-Banna, who rejected the secular dimension of nationalism which was imported from the West to break down the unity of the Muslim world and the imperial West takeover the Muslim's territories.

The Muslim Brotherhood had had a leading role in the Palestinian problem. Al-Banna believed that the Palestinian problem could only be resolved through creating a Palestinian Islamic government within the boundaries of the occupied territories which could recruit fighters inside Palestine to join with the volunteers from outside Palestine in "a guerrilla force" to avoid the "involvement of Arab armies" and furthermore, "preclude the involvement of international bodies" (el-Awaisi: 207). The government in Palestine should be a representative of the people there and capable of speaking on behalf of them not the Arab League or other Arab governments. This meant, for the Palestinian, an Islamic identity.

The Muslim Brethren in Palestine

The Muslim Brotherhood interest in the Palestinian cause dates back to 1935 when Abd al-Rahman al-Banna, brother of Hassan, paid a visit to Hajj Amin al-Husseini in Jerusalem (Abu Amr, 1994: 1). Then the movement started to support the Palestinians and acquire a leading role in major events of the Palestinian struggle against Zionism and British mandate (El-Awaisi, 1998; Azmul Kamaruzaman, 2010). During the 1936 revolt, the Muslim Brotherhood took part in "propaganda activities" to talk about the Palestinian revolutions (Abu Amr, 1994: 1). The Muslim Brotherhood regarded fighting besides the Palestinians as a sacred Jihad (Mayer, 1982: 109).

Instituting branches outside Egypt was not that easy. But with the help of the mother Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo, the Palestine branch was created. One of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, Said Ramadan, established the first branch in Jerusalem on 26 October, 1945; within two years, there were more than twenty-five other branches in Palestine. Hajj Amin al-Husseini was nominated as a leader because his post as Grand *Mufti* assisted the society to disseminate and spread its impact all over the Palestinian territories (Abu Amr, 1993: 6). The close borders between Egypt and Palestine, from Rafah in Gaza Strip, made it easy for the branches to communicate with the mother Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo.

The Muslim Brotherhood branch in the West Bank and Gaza Strip adhered to the thoughts and ideas of al-Banna although it acted as a separate movement. Despite the rapid emergence and formation of Palestinian nationalism, the Muslim Brotherhood made use of the Palestinian problem and the creation of the state of Israel; it stressed the Islamic dimension of Palestine and the Islamic essence of the problem to the extent that it described the Arab-Israeli conflict as a religious-cultural conflict against Western imperialism. Nevertheless, the Muslim Brotherhood could not remain far from the stage especially during the rapid growth

of the Palestinian national consciousness which coincided with the decline of pan-Arabism and rise of nation-states. For the Palestinians who were born under the Israeli occupation, they saw the Palestinian orientation as the a natural framework; for those who were let down by PLO failures, Islam was the immediate remedy. Therefore, Islam and nationalism mated. Signs of assimilation were manifested in the discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood even before the start of the Intifada and the creation of Hamas.

The Muslim Brotherhood branch in Palestine embarked on creating mechanisms to disseminate its ideology and widen its impacts. It founded many charitable societies, religious schools, libraries and sports clubs (Abu Amr, 1993:7). It also used the Zakat (alms) money to aid poor families, needy students and orphans (Roy, 1994: 29; Abu Amr, 1994: 14; and Milton-Edwards, 1996: 127). The Muslim Brotherhood benefited from the mosques to raise its publicity as they were far from being monitored by the Jews. The mosques were used to recruit members; the more mosques in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the more members for the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood directed its attention to the education institution in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Islamic groups of students began to emerge and compete the nationalist groups. These groups participated in the elections of the universities' Student Councils. In 1979, the Islamic Bloc won ten seats out of eleven at An-Najah National University; in 1980 they got five seats while PLO faction won six; but in 1981 the Islamic Bloc won all the seats of the council in the same university. In 1987 the Islamic Bloc got around eight hundred votes while Fatah 650 and Islamic Jihad around 200. The Islamic University in Gaza was different; it was considered as the central stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood (Abu Amr: 17).

Between the mid of 1970s and the mid of 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood grew constantly and steadily until it became the "largest of [movements], both in number and influence" (Kamaruzaman: 3). Another important element that led to the decrease of the Muslim Brotherhood influence was the emergence of the Islamic Jihad at the beginning of 1980s. With the eruption of the first uprising in 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood became the main "contenders among Islamic Movements in occupied territories and remained an influential force" (Kamaruzaman: 3) and then it began to be represented by Hamas.

Palestine Islamic Jihad: Fathi Shaqaqi (1974) and the Vision of Revolution

Like other contemporary Islamic revivalist movements *Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami Fi Filastin* (The Islamic Jihad in Palestine) has been a revolutionary social movement that sought to rebuild the Muslim society and give it a new image following the tradition of Islam. It was different from other Islamic movements in that it realized the dangers and threats of occupation and embarked on fighting it from the very beginning. It integrated religion with political nationalism in a "dynamic social reality" (Rashwan, 2007: 133).

For the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic revival and the Islamic transformation of the society were crucial prerequisites for the liberation of the occupied territories in Palestine; it saw the armed struggle or Jihad unattainable and could not be undertaken until the Muslim community is reformed, Islamic rules and traditions are adopted and the secular conceptions and ideas are neglected or abandoned (Abu Amr, 1993; 9). The Islamic Jihad in Palestine, on the contrary, looked at the Palestinian problem differently; it was the central issue for the movement, and therefore; adopted armed struggle as its strategy without waiting for

transforming and Islamizing the society (Hala Mustafa, 1987: 179).

Al-Shaqaqi was greatly influenced by the writings of many Muslim scholars including Muhammad al-Ghazali to who Islam encompasses all aspects of life; the Islamic Revolution in Iran was another source of inspiration for al-Shaqaqi's movement. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Jihad in Palestine believed in the necessity of establishing an Islamic state in Palestine and the need for ruling that state using the Islamic creed and *shari'a* (Abu Amr, 1993: 9). Consequently, al-Shaqaqi refused to participate in the national struggle against the Israeli occupation in terms of the PLO "incremental strategy" which based on recognition of UN Security Council Resolutions. al-Shaqaqi began to formulate his own ideology that blends Islam with the Palestinian cause and depends on Jihad as a variable in the "three-part equation: Islam as the approach, Jihad as the means, and Palestine as the object of liberation". He contended that Islamizing the Arab-Israeli conflict would not "nullify its nationalist nature, but complement it" (Rashwan: 136).

The Islamic Jihad in Palestine was always at odds with Arab regimes mainly those which had strong relations with the West and the USA like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. For the movement, these countries were a "security belt for Israel" and that they were, along Israel "two faces of the same coin; they are the fruit of the Western invasion of the Arab world" (cited in Syed, 2002: 205).

The "Zionist state" had been, according to the movement platform, "the spearhead of the West contemporary colonialist enterprise in its civilization battle against the Muslim community", but Palestine, from the river to the sea, is part of the Islamic world. It also contended with the Arab Nationalists Movement notion of the importance of the Arab and

Muslim public which represent the "true depth of [the Palestinians] in its Jihad" (Rashwan: 144). Consequently, the Islamic Jihad in Palestine believed that there should be a unification of Islamic and nationalist forces; and all peaceful settlements were fruitless and invalid as they intended to "waste time, sap the energy of the resistance, bury the Intifada, relieve Israel of the burden of resistance and prolong negotiations, which are merely agreements that charge the Palestinians with the responsibility for maintained Israel security" (Rashwan: 154-155). It also rejected all UN resolutions.

The Creation of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in 1987, and the Ideas of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi)

On 8 December, 1987, an Israeli truck hit deliberately two vans carrying Palestinian workers, from Jabalya Refugee Camp in Gaza, while they were on the way to work in Israel. The crash killed four Palestinians instantly. It was later known that the truck driver was a relative of a Jew who was previously stabbed to death in Gaza Market (Kimmerling & Migdal: 297). At the funeral in the evening, tens of thousands of Palestinians headed to the nearby Israeli military post and started hurling stones at the soldiers. By the morning, the streets and alleys of Jabalya Camp filled with people who invited new types of barricades and a huge wave of violence began to inaugurate the second revolt in the history of the Palestinian people after that of 1936-1939 against the British Mandate (p. 297-298).

The next day, the prominent leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood met to discuss the ways of making use of the event to arouse the religious and nationalistic feelings of the Palestinians and to quarantine the dissemination of wide mass resistance and demonstrations. The leaders,

who met in Ahmad Yasin's house as he was the founder and chairman of the Islamic Center in Gaza, included Dr. Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, Dr. Ibrahim al-Yazouri, Muhammad Sham'a, Salih Shihadah, Abd al-Fattah Dukhan and Isa al-Nashshar (Abu Amr, 1989: 19). These leaders were soon meeting regularly to plan for the actions and manage the fast-growing and developing situation.

One week after the breaking out of the wave of violence, the Muslim Brotherhood leaders issued its first statement urging the masses to resist the Israeli occupation; then it started issuing further leaflets signed by the name Hamas only in January 1988 (Abu Amr, 1989: 101). At that time communications with the West Bank were intense and resulted in Ahmad Yasin and others.

The creation of Hamas was not totally a final decision of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders. There was a tension among the members of the movement concerning the participation in the activities of the Intifada; the young were eager to take part while the "traditional leaders initially had a reversed, wait-and-see attitude"; it was the Intifada that brought Hamas into existence (Abu Amr, 1993: 16). The emergence of Hamas could be attributed to two main factors. On the one side, it was the dichotomy of the young and the old concerning involvement in acts of resistance as well as the constant pressures falling on the movement due to PLO and other groups rivalry with the Muslim Brotherhood (Rashwan: 107). On the other side, it was almost difficult for the movement to consolidate or justify its engagement in the Intifada despite its constant abstention from such move prior to the Intifada; the Muslim Brotherhood contended, before the uprising, with the idea that the suitable time for the holy Jihad did not come yet. The time was, according to the Muslim Brotherhood leadership, good for educating the society and preparing it for Jihad. Furthermore, the leaders were trying to find a way to participate without compromising the destiny of their movement (Abu Amr, 1993).

Ahmad Yasin found the right solution for all these obstacles; he suggested creating a separate group, out of the Muslim Brotherhood, that could participate in the uprising. With the fate of the movement in his mind, Yasin believed that if the Intifada continued, succeeded and gained its objectives, then the Muslim Brotherhood could claim it as its own, but if it failed then the Muslim Brotherhood had the possibility to disclaim and avoid being destroyed by Israel. Meanwhile, the PLO factions were busy in creating a unified entity that could coordinate, organize and mobilize the masses during the Intifada. *al-Qiyada al-Wataniyya al-Muwahhada lil Intifadh* (The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising) emerged before the end of December (David McDowall, 1989: 11).

Yasin insisted on the necessity of educating the masses religiously, socially and culturally beside their religious background. Yasin began to widen his efforts socially and culturally. He began preaching in other mosques in the Strip; started to collect donations to help the poor, called for religious lessons for women at mosques; and finally established the Islamic Center. Within the boundaries of the center, Ahmad Yasin established the first military group and called it 'Mujahideen *Filastin*' (Palestine Fighters) in 1982 (Chehab: 21). This group was interested in collecting weapons and training fighters without attacking the Israeli soldiers. It was during the first month of the Intifada that Hamas came to existence.

Hamas moved through four stages before it came into existence. The first stage witnessed the establishment of a wide range of social network institutions, charities and social committees. The second stage saw the strengthening of the bases of resistance among the Palestinians

regardless of their social and religious backgrounds. The next stage worked in developing the resistance tactics; instead of throwing stones, the activists began to use guns, grenades, mines and other explosive weapons. Finally, Hamas began spreading outside the boundaries of the occupied territories and establishing good relations with Arab and Islamic states, especially Syria after Hamas was expelled from Jordan in 1999 (Rabbani, 2008: 59).

Sheikh Ahmad Yasin described Hamas's emergence to the Israeli interrogators by saying that:

Two months before the start of the Intifada in December, 1987, I met with Sheikh Salah al Shehada to whom I was first introduced in al-Majdel Prison. I decided to establish a movement in Gaza to work against the Israeli settlement policy, resist the occupation and to encourage the Palestinians to take part in the resistance efforts against Israel. During our meeting, we agreed to set up a military wing and a security wing of this new Islamic movement. The military wing was to fight against the Israeli army and its occupation, Salah al Shehada built up this wing. The aim was to amass weapons to use in the struggle. The security wing was to monitor and arrest Palestinian informants as well as drug dealers, prostitutes and the sale and consumption of alcohol in the Palestinian Territories.” (Quoted in Chehab: 23).

Regarding the status of Palestine, Hamas Charter stated that Palestine is part of the Muslim world that cannot be sold, given up or neglected as in (article 11). This came, according to Barry Rubin (2009) as a reaction by Hamas to the PLO declaration of independence on November 15, 1988. The Palestinians, the Arabs and the Muslims are all responsible for the fighting and liberating it as shown in (article 14). Palestine is a Muslim *waqf* (endowment). With respect to the peace process and the different initiatives the charter declared they contradict the doctrines of the Hamas as they call for giving up parts of the land to the Israelis, (article 13) because there could be no effective solution to the problem of Palestine except *Jihad*. Article 15 states that “When an enemy occupies some of the Muslim lands, Jihad becomes obligatory on every Muslim”. All peaceful negotiations and initiatives “are nothing but a form of judgment passed by infidels on the land of the Muslims” (Taraki, 1989: 31) and a “waste of time and acts of absurdity” (article 13).

Concerning Hamas's attitudes towards other nationalist movements, the charter stated that Hamas shares many things with the PLO as both had the same homeland, calamity, destiny, enemy, etc. “[The PLO] constitutes a father, a brother, a relative, a friend” article 27). The secular tendencies of the PLO, according to the charter, are opposed to religious thought, which it represents, and cannot be substituted with Islamic trends that consider Palestine as part of the Muslim world. Furthermore, the charter states that when the PLO adopts Islam, Hamas members will be PLO fighters and soldiers.

The Islamic Resistance Movement “objects to the [PLO] widespread acceptance as the [Palestinian] people's frame of reference and definer of their identity and national goals”, although it did not claim to be their representative (Abu Amr, 1993: 13). Nonetheless, the constant repetition of Hamas slogan “Islam as an alternative” in case the secularists failed, made it clear that Hamas tries to project itself as a substitution to the PLO. In other words, Hamas started to see itself as a rival for the PLO when it rejected its political program and called for the creation of an Islamic society, leadership and constitution.

Despite these indirect rivalries, both Fatah and Hamas strived to keep the fires of the Intifada

ignited and directed the Palestinian activists against the occupation. Arafat and Yasin were in good moods with each other to the extent that the former ordered his followers to build a suitable house of a prominent figure of the Palestinian society, but the latter refused. Both helped to reduce the internal conflict among the Palestinian factions and society; both urged the followers to resist the Israeli soldiers, but Hamas inclined to much more violent tactics than those adopted by Fatah (Kimmerling & Migdal: 308).

Unlike the PLO, or to a lesser degree Fatah, Hamas developed multiple leadership, committees and wings which were controlled by a consultative council whose representatives resided inside and outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, Hamas remained almost simple without the bureaucracy abounded in the PLO. The leadership of Hamas was always targeted by the military forces of the Israeli occupation. Some were deported; others were imprisoned while the prominent leaders were assassinated. Sheikh Yasin was imprisoned again in 1989 for fifteen years, and thus; he had to be substituted (Abu Amr, 1994).

Salah Shehadeh and Ibrahim Makadmeh beside al-Rantisi were among the leaders who were supposed to succeed Yasin. Yet, the Israeli forces assassinated the two other prominent leaders of Hamas. Doctor Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi became the leaders of Hamas.

Al-Rantisi was known for his inclination to more violent resistance. Before the creation of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas made a qualitative as well as quantitative leap in the sort of operations against the occupation. During the first years of the Intifada, between 1987-1991, Hamas carried out less than ten bombings a year; yet it increased the number to become around twenty in 1992 and more than 25 in 1993. Following 1993, Hamas began to target the Israelis inside the Green Line killing more between 1992-1993 (Rashwan: 121).

It was Yahya Ayyash who advanced and developed the techniques of suicide bombings. He was the main bomb maker of the movement as well as the head of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in the West Bank. Israel wanted him and searched for him for three years until the Shin Bet tricked one of his relatives who gave him a bomb-laden cell phone and killed him instantly on January 5, 1996 (Katz, 2002). After Ayyash death and the Palestinian Authority establishment, the range of operations increased. Between 1998 and 2000, there were no bombing due to an agreement signed by Hamas and the PLO (Nawati, 2002: 94)

The 1987 Intifada brought Hamas to the forefront; it was during this revolt that the PLO monopoly of the Palestinian cause began to be called into question. According to Azzam Tamimi (2007) Jerusalem and its high religious status constituted the core of the conflict and mosques turned to be the starting points of the acts of resistance especially demonstrations. This was definitely clear when Sharon paid a visit to the Al-Aqsa mosque. The Palestinians were irritated and fluked to the place to announce the start of the second Intifada in 2000.

Reasons of Hamas's Popularity during Second Palestinian *Intifada*

The period between 1996 and 1998 witnessed an escalation of the attacks against the Israelis especially after the assassination of Ayyash and Rabin. Tens of Israelis were killed and this led the officials, as well as the public, to suspect the Palestinian partner who could not sustain the activists. Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine stood firm in front of all acts of reconciliation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel; their attacks brought extra sufferings to the Palestinians as Israel used to react violently after each bombing. The

Palestinians began to lose hope in any peaceful settlement to the conflict.

Furthermore, the relationship between the new government in Israel with the Palestinian Authority was not in good terms when Barak became prime minister. He stressed the indivisibility of Jerusalem; the expansion of settlements increased, and the Palestinian economy worsened more and more. The Oslo agreement proved futile in formulating a mechanism through which the peace process could be 'inherited' by new Israeli government" (Schulz, 2004). According to the Accord, the interim period should end in May 1999; but it was extended due to a delay in implementing the conditions and agreements and because of the elections in Israel.

The Palestinian Authority and the new Israeli government, headed by Barak, agreed to solve all problems, including Jerusalem, the settlements, the refugees, the borders, security, and reach a final permanent status not later than September 2000. The two sides met, under the auspices of the USA, in July 2000 in Camp David based on what was called Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum in 4 September, 1999). Barak was under the pressure of the threat of collapsing the coalition. The main idea of the negotiations was, on one hand, Jerusalem which according to the Palestinians should be divided into both sides, and the fragmentation of the parts of the West Bank under Palestinian control. For the Israelis, the agreement was "radical" and for the Palestinians was "insufficient" (Schulz: 12). The period was then dominated by uncertainty. September ended and no agreement was signed. Further negotiations were held in Taba and Eilat but at the end of 2000 Barak resigned and new elections were to be held in Israel. Meanwhile Ariel Sharon, minister of defense, made a provocative visit to al-Aqsa Mosque and then riots started on 20 September, 2000 (Walther, 2009: 70).

Sharon wandering in the yards of al-Aqsa Mosque was interpreted as an indicator to the uncertainty atmosphere as well as a direct challenge to the Palestinians telling them that the City of Jerusalem was, and is always, the permanent capital of the state of Israel.

The Likud Party would not, according to Schulz (2004: 13), "to compromise on Jerusalem, directly feeding into Palestinian identity discourses of vulnerability, suffering, and struggle."

The Palestinians broke out in large scale violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It was interpreted by the Israelis as promoted by Arafat in an attempt to destroy the peace process as he did not get what he wanted at Camp David; he, alongside the Palestinians, thought that violence could force Israel into further concessions. In addition, by assuming leadership of this Intifada Arafat could rescue himself, in front of his people, after the collapse of the peace process in Camp David, particularly when he was intending to declare, unilaterally, the creation of the Palestinians state (Ben Kaspi, 2000: Ma'ariv). Yazid Sayigh, on the contrary, contended that Arafat's lack of clear strategies was the behind his adoption of violence depending on Ami Ayalon statement when he said "Yasir Arafat neither prepared nor triggered the Intifada" (Le Monde, 22 December, 2001).

Many Palestinian Authority officials warned the Israelis from the visit. Yet, Sharon insisted upon it having two-interconnected motives. Firstly, he was thinking about winning the rivalry against Netanyahu to preside the Likud Party. By showing the advocates that it was easy to reach all sites in the region, Sharon was sure of winning the contest, and he did. The visit was an endeavor to "block Netanyahu's political comeback" (Kidron, 2000: 8). Secondly, Sharon was looking forward to sinking Barak's ship that was heading to give the Palestinians some

sort of sovereignty on the mosque. According to the Likud spokesman, the visit was intended to show that under the party's leadership "the Temple Mount would remain under Israeli sovereignty (AP: September, 2000). Four months later Sharon won the elections and became the Prime Minister.

The tactics of Hamas developed noticeably during this uprising. According to Matthew Levitt the pace of Hamas resistance and attacks increased dramatically; it carried out more than four hundred attacks killing three hundred eighty Israelis and wounding more than two thousands in the first two years. In 2003, more than 200 attacks were done, but in 2004 the number doubled; rockets and mortar shells were introduced and Hamas used to target the Gush Qatif Bloc and Asqalan and Ashdod cities (Abu Amr, 1993). At the beginning of 2003, Hamas embarked on fighters in a popular arm until it established the *Murabitun* (Border Guards) in 2004 which entitled with different responsibilities than those of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The *Murabitun* were responsible for defending the Strip and rescue operations while the al-Qassam Brigades were responsible for targeting the Israelis, soldiers and civilians as well, Ya'ari (2004).

Israel, in its turn, escalated its military assaults against the Palestinians during the al-Aqsa Intifada. It killed, in one of the enduring images of the conflict the 12-year-old Muhammad Durrah during confrontations between Israeli troops and Palestinians (BBC, September, 2004); Israel began launching F-16 strikes against the civilians in the Strip; it assassinated many leaders, not only from Hamas but also from other factions, particularly the PFLP leader Abu Ali Mustafa on 27 August, 2001; Israel launched a massive military assault on the West Bank targeting Arafat headquarters in Ramallah and siege it for a long time; and above all, it began building a separation wall to prevent, according to their narratives, the militants from entering Israel.

There were two significant events that took place during this uprising. First, the partial reoccupation of the West Bank when the Palestinians felt themselves at war; the other was the evacuation of the Gaza Strip in a unilateral initiative by Sharon. On January 18, 2002 Israeli forces moved towards Arafat headquarters in Ramallah; shielded it and torn down its walls along with most buildings. Sharon threatened to send him into exile but Arafat preferred to die as a martyr. The result was that Arafat became weak by the time and Mahmoud Abbas was nominated a Prime Minister in April 2003. Later his health deteriorated and was sent to Paris for treatment; he died there and Abbas became president (Hart, 1989). Two interconnected crises of Arafat's nationalist ideology and practices resulted in Hamas to win greater support. On the one hand, there was the political dilemma of representation which was worsened by the autocratic and insufficient national leadership of Arafat. On the other hand, there was also the crisis of political and social agenda and content of following Palestinian polity. The rise and emergence of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "can only be understood in relation to the organizational, ideological and political degeneration of the PLO" (Usher, 1999: 32).

The second event was the most significant. Hamas succeeded in building up its own militia and, at the same time, Israel managed to weaken the infrastructure of the PLO and its factions. Abbas stated to become stronger by the time but he was unable to confront Hamas. To do so, he and Mohammad Dahlan began a seven-stage plan to strengthen the

Preventive Security Forces to "pacify Hamas by demilitarizing it and transforming it into an exclusively political movement". The first stage was, according to Dahlan, to convince

Hamas to stop bombings inside the Green Line; the second stage was “harsher, with step seven being a complete crackdown ‘by all means’” (Hroub: 28-29). At a later stage, the Palestinian Authority inclined to hit the social networks of Hamas. It began cutting off or freeze the funds of Hamas; limited the charities and closed many; imprisoned activists, etc. The situation changed to be militarized and the Palestinian Authority shifted to the police state approach where it “exercises its hegemony over civil society” (Hroub, 2000: 241).

Hamas did not stand still despite the great loss it encountered after the assassination of its two grand leaders. Khalid Mishal was named to replace Sheikh Yasin in Spring, 2004.

With the fading of the second Intifada and the increase of the conflict between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, Hamas faced new challenges especially when the resistance option was no longer fruitful. The movement was at the brink of a crisis. To avoid it, Hamas had to shift its ideology, policies and programs just as the nationalist movements had done before. The public masses stopped to support the suicide bombings and violence; they were also let down by Hamas refusal of getting involved in the presidential elections of 2005 thinking that the movement would not like to be a “part of the national political process” (Baumgarten, 2005: 42).

It is, up to this point, agreed that Hamas, like other movements that represent political Islam, could serve as a resisting military group. On the one hand, it is a completely modernist political organization that deployed “mass modes of mobilization, propaganda and social organization to propagate its ideology” (Usher: 32), and gained vast reputation by maintaining financial honesty and probity, social services for the community as well as military courage. In an interview with Khalid Mishal, Hamas created the need to have its own project that “Fused Islam and Nationalism” (cited in Rabbani, 2008: 65). On the other hand, the movement tended to interpret the teachings of Islam in a primitive, inadequate way that could not meet the social, political and economic “challenges raised by the struggle for self-determination. More dangerously, its eventual hegemony would bequeath a vision of Palestinian national identity that it is anti-democratic, sectarian and racist” (Usher: 32).

Jamil Hilal (1993) maintained that Hamas’s vision would deconstruct the bases of Palestinian nationalism as it rejects secularism and advocates changing the Arab-Israeli conflict into a religious one “The challenge of political Islam comes from the fact that it questions the foundations of Palestinian nationalism. It adopts a sectarian conception of society and offers Islam as an alternative to the secular nationalism of the PLO. Furthermore, it rejects the pluralistic features of future Palestinian society in favor of a totalitarian perspective, an alternative to a political society that negates ‘territorial’ nationalism”. This, according to Hilal, will endanger the national and cultural identity of the Palestinians simply because Hamas “could not have prospered without the political discontent that had been spreading among ever-widening sectors of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the diaspora” (Hilal: 57).

Hamas and Islamic Mobilization: The Role of Khalid Mashal (1996)

Hamas refrained from participating in the 2005 presidential elections during which Mahmoud Abbas was elected president, but the next year, the leaders decide to run for the parliamentary elections. It won 74 of the 132 seats of the PLC. Both Israel and the US decided to isolate the movement internationally but did not succeed. It was Khalid Mishal who managed to maintain a direct contact with it and the international media as well (Rabbani, 2008).

Mishal is known as belonging to the hardliner group among Hamas leadership. After Hamas winning of the 2006 elections, Mishal stated that his movement intends to bring all factions together with their weapons so that they form an army; later, he declared that Hamas would give up the violent armed resistance if the Israelis withdrew from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the pre-1967 borders as well as accepted the refugees return and compensation. Mishal said "Israel must withdraw to the 1967 borders and abide by Palestinian refugees' Right of Return if it wants peace" (*Ynetnews*: 3 March, 2006). In interview with Rabbani, Mishal declared that Hamas stressed the necessity of culture of coexistence, cooperation, tolerance and devotion for the homeland.

When asked to describe Hamas, Mishal argued that it is a "comprehensive movement ..., an Islamic movement, a nationalist movement, a militant movement, a political movement in addition to its cultural and social dimensions, its services functions, and its institution building" (cited in Rabbani: 69). What Hamas introduced to the Palestinian cause, according to Mishal, is the Islamic, religious dimension without sacrificing the nationalist one as "there is no contradiction between the two. The Islamic movement is a nationalist movement" (cited in Rabbani: 70) despite the religious diversity of the Palestinian society.

For Mishal, the main priority of the movement is to free the nation, get rid of the occupation, and achieve self-determination on the occupied territories. Hamas is not interested, at the present time, in determining the nature of the future state in Palestine because this will be done by all Palestinians "Once the occupation is ended and sovereignty on the ground is achieved, the state will be established, and in that phase, collectively, as Palestinians, we will discuss and determine the state's identity in keeping with the rules of democracy" (cited in Rabbani: 72).

Palestinian Municipal Elections of 2005 and the 2006 General Elections: The Ideas of Ismail Haniyeh

Hamas was depicted, by many, as a reactionist and militant movement. Nevertheless, it decided to shift its ideology to the direction of the Palestinian national movement. During the intifada Hamas was forced to accommodate its ideology to the Palestinian nationalism by inventing an Islamic tradition that is carried out as "an integral part of Palestinian national identity" (Usher: 29). Yet the main obstacle that faced Hamas was to compromise between the social conservatism and its Islamic nationalism. It has started to call for the Palestinian Authority to allow the Palestinian society to operate in a democratic fashion and that the school curriculum should be built according to the Islamic civilization (Usher: 28). But such demands needed to be accommodated until they go with and assimilate in the nationalist slogans raised by other Palestinian factions, mainly Fatah.

Consequently, Hamas began recruiting younger and militant members of the society to whom Islam is not necessarily limited to Islamic *Shari'a* but also national freedom from occupation. The attraction of the young elements of the society aims at "not the eclipse of nationalist ideology...but its transformation, [mixing] it rather with a religious soul that secularism is felt lack" (Usher: 29).

The Islamists were divided between the pragmatists who believed in supporting participation in the elections and the rejectionists who opposed it. Ahmad Yasin, for instance, argued that it would be better for Hamas to take part in these elections because this would "reassert the strength of the Islamist presence...and prevent it losing ground because of isolation" (*al-*

Wasat, London: 1/11/1993). In 1994, Ibrahim Ghosjah, a Hamas prominent leader from the hardline rejectionist front, stressed that the movement would abstain from participating in “any elections associated with autonomy” (*an-Nahar*, Jerusalem: 10/01/1994).

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) of 1996 was repeatedly extended due to lack of security in the occupied territories. Hamas did not participate in the elections. Yet, in 2004, elections of municipal councils were to be carried out in two phases. The first would be organized on 23 December 2004 and it involved 26 municipalities in the West Bank. The second phase would be held on 27 January 2005 for ten municipalities in the Gaza Strip. This year was called by Ahmad Qurei, the ex-prime minister, ‘the year of Palestinian elections’. Hamas participated in the municipal ones and had achieved clear gains when it got 77 of the 118 seats in Gaza and 35 % in the West

Bank. Fatah got 14 councils while Hamas only 9 councils. This represented the “first penetration of the Islamic movement” (Balawi: 2006, 128).

The second phase of the elections were organized on May 5, 2005 and was larger than the previous one; eighty-four municipal, local, and village councils were involved in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, seventy-six in the West Bank and eight in the Strip. The percentage of voting was high and exceeded 80 %. The total seats were 906; Fatah got 55% and controlled 50 municipalities compared to 34% to Hamas which controlled 28. The rest councils went to independent and other smaller groups (Balawi, 2006).

Two additional rounds of elections were held in the West Bank only. The former took place on September 29, 2005 and the other on December 15, 2005 one month before the legislative elections of 2006; it was the most important phase for Hamas as it involved the main municipal councils in the West Bank such as Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron and other cities; it was also an indicator to the tendency of the Palestinian society to democracy; and it was the turning point in Hamas history as it decided to take part in the coming legislative elections after one month (Balawi: 128).

Following the results of the Municipal elections of 2005, new reforms were introduced to the electoral system so that Hamas would not maintain a majority. The number of seats for the PLC was 88 but it was increased from 88 to 132; the seats were divided into two categories: one to be elected in constituencies while the other by the party lists (Tim Youngs, 2006: 8). Hamas evaluated its status carefully before it had decided to participate in the legislative elections in 2006 making use of the post 9/11 conditions (Walther: 90) and the possibility of political reconciliation with the national movements.

Thus, the situation was in favor of Hamas due to three main considerations. First, the support of the Palestinian Authority and the secular movements had been declining all the time since 2002 and the failure of the Camp David. The masses began to consider a new era of peace process that puts an end to their sufferings and the vicious circle of violence that increased misery and torture because the hundreds of road blocks and check-points scattered in the West Bank.

Second, the death of Arafat and the new strategies of suppressing armed struggle by Israel gave Hamas additional chances to take part in these elections as it became unable to maintain the same momentum of its resistance activities after Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip; the erection of the separation wall; and the tightening of border closures between the

occupied territories and Israel. The new leadership of the Palestinian Authority after the death of Arafat was unable to introduce successful reforms to the political system of the Palestinian Authority nor was it able to improve the economic condition of the Palestinian people (Shiqaqi, 2007: 6).

Finally, there was an increasing tendency among Hamas leaders towards political solution particularly within the moderate figures of Hamas (Walther: 91). Furthermore, to gain political supremacy over the secular movements, mainly Fatah, had always been among the priorities of Hamas both the moderate as well as the extremist leaders of the movement. From a military perspective, Hamas won antecedence over Fatah especially during the second uprising. With taking part in the election it would be possible to surpass Fatah and dominate the political stage that was dominated by the PLO for more than four decades.

A noticeable shift was observed towards moderation among Hamas leaders due to the increasing loss of leaders and active members as a result of the continuous assassination, deportation and imprisonment. Therefore, there was a demanding need to compensate for this loss. Added to this was the retreat of the Syrian as well as Iranian backup to Hamas, in terms of military services (Gunning: 227-233). Finally, Hamas wanted to make use of the division inside Fatah, and that it would acquire a “policy insurance against [further] possible repressive actions by the Palestinian Authority.” (Klein, 2007: 446).

So as to get involved in these elections and the political life Hamas needed to develop an appropriate tool while maintaining its own identity as an Islamic revolutionary movement. Therefore, this kind of participation entailed the movement to address all aspects of life of the Palestinian people. Like all previous national movements, Hamas tended to deviate from the principles listed in its charter depending on the situations (Walther: 95). One significant deviation was the willingness to establish a state on parts of Palestine. But there was an urgent need to justify the decision of Hamas to take part in these elections.

In previous elections, Hamas participated with members and sometimes minor groups as shown in Student Councils at universities. Now the situation is different; *Qa'imat al-Islah wa al-Tagheer* (Change and Reform Party) was founded and was dedicated to civil affairs and governance instead of ideological perspectives of the charter. The movement did expect to do well in the elections but not to the extent that was gained after the process. The leaders were interested in acting as an opposition party rather than a ruling one, in addition to the legitimacy it will gain local, regionally and even internationally.

Within the horizons of the Change and Reform, and according to Marc Walther (2007), this agenda explained Hamas's move to “pragmatism and willingness to participate in politics” without referring to violence; focus on civil affairs rather than religious ones (Hroub, 2006); and selecting professionals rather than religious personalities (Gunning: 164).

The elections were carried out with more than 450 international observers mostly Europeans. Hamas succeeded and got 78 seats out of 118 for a number of reasons. First, it, unlike its rival Fatah, maintained its unity, cohesion and solidarity. The movement acted as a one cell. Second, the movement dealt with the social affairs of the society the right way. Third, there was an increasing awareness, among all sectors of the society that Hamas was honest, straightforward and act for the sake of the people. This was clear in its conduct in municipal councils through the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and through its resistance fame, its continuous charitable organizations during the Intifadas and after the 4004 and 2005 elections

mainly in urban areas (Gunning, 153). The victory was stunning not only for rivals but also for Hamas itself. Finally, the choice of candidate and the secured funding was very useful for Hamas. They were capable of influencing the masses and mobilize them for achieving greater support. At the top of these candidates was Ismail Haniyeh whose status within Hamas developed noticeably during the second Intifada. In 2005 he was chosen to head the list of Change and Reform Party for the legislative election of 2006. On February 16, 2006 Haniyeh became the Prime Minister and was introduced to president Abbas on March 29, 2006 (Hroub, 2006).

From the beginning of his post, as a prime minister, Haniyeh adopted a moderate and conciliatory tone towards other Palestinian factions stressing that the Palestinians had “no choice but to work together” to defend Palestine; he also maintained tribute to president Abbas who was always criticized by Hamas (Hroub, 2006). Nevertheless, neither Hamas nor Haniyeh changed their positions and attitudes towards the discord points with the PLO and the Palestinian Authority.

In a similar stance concerning the attitude towards Israel, Haniyeh stressed the fact that his government would handle the issue with “high national responsibility” while saving and maintaining the historical rights of the Palestinian people and that “The government and relevant ministries will take into consideration the interests and needs of our people and the mechanisms of daily life, thus dictating necessary contacts with the occupation in all mundane affairs: business, trade, health, and labor” (Haniyeh Speech: Quoted in Hroub, 2006).

He refused to recognize Israel, the PLO-Israeli agreements, and the UN Security Council Resolutions although he alluded very often to the two-state solution. In his speech, Haniyeh stressed the need to secure a geographical continuity and “link the two halves (West Bank and Gaza) of the homeland politically, economically, socially, and culturally /.../ the Palestinian people at home and in the Diaspora” (Hroub, 2006). Hanyieh was listed among the moderates of Hamas leaders though he never abandoned the necessity of resisting the occupation. This was clear in the program Hamas prepared for its government. He called for tolerance and peaceful coexistence with other religious communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip “We stress the need to reinforce the spirit of tolerance, cooperation, coexistence among the Muslims, the Christians, and the Samaritans in the framework of citizenship that does not discriminate against any on the basis of religion or creed”, as well as all countries and NGOs including the UN (Hroub, 2006).

Israel, aided by the US, did not recognize Hamas rule and, therefore; started to carry out a group of punitive measures, according to a BBC reporting, such as economic sanctions against the Palestinian Authority. Haniyeh rejected these actions and stressed that his movement would remain resisting and would never recognize the occupation (BBC: Feb 2006). The European Union (EU) threatened to freeze its funding to the Palestinian Authority unless Hamas renounces terror and accepts Israel. Haniyeh commented “The West is always using its donations to apply pressure on the Palestinian people” (BBC, 2006).

Hamas had changed considerably after the 2005 elections. Now it had been referred to as a “profoundly different organization” (Erdogan, 2006: 52) which witnessed a “strategic transformation” according to (Hroub, 2006: 2) to the extent that some Israel politicians and the Western media began to inquire if Hamas began to change into moderation or not (Swiney, 2007: 22). In addition to being the most powerful opposition party, Hamas was also

the most democratic of the Palestinian movements due to its commitment to consultative political system, internal elections, and resort to the public masses' opinion during crises (Gunning, 2004: 238). An example of this could be Mahmoud Zahar, who served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, answer he asked about Hamas recognition of Israel after the elections: "First we had to listen to answers /.../. If it is very simple, if it is very clear, if it satisfies the Palestinian demands we can decide. But if it is not, we had to consult, we had to ask the people" (*ZioNation*: April 28, 2006).

Another shift in Hamas after the elections was in the increase of its social network and solidarity associations. Moreover, the movement enlarged and developed the notion of resistance and the possible tactics that could be followed to achieve the various objectives. After the elections, it became obligatory for Hamas to adopt peaceful, diplomatic and non-violent strategies of resistance. Its original charter "espouses the use of violence as an essential end" (Swiney: 23). Since coming to the government, Hamas started to distance itself from the military group, i.e. Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. An outstanding evidence could be the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in June 2006 (Tamimi, 2006: 243).

The overall objective of Hamas before the elections was to create an Islamic state over all historic Palestine. Today, Hamas's rhetoric became void of such terminology; instead an independent Palestinian state is referred to on a "geographically-tiny slice of historic Palestine". The same was clear in the motto the movement used in the campaign to the elections. 'Change and Reform' seemed, for Swiney, empty of ideological, Islamic and militant attributes. This motto was the source of bringing the majority of the Palestinians, who were fed up with, the corrupted Fatah, around Hamas (p 31).

CONCLUSION

The Palestinian people have undergone different shifts and transformations as a result of being under control of a succession of different alien and foreign authorities. These shifts have basically influenced their national identity. The Palestinian identity had been, to a considerable extent, enhanced and accelerated due to the development and interaction of three related factors: the peace process, the national reconstruction of state institutions and the transition to democracy (Shiqaqi, 1996: 5). These three elements shaped, to a large extent, the future of the national identity of the Palestinians. Before the end of 1987, secularists had prominence over the Palestinians but with the outbreak of the first *Intifada* religio-political groups emerged, Hamas advocated a Palestinian national consciousness soaked with religious flavor over any other secular nationalism. Islamism did not develop instead of secularism though the defeat of nationalists promoted the emergence of their rivals, the Islamists. Yet, both failed to secure an independent Palestinian state neither on whole Palestine nor on parts of it. National Palestinian Authority was created in the mid of 1990s and acted as a semi-state entity, following a long peace process. Hamas's influence increased by the time until it acquired power in 2006.

Litvak argues that the ideological development of Hamas falls within the boundaries of this phenomenon where nationalism and religion meet, or in other words, Islamists made use of nationalism because the unsettled problem of "Palestinian nation formation and statehood as well as the fusion of Islam and nationalism in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, had made the issues of nationalism more pertinent and urgent to Hamas" (Litvak, 1998:149). For Hamas

“the Palestinian cause is not about land and soil, but it is about fate and belief” (*Filastin al-Muslima*, Statement No. 73). The rise of political Islam in the Middle East, in general, and in the Palestinian arena, in specific, represents a shift from the previous patterns of the past.

Therefore, it could be possible to argue that Hamas was established as a rival for the nationalist movement which adopted secular affiliations. Furthermore, Hamas stressed the concept of homeland and supported the notion of the nation-state depending on the slogan of patriotism which states that love of homeland is part of one's faith.

Hamas became more political than religiously ideological; more normal than revolutionary; more local than regional or even universal; and more nationalist than Islamist. According to Mishal and Sela (2000) Hamas advocated the possibility of “a transitory liberation of Palestine, willing to accept a temporary truce with Israel”; this meant that for Hamas “the prose of reality may overcome the poetry of dogmatic ideology” (p. ix). Following 2006, many additional developments occurred within the perspectives of Hamas. It is beyond the scope of this study to tackle them.

The impact of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad in Palestine increased while that of other nationalist movements, especially Fatah and the PLO, declined. The rise and the decline of these movements were not mutually related or depended on the direct relations between them.

The different Palestinian factions failed to come closer to each other or to establish unity and mobilize its potentials and powers to face the occupation authority. This has resulted in the retreat of Palestinian nationalist illusions and the emergence of distinct Palestinian nationalism. The failure of the peace process has also resulted in negative consequences on the aspirations of the Palestinian society; it has also led to Hamas becoming the representative of the opposition. Hamas, at the end, becomes a matter of fact although it cannot replace Fatah.

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