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Victorious Hamas – is it a Final Breakdown of the Peaceful Process With Israel or a New its Beginning?

Hamas – ideology, aims and structure

Hamas is the Arabic acronym for “The Islamic Resistance Movement” (Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya). The Arabic word Hamas mean zealot, strength and bravery.¹

The organizational and ideological sources of Hamas can be found in the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) which was set up in the 1920s in Egypt by Hasan al-Bana to foster a return to the original precepts of the Koran. The Muslim Brotherhood spread beyond Egypt, creating a particularly strong presence in Jordan.²

While always adhering to extremist politics and in many places having clandestine armed cells, the Muslim Brotherhood was best known for its religious, social, and educational works. After 1967, the organisation in Gaza and the West Bank focused mainly on charitable works and did not take an active role in the violent struggle against Israel.

In 1973, Gaza based Muslim Brotherhood activist Sheikh Ahmed Yassin founded Al-Mujamma al-Islami (The Islamic Assembly) which did social and religious work.³ In 1982 was founded Majahodoun al-Falestinioun (The Palestinian Holy Fighters). The violence was directed against other Palestinian rivals, and later against Israel.⁴ In early 1986, Yassin and his associates established Jehaz Aman (The Security Section) monitor those suspected of collaborating with Israel, anti-Islamic activity. Shortly thereafter, Yassin organized an enforcement arm, the MAJD (an Arabic word for glory) to murder collaborators.

¹ See more about the origin of Hamas in: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8968/>; http://www.aljazeera.com/cgi-bin/review/article_full_story.asp?service_ID=1021.

² See more in: Z. Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, Bloomington 1994.

³ The Hamas movement was legally registered in Israel in 1978 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the movement’s spiritual leader, as an Islamic Association by the name Al-Mujamma Al Islami, which widened its base of supporters and sympathisers by religious propaganda and social work.

⁴ In 1984 Israeli investigators unearthed this activity. Yassin was sentenced to 13 years in prison but he was released in May 1985 as part of a prisoner exchange.

Hamas emerged in December 1987 during first days of the First Intifada.⁵ The main goal is the destruction of the state Israel and establishing in its place an Islamist state. On August 18, 1988, Hamas published its own “covenant” a document of thirty-six articles calling for a synthesis of Islamism and Palestinian nationalism. It envisioned Palestine as a state run according to the shari’a (Islamic law) and declared that when “enemies usurp some Islamic lands, jihad becomes a duty binding all Muslims.” Further it stated that Palestinians should not cede one inch of land because Palestine is waqf, an inalienable religious endowment entrusted to the Muslims by God.⁶ The Hamas Covenant challenged the PLO and its claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, but it did not call for its elimination.⁷

Hamas ideology is a synthesis of asceticism and nationalism, clearly spoke to an unceasingly broad segment of the Palestinians. As noticed Andrea Nüsse, Hamas seem clearly to have been influenced by Judaism, in which the notions of the sacred territory and the Promised Land are prominent. Hamas discarded the old incompatibility between Islam based on ideological grounds and the Western idea of the nation-state which is based on territorial claims. For Hamas “Fatherland (watan) and nationalism (wataniyya) are part of the Islamic creed”.⁸

As its popularity rose, Hamas pressured women to dress modestly and attacked stores selling liquor. Hamas also took credit for six attacks against Israelis in 1989, including kidnappings, stabbings, and shootings.⁹

The first squads of Hamas’s military wing, Izz-al-Din al-Qassam,¹⁰ were formed in early 1991, following a crackdown of Hamas military infrastructure by Israelis. Izz-al-Din al-Qassam is responsible for most terrorist attacks executed in the name of Hamas ever since 1992.¹¹ Izz-al-Din al-Qassam emerged out of two

⁵ On December 8, 1987, a truck driven by an Israeli accidentally hit a car in the Jabalia Refugee Camp and killed four Palestinians, see more in: A. M. Lesh, M. Tessler, *Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians. From Camp David to Intifada*, Indiana University Press.

⁶ *The Charter of Allah: The Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)*, translated by Raphael Israeli, Harry Truman Research Institute, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/880818.htm>.

⁷ By the end of 1988, some analysts speculated that Hamas was on the verge of replacing Fatah and the PLO as the leading force in the territories, G. E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1997, p. 1. 169.

⁸ A. Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine. The Ideology of Hamas*, Amsterdam 1998, p. 49.

⁹ <http://www.Palestine-info.net/hamas/index.htm>.

¹⁰ The group’s name is based on Izz-al-Din al-Qassam, considered by most Palestinian Islamic movements as a heroic figure – a pioneer of the Palestinian armed resistance and the father of the armed Palestinian revolution. For information on Izz-al-Din al-Qassam the individual, see Ziad Abu-Amr, op. cit., pp. 98–101.

¹¹ On April 13, 1994, the Brigades planned and executed the first major suicide bombing at the central bus station in the central Israeli town of Hadera, in which five people were killed. Initial activities of Izz-al-Din al-Qassam had an internal focus, as the military wing kidnapped and executed Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. In December 1991, Doron Shorshan became the first Israeli citizen to be killed by Izz-al-Din al-Qassam,

groups, that together constituted the first military arm of Hamas, the *Majahadoun al-Falestinioun* (Palestinian Holy Fighters), and the *Jehaz Aman* (Security Section).¹² The *Majahadoun al-Falestinioun* served as a military apparatus for terrorist attacks, particularly against Israeli targets, whereas the *Jehaz Aman* collected intelligence against Palestinian collaborators. Within *Jehaz Aman*, a violent operational arm was formed, labeled *Majmouath Jihad u-Dawa* (Holy War and Sermonising Group). The latter was responsible for punishing those collaborators and other internal elements that were identified by the *Jehaz Aman* (The Security Section).¹³

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin founded both groups that together formed the early military arm of Hamas – the Palestinian Holy Fighters and the Security Section – the initial goal of the military wing of Hamas was to focus their struggle on “heretics’ and collaborators, in accordance with the view of the Muslim Brotherhood that Jihad should come only after the purging of rivals from within.”¹⁴ Additional goals were to set up a military infrastructure, which included, inter alia, the stockpiling of weapons and the recruitment of operatives.

There are four major objectives highlighted by strategists in the Military apparatus (Izz al-Din al-Qassam):

- To conduct painful strikes within Israel to ensure the Israeli government knows there are consequences to attacking Palestinian civilians;
- To conduct military operations to attract the attention of the world and the United Nations to force a solution to the Palestinian problem;
- To conduct strikes to raise the morale of the Palestinian people and to assert its authority on the street;
- To conduct military strikes against the Israeli people to send the message that they have no place in Palestine and that they cannot easily attain the security they desire.¹⁵

ICT, *Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)*, available at <http://www.ict.org.il/>; ICT, *Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)*, available at <http://www.ict.org.il/>.

¹² As noticed S. Mishal and A. Sela Izz-al-Din al-Qassam has: “an extensive, compartmentalised, military apparatus, which maintained close contact with the Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, and Lebanon using advanced communications methods, including the internet. The activities of the Izz-al-Din al-Qassam squads were divided among several senior regional commanders, whose names were on Israel’s ‘wanted’ list. They were constantly on the move from one district to another, assisted by the clergy and personnel of the mosques. These senior activists organized new military cadres and supervised their training for military operations,” S. Mishal, A. Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas. Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, New York 2000, p. 78.

¹³ This section was established in early 1986 by Sheikh Yassin. In late 1986 – early 1987, Yassin decided to set up hit squads, known as Majd, whose purpose was to kill “heretics” and collaborators, more in: ICT, *Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)*, available at <http://www.ict.org.il/>.

¹⁴ Rivals included not only collaborators, but also drug dealers, sellers of pornography, and other elements accused by Hamas of acting against the principles of Islam. See ICT, *Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)*, available at <http://www.ict.org.il/>.

¹⁵ Y. H. Aboul-Enein, *Hamas, understanding the organization*, “Military Review” 2003, no. 7, p. 1.

The objectives of Hamas can be divided into short-term and long-term goals. In the short term, Hamas aims at establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, while its long term goal remains the establishment of an Islamic state that would replace Israel.¹⁶ By adopting this order of objectives, Hamas, as Mishal and Sela have written: effectively subordinated the former to the latter (objective) by emphasising the provisional nature of any political settlement with Israel, thus achieving political flexibility without forsaking its ideological credibility.¹⁷ Hamas concedes that its own jihad cannot destroy Israel, and contends that the cause of liberating Palestine is related to three circles: the Palestinian, the Arab and the Islamic. According to Hamas each has a role and an obligation to fulfil, and it would be a grave error to ignore any of these circles. In traditional Islam an offensive jihad is a *fard kifaya*, for instance a collective obligation upon the community as a whole rather than on each individual. In the situation as Hamas highlights when enemies usurp an Islamic land, the jihad becomes a personal obligation (*wajib'ayn*) upon every Muslim. Within this jihadist course for the liberation of Palestine, the Palestinian people serve as the vanguard of the Islamic nation, while the various Islamic movements should take the lead of the Arab and Islamic circles of jihad.¹⁸

Summing up, Hamas evolved over time through four stages:

- 1) 1967–1976: construction of the “hard core” of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip in the face of Israeli occupation;
- 2) 1976–1981: geographical expansion through participation in professional associations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and institution – building, notably al-Mujama al-Islamiya, al-Jamiya al-Islamiya, and the Islamic University in Gaza;
- 3) 1981–1987: political influence through establishment of the mechanisms of action and preparation for armed struggle;
- 4) 1987: founding of Hamas as the combatant arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine and the launching of a continuing jihad.¹⁹

A great part of the success of Hamas was due to its influence in the Gaza Strip. The large numbers of refugees, the socio-economic hardships of the population in the refugee camps and the relatively low status of the nationalist elements there until recently, enabled Hamas to deepen its roots among the

¹⁶ More important, Hamas regards the struggle against Israel and the Jews as part of a broader religious war waged between the Islamic and Western civilizations. The Jews were portrayed as instruments of the West, or alternatively as the power which controls and manipulates the West. The US, for instance, was described as a servant of Israel and as seeking to subjugate the Arabs according to the Jewish plan, see more in: M. Litvak, *The Islamization of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: the case of Hamas*, “Middle Eastern Studies” 1998, no. 1, p. 1.

¹⁷ S. Mishal, A. Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas. Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, New York 2000, p. 3.

¹⁸ M. Litvak, *The Islamization...*, op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 18.

refugees. Its emphasis on a solution that would include the liberation of all Palestine is more attractive to the Gazans, beyond the social factors that nourish the Islamic influence in that area.

Another factor, which served the popularity of the Islamic phenomena, was that the Palestinian nationalist movement and the PLO moved the centre of their political power away from Palestine, by consolidating an external leadership at the expense of the internal one in the Territories. In contrast, the Islamic camp and its leadership developed entirely within Palestine and could thus better serve the interests of the Palestinians.

Initially in Israeli policy *divida et impera* in the West Bank and Gaza, Israelis favoured situation strong Arafat's secular Palestinian Liberation Organization had a demanding competitor in more religious Hamas. In September 1989, Israeli authorities declared Hamas an illegal organisation.²⁰

The Islamic infrastructure in the Territories was separate but parallel to the nationalist institutions built by the PLO in the 1980s. Hamas was successful in forming a social system that has provided an alternative to the social-political structure of the PLO. Parallel branches that run charities support social activities and conduct religious outreach mainly know Hamas. They are known as da'wa, which literally translates as sermonising. These branches broaden the Hamas presence in Palestinian society, foster greater observance among the Palestinians, and recruit members to the military wing.²¹

The means used by the Hamas to increase their influence in the street were the mosques. The mosque was the first stop on the road to civil rebellion. At the same time the Hamas leaders worked at setting up the various apparatuses of the movement. In the tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Yassin built the Hamas as an underground movement. He decided to separate the different apparatuses and the area activists and use only encoded messages in the internal communications.

Hamas enjoys strong financial backing. Zakat is one of the five basic principles of Islam. Hamas diligently and, in some cases, forcibly collects this tithe from its supporters in the West Bank and Gaza and engages in criminal activity – particularly producing counterfeit music compact discs and other multimedia material. Additionally, Hamas raises funds from individuals throughout the Arab world, particularly from the Gulf States.²²

²⁰ Sheikh Yassin and several other Hamas leaders were arrested. Yassin was sentenced to life imprisonment.

²¹ Hamas has an active youth wing that is particularly strong at al-Najah University in Nablus, where the student council is dominated by a Hamas – Palestinian Islamic Jihad coalition. The university laboratories have been used to make explosives and poison for use in terror attacks. Hamas also runs summer camps where children are indoctrinated in Islamist ideology and trained how to participate in violent protests, more in. A. Mannes, *Profiles in Terror. The Guide to Middle East Terrorist Organizations*, Oxford 2004, p. 125.

²² For instance, Hamas opposed the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and consequently, Kuwait has proven a particularly fertile ground for Hamas fundraising endeavours. Hamas

The four central Hamas charities in the West are: The Palestine Relief and Development Fund (Interpal) in Great Britain, The Holy Land Foundation in the United States, The al-Aqsa Foundation in Germany with branches in Belgium and Holland, and Comité de Bienfaisance et Solidarité avec la Palestine in France. It is estimated that tens of millions of dollars a year are raised for Hamas in the United States and Britain – between one third and three quarters of Hamas' total budget. In the wake of 9/11, the FBI closed the Holy Land Foundation in November 2001.²³

Charities in general, and zakat are especially susceptible to abuse by terrorists groups that have long exploited them for a variety of purposes. Charities offer a veil of legitimacy for terrorist fundraising, attracting unwitting donors who are unaware that monies they donate for humanitarian purposes fund terror.²⁴

It is difficult to ascertain the precise number of social institutions operated by or affiliated with Hamas. One study conducted prior to the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 estimated that 65 percent of all education below secondary school in Gaza is Islamic and thus in some way controlled by Hamas. In other study conducted during the late 1990s revealed that Islamic social institutions in the West Bank and Gaza provided support to more than 275,000 Palestinians. U.S. government estimates that Hamas' budget is approximately \$50 annually.²⁵

Suicide terrorism in the strategy of Hamas

After the Gulf War, Hamas became the leading terrorist entity in the occupied territories and the single most powerful group, after Fatah. The deportation of 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists from Israel by the Yitzhak Rabin government in 1992 marked a changing point in policy. Hamas decided to adopt Hezbollah terrorist methods and began using car bombs, suicide bombers, and kidnappings against Israeli civilians and military personnel.

members also benefited from grants made by Saudi Arabia and Iraq under Saddam Hussein to the families of those killed fighting in the Intifada. Reportedly, in his 1998 tour of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Yassin raised \$300–400 million. Iran also provides financial support to Hamas. Probably it is at least \$3 million annually and may be much as \$10–20 million annually, A. Mannes, *Profiles...*, p. 126.

²³ ICT, *Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)*, available at <http://www.ict.org.il/>.

²⁴ See more in: M. Levitt, *Hamas, politics, charity, and terrorism in the service of terrorism*, pp. 143–170.

²⁵ International Crisis Group, *Islamic Social Welfare Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Legitimate Target?* "Middle East Report" 2003, no. 13, p. 7; J. S. Pistole, *Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*, 24 September 2003, <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/pistole092403.htm>.

The 1993 Oslo Accords and the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and Palestinian Authority (PA) changed the strategic situation. The agreement put an end to the intifada, and the PLO's agreement to curtail violence in the territories threatened Hamas' military abilities and freedom of action. The Hamas leadership nevertheless decided to continue the jihad against Israel. Hamas escalated the violence through suicide bombings, which thwarted the peace process and at times threatened to stop it completely.

The use of suicide attacks in Israel quickly became a widespread phenomenon, chiefly because of the deployment of Israeli army in Gaza and the West Bank, which caused a decline in Israeli intelligence measures and operational ability. Prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Palestinian organisations executed terrorist attacks against Israel whenever their operational ability allowed. Their capacity was limited only to the activity of Israeli security forces in the territories under Israeli control.

Since the establishment of the PA in 1994, Hamas's civic activities have focused on maintaining a strong opposition to the PA, in the short term, and then creating a possible alternative to it. The PA viewed Hamas as a serious challenge to its power.

In the attempt to limit the organisation's activity following the February–March 1996 terrorism attacks on Israeli citizens, the PA took steps against Hamas' financial base by closing down several charitable organisations and confiscating funds and equipment.

The outbreak of the second intifada was seen as a strategic opportunity to continue the resistance to Israel's occupation. From September 2000 to March 2002, Hamas took responsibility for approximately 40 suicide attacks, taking the lives of over 400 Israeli citizens. By July 2005, suicide bombers were responsible for the deaths in sum of 657 people (including 148 suicide bombers) and the injury of 3,682 others.²⁶ In the early years of the 21st century, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza became the region of the world with the highest frequency of – and the highest per capita death toll due to suicide bombing.

According to Bader Ajar, there are five types of rationales for suicide attacks:

- 1) Desire for personal revenge or retaliation due to an Israeli action against the suicide bomber or his or her relatives or friends;
- 2) Desire for national revenge or retaliation due to an Israeli action against Palestinians in general;
- 3) Desire for religious revenge or retaliation due to an Israeli action against Muslims or Islam;
- 4) Desire to regain one's reputation due to the suicide bomber having engaged in shameful behaviour, such as collaboration with enemy;

²⁶ B. Araj, *Suicide bombings as strategy and iteration: the case of the second Intifada*, "Social Forces," 1 June 2006.

- 5) Desire to achieve religious goal other than revenge or retaliation, such as the defence or spread of Islam.²⁷

Boaz Ganor (Executive Director, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism) divided benefits of the suicide attack for: the terrorist organisation and for the terrorist.

BENEFITS OF THE SUICIDE ATTACK²⁸

To the Organisation

Many casualties
Media coverage
Precisely-chosen time
and place
Guaranteed success
No need for escape
route

To the Terrorist

Personal image:

fulfilment of a religious
commandment
patriotism

Personal benefits:

eternal life in Paradise
72 young virgins
privilege to promise life in
heaven to 70 relatives

Family benefits:

Social status improvement
Economic improvement

For Krueger and Maleckova suicide terrorism ensued mainly from the religious motivation: "Suicide bombers clearly are not motivated by the prospect of their own economic gain, although it is possible that the promise of larger payments to their families may increase the willingness of some to participate in these lethal missions. We suspect their primary motivation instead results from their passionate support for the ideas and the aims of their movement."²⁹

²⁷ Precipitants are the specific preceding events that affected the timing of suicide bombings according to representatives of organisations claiming responsibility for the attacks. Bader Ajar found five types of precipitants:

- 1) Assassination of organisational leaders or members by Israel;
- 2) Killing of Palestinians other than organisational leaders or members by Israel;
- 3) Anti-Palestinian actions by Israel not involving the killing of Palestinians, such as house and demolitions;
- 4) Significant political events such as an Israeli election, the visit of an American envoy or an Arab summit meeting;
- 5) Symbolically significant religious or ideological events, such as the anniversary of Salah al-Din's retaking of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 C.E. Ibidem.

²⁸ B. Ganor, *Suicide Attacks in Israel in: Countering Suicide Terrorism An International Conference*, February 20-23, 2000 Herzliya, Israel. The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya, p. 139.

²⁹ A. B. Krueger, J. Maleckova, *Does Poverty Cause Terrorism? The Economics and the Education of Suicide Bombers*, "The New Republic" 2002, no. 24, pp. 27-34.

Despite the fact that Hamas is a nationalist movement, it still views the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis in traditional religious terms of believer against infidel.³⁰

As one of the Hamas leaders Ismail Abu Shanab (killed by Israeli missile in August 2003) noticed: there was only one thing a person needs to qualify: “a moment of courage.” A person using a knife, Shanab explained is usually nervous, a gun takes training, and too much time. But a suicide bomber only needs according to him that moment of courage.³¹

Hamas uses a variety of tactics, including ambushing soldiers and Israeli civilians in the West Bank, fomenting violent demonstrations and strikes, and kidnapping. Hamas does not differentiate between Israeli soldiers and civilians. To maximise casualties, Hamas has struck Israeli buses, bus stops and restaurants. Hamas has workshops and factories throughout the West Bank and Gaza to produce the explosives, mortars, anti-tank weapons, and the Qassam rockets.³²

From the start of the second intifada on September 27, 2000, through March 20, 2006, Hamas has claimed responsibility for death of some 430 Israelis – almost half the total victims of terrorism during the second intifada.³³

Would Hamas become moderate and democratic party?

In January 2006 in elections to the Palestinian Assembly, Hamas defeated Mahmoud Abba’s Fatah Party and won 74 parliamentary seats out of 132, versus Fatah’s 45.³⁴ Hamas’ triumph in the Palestinian parliamentary elections soundly defeating the mainstream Fatah movement that has dominated Palestinian politics for half a century. From a local perspective, two events caused Hamas’s strategic shift that brought it to the election victory: Arafat’s death at the end of 2004 and Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza and part of the West Bank in the summer of 2005. But – why did so many Palestinians voted on Hamas? In the past, about 20–25 percent of Palestinians identified with Hamas. Radical

³⁰ M. Munsoon, *Islam, Nationalism and Resentment of Foreign Domination*, “Middle East Policy” 2003, no. 2, p. 53.

³¹ D. Natta, *Terror’s ultimate weapon: suicide bombings have become the tactic of choice for terrorists. Their toll in terms of death and psychological impact is devastating*, “New York Times,” 13 October 2003.

³² These rockets similar to Katyushas, with range of 1.5 to 12 km, will allow Hamas to strike strategic targets within Israel. Hamas has attempted to augment the lethality of its attacks with chemical weapons.

³³ About fatal Hamas attacks since September 2000, see more in: http://vitalperspective.typepad.com/vital_perspective_clarity/files/Fatal_Hamas_Attacks_Since_9-00.pdf.

³⁴ K. Peraino (with Dan Ephron and Joanna Chen in Jerusalem and Michael Hirsh and Richard Wolffe in Washington), *Extreme Victory; Hamas emerges victorious in a Palestinian election that stuns the world. But what the militants win? A mess – and they can’t fix it alone*, “Newsweek” 2006, no. 2, p. 6.

victory reflects dual themes: disgust with corruption in the ruling Fatah party and appreciation for Hamas' grassroots work to build a social service safety net that the ruling party did not provide for Palestinians.³⁵

For Hamas' leaders – Israel can only count for truce but not real peace. Hamas officials consider that there will be possible reaching a long term hudna truce with Israel, based on letter's withdrawal to the 1967 borders, agreement to a sovereign land bridge between the West Bank and Gaza, release of all Palestinian prisoners, and commitment to end all attacks on Palestine targets. To reach this accord, Hamas is likely to agree to negotiate with the Jewish state. However tantalising a long-term period of calm should not be mistaken for renunciation by Hamas of its strategic objective of the eradication of Israel. Hamas derives the concept of hudna from Muslim tradition, where the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad teaches that seeking a truce with enemies is legitimate as a practical measure whenever Muslims are not in a position either to conquer their foes or to impose their demands on them. The Prophet himself arranged such a truce with his rivals in Mecca before conquering them two years later.³⁶ For Hamas, the hudna represents an opportunity to rest and rebuild.³⁷

There are opinions that Hamas' expanding role in Palestinian politics arguing that political activity will ultimately moderate the movement. These advo-

³⁵ For Michael Oren, there were other reasons of the Hamas' victory: "Palestinians and a great many other Muslims in the Middle East and beyond are turning to Islam not because they are forced to by external circumstances, but because they find something compelling, fulfilling and empowering about religion itself," quotation from: *The Hamas Victory. Roundtable Questions*, "Yale Israel Journal" 2006, no. 9, <http://www.yaleisraeljournal.com/summ2006/roundtable.pdf>.

³⁶ The "Hudna" that Hamas is proposing is very similar to The Hudaybiyya Treaty, a temporary treaty lasting ten years that was signed between the Prophet Muhammad and the Quraysh tribe in the year 628 (6 to the Hijra). This pact was representative of the period, and there exist numerous explanations for its signing: the first being the desire of Muhammad to allow himself and the Muslim believers, through significant religious concessions, to enter Mecca for a period of three days in order to fulfill the "Umra" (a minor pilgrimage to Mecca not during the period of Hajj), in return for the promise that during this time Mecca would be evacuated of its residents and the two sides would not confront one another. A second explanation was Muhammad's desire to prevent a potential Quraysh-Jewish coalition against him. The third explanation is Muhammad's desire to neutralise the Quraysh tribe in the south while he planned to attack the Khaybar-Jews in the north. In retrospect, The Hudaybiyya Treaty allowed Muhammad and the Muslims to strengthen their ranks without needing to worry about a confrontation with the Quraysh tribe. After only two years (630) the Muslims annulled the agreement and conquered Mecca. This agreement has since been exploited more than once by radical Muslim organizations that seek to justify the annulment of agreements signed with those characterized as "enemies," M. Lecker, *The Hudaybiyya-Treaty and The Expedition against Khaybar*, Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam, 5, The Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1984), pp. 2, 5; W. Montgomery, Watt, "al-Hudaybiya," in: B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, J. Schacht, V. L. Menage (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 3, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1971, p. 539.

³⁷ M. Yaghi, *Understanding the Hamas Agenda*, in: *Hamas Triumphant. Implications for Security, Politics, Economy, and Strategy*, R. Satloff (ed.), Policy Focus#53, February 2006, pp. 10–15.

cates point to the fact that Hamas' leaders have long called for transparent and accountable governing institutions and have demonstrated political pragmatism, suggesting that the group could accept less than its absolutist demands.³⁸

Barry Rubin the director of the Global Research in International Affairs is pessimistic about the idea that Hamas after victory will become more moderate. For him there are strong factors which deny such assumptions. As Rubin noticed: "Hamas leaders believe passionately in their ideology and accept it as conforming with God's will, making it hard to abandon. As a cadre group, it is not responsive to the masses."³⁹

Confoming of this opinion was Khalid Mash'al's victory speech on January 28, 2006 in Damascus, in which he stressed that Hamas would not succumb to international pressures to recognise Israel. "We are adhering to the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem, the right of return, the evacuation of settlements and the option of armed resistance," he said. Addressing Israeli voters ahead of the March 2006 Knesset elections, Mash'al said: "there will be no peace or security amid the Israeli occupation."⁴⁰

Summing up – however Hamas participates in electoral politics it will not guarantee that Hamas will moderate its position or eventually renounce terrorism. The movement's leaders themselves have consistently denied that political activity will mean the end of resistance. For Hamas, there is no contradiction between political activity and military activity. Hamas believes that military action and resistance will strengthen the Palestinian political position.⁴¹ Concluding, even during so called hudna, Hamas will not renounce the "right" of resistance. For this organisation – resistance is an existential part of the movement's ideology.

Conclusions

Palestinian and foreign observers ascribed Hamas's victory in 2006 legislative elections to its network of efficient and honest social service providers.

³⁸ H. Malka, *Forcing Choices: testing the Transformation of Hamas*, http://www.twq.com/05autumn_malka.pdf.

³⁹ B. Rubin, *The decline and Fall of the Palestinian National Movement*, "The Middle East Review of International Affairs" 2006, vol. 10, no. 2, Article 9, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue2/jv10no2a9.html>.

⁴⁰ Exiled in Damascus, Meshal is not likely to return to the Palestinian territories anytime soon. He is considered the unofficial leader of Hamas, with control over all of its military and political activities. Yet due to his distance from Gaza and the West Bank, his actual power is questionable.

⁴¹ Mashal has stated: "negotiating without resistance leads to surrender but negotiating with resistance leads to real peace" quotation from: International Middle East Media Centre, December 12, 2004, <http://www.imemc.org/headlines/2004/December/week2/121404/hamas-cease-fire.htm>.

Hamas's military power gives it the ability to launch attacks on Israel and to fight Fatah military groups especially in Gaza.

The Hamas-led Palestinian Authority is broke and deeply in debt. The European Union and the United States were the largest sources of funding to the Palestinian Authority. These sources were cut off, when Hamas-led government refused to renounce violence and recognising Israel.⁴²

Hamas imitates Hizballah.⁴³ Both organizations see politics, charity, political violence, and terrorism as viable, legitimate tools to pursue their goals.

Dr. Hillel Frisch a senior researcher at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies considers that Hamas will not be in its terrorists activity as similar as Al Qaida: "Hamas has refrained from engaging in terror abroad, has not attacked Americans in the Palestinian Authority, nor has it openly identify with Al Qaida terrorism. Hamas knows the red lines that exist in the murky world of realpolitik."⁴⁴

But is the realpolitik – Hamas denial for Israel's existence? The real red line is the problem of changing in the main attitude. Hamas gained decisive victory in January 2006 legislative elections, but for leaders of this movement it meant that Palestinian approved its ideology with the vision of destruction Israel and the Islamic state in Palestine. However, Palestinians voted not for the destruction of Israel but the real reason was their frustration of inability and corruption of the Fatah.

In the near future there will not be the new beginning of the peace process with Israel. For Hamas the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine is seen to be the only possible political solution. Jihad is seen to be the only means of spreading Islam. In this context there is very narrow space for real transformation of Hamas into more peaceful entity.

Victory of Hamas remained that Israel is still on the edge of the war, and the problem the creation of the Palestinian State is still difficult task to attain it.

⁴² The EU annual aid was more than \$600 million. The US annual aid was roughly \$420 million. Aid from EU and US made considerable part of the Palestinian Authority budget which was about \$ 1.5 billion to \$ 1.7 billion annually; E. Pan, *Hamas and the Shrinking PA Budget*, 21 April 2006, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/10499/>.

⁴³ Ideologically, Hizballah is an Islamic, Shi'ite organisation. It articulates a universalistic view of the ummah that incorporates Arab and non-Arab Muslims, but it also maintains Ayatollah Khomeini was the divinely inspired ruler of the ummah, see more in: A. Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, London 2002, pp. 64–87.

⁴⁴ Quotation from: H. Frisch, *The Hamas Takeover Serves Israel's Interests*, "BESA Perspectives" 2006, no. 13, p. 3.