Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Democratization and Government

HAMAS AND PALESTINE

THE CONTESTED ROAD TO STATEHOOD

Martin Kear

Hamas and Palestine

Hamas and Palestine: The Contested Road to Statehood analyses the Palestinian Islamist movement, Hamas, between 2005 and 2017. The book expounds how Hamas has employed a dual resistance strategy, consisting of political and armed resistance, as a mechanism to achieve, maintain, and defend its continued political viability. Hamas entered politics to transform the role of the Palestinian Authority from an administrative institution into one driving the Palestinian quest for independence. To achieve this the analysis explains how Hamas implemented a process of soft-Islamisation in Gaza. This was intended to build the institutional capacity of the Authority based on the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of key institutions, while selectively increasing the role of Islam in society.

The book provides a detailed explanation of key shifts in Hamas's political behaviour as it adapts to the vagaries and vicissitudes of governing Gaza, despite the imposition of Israel's political and economic siege. Employing the Inclusion-Moderation theoretical framework, the book traces Hamas's transformation from a non-state armed group into a legitimate actor in Palestinian politics. The book's analysis also highlights the key role that Hamas's national liberation agenda has on shifting its behaviour towards adopting more moderate and inclusive policy stances. Specifically, the analysis demonstrates how Hamas has made measurable shifts in it political behaviour towards accepting the primacy of the two-state solution, and its dealings with Israel and the Peace Process.

The book provides a comprehensive assessment of Hamas's time in government and its capacity to deal with the vicissitudes of governing. It is a valuable resource for students and researchers interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Middle East Politics.

Martin Kear is a Sessional Lecturer in the Department of Government and International Relations at The University of Sydney. His research interests include the political participation by Islamist groups, Middle East politics, and the role of political violence in the ideological narrative of Islamist groups.

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Abstract

Hamas's 2006 election victory altered the political environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) dramatically. For the first time in the Arab world, an Islamist movement had won government by participating in free and fair elections. Hamas's electoral success reshaped not only its role in Palestinian politics, but also the way by which it is perceived in the OPT, the Arab Middle East, and the broader international community. Yet the bulk of academic analyses of Hamas tends to be located within the security rubric, portraying it as a terrorist movement that is determined to disrupt the security of the Israeli state and the relative stability provided by the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA).

The post-2006 political environment has rendered this analytical framework problematic, necessitating an alternative perspective to examine the shifts in political behaviour within Hamas. Employing the inclusion-moderation framework this book analyses Hamas's performance in government, and the development and implementation of its dual resistance strategy. Focusing on Hamas's quest for legitimacy and Palestinian statehood, the book examines the constellation of domestic and external forces that have reshaped Hamas's aims, political and policy stances, and ideational shifts.

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Abbreviations

AKP	Adelet ve Kalkinma Partisi – Turkey's Justice and Development Party
al-Maktab al-Siyasi	Hamas's Political Bureau
al-naqbah	The Catastrophe – Palestinians' description of the 1948 war and their ensuing exodus into refugee camps in the OPT and surrounding states
AMB	al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade – Fatah's armed wing
BESA	Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies
CPOST	Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism
CR	Change and Reform – Hamas's political party
DoP	Declaration of Principles
DRS	dual resistance strategy
Eretz-Israel	Land of Israel, also referred to as Greater Israel
Fatah	Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya – The Palestinian Liberation Movement
FIS	Islamic Action Front – Jordanian Islamist political party
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party – the political party formed by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood prior to the 2011 parliamentary elections
GoI	Government of Israel
Hamas	Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyah – The Islamic Resistance Movement
HCCNOP	Higher Committee for the Co-ordination of National Opposition Parties
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
IICC	Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre at the Israeli Intelligence and Commemoration Centre
IM	inclusion-moderation

International Quartet	United States, European Union, the United Nations, and Russia – established in 2000 in response to the outbreak of the Second Intifada
INTERPOL	The International Police Organisation
Intifada	Arabic for Uprising
IQB	Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades – Hamas's armed wing
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISF	Internal Security Forces
JMCC	Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre
JMP	Joint Meeting Parties
Majlis Shura	Hamas's National Council
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MWC	Minimum Winning Coalition
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group
NSC	National Security Council
NSF	National Security Forces
OCHAOPT	Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territories
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	United Nations – Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA	Palestinian Authority – also referred to as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA)
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional – Indonesia's National Mandate Party
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia – Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party
PASF	Palestinian Authority's Security Force
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCHR	Palestinian Center for Human Rights
PCPSR	Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research
PDFLP	Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIF	Palestinian Investment Fund
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PM	Prime Minister
PMB	Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood
PNC	Palestinian National Council – the legislative body of the PLO
PRC	Popular Resistance Committees
PSF	Palestinian Security Force

PSO	Preventative Security Organisation
PWA	Palestine Water Authority
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SCC	Supreme Constitutional Court
SDGT	Specially Designated Global Terrorist
SSF	Special Security Force
TIM	Temporary International Mechanism
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNISPAL	United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine
UNOCHA	United Nations – Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCO	United Nations Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
USSC	US Security Co-ordinator
Wasat	Centre Party – an Egyptian political party
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organisation

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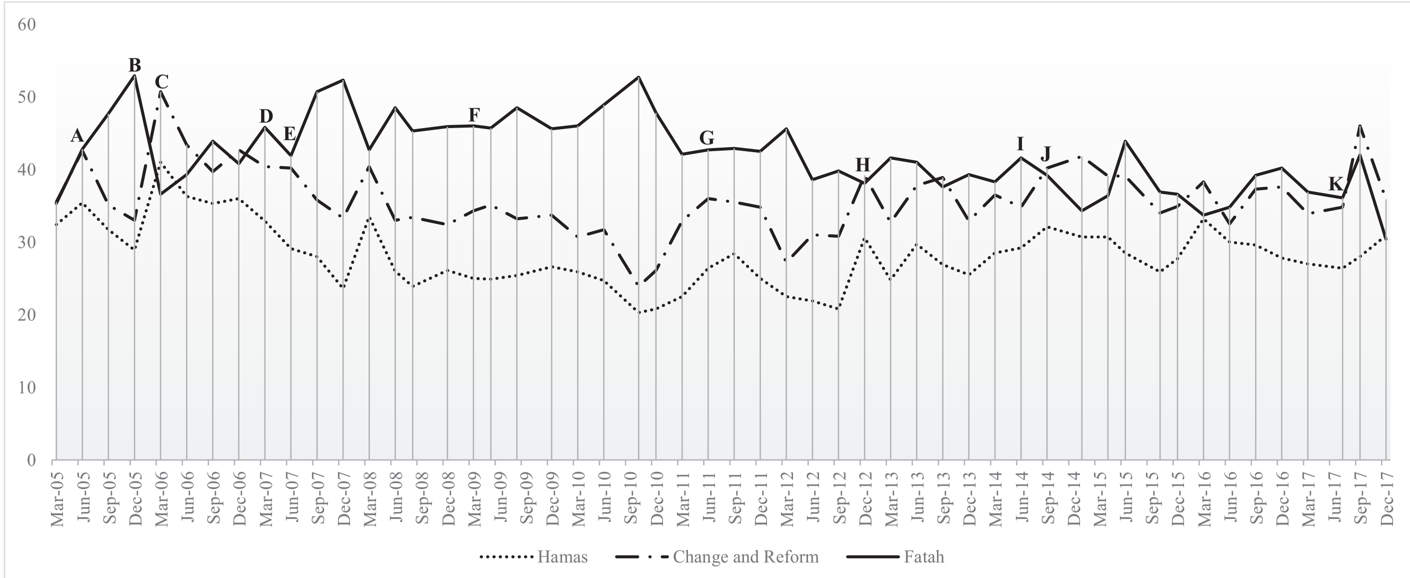

Figure 1 Popular support in Gaza

Source: PCPSR Poll Nos. 30–66, www.pcpsr.org/en/node/154

A = Municipal elections, June 2005;
B = Municipal elections, December 2005
C = PLC elections, January 2006
D = Mecca Agreement, March 2007
E = Schism, June 2007
F = 2008 war
G = 2011 Reconciliation Agreement
H = 2012 war
I = 2014 Unity Agreement
J = 2014 war
K = Hamas Policy document released

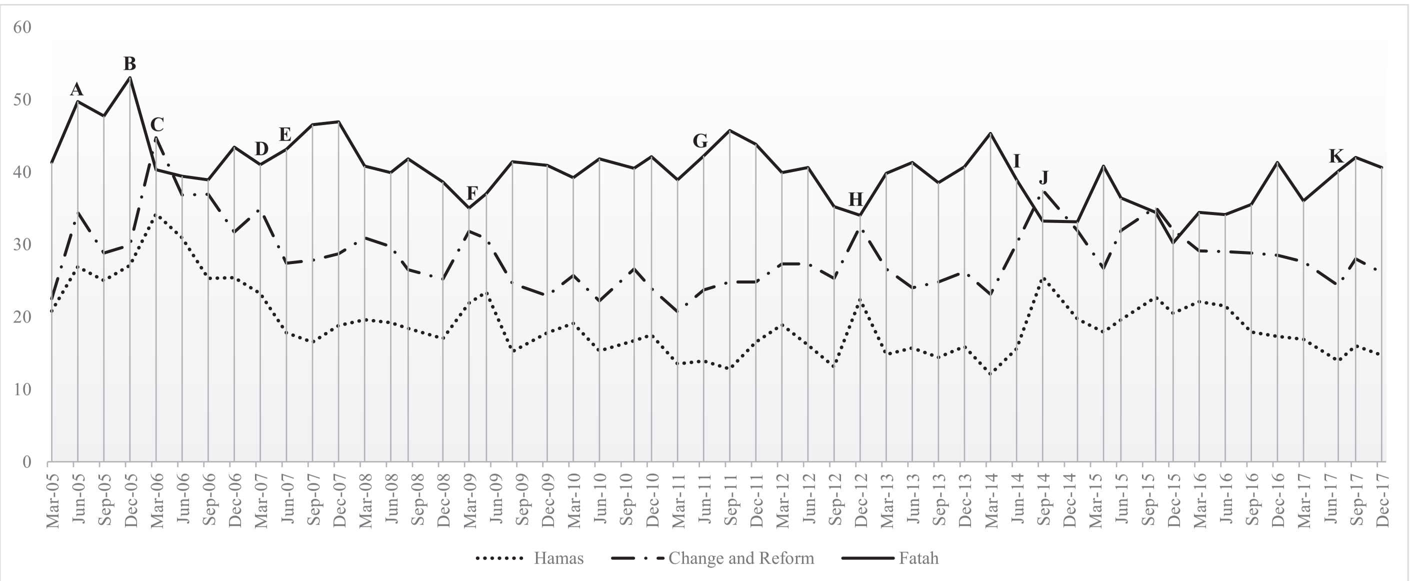

Figure 2 Popular support in the West Bank

Source: PCPSR Poll Nos. 30–66, www.pcpsr.org/en/node/154

A = Municipal elections, June 2005;
B = Municipal elections, December 2005
C = PLC elections, January 2006
D = Mecca Agreement, March 2007
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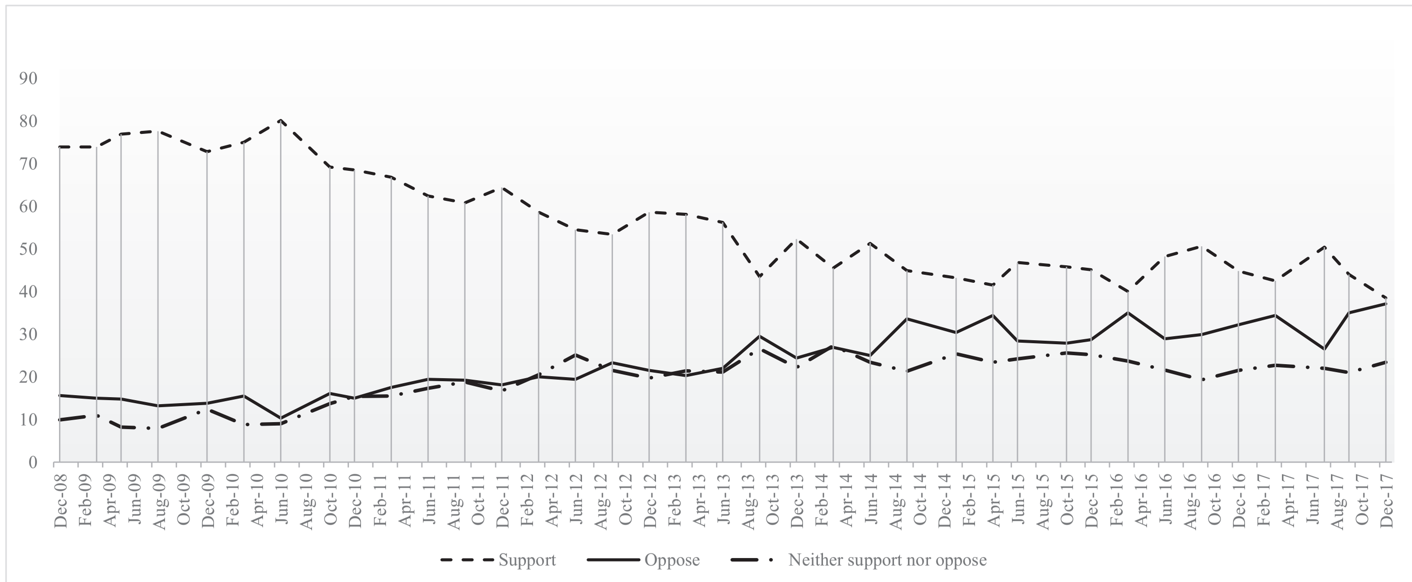

Figure 3 Support for the Peace Process in Gaza

Source: PCPSR Poll Nos. 30–66, www.pcpsr.org/en/node/154

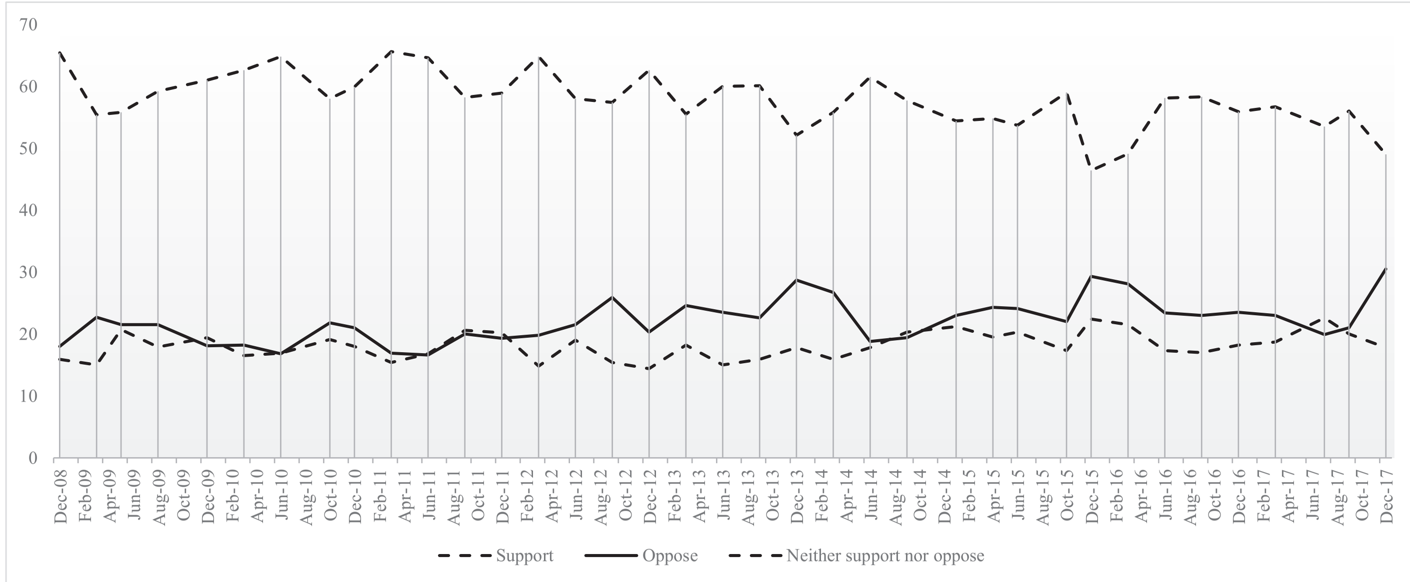

Figure 4 Support for the Peace Process in the West Bank

Source: PCPSR Poll Nos. 30–66, www.pcpsr.org/en/node/154

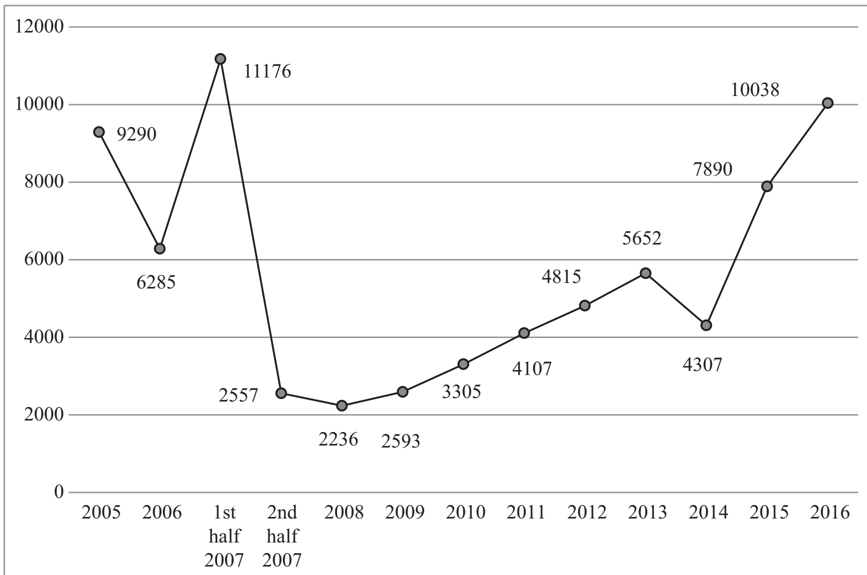

Figure 5 Import of goods into Gaza – average monthly truckloads

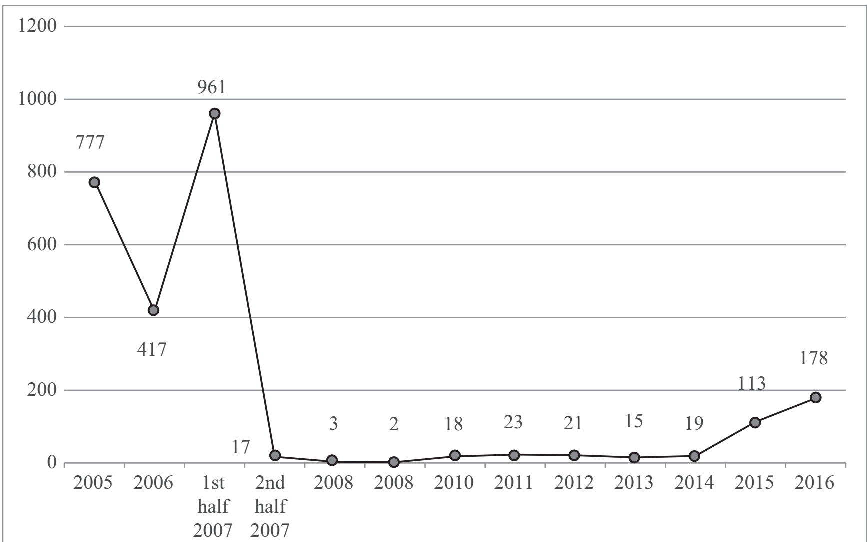

Figure 6 Exit of goods from Gaza – average monthly truckloads

Introduction

On 25 January 2006 the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas won the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. This was the first time that the Arab world had witnessed an Islamist movement win government by participating in free and fair elections (Brown 2010: 375). This groundbreaking event made Hamas a legitimate actor in Palestinian politics, elevating it to a political status equivalent to that of its chief domestic rival, Fatah. The victory also raised the intriguing prospect of Hamas playing a substantive role in the negotiations concerning the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state.

This constituted a remarkable turn of events for a movement that had spent the previous 19 years involved in an often violent struggle for national liberation. Hamas was launched in 1987 to challenge simultaneously the hegemony of Fatah via its dominance of the PLO and later the PA, and violently resist Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, known collectively as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Abu-Amr 1993: 5–6). Alongside Fatah, Hamas represents the vanguard of Palestinian national liberation efforts. Not only are these two movements struggling to unshackle the Palestinian Territories from Israeli occupation, they are wrangling with each other for hegemony over the role and character of Palestinian resistance, the right to govern the OPT, and the optimum strategy for achieving Palestinian independence.

The election result sent shockwaves through Fatah, Israel, and the international community, creating a new dynamic in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict that threatened to restructure the status quo of the Peace Process. Since 1991, the Peace Process has been marketed as being the only legitimate venue for determining an agreement between Palestinians and Israelis on the establishment of a sovereign Palestine. The election result led Israel and the International Quartet to question the future of the Peace Process, especially whether they should negotiate with a Palestinian government containing an internationally designated terrorist movement purportedly bent on the destruction of the Jewish Israeli state (Zweiri 2006: 675–676). Their response set the tone for the next decade. Hamas-controlled Gaza would be placed under a political and economic siege calculated to quarantine and then excise Hamas from Palestinian politics (Caridi 2012: 203–204). Neither the US nor Israel would countenance Hamas playing any role in Palestinian politics, especially the Peace Process, until it accepted the Quartet's stipulations of

renouncing violence, recognising Israel, and accepting all previous Palestinian/Israeli agreements (Tamimi 2009: 225). In the words of a US official at the time, Hamas could change or fail (ICG 2006: 32).

That Hamas has managed to survive these immense political pressures presents an opportunity to examine the myriad factors that led it to make the momentous decision to enter politics and make the transition from the idealism of opposition to the pragmatism and compromise of governing. It also presents an opportunity to investigate how Hamas has changed over time to deal with the pressures and vicissitudes of governing in a domestic and regional political milieu that appears intent on engineering its failure.

Therefore, this study has two key goals. Firstly, to examine critically the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour between 2005 and 2017. In doing so, this study expounds how Hamas has developed and implemented a dual resistance strategy, comprising political and armed resistance, to achieve, maintain, and defend its status as a viable actor in Palestinian politics. A DRS represents an ideological and political framework within which Hamas can gain simultaneously a prominent voice in how the OPT is administered via its entry into politics, while maintaining its armed resistance to Israeli occupation; something that forms a central part of its raison d'être.

Secondly, the study highlights Hamas's role as a national liberation movement struggling for Palestinian statehood. Despite this facet being central to Hamas's ideological narrative, its influence on Hamas's shifting political behaviour is often either ignored or portrayed as something distinct from its political endeavours. This study seeks to move away from the assumptions of existing analyses to explore and account for the effects that Hamas's national liberation agenda have on its move into politics, and the causal nexus behind any subsequent shifts in its political behaviour.

While the primary analytical focus of this study will be on Hamas, at times it will also examine the political strategies employed by Fatah. This is done because any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour do not occur in an analytical vacuum. Including an analysis of the rivalry between Hamas and Fatah enhances the study's analytical rigour in explaining the causal nexus behind the scope and limits of various shifts in Hamas's political behaviour.

To provide an effective investigative structure for this study, it will primarily employ the inclusion-moderation analytical framework. The IM framework is premised on the logic that allowing non-state political actors to participate in competitive political processes such as democratic elections, civil society, legal protest, and demonstrations can moderate their political behaviour (Schwedler 2013: 1350006-4). This inclusion is intended to generate bargaining, compromise, and the pursuit of incremental policy gains on behalf of movements like Hamas (Wegner & Pellicer 2009: 158).

Scholars initially used the IM framework to analyse the ways that radical movements in Europe and Latin America moderated their behaviour to facilitate their electoral participation (see Share 1985; Huntington 1991; Roberts 1995). More recently, scholarly attention has turned to the Arab world, particularly with the

advent of the Arab Uprisings. When applied to Islamist movements like Hamas, the primary analytical focus of the IM literature tends to centre on what moderation looks like, what causes it, and whether participation in politics necessarily leads to the democratisation of the movement and/or the political system within which it operates (see Schwedler 2006; Clark 2006; Wegner & Pellicer 2009; Wickham 2013). Broadly speaking, the various studies employing the IM framework posit that political actors who successfully moderate their political behaviour over a wide range of policy issues have gradually internalised the necessity for compromise and coalition building to achieve organisational goals (Somer 2014: 246).

Hamas in the literature

The political science literature on Hamas can be divided into two broad, but distinct schools of thought. The first characterises Hamas as an Islamist social movement (see Hroub 2000; Mishal & Sela 2006; Gunning 2009; Hroub 2010b; Brenner 2017). The second characterises Hamas as either a terrorist or an insurgent movement (see Levitt 2006; Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010; Bartal 2016; Davis 2016). While each school advances cogent arguments to explain Hamas's behaviour, one of the key analytical delineators is how they characterise and posit Hamas's use of violence in its simultaneous struggles with Fatah and Israel.

The first group of analyses is predominantly introspective, seeking to explore and explain Hamas's ideological nuances, contradictions, and justifications, how the movement functions, and importantly, the role that Islam plays in its numerous activities. When analysing the issue of violence, they are concerned predominantly with how Hamas frames and justifies its use of violence through its Islamist ideology. Here Hamas's use of violence is classified as being instrumental, meaning that it has an inherent pragmatism about it, and with definitive objectives: resisting Israeli occupation and liberating Palestine. In this sense, violence is a means to an end (Crenshaw 2001: 13–19). In this school of thought, Hamas uses violence both to demonstrate its military strength to Israel and to maintain and buttress its domestic political legitimacy. Classified in this way, Hamas's use of violence is but one aspect of an array of activities that Hamas undertakes in pursuit of its ultimate objective of achieving a sovereign Palestine (Gunning 2009: 6).

Nevertheless, the introspectiveness of this body of literature means that little analytical attention is devoted to examining how Hamas interacts with and adapts to its political environment, particularly concerning Hamas's political activities like electoral participation, governing, power-sharing, and regional coalition building. The corpus also tends to avoid any detailed analytical discussion of the synergy between Hamas's use of violence and Israeli occupation, and how central this is to Hamas's raison d'être and legitimacy as a Palestinian resistance movement. Avoiding this feature means that Israel's occupation often remains analytically invisible, and with it, Hamas's role in Palestinian self-determination efforts and Israel's concomitant efforts to hinder Palestinians' struggle for independence.

The second school of thought on Hamas consists of distinctively state-centric analyses, with Hamas classified as a radical and militant Islamist terrorist/

insurgent movement intent on destroying/harming the sovereign state of Israel.[1] These securitised analyses focus almost exclusively on Hamas's use of violence as a challenge to the Israeli state, with any other activity, political or otherwise, rarely receiving the same degree of analytical attention and causal explanation. Consequently, there tends to be an over-emphasis on the importance and role of violence in Hamas's meta-narrative. Hamas's use of violence is often portrayed as being the driving force in its inherent quest for power. Accordingly, Hamas adopts violence as a strategic choice, first in its struggle to seize power from Fatah, and second in its struggle to destroy the state of Israel and replace it with an Islamic state. Again, the parallel violence associated with Israel's occupation is rendered analytically invisible because of Hamas's classification as either a terrorist or an insurgent movement. Consequently, Israel's response to Hamas's use of violence is characterised as that of a state legitimately protecting itself and its citizens, and not as an occupying power seeking to suppress an indigenous challenger (see Frisch 2015; Davis 2016). This makes Hamas's own use of violence seem a product of emotion and psychology, completely detached from social factors and associated causes (Strindberg & Wärn 2011: 79). Because this body of literature continues to cast Hamas as a non-state actor as well as a terrorist/insurgent movement, its use of violence remains deemed as illegitimate (Wiegand 2010: 35–46).

Within this school, any political activities conducted by Hamas are viewed as an aberration and seen as subservient to its military activities. Indeed, Levitt (2006: 33) argues that both are symbiotic, and that the role of Hamas's political wing is to 'recruit terrorists, equip them with weapons, raise money for operations and function as outright military commanders.' Importantly, within this body of literature there tends to be little mention or analysis of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, their state-building efforts, and the role that these play in Hamas's decision to use violence and to participate in electoral politics. Within this securitised literature, peace between Palestinians and Israel can only occur through the defeat of either Hamas or Israel (Litvak 2010: 721).

Gaps in the literature

Given the stated goals of this study, it seeks to address certain gaps in the literature concerning both the IM framework and Hamas. Some studies of Islamist movements participating in electoral politics in the Middle East have specifically excluded Hamas (see Ashour 2009; Tezcür 2010). Ashour (2009: 25) rejected Hamas from his analysis on de-radicalisation because of its continued use and promotion of violence against Israel. Similarly, Tezcür (2010: 210) claims that the IM framework does not apply to Hamas because its entrenched role in Palestinian society, financial autonomy, and control of a militia excluded it from having to face the trade-off between organisational survival and the pursuit of revolutionary goals.

However, as will be demonstrated by this study, utilising the concept of a DRS allows for a more substantive assessment to be made, not only of the IM

framework itself, but of how Hamas copes with the transition from opposition to government, how they govern in practice, and the evolving role that violence plays in its organisational narrative. While there is a growing body of literature that analyses Hamas's time in government, most continue to classify Hamas as an armed non-state actor, seemingly ignoring that the 2006 election result made Hamas a legitimate state actor in Palestinian politics (see Szekely 2015; Heger 2015; Bhasin & Hallward 2013). By continuing to characterise Hamas as a non-state actor, they have seemingly failed to address several key questions. First, how does the legitimacy accorded to Hamas because of the election result change its role in Palestinian politics? Second, how does the election result change the way Hamas is perceived and acts on the regional and international stage? Third, how to adequately account for the changing function of Hamas's use of violence post-2006?

The use of Hamas as a case study means that any association between the use of violence and political moderate behaviour becomes theoretically and empirically germane. As Schwedler (2006: 15) highlights, previous studies using the IM framework have often selected groups that, while they may certainly qualify as moderate, were never militant in the first place in that they were never involved in – or had long rejected – the use of violence to achieve their political objectives. The IM literature views the use of violence as the antithesis of politically moderate behaviour, establishing a theoretical dichotomy between political participation and the use of violence. However, Hamas represents a theoretical anomaly where an Islamist movement has participated in the political process, won an election, and is governing, without having had to relinquish its military capability and its willingness to wield it. Therefore, using Hamas as a case study alongside the concept of a DRS provides an opportunity to investigate and understand the evolving function of Hamas's use of violence and its influence on the scope, limits, and causation of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour.

Finally, the studies of Islamist movements/parties have only analysed the shifts in their political behaviour within the jurisdiction of sovereign states. These conditions do not exist for Hamas. To begin with, Hamas is involved in a violent conflict with Israel over the establishment of an independent Palestine, with Palestinians possessing very limited sovereign rights in the territory they are responsible for governing. States have sovereign protection against overt external interference in their domestic political affairs. Given the nature of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, these simply do not exist, with the Palestinian political system subject to constant interference from myriad domestic and international actors, each with their own geopolitical designs. The potential influence this has on the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour needs to be accounted for.

Additionally, there are no independent state-like institutions in the OPT to provide both the incentives for and the limitations on Hamas's political participation, and what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable political behaviour. Since the establishment of the PA in 1994, Fatah has co-opted and subsumed the PA's various institutions so that there is no institutional distance between it and the PA. The co-opted nature of the PA's institutions reflects the semi-authoritarian political

system established by the previous Fatah chairman, Yasir Arafat, and maintained by the current chairman, Mahmoud Abbas. Consequently, questions such as 'Where does the impetus for Hamas to shift its political behaviour come from?' and 'Who or what determines the limits of Hamas's political participation?' become germane and will be addressed by this study.

Hamas's dual resistance strategy

This study aims to establish that the shifts in Hamas's political behaviour after 2005 were driven primarily by its desire to gain a political voice in how the OPT was governed and in the decision-making processes concerning the Palestinian acceptance of any deal for statehood negotiated through the Peace Process. With Fatah's domestic, regional, and international support waning by the end of the Second Intifada (2000–2005), Hamas saw an opportunity to translate its popular support in the OPT, forged through its armed resistance to Israeli occupation and continued provision of social services, into political legitimacy and institutional power (Roy 2011: 199).

Given the events of *al-naqbah* in 1948, and then Israeli occupation of the OPT since 1967, the concept of resistance to occupation forms a central pillar of both the Palestinian and Hamas narratives. One of Islam's key tenets is justice, and thus resistance to the injustices of Israeli occupation and what that means for Palestinian self-determination forms a compelling part of Hamas's justification for a DRS. As Dunning (2015: 285) explains, for Hamas 'resistance . . . does not simply refer to political violence, but exists in multi-variant aspects that extend to socio-political, symbolic, and cultural terms.' Having a DRS enables Hamas to tap into the well of evocative societal emotions concerning the root cause of Palestinian resistance and what this means in their continual fight for self-determination. As one prominent Palestinian academic put it,

> resistance is something that is not only essential, also [it] is a part of Palestinian life, sometimes we can call it [a] sacred thing. It's a sacred thing because resistance is the only way you can live in dignity, prosperity, and return to [our] homeland.
>
> (pers. comm. 29 June 2017)

By synergising political participation with armed resistance, Hamas can expound a cogent, relevant, and adaptable resistance narrative.

Consequently, a DRS consisting of political and armed resistance represents an ideological and political framework within which Hamas can simultaneously challenge Fatah's hegemony in the OPT politically while maintaining its armed resistance to Israeli occupation that forms the core of Hamas's raison d'être. The operationalisation of Hamas's DRS is consistent with its Brotherhood antecedence, meaning that Hamas does not intend to use its DRS as a framework to threaten or overthrow the current political system, but merely to challenge and reframe the existing political status quo in the OPT.

The idea of a militant movement like Hamas possessing both political and military personas simultaneously is not especially new, with the IRA/Sinn Féin and the Lebanese movement Hezbollah being two often cited examples. However, this study argues that given the role that resistance plays in the Palestinian narrative, Hamas's dual resistance is a more comprehensive and integrated strategy than that possessed by other so-called hybrid or dual-status movements. This is because Hamas has managed to synergise its political and armed resistance efforts, and it does this to further its self-determination agenda.[2]

Within the literature on these dual-status movements there is a dearth of detailed analyses of the mechanics and the extent of any cooperation and interaction between a movement's political and military personas. Often this is because political parties and designated terrorist movements, like Hamas, are depicted as being at the opposite ends of the spectrum of political organisation (Weinberg, Pedahzur & Perliger 2009: 1). At one end, political parties are characterised as forming essential elements of a political system because they can establish a government, be held accountable by the people, and are responsible for ensuring the rule of law. In a semi-authoritarian system like the OPT, political parties can also be formed to take advantage of legal openings in the system and to get people to turn out to vote (Brown 2012: 142). Even in these relatively closed systems, parties provide an opportunity for opposition movements to organise relatively freely, to increase the number of avenues for transmitting their political narrative, to gain new political skills, and to have increased access to the media and public spaces (Brown 2012: 132). The advent of a political party can also signify that a designated terrorist movement recognises the legitimacy of a political system through its willingness to begin to work within the system to achieve its organisational goals. Finally, the presence of strong competition among political parties is often seen as a key indicator of a state's democratic vitality (White 2006).

At the other end of the spectrum, terrorist movements are portrayed as the antithesis of this. Terrorist movements use violence to coerce and intimidate states into altering their behaviour concerning certain issues or grievances expressed by the movement (Pape 2005: 9–10; Kydd & Walter 2002: 264–265). Indeed, there is a corpus of literature that argues that terrorism can have an adverse impact on one of the core facets of democracy – elections – through this ability to coerce and intimidate (Indridason 2008; Guelke 2000). Consequently, the state considers that any violent acts perpetrated by terrorist movements lie outside the boundaries of politically moderate behaviour and represent a clear threat to the safety and security of the state and its citizens. States react to this threat by meeting these violent acts and the movements that utilise them, with a similar or greater degree of abnormal and uncivilised level of force, while the traditional and more measured actions of a sovereign state are placed temporarily into abeyance (Ayyash 2010: 111–112). Whereas the existence of political parties connotes broad acceptance of the political system, terrorist movements are associated with anti-democratic/anti-systemic behaviour.

Most of the literature on dual-status movements appears trapped in this dichotomy concerning the inherent legitimacy of political parties and the inherent

illegitimacy of terrorist movements. However, within this debate, questions arising over which activities are considered legitimate and what are considered illegitimate are germane to those movements who possess both political and armed personas. For example, if a movement's political persona is considered legitimate, does this then legitimise the movement's military persona? Alternatively, does classifying a movement as illegitimate because of its military activities necessarily mean that its political activities are considered equally as illegitimate? The problem with having to address these questions arises because most of the associated literature often equates a movement's participation in politics as being the precursor for it transitioning into a legitimate political actor, and in the process renouncing the use of violence (see Zielinski 1999; Neumann 2005; Allison 2006; Acosta 2014). The analytical focus of this apparently linear transition is on how to account for the shifts in the movement's behaviour that led to it renouncing violence and committing itself to the peaceful participation in the political process (see Gupta 2008; Van Engeland & Rudolph 2008). Like the IM framework, the causal logic around this transition is that once terrorist movements realise that they can achieve more through political participation than through using violence, their political behaviour shifts towards the former, with the military option left to wither as a viable strategy (see Neumann 2005; Allison 2006).

Nevertheless, as Berti (2013: 5) argues, the notion that inclusion in the political process leads inevitably to movements renouncing violence is contested. While participating in politics may mean that a movement favours this over a military option, it does not necessarily mean that the movement will seek to move away from using violence indefinitely. Thus, the key to understanding Hamas's DRS is to understand the evolving and nuanced role that the use of violence plays in its strategic narrative. This narrative incorporates its simultaneous struggles against Fatah's hegemony over governing the OPT and the Palestinian resistance narrative, with Israel's continuing occupation and inherent opposition to Palestinian statehood.

Recently there has been an increased effort to account for the evolution of dual-status terrorist movements like Hamas (see Wiegand 2010; Krause 2013; Berti 2013; Bhasin & Hallward 2013; Heger 2015). Berti (2013: 24) argues that an armed movement will form a political wing through the interplay of four key factors: the degree of the movement's institutionalisation, the availability of mobilisation resources, shifts within the political opportunity structure, and a requisite level of internal unity and commitment for change. Similarly, Weinberg, Pedahzur and Perliger (2009: 75–78) argue that terrorist movements can enter into party politics under particular circumstances: the government offering the movement an amnesty and the opportunity to transform into a legitimate political party; the establishment, re-establishment, and consolidation of a democratic system; the desire to use a political wing to better articulate the movement's message to a wider audience; and finally, as a competitive strategy to separate themselves from other movements in a political system that also use violence.

Finally, Braithwaite (2013) argues that territorial competition and the nature of group competition determine whether terrorist movements adopt a political strategy. The core of Braithwaite's argument is that in cases where a terrorist

movement is demanding territory, it is more likely to adopt political strategies that can assist in its quest for independence or autonomy. The terrorist movement is forced to consider a political option because the state possesses a preponderance of military capability, meaning the terrorist movement is unable to take and control the territory it requires. Adopting a political persona also assists the terrorist movement to garner additional material resources (supporters, finances, and arms). This is especially important when several movements are vying for the same objective and compete among each other for these resources, like the competition between Hamas and Fatah. According to Braithwaite (2013: 54), if a terrorist movement manages to establish a political persona it enables the movement to increase its capacity to challenge the state by mobilising and attracting a greater resource base.

However, these studies concentrate primarily on analysing the process of terrorist movements forming political wings and then participating in politics. By implication, there is a degree of institutional individualism between the armed and political personas of the movements studied. The presence of a political persona by a movement more commonly known for its military actions is therefore considered somewhat of an aberration. The analytical emphasis of these studies tends to revolve around not just the inception of these aberrations, but how and why these movements favour either their political or military personas at certain points in time depending upon strategic exigencies. Consequently, this literature does not delve into how the political and military personas might be a function of the evolution of strategic options on the part of the movements concerned. It also does not consider how these movements might use these personas, not just interchangeably, but in a mutually cooperative way, in their efforts to further the movement's strategic objective(s).

The concept of a DRS proffered here builds on this literature by demonstrating that Hamas's DRS is a more comprehensive and integrated strategy. Underpinning the mutually supportive functions of political and armed resistance is the notion that both political participation and acts of violence can be viewed as similar and mutually supportive methods of political communication (Richards 2015: 57). One of the main reasons why Hamas can achieve such a mutually supportive strategy is the make-up of its key decision-making institutions. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, Hamas has a *majlis shura* that is made up of members elected from throughout the movement, including those inside and outside of the OPT, and from Hamas's military wing, the IQB. The *majlis shura* then elects Hamas's Political Bureau (Gunning 2009: 98–99). The *majlis shura* is the equivalent to a state's legislative body, while the Political Bureau is the equivalent to a state's executive (Mishal & Sela 2006: 162; Gunning 2009: 100). This makes Hamas's decision-making processes concerning its military and political strategies like those of a state, with the government and its cabinet debating and resolving key political and military strategies to further common national objectives.

This decision-making process is what sets the DRS apart. Both the political and armed resistance strategies of Hamas are debated and decided upon by a set of institutions composed of elected representatives from all sections of

Hamas. This means that these sections, including the IQB, and later Hamas's political party CR, are bound by the decisions of the *majlis shura* and Political Bureau. While the IQB and CR necessarily retain their tactical autonomy and have semi-independent organisational structures, their strategic direction is decided upon by the representative institutions of the *majlis shura* and Political Bureau.

Implementing a DRS also placates Hamas's moderate and militant members simultaneously, as both components of resistance are employed in mutually supportive roles in its struggles against Israel and Fatah. While the armed resistance component is necessarily modulated, it is never abandoned, meaning that it becomes a strategic asset to be utilised judiciously. Adopting a DRS enabled Hamas to alter the posture of its armed resistance from being a strategically offensive tool to being a strategically defensive tool.

Despite the apparent synergy, the two personas do not always cooperate seamlessly, and inherent tensions do exist between supporters of both forms of resistance. Nevertheless, Hamas's leadership understands neither persona is sufficient by itself to achieve Palestinian statehood. For Hamas, dealing with the occasionally dialectic relationship between its political and armed resistance personas is like having to juggle the at times contradictory ideological paradigms of Islamism and national liberationism.

The duality of Hamas's resistance strategy is exemplified by its slogan, 'One hand resists, while the other one builds' (US Senate 2006). Explaining this duality, the former chairman of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal (2008 cited in Rabbani 2008: 64), observed that

> ours is a comprehensive movement, which has fused military and political activity. Our vision is to combine them without focusing exclusively on either. Resistance is a fundamental part of our strategy to end the occupation and reclaim our land and rights, but this strategy also includes political and popular action, media work, and diplomacy.

Indeed, the foundation of Hamas's legitimacy as a resistance movement is the Palestinian public's demand that their national representatives exhibit both military and political personas in their prosecution and promotion of Palestinian self-determination (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 302). According to Hroub (2010a: 175–176), the ability of a Palestinian movement to resist Israeli occupation is critical to its legitimacy. This occurs because the legitimate leader of Palestinian resistance is the one who holds the banner of resistance and revolution, advancing and bringing the goals of liberation closer. While traditionally this resistance has involved only armed resistance, the inclusion of a political facet means that the conceptualisation of Hamas's resistance has altered. Indeed, implementing a DRS is a way for Hamas to enhance its own legitimacy among Palestinians by amalgamating any 'electoral legitimacy' with its more traditional legitimacy source: armed resistance. Consequently, Hamas's DRS is a strategy intended to solidify public support for its strategic narrative, and in

doing so challenge Fatah's dominant narrative that the diplomatic path is the only appropriate method of achieving Palestinian statehood (Usher 2005; Brown 2010).

This stance is reflective of popular Palestinian public opinion that recognises the efficacy of a combined strategy of armed resistance and political participation (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 302).[3] Importantly, the political aspect of the strategy is dominant and signals the primacy of political resistance efforts among the majority in Hamas's decision-making institutions (Hroub 2010b: 119). This primacy is also based on the political leadership's ability to garner external funding to finance the activities of Hamas, including its military exploits (Gunning 2009: 40–41; Hroub 2010b: 119–120).

The first component of Hamas's dual strategy is political resistance. This necessarily flexible facet possesses many guises that are utilised in whatever way Hamas's leadership deems most appropriate. Hamas initially refused to enter Palestinian politics, believing the Palestinian political system to be the product of the reviled Oslo Accords. However, the fundamentally altered political circumstances in the OPT created by the 2003 Roadmap, the death of Yasir Arafat, and the successive assassinations of Hamas leaders Sheikh Yassin and Dr al-Rantisi in 2004, presented Hamas with the opportunity to justify its move into politics ideologically as being a response to the public's demands, and the dramatically altered political environment.[4] The inclusion of a political facet to its resistance was not only recognition that Hamas needed a political voice; it was also the tacit acknowledgement that its previous strategy of unilateral armed resistance had largely failed. As Roy (2011: 199) observed, 'Hamas was no longer content to play the role of rejectionist opposition, recognising the ineffectiveness of armed struggle in the absence of political engagement.'

Hamas came to appreciate that gaining a political voice, with its associated claims to legitimacy, served as an act of resistance, especially given later efforts to excise Hamas from politics after its 2006 election victory. In this sense, the more politically engaged Hamas became, the greater the level of its resistance both to Fatah's political hegemony and to Israeli occupation. So by developing and implementing a comprehensive policy platform, participating in parliamentary processes like policy bargaining and compromise, and learning and adapting to the prospect of sharing power with Fatah became the focus of Hamas's early political resistance efforts. While this form of resistance had a distinct Islamic hue, it is very much politically secular, meaning that its narrative and operationalisation was necessarily flexible, open to contradictions and inconsistencies, and was – to a certain degree – capricious.

Hamas envisaged the main goal of its political resistance as advocating for the reformation and institutional capacity building of the PA as the junior partner in a coalition government controlled by Fatah. The Palestinian state-building process that had begun in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords had all but ceased following the failed Camp David talks in 2000 and the onset of the Second Intifada (Amundsen & Ezbidi 2004: 141). Hamas wanted to restart the Palestinian state-building process, believing that the PA needed to metamorphose from being merely

an administrative institution into one driving the more important state and institutional capacity-building functions necessary to realise Palestinian statehood (Rabbani 2008: 68).

However, after its 2006 election victory Hamas found itself able to govern the OPT in its own right. This meant that Hamas's contest with Israel and Fatah transformed to become about the struggle to legitimise Hamas's claim to the right to govern the OPT: namely, who has justified access to power; who is justified to select the government; and how and under what conditions, and limitations Hamas's rule is legitimately exercised (Kailitz 2013: 41). In this altered political environment, the goal of Hamas's political resistance shifted to become about securing and entrenching its political authority. To achieve this, Hamas needed to have its right to exercise political power in the OPT recognised, first by Palestinians and then by the international community (Buchanan 2002: 691). With Hamas's political authority challenged directly by Israel's siege, its efforts to govern Gaza effectively, to establish an equitable power-sharing arrangement with Fatah, and to enter suitable regional alliances to provide it with diplomatic support became associated with the notion of political resistance because these activities were intended to ensure that Hamas remained a viable actor in Palestinian politics.

A key aspect of Hamas establishing its political authority is through Palestinians consenting to the new government exercising its political power. Zelditch (2001: 41) argues that consent is a function of legitimacy and is based on consensus, the public interest, or sometimes both. Consent equates to agreement, meaning that the new Hamas government obtains its political authority via Palestinians consenting to it monopolising the execution of political power without any form of retribution or challenge (Beetham 1991: 90–91). In this sense, consent can have passive and active facets: it can be informed and uninformed and/or implicit and explicit (Beetham 1991: 18–19). Palestinians set limits as to exactly what they are willing to accept before they withdraw their consent to the government exercising its political authority. As Hroub (2010a: 173) explains,

> Palestinians appear to grant their Islamists generous margins within which to operate and tolerance with respect to their agenda for social change, yet, if the Islamists were to press the idea of Islamising in the narrow sense of the word too strongly, the mode of reception . . . in Palestinian society would change in ways that would not necessarily be favourable to the Islamists.

As will be borne out in subsequent chapters, the issue of public perception also directly influences Hamas's attempts to cement its political authority. As Crandall and Beasley (2001: 77–78) explain,

> the legitimacy of a government, the authority of its leader . . . has its roots in the perception of moral worth. . . . People and governments have a moral value that people can perceive; they see it in a person, in a nation, or in an action a degree of good and bad that is equivalent to legitimacy.

So, how Palestinians perceive the political and military activities of Hamas and its government, their policy successes and failures, the overall effectiveness of these activities, and how these policies are implemented also correlates with increases and decreases in Hamas's political authority.

The second component of Hamas's dual strategy is armed resistance. This is geared towards resisting Israeli occupation using violence while also supporting Hamas's political resistance objectives. While the use of violence by Hamas is highly contentious, it is hardly a novel tactic, particularly in asymmetric contests between the state and movements fighting for self-determination, such as the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Hamas's use of violence is also not surprising given that Israel's occupation and its siege are enforced and reinforced through Israel's own use of violence. Consequently, Hamas's use of violence is predominantly a reflection of the threat Hamas believes that Israel poses, not just to its own existence but also to the overall Palestinian goal of self-determination.

In these circumstances, violence becomes a manifestation of the contest over political space and a measure of the level of asymmetry between the principal actors. In contests where the conflicting parties are relatively equal in resource terms, a greater amount of political space is available for representation, negotiation, and compromise, resulting in lower levels and/or less egregious forms of violence. This either occurs because all parties recognise that the level of violence necessary to achieve system hegemony is beyond their means or is unsustainable in the long term. In contests where the asymmetry between the principal actors is more acute, the amount of political space available is often significantly less, because the dominant actor is closer to achieving and/or maintaining system hegemony. In these cases, violence is often more prevalent and egregious as the 'weaker' actor seeks to force the hegemon to relinquish its grip on the amount of political space available for representation, negotiation, and compromise (Grinberg 2010: 15).

Any act(s) of violence by Hamas, either as pre-emptive attacks or reprisals, therefore becomes a potent metaphor for justice and injustice. Esoterically it represents the concomitant discourse between Israel and Hamas concerning the broader contest for control of the concepts and symbols by which the conflict is evaluated by their respective local, national, and international constituencies (Scott 1985: 27). As the 'weaker' actor, Hamas uses violence to demonstrate to its constituencies its ability to injure the 'stronger' Israeli state. Simultaneously, Israel uses force to demonstrate to its constituencies its ability and willingness to withstand the onslaught and damage Hamas. Hamas and Israel have their own separate and intertwined constituencies, and the messages they send to each other extend to these constituencies to gain support, sympathy, and solidarity.

The act(s) of violence against Israeli occupation does not necessarily have to involve physical acts such as death, injury, or destruction. Violence can take many forms: economic, social, cultural, and political. While these challenges against Israel's occupation may be more passive, they are equally as symbolic and effective as the more overt forms of violent activity. Violence in these circumstances can transmute into a multidimensional and multifunctional entity, meaning

that the use of violence by Hamas cannot be assumed or treated as monolithic (Kalyvas 2010: xii). For example, during the First Intifada (1987–1991), Palestinians, in addition to more direct challenges to Israeli occupation, boycotted Israeli goods, refused to pay Israeli taxes, and participated in strikes and shutdowns of Israeli businesses (Smith 2007: 422). This form of economic violence against the state became another symbolic front of resistance for many Palestinians. The combination of passive and active forms of violence became compelling signifiers of the entire population's willingness to resist, which resonated equally with local, national, and international constituencies.

Singh (2012) argues that Hamas's style of armed resistance in the face of occupation is emblematic of the concept of 'heroic resistance.' Heroic resistance is a characteristic of existential conflicts fuelled by ideology, where religion and nationalism serve as powerful mobilising forces (Singh 2012: 535). In these conflicts, sacrifice, both individual and societal, is mythologised within the public's imagination and popular discourse. Within this discourse, attributes such as honour, courage, perseverance, strength, cunning, and selflessness are highly valued. Of note is the concept of selflessness, whereby the 'hero' is willing to kill and die for their socio-political community. There is a sense of social responsibility within the construction of the selfless act that ties the 'hero' to the community, and the community to the 'hero' (Singh 2012: 535–536).

How Israel responds when Hamas commits these acts of violence is also an important factor to consider, and paradoxically contributes to Hamas's legitimacy as a political actor. Because Israel sees Hamas as a terrorist/insurgent movement, any acts of violence perpetrated by Hamas are promoted as threatening the safety and security of the Israeli state. In response to this threat, Israel perpetrates acts that are equally, if not more violent as those committed against it. Israel can justify this increased use of force by portraying Hamas's acts of violence as being outside the normal and civilised boundaries of law and order. Consequently, Israel argues that these violent acts, and the groups that utilise them, need to be met with a similar, or greater, degree of abnormal, and uncivilised level of violence, while the traditional and more measured actions of a sovereign state are temporarily placed into abeyance (Ayyash 2010: 111–112).

To assist Israel in accomplishing this, it and other supporting members of the international community, like the US and EU, affix value-laden classifications such as 'terrorist,' 'fundamentalist,' or 'radical' to Hamas. By implication, a terrorist is someone or something that operates outside of the normal boundaries of acceptable political behaviour, and therefore lies beyond the customary protections that states award their loyal citizens. The state demands that the terrorist be dealt with by means that fall outside the normal legal boundaries applicable to those citizens who do not challenge its monopolisation of the legitimate use of force (Ayyash 2010: 112). Because the types and levels of violence utilised by the terrorist are characterised by the state as extraordinary, it necessitates a state response with levels of force that are extraordinary to deter and punish the terrorist, their movement, and supporters (Strom & Irvin 2007: 586). Because Hamas and other Palestinian resistance movements use violence, Israel sends a message to its own local,

national, and international constituencies, and to Palestinians, that when violence is used against it, then the OPT, and those contained within them, are segregated temporarily from 'the state,' and thus from normal, civilised legal and state-sponsored protection (Sadiki 2010: 351).

Research methodology

This qualitative study aims to move beyond the analytically restrictive environment of the security-dominated analyses on Hamas that tend to obscure the complexities and internal diversity behind any shifts in its political behaviour. Consequently, the study consults an extensive range of independent analyses on Hamas and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. This evidence is obtained via numerous reports from international institutions such as the UN and its affiliated agencies, the ICG, the WB, HRW, B'Tselem, the PCHR, and BESA. Additionally, numerous reports and studies published by various academic institutions such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the US Institute for Peace, the Saban Centre for Middle East Policy, and the Crown Centre for Middle East Studies have been utilised.

The study also takes advantage of the relatively untapped resources of the Palestine Papers and the plethora of diplomatic cables released via WikiLeaks. These two datasets provide unique insights into the personal viewpoints and strategic appreciations of key actors at the individual, organisational, and state levels, exposing the rationales concerning crucial political decisions relevant to this study. When and where available, the researcher conducted several semi-structured interviews with Palestinians living inside and outside of the OPT to add further insight into the causal nexus behind any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. Furthermore, the researcher has also taken advantage of various interviews with Hamas's leadership published in academic journals and media outlets.

Finally, the study makes extensive use of public opinion polling conducted by the PCPSR and the JMCC. This polling data provides a valuable insight into the shifting attitudes of the Palestinian public, and contemporises and contextualises these attitudes. In many respects, polling data amplifies the voice of ordinary Palestinians. Most studies on Islamist groups like Hamas are based on elite sources, with little attention paid to understanding the Palestinian public and what motivates them to support Hamas and its political programme (Jensen 2009: 6). The extensive use of public opinion polling by this study provides an understanding of the reasons for this support, and the way in which Hamas shapes its policy positions to adapt to shifts in public opinion. The polling data also provides insights into the impact that this vacillating public opinion has on Hamas and the ensuing shifts in its political behaviour.

Given the often polarising and contentious nature of conducting research into the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, and on Hamas in particular, methodological questions concerning the objectivity and neutrality of this study become especially germane. Instructively, Roy (2007: xii–xiii, xv) makes the point that complete

objectivity is unattainable, and indeed undesirable, because it can make the researcher indifferent to consequences and create an analytical detachment that may result in a disinterested pursuit of knowledge. Roy (2007: xvi) also notes that claims of neutrality are often an excuse for a researcher not interrogating the conflict's analytical status quo. Indeed, it could be argued that allegations of a lack of objectivity and neutrality are often raised only when a body of research does challenge the analytical status quo concerning both the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Hamas.

One solution to the dual concerns over the indifference of 'objectivity,' and the complacency of 'neutrality' is to remain analytically critical. As Roy (2007: xiv) explains, 'it is the criticizing function of the intellectual – the critical sense of inquiry that seeks to break down stereotypes and reductive categories, which is the basis of his or her own moral authority.' In this way, this study relies on the body of evidence collected to dictate the course of the analysis. A direct consequence of this approach is that it humanises Hamas as the subject of analysis. As Roy (2007: xvii–xix) argues, only by humanising 'the other' can the researcher truly know their subject, expounding contradictions, and by extension furthering intellectual inquiry about the most perplexing of problems.

Outline of the book

This study is divided into eight chapters that critically examine the complexity of Hamas's evolving political behaviour. Chapter 1 provides the conceptual framework of the book, presenting a comprehensive analysis of the IM hypothesis, its key tenets, the arguments concerning its application, and areas of analytical contention. It also includes an analysis of the state-building literature to provide the framework for understanding the development and implementation of Hamas's DRS and its struggle for Palestinian statehood. Chapter 2 presents a detailed analysis of Hamas, its historical development from the PMB to its inception in 1987, and the development of its distinctive ideological combination of national liberationism and Islamism. The chapter also analyses Hamas's internal structure and sources of authority to reveal the relative strengths and weaknesses of its decision-making processes.

Chapter 3 investigates the impact of Israeli occupation and the influence this has on Hamas's perception of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. It goes on to analyse the subtle ideological shifts that Hamas has made as it justifies its continued opposition to the Peace Process negotiations and to formally recognising Israel. The chapter aims to provide a nuanced understanding of why resisting Israeli occupation politically and militarily is critical to Hamas, and the causal impetus this has on any shifts in its political behaviour.

Chapter 4 investigates the events leading up to and including the 2006 election. The chapter examines Hamas's Election Manifesto, analysing the numerous changes in public policy as Hamas presents to Palestinians and the world a comprehensive and secular plan to govern the OPT. The chapter considers how Hamas deals with some of the inherent ideological challenges faced by Islamist

movements participating in the political arena, specifically the problem of rationalising the contentious relationship between popular and divine sovereignty. This provides the framework within which to understand Hamas's initial version of its political resistance efforts. The chapter then analyses the 2006 election and the reaction from Hamas, Fatah, Israel, the Quartet, and Palestinians.

Chapter 5 investigates Hamas's governance of Gaza after the 2006 election, analysing the evolving conceptualisation of Hamas's political resistance that became centred on ensuring its political survival. The chapter examines the way in which 'good governance' initiatives in Gaza, in institutional capacity and state-building terms, contributes to the establishment and maintenance of the government's political authority. The chapter also analyses how Hamas deals with the constant internal challenges to its political authority through the development and operationalisation of soft-Islamisation and soft-authoritarian approaches.

Chapter 6 investigates Hamas's armed resistance efforts. Through an analysis of the 2008, 2012, and 2014 wars, the chapter examines how rather than Hamas's armed resistance being intended to be a military threat to Israel or an anti-systemic/anti-democratic tool, it is aimed at ensuring that Hamas remains a viable political force in Palestinian politics. In doing so, the chapter illustrates why the act of resisting is such a key legitimating factor for Hamas in its simultaneous struggles with Israel and Fatah.

Chapter 7 examines Hamas's efforts to enter into power-sharing arrangements with Fatah. The chapter analyses how the long-standing mistrust between Hamas and Fatah has been aggravated by spoiling activities conducted by Fatah, Israel, the US, and at times Hamas itself. By assessing the 2007, 2011, and 2014 Unity Agreements, the chapter explores the shifts in Hamas's political stance as it attempts to cope with the simultaneous centrifugal forces of mistrust and the centripetal forces of public expectation.

Chapter 8 analyses Hamas's diplomatic engagement with key regional actors. Israel's siege meant that Hamas needed external benefactors to legitimise its government in Gaza, ameliorate Israel's siege, and support its efforts to resolve the 'Palestinian Question.' Therefore, the chapter examines Hamas's oscillating relationships with Egypt, the Axis of Resistance (Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah), and the newer actors in regional politics, Qatar and Turkey. With Hamas increasingly isolated politically and economically, these diplomatic relationships represent further avenues to assess the causal nexus behind shifts in Hamas's political behaviour.

Notes

1 Hamas was first designated as a terrorist organisation by the US in 1995 via Executive Order 12947. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, President Bush then classified Hamas as an SDGT via Executive Order 13224 (US Treasury 1995, 2001).

2 Bhasin and Hallward (2013: 76) argued that Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 elections was in line with its dual strategy of violent dissent against the Israeli state and the provision of governance and welfare services to acquire and maintain the support of the Palestinian public.

3 For example, in a December 2014 PCPSR poll, 79.3% of respondents supported Hamas's approach confronting the occupation in Gaza. See PCPSR (2014: Poll No. 54).
4 The Quartet unveiled the Roadmap in April 2003 (see United Nations 2003). It was a performance-based and goal-driven document designed to produce a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005.

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1 Empirical ambiguities and theoretical considerations

Hamas's decision to participate in the electoral process in 2004–2005 marked the beginnings of a shift away from its unilateral strategy of armed resistance towards employing a DRS that incorporated political participation as a form of resistance. For Hamas, gaining a voice in Palestinian politics is central to advancing its state-building agenda. So central is the idea of an independent Palestine that for Hamas it is simultaneously an inspiration and an aspiration (Sen 2015: 211). To understand the scope, limits, and causation of these shifts in behaviour and role that the DRS plays requires a theoretical framework that not only deals with the vagaries of Hamas's political participation but also links these with Hamas's key organisational goal of realising a sovereign Palestine.

The chapter begins with an examination of some of the relevant literature on state-building as a way of explaining the impetus for these shifts, before analysing the pertinent aspects of the IM literature that will provide an understanding of the respective scope and limits of any shifts. Overall, the chapter represents the study's conceptual framework that seeks to explain why Hamas's DRS is inextricably intertwined with its state-building agenda. Recognising the symbiosis of this relationship provides a more complete and nuanced understanding of the scope, limits, and causation of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour, and why it developed and implemented its DRS.

Conceptualising the state-building process

Despite the formal declaration of the Israeli state in 1948 and the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, neither Israelis nor Palestinians have been able to achieve their objective of a sovereign state as they had originally envisaged. While the borders of what was known as Mandatory Palestine have remained constant since 1920, exactly what constitutes the Israeli 'state' and any prospective Palestinian 'state' in the minds of Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community remains a contested concept. It needs to be remembered that the boundaries of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem are not immutable. They reflect the various ceasefire agreements signed between Israel, Jordan, and Egypt after the 1948–1949 war. They are not the recognised borders between sovereign states. As such, neither Palestinians nor Israelis universally recognise or accept these

ceasefire lines as permanent territorial delineators (Gordon 2007: 458). This has important ramifications for the state-building efforts of Palestinians and Israelis, both in the minds of the participants and the international community. It is also germane given that segments within both Palestinian and Israeli societies continue to actively seek their respective states in their totality. As such, it can be argued that Palestinians and Israelis are engaged in duelling state-building enterprises.

While this study focuses primarily on Hamas's state-building efforts and its use of a DRS, it needs to be remembered that Fatah and Israel are also undertaking their own state-building endeavours that run either in tandem or in opposition to Hamas's. Israeli state-building efforts formally began in May 1948, and underpin *al-naqbah* and later events that saw the creation and then occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Palestinian state-building efforts in the OPT formally began with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the subsequent establishment of the PA. These efforts can be attributed to the First Intifada (1987–1991), to having influenced the Second Intifada (2000–2005), and to having subsequently motivated Hamas's decision to develop and implement its DRS. Given the unresolved and hotly contested nature of Palestinian and Israeli state-building efforts, having a sound understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the state-building process, as it relates to Palestinian and Israeli endeavours, is key to understanding the causal impetus behind the scope and limits of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour.

Understanding the function of 'the state'

A strong 'state' is key to the success of any state-building project. While this may seem obvious, there is a growing understanding among the international community concerning the need to build capable, effective, and responsive states that are able to exert sufficient political authority in their territory to stave off the numerous problems associated with weakness, fragility, insecurity, and poor development performance (Menocal 2011: 1718–1719). As such, it is necessary to understand what the state is and does. While 'the state' may seem a rather generic and immutable term, there are many ways in which it is used in the literature to describe specific functions. Sometimes the state is used to describe the legitimate authority over a particular territory that is exercised, and recognised internally and externally. Sometimes it is used to describe the institutions of government and the administrative capacity of governance. Other times it is used to describe an entity that represents a political community within a particular territory that is over and above the government (Call 2008: 7). For the purpose of this study, 'the state' is used to describe the legitimate authority over a particular territory.

One of the most accepted modern conceptualisations of the state is Weber's. He (1984: 33) argues that 'a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a given territory.' Thus for Weber (1984: 33), the state is intrinsically associated with dominance, supported by the legitimate use of force where the dominated must obey the dominant. In this sense, the state is not a benign collection of executive agencies

but an exercise and embodiment of power (Call 2008: 7). For this obedience to be assured, the dominant must undertake the organised administration of the dominated to condition their behaviour. As part of this process, the dominant need to obtain control of the bureaucracy and state institutions responsible for the distribution of material resources (Weber 1984: 35–37). In doing so, the state can forge close-knit nations out of peoples who had previously been loose collections of local groups. As states formed, they began to exert a new form of public power with large standing armies, formidable bureaucracies, and codified law (Migdal 1994: 12).

Nevertheless, Weber acknowledges that every genuine form of domination necessarily involves a degree of voluntary compliance, or consent, from the dominated. This consent is grounded in an acceptance or belief in the political authority of the state and its ruling regime (Weber 1978: 212–213). As noted earlier, consent is a function of legitimacy, which is based on either consensus or the public interest, or sometimes both (Zelditch 2001: 41). The act of consent has a moral and legal component, and provides the foundation for the belief in the government, as there is a measure of individual and societal choice inherent within the notion of consent (Beetham 1991: 18–19).

Tilly (1985: 170) also argues that the state is a function of the monopoly on the use of violence. His central proposition is that war makes states, and he provides a conceptual framework for understanding the processes of what he terms internal and external state-making. Tilly (1985: 181) argues that external state-making, or war-making, involves a process of eliminating or neutralising rivals outside of the territory where an agent holds a monopoly on the use of violence. Concerning internal state-making, he argues that this involves a process of eliminating or neutralising internal rivals within a particular territory where the agent holds a monopoly on the use of violence. The process of either eliminating or neutralising rivals strengthens the state's ability to extract resources from its territory. This then enables the state to protect its supporters and conduct war-making. Tilly (1985: 181) notes that the process of resource extraction can range widely from plundering to bureaucratic taxation.

In many cases war-making can result in state-making, as the state increases its capacity to extract resources from the population in its newly acquired territory, leading to the eventual elimination or neutralisation of any internal rivals (Tilly 1985: 183). As Tilly (1985: 184) argues, prior to the twentieth century war-making was the primary reason why states appeared and disappeared. In this period, dominant states defended or enhanced their position in the international system by expanding the territory within which they could monopolise the use of violence. This allowed them to extract more resources that in turn enhanced their power in the international system.

Understanding the process of external state-making provides an insight into the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and the raison d'être of Palestinian resistance. Israeli forces fought against the Arab armies and Palestinian militia to create the Israeli state. Viewed through Tilly's lens, *al-naqbah* involved a process whereby Israelis eliminated and/or neutralised internal rivals, that is the Palestinians, thus

becoming able to monopolise the use of violence within the boundaries of what was to become the 'state' of Israel. Once this had been achieved, Israelis were able to dominate and control the extraction of material resources within the state of Israel. This process continued after the dramatic victories of the 1967 war that saw the boundaries of the Israeli 'state' expand to include the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

The monopolisation of the use of violence and the ability to dominate resource extraction thus form key aspects of a successful state-building process and by extension a successfully functioning state. Given what is at stake, successful state-building becomes a zero-sum process where there can only be one winner. Therefore, understanding the function of the state has important consequences for Palestinians and Israelis in their respective state-building efforts. As will be determined throughout this study, being able to deny a rival the ability to monopolise the legitimate use of violence has become an important tactic for inhibiting any state-building activities. This tactic exists not just between Palestinians and Israelis, but additionally between Hamas and Fatah as the two dominant Palestinian representative movements.

State-building

Given that state institutions are responsible for guaranteeing the monopoly of the legitimate use of force, for the collection of revenues, and for the governing of expenditure, they play a central role in the state-building process (Call 2008: 8). Paris and Sisk (2008: 14) define the process of state-building as 'the strengthening and construction of legitimate government institutions in countries that are emerging from conflicts.' Fukuyama (2004: ix) defines state-building as 'the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones.' Additionally, Richmond and Pogodda (2016: 8) argue that the state-building process is aimed at 'producing the basic framework of a neo-liberal state in a procedural and technocratic sense.'

Consequently, the building of institutional capacity plays a central role in the state-building process as a way of restoring/guaranteeing the state's legitimacy and ensuring its survival (Cliffe & Manning 2008: 172). Conversely, the destruction of institutional capacity weakens state institutions, thereby preventing public services from operating and increasing economic pressures that stop the payment of civil servants and the supply of basic services. This weakening of state institutions can also lead to the creation of a culture of impunity and the virtual breakdown of the rule of law. As Cliffe and Manning (2008: 163–164) argue, effective state institutions are therefore critical in addressing any inherent capacity and legitimacy deficits in states.

The process of institutional capacity building has both normative and empirical perspectives. From a normative perspective, it involves the strengthening of the extractive, coercive, and incorporative capacities of state institutions (Lee 1988: 25–27). This strengthening can have two analytical dimensions: institutionalisation and durability. The former dimension is the extent to which

institutions conform to some set of principles, norms, and rules. The latter dimension concerns the extent to which those principles, norms, and rules persist over time in the face of changing circumstances (Krasner 1999: 56). From an empirical perspective, institutional capacity building involves ensuring that state institutions can formulate and implement specific policies and pursue particular goals as they participate in governing the state (Lee 1988: 27). This enables institutions to begin to operate with increased efficiency, start to control and combat incidents of corruption and bribery, and to gradually achieve and maintain a degree of transparency and accountability (Fukuyama 2004: 8–9). Understanding the differences between the operationalisation of normative and empirical institutional capacity building can be useful in understanding how and why 'the state' and its institutions appear to function adequately in some areas and not in others.

Fukuyama argues for the need to distinguish between what he terms the scope of state activities (normative) and the strength of state power (empirical). He (2004: 7) defines the former as 'the different functions and goals taken on by governments' and the latter as 'the ability of states to plan and execute policies and to enforce laws cleanly and transparently.' Being able to distinguish between the two provides a framework within which to understand how and why actors might attempt to control state institutions to constrain and/or enhance the scope of state activities and the strength of state power to suit or enforce a certain political agenda (Fukuyama 2004: 7).

The relative strength of state institutions is particularly relevant to the Palestinian case because of Israel's reaction to the Second Intifada and the circumstances that continue to confront the governments of Hamas and Fatah after the 2006 election. During the Second Intifada, Israel reoccupied the West Bank, dividing it into small cantons and causing the almost complete destruction of much of the PA's institutional capacity. Then after the 2006 election, Israel's imposition of a political and economic siege on Gaza was intended to cripple the Hamas government's institutional capacity to provide basic services, and law and order. It is for these reasons that the state-building efforts of Hamas analysed in Chapters 4 and 5 concentrate predominantly on capacity building as a way of increasing institutional functionality and legitimacy, and by extension to increase the political authority of Hamas's government.

This situation becomes germane for Hamas and its political aspirations because within the scope of the state-building process is the inherent question of what type of state is being created. Given the normative aspect of institutional capacity building, and the fact that often state institutions need to be created from a very base level, the process of state-building necessarily involves normative decisions be made concerning the design of the prospective state, how any existing institutions can be incorporated into this prospective state, and importantly, what type of regime will inherit these institutions (Miller 2013: 5). With the almost indispensable involvement of external parties in the state-building process, especially in the Palestinian case, it is impossible to avoid certain political groups and leaders being favoured by these external actors. This in turn influences the process of state design

and the choice of regime type deemed acceptable to inherit these newly constructed and/or rejuvenated state institutions (Call 2008: 9).

According to Hameiri (2010: 4), institutional capacity building is intended to manage the risks associated with weaker states posing a security risk to these external actors. As such, state-building becomes a process whereby these external actors shape political outcomes within the new state, primarily by circumscribing the spectrum of political choices available to domestic leaders. In doing so, these external states seek to regulate the way that the regimes in weaker states govern as the primary way to manage risk. Given the operation of Israel's occupation regime in the OPT, it begs the question: which specific institutions are marked for improvement and which ones are left to whither, or whose institutional capacity remains diminished, or unrealised? And just as importantly, who makes these decisions: Palestinians, Israelis, or third parties?

In the 1994 agreement between the GoI and the PLO that established the PA, the scope of state activities and strength of state power that the PA was accorded were specifically delineated (UNISPAL 1994). According to the agreement, the PA would assume responsibility for education, culture, health, social welfare, and tourism. However, the transfer of power and responsibility did not include the area of foreign relations. Additionally, the agreement noted that the PA's jurisdiction did not extend to Jerusalem, the settlements, military locations, and Israelis (UNISPAL 1994, Article 3). Khan (2004a: 5–6) argues the agreement created a client state in the OPT. This 'state' lacked any control over borders and did not possess contiguous territory. It also lacked an adequate fiscal base and was dependent on tax revenue collected by the GoI on behalf of Palestinians. The PA also remained part of a customs union with Israel, meaning that its trading relations with the international community remained highly dependent upon Israel. Therefore, the PA's economic survival and the ability of Palestinians to move and trade domestically and internationally were entirely dependent upon Israel (Khan 2004b: 13).

This then allowed the GoI to regulate exactly what PA institutions were strengthened and to what degree, and which were left to whither or remain dormant and under-developed. This meant that the PA became an administrative institution with the scope of its state activities and the strength of its state power circumscribed by Israel. The scope and strength of the PA's institutional capacity became even more limited and regulated after the 2006 elections with Israel's strident opposition to Hamas's participation in government and the 2007 schism. The circumscription of the PA's institutional capacity influenced Hamas's decision to enter politics and seek to transform the normative role of the PA from being an administrative institution into a state-building institution.

With Israel's occupation circumscribing such key aspects of the PA's institutional capacity, questions surrounding the extent of the PA's sovereignty and legitimacy in the OPT become germane. Understanding the struggle to obtain and retain sovereignty and legitimacy can assist in conceptualising and analysing Palestinian state-building efforts and how they can influence the shifts in the political behaviour of Hamas and its utilisation of a DRS.

Sovereignty

Given the fact that the scope of the PA's state activities and the strength of its state power have been so constrained, and that the Palestinians and Israelis are both claiming the same piece of land, the concept of sovereignty in its various forms needs to be unpacked. This is so that its various characteristics and their associated norms can be understood in relation to state-building efforts in the OPT. Additionally, the complexities associated with Israel's occupation regime and its siege on Gaza mean that notions such as sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political autonomy in the OPT are far from absolute (Heller & Sofaer 2001: 24).

According to Jackson (1999: 432), sovereignty is a constitutional arrangement of political life that is not natural, immutable, or inevitable. Indeed, Zaum (2007: 3) argues that sovereignty cannot be considered as a single norm but a collection of norms associated with territory, population, autonomy, authority, control, and recognition. Krasner (1999: 3) argues that the term 'sovereignty' can be used in four different ways: international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, domestic sovereignty, and interdependence sovereignty. International legal sovereignty refers to the practices associated with the mutual recognition of states. Westphalian sovereignty denotes political organisation based on the exclusion of external actors from authority structures within a given territory. Domestic sovereignty refers to the formal organisation of political authority within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the borders of their own polity. Finally, interdependence sovereignty refers to the ability of public authorities to regulate the flow of information, ideas, goods, people, or capital across the borders of their state (Krasner 1999: 3–4). Importantly, these categories are not binary and exist on a continuum, meaning that at various times a state's international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, domestic sovereignty, and interdependence sovereignty can wax and wane depending upon a variety of internal and external factors.

Additionally, a state does not have to possess all four forms of sovereignty simultaneously. For example, a failed or weak state, such as Somalia or Afghanistan, may possess international legal sovereignty – and even Westphalian sovereignty – while the extent of their domestic sovereignty is very limited.[1] That is Somalia and Afghanistan are recognised by other states as states in the international system, and have seats at the UN. Likewise, other states respect the non-intervention norm and the right of the Somali and Afghan governments to exclude external actors from their decision-making processes. However, because of their weakened institutional capacity the Somali and Afghan governments are deemed incapable of exercising sufficient political authority and control, and they struggle to monopolise the legitimate use of force within the borders of their respective states, meaning that their domestic sovereignty is compromised.[2] Conversely, a government may possess domestic sovereignty within a given territory without possessing international legal sovereignty, for example Taiwan. That is the Taiwanese government possesses the requisite level of political authority to monopolise the legitimate use of force within its territory and provide

sufficient basic services to its citizens. However, for geopolitical reasons, Taiwan has not been accorded international legal sovereignty in that the international community does not recognise it as a state.

Such distinctions can also be used to explain the complicated and contested nature of sovereignty in the OPT. Given the operationalisation of Israel's occupation regime in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, it can be argued that Fatah's government possesses very limited domestic sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, and interdependence sovereignty. However, it could be argued that Fatah's government may possess a degree of international legal sovereignty given the status accorded by the UN to the PLO as a non-member observer state and the fact that Abbas is both the president of the PA and the chairman of the PLO. This status provides the PLO, and by extension Fatah's government, with similar rights to member states in that it can apply for entry into numerous UN institutions and participate in General Assembly debates (Kattan 2014: 63). This then influences Fatah's capacity to operate in the international system and accords it with a degree of international legitimacy and recognition.

The case of Hamas's government in Gaza is quite different. Clearly, it has not been granted international legal sovereignty. However, its Westphalian sovereignty in Gaza is arguably greater that Fatah's government in the West Bank. Additionally, as will be established in later chapters, Hamas has also achieved a degree of domestic sovereignty in Gaza that is in many cases comparable to that of Fatah's. While the Westphalian and domestic sovereignty of Hamas's government are being challenged by Fatah and Israel through the imposition of the siege and the three wars Israel has fought with Hamas, it does provide insight into the objectives of the Hamas government and some of the reasons for the legitimacy it has been accorded by Palestinians.

A core issue within the debate about Hamas's situation in Gaza is the distinction between authority and control, with Krasner defining authority as involving a mutually recognised right for an actor to engage in specific kinds of activities. Control has similar conceptual boundaries as authority, though as Krasner notes, the key difference between the two is that control can simply be achieved through brute force (Krasner 1999: 10). Accordingly, international legal and Westphalian sovereignty deal almost entirely with issues of authority, whether 'the state' is recognised by other states as being able to operate in the international system and whether that state has the recognised right to exclude external actors. Within the concept of domestic sovereignty, there are elements of both authority and control that have to do with the scope of state activities and the strength of state power (Krasner 1999: 10).

Therefore, who possesses political authority within a territory can become a defining issue in regions, like the OPT, where these various facets of sovereignty are contested. In the three waves of state creation in the twentieth century – after the First and Second World Wars and after the breakup of the Soviet Union – the international community did not consider the democratic and governance credentials of any newly created states a priority in their granting of international legal sovereignty. If the international community granted international legal sovereignty,

they acknowledged simultaneously the state's Westphalian and domestic sovereignty (Mayall 1999: 474). This process was known as negative sovereignty (Zaum 2007: 3). If any newly acknowledged state subsequently lacked the institutional capacity to effectively administer its territory – that is to achieve domestic sovereignty – then the international community would provide aid to either rectify or mitigate the situation (Mayall 1999: 476–478).

Nevertheless, the granting of international legal sovereignty in this period was distinctly arbitrary. Fabry notes that given the international community's aversion to colonialism after the Second World War, the granting of international legal sovereignty was restricted to those people in colonial territories whose attempts at independence were thwarted, violated, or left unrealised. While this created a group of people the international community deemed eligible for independence and the granting of international legal sovereignty, it also created a group of people that were deemed ineligible for international recognition of their self-determination efforts (Fabry 2011: 257–258). Consequently, if the international community recognised a nation's struggle for self-determination as being anti-colonial, then it received the community's approval and the conference of international legal sovereignty. However, if the international community classified a nation's struggle for self-determination as being an insurgency or involving a national liberation movement, then their claims for self-determination were refused and international legal sovereignty was withheld (Fabry 2011: 251).

One of the key determinants as to whether a people were eligible or ineligible for recognition became whether they were identified as a distinct nation. One of the central conditions of the resulting debate over what constituted 'a nation' concerned the identity and origins of the people seeking self-determination (Mayall 1999: 477–478). Given that it took until 1993 for the GoI and the international community to officially recognise the existence of the Palestinian nation, it made the process of Palestinian nation-building a central issue in its quest for self-determination and therefore subject to contestation. This meant that Palestinian statehood efforts between the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 were largely thwarted because the Palestinians did not possess a distinct national identity.

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the surge of self-determination struggles that ensued spurred on the debate about the limits of sovereignty and what this meant for international norms concerning self-determination efforts (Mayall 1999: 474). As a way of justifying the international community's continued rejection of certain self-determination efforts there developed a fresh norm known as positive sovereignty. Under these new conditions, a prospective national group would have to demonstrate that it had achieved domestic sovereignty over a territory, meaning that it possessed the capacity to declare, implement, and enforce public policy. Only once the national group could satisfy the international community of this would the conference of international legal sovereignty be considered (Zaum 2007: 35).

These altered criteria have several ramifications for Palestinian state-building efforts. First, to be accorded international legal sovereignty Palestinians would

have to demonstrate their domestic sovereignty by convincing the international community that they have the capacity to govern the OPT effectively. As described in Chapter 3 and elsewhere in the study, the effects of Israel's occupation regime on the West Bank and East Jerusalem and Israel's siege of Gaza makes these efforts highly problematic. As this study attempts to demonstrate, understanding the various facets of sovereignty explains why the issues of institutional capacity building, governance, the provision of law and order, and power-sharing between Hamas and Fatah in a unity government have become key areas of contestation, not just between Hamas and Fatah but between the GoI and the Fatah and Hamas governments. It also provides a framework to understand the causal nexus behind various shifts in Hamas's political behaviour.

State legitimacy, nation-building, and state design

Fostering the legitimacy of the state-building process can also be a problematic issue because embedded within this process is the concomitant effort to build or rebuild the legitimacy of 'the state' among the polity. A state's claim to legitimacy has a cultural and historical context that must be framed to appeal to indigenous concepts and ideals (Miller 2013: 89). Papagianni (2008: 49) notes that states are considered legitimate when key political elites and the public accept the rules regulating the exercise of power and the distribution of wealth as proper and binding. This makes the complex matter of nation-building a facet of achieving the legitimacy of the overall state-building process. Von Einsiedel (2005: 28) defines nation-building as 'building a common identity of a society within a state thereby strengthening its fabric.' Consequently, possessing domestic sovereignty, with its attendant institutional capacity-building aspects, becomes a key factor in how and why Hamas uses its DRS to legitimise and promote both its state-building and nation-building efforts.

From a normative perspective, any Palestinian state represents the embodiment and existence of a unified Palestinian political community (Papagianni 2008: 53). For the idea of the 'Palestinian nation' to endure and prosper, Palestinians must believe in their ability to exist as a separate national entity and that there be no viable alternative that would be vastly superior (OECD 2010: 7). Because of *al-naqbah*, the 1967 war, the geographically dispersed Palestinian Diaspora, and the operationalisation of Israel's occupation regime, the process of Palestinian nation-building has proved especially challenging. Not only did *al-naqbah* decimate Palestinian society, it also fragmented every social stratum that had yet to recover from the tribulations of British colonial rule. With the traditional Palestinian societal elite discredited by their close links to British rule and Zionist immigration, and a nascent middle class scattered throughout the Diaspora and the territories, the Palestinian nation was left leaderless and directionless, especially in the OPT (Sayigh 2011: 35).

Additionally, neighbouring Arab states displayed an ambivalence, if not an outright opposition, to Palestinian statehood ambitions, with the 'Palestinian Question' providing a convenient cause célèbre for successive Arab regimes. Given the

almost complete societal capitulation by Palestinians, there began an increasingly entrenched feeling among the Arab community that Palestinians were unpatriotic and cowardly, and had abrogated their responsibility to stay and fight while simultaneously expecting others to fight for them (Karsh 2010: 230). The unfortunate by-product of this situation was that it robbed any emerging Palestinian social and political elite of any territorial and institutional basis for the exercise of the social control of the Palestinian nation (Sayigh 2011: 35). So complete was this loss of national identity and what it meant to be Palestinian that within five years of *al-naqbah*, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir could state with some accuracy and conviction that the Palestinian people simply did not exist (Khalidi 2007: 164).

It took until the mid-1960s for Palestinians to revive the social networks, value systems, and cultural symbols necessary to re-establish a sense of societal cohesiveness (Sayigh 2011: 665–667). It was the attainment of an increasingly cohesive society that facilitated conspicuously Palestinian movements, such as Fatah, to begin to assert themselves and challenge for the leadership of Palestinian resistance, which until then had been largely controlled by external agents. Even then, Palestinian societal cohesion was subject to regular irredentist-styled assaults as neighbouring Arab states, particularly Jordan, continued to subvert Palestinian political activities and nation-building efforts in the territories to absorb the population into their own polities.[3]

Even though the Oslo Accords formally recognised the existence of a distinct Palestinian nation, the ability of the Palestinians to present a sense of societal cohesion remains problematic because it is challenged daily by Israel's occupation regime. As discussed later in Chapter 3, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are subject to a continuing process of ghettoisation as Israel's occupation regime partitions these territories into smaller parcels of land, making it easier to control, regulate, and even inhibit the functioning of Palestinian society. Furthermore, the expansion of settlements surrounding East Jerusalem has resulted in its geographical connection with the West Bank becoming tenuous. Any excision of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank would not only cast into doubt the future of any Palestinian state, but it would also rob the Palestinian nation of a defining feature of its cultural identity.

Similar societal conditions exist in Gaza. Beginning with the Israeli withdrawal in 2005 and then with Hamas assuming unilateral control in 2007, Gaza's population has become segregated from Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This is not just an issue of geographical separation but a process of political and societal isolation. It poses a fundamental problem for achieving a sense of Palestinian national cohesion and sense of identity. As discussed in Chapter 3, Israel treats the Palestinians in Gaza differently in policy and narrative terms from Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Its policies are more draconian, attempting to excise Gaza and its Hamas government from Palestinian political system and by extension to inhibit Palestinians from realising any sense of national and political cohesion.

This situation presents significant challenges for both Hamas and Fatah. As the Palestinians' two main political, social, and ideological representatives, not only

are they charged by Palestinians with laying the foundations for a Palestinian state, but they have also assumed the role of maintaining a sense of an independent and cohesive Palestinian national identity. As will be established throughout this study, the maintenance of a unified Palestinian political community is being increasingly questioned and threatened. This casts into doubt the viability of any future sovereign Palestinian state because the perception of national cohesion can provide the foundation upon which to rebuild the weak institutions of the state (Papagianni 2008: 54). As Chapter 7 explicates, the symbolism of Hamas and Fatah entering into an agreement to form a consensus government is not just about the ability of the factions to share power. For Palestinians the agreements are symbolic of Palestinian national political cohesion, as the two ideological adversaries advocating conflicting paths to Palestinian statehood purportedly come together to present a unified Palestinian voice.

For the state-building process itself to be perceived as legitimate, Papagianni (2008: 50) argues that four conditions need to be met in whole, or in part. First, the state needs to be able to deliver basic public services and maintain public order. Second, a political process needs to exist that creates space for debate and dialogue between the powerful elites and is inclusive of all major political forces. Third, the public needs to be given a role in the state-building process. Finally, there is the need to achieve both internal and external state legitimacy.

In the Palestinian case, the notion of legitimacy has two additional facets: the legitimacy of the Peace Process negotiations concerning the advent of a Palestinian state and the legitimacy of the various institutions of the PA established to administer Palestinians. Despite these facets occasionally being considered separately, they are inextricably interlinked, making the issue of the legitimacy of the Palestinian state-building process and of the idea of sovereign Palestine more problematic and contestable (Brynen 2008: 237).

Overall, these conditions mirror the core tenets of domestic sovereignty. This makes its achievement not only central to the granting of international legal sovereignty but also a key aspect of having the state-building process considered legitimate by Palestinians. People equate the legitimacy of state institutions with their capacity to function effectively, especially with respect to guaranteeing public safety through effective law and order regimes, and promoting economic development (Papagianni 2008: 51). These indicators of legitimacy can be traced back to Weber's conceptualisation of the state with its emphasis on the monopolisation of the legitimate use of force. This makes Hamas's efforts to reform, bureaucratise, and professionalise the various state institutions in Gaza analysed in Chapter 5 germane to attaining domestic sovereignty in Gaza, and in doing so legitimising Hamas's political authority.

Perhaps the dominant way of legitimising domestic sovereignty, especially given its focus on institutional capacity building, has been the promotion of democracy. As Bowen notes, democracy without effective and autonomous state institutions can lead to instability and misrule, while state-building without the institutional constraints of democracy can lead to violence and authoritarianism (Bowen 2015: 86). This means that not only do state institutions need to work

together effectively in an administrative sense but they should also be perceived by the public as being legitimate (Fukuyama 2004: 26).

In the post-Cold War period, the processes of state-building and democracy promotion have become symbiotic. This reflects the evolving understanding of the function of 'the state' in the state-building process. As Menocal (2011: 1719) notes, the focus of state-building efforts has changed from a relatively narrow focus on institutional capacity building to one that recognises that the state cannot be treated in isolation, and that state-society relations are central to the state-building process. Consequently, the process of state-building now involves the establishment of an effective political process whereby the polity and the state can negotiate mutual demands, obligations, and expectations. Nevertheless, the efficacy of the promotion of democracy is often a hotly contested issue and is seen by some as the hallmark of an interventionist foreign policy regime. However, Miller notes that every claim for self-determination in the post-Cold War period has included the demand for some form of democracy as the basis of political reconstruction (Miller 2013: 89).

The same is true in the Palestinian case. The 2003 Roadmap introduced by the Quartet was a plan focused on institutional capacity building and democratisation as the necessary precursors for Palestinian statehood. The 2005 Cairo Accord and 2007 Mecca Agreement were both signed under the auspice of this framework. They committed all Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Fatah, to transitioning away from the semi-authoritarian one-party rule of Fatah to a political system grounded on the democratic ideals of free and fair elections, separation of powers, political plurality, and power-sharing. Nevertheless, the international community's reaction to Hamas's 2006 election victory meant that the promotion of democracy in the OPT became a moot point.

Unpacking the inclusion-moderation framework

The second half of the book's analytical framework consists of an analysis of the relevant IM literature. This will provide an understanding of the scope and limits of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour, as it operationalised its political resistance efforts by participating in the Palestinian political system. The IM framework is premised on the logic that allowing non-state political actors to participate in competitive political processes such as democratic elections, civil society, legal protest, and demonstrations can moderate their political behaviour (Schwedler 2013: 1350006-4). However, the nexus between inclusion and moderation involves a complex set of theoretical and empirical processes that raise as many questions as they answer. As Schwedler (2013: 1350006-16) explains,

> there is no single logic to the inclusion-moderation hypothesis; indeed, unpacking its many dimensions suggests that it is less a single hypothesis than a series of propositions about the relationship between institutional constraints, the structures of the field of political contestation, and the normative commitments of individual and group actors.

One of the fundamental and contested questions within the IM paradigm is defining what moderation means. Wickham (2013: 5–6) makes the point that 'moderation' suffers from a high degree of imprecision and opacity because it can connote either an end-state or a process. This in turn generates the question, 'Moderate compared to what?' Adding further complexity is the reality that moderation can simultaneously refer to changes in behaviour at the individual and organisational level. Schwedler (2007: 59) defines moderation as 'a process of change that might be described as movement along a continuum from radical to moderate, whereby a move away from more exclusionary practices equates to an increase in moderation.' Wegner and Pellicer (2009: 158) define moderation as 'an increasing flexibility towards core [Islamic] ideological beliefs.' Similarly, Clark (2006: 541) notes that moderation expresses itself 'in terms of Islamists' greater acceptance and understanding of democracy, political liberties, and the rights of women and minorities.'

The term 'moderation' is used to describe the shifts in political behaviour of an increasingly wide range of Islamist movements. This has resulted in a disparate collection of Islamist groups including Turkey's AKP, Tunisia's *Ennahda*, Malaysia's PAS, Indonesia's PAN, Egypt's MB, and Yemen's *Islah* Party all ostensibly undertaking a process of moderation. While there are some similarities between these movements and the various behavioural shifts they have undergone, there are enough differences to make simplistic conflations theoretically and empirically problematic. The danger is that the inconsistent and poorly defined use of the term 'moderation' can result in a degree of conceptual stretching that reduces nuance in favour of broader applicability (Karakaya & Yildirim 2013: 1323).

Brown attempts to address these issues of definitional imprecision and conceptual stretching by providing an expansive understanding of the IM process. Brown (2012: 33) argues that moderation occurs when

> over time, given a political process that offers substantial rewards for participation and substantial risks for other strategies, movements on the edge of a system will indeed become politicized and orient themselves towards securing their goals through peaceful and legal political activity.

Nevertheless, he cautions that researchers need to move away from general statements and definitions concerning IM, focusing instead on the qualifications and nuances regarding time, rewards, risks, and politicisation (Brown 2012: 33).

In this study, the concept of moderation is treated as a process and not an end state. It is tied to the shifting ideals of individual rights and the democratic principles of tolerance, pluralism, and cooperation (Schwedler 2011: 352). Equally, moderation cannot be considered as a static or linear concept leading inexorably to the wholesale democratisation of Hamas and/or the Palestinian political system. As will be demonstrated, Hamas is not a unitary actor, with various internal constituencies often adopting more moderate positions in some policy areas and more radical and/or militant positions in others. This means that the moderation process cannot be considered as irreversible and there remains the possibility – and perhaps

even the inevitability – of organisational backsliding that is contextual and temporal (Broker & Kunkler 2013: 177). This trajectory is consistent with Jaffrelot's examination of Hindu nationalist parties in India that found they constantly oscillated between a radical ethno-religious strategy and phases of apparent moderation. Jaffrelot (2013: 888) observed that this episodic moderation coincided with the necessities of the political environment rather than being indicative of the internalisation of democratic principles.

Given the complexity and nuance surrounding the term 'moderation,' there is a need to separate the differing processes of change undertaken by Islamist movements, like Hamas, participating in politics. As such, the moderation process exists at two analytical levels: behavioural or tactical moderation, and ideological or strategic moderation. A key difference between the two is that the former involves empirical changes in behaviour while the latter involves normative changes. Karakaya and Yildirim (2013: 1328) define tactical moderation as occurring when 'anti-system parties strategically decide to embrace electoral democracy to realise their ideological goal of a different political, economic, and social system while renouncing the use of extreme/radical tactics.' Tezcür (2010b: 10–11) defines behavioural moderation as 'concern[ing] the adaption of electoral, conciliatory, and non-confrontational strategies that seek compromise and peaceful settlement of disputes at the expense of non-electoral provocative and confrontational strategies that are not necessarily violent but may entail contentious actions.'

Karakaya and Yildirim (2013: 1328) define ideological moderation as involving 'a major transformation of the central tenets of party ideology. For Islamist parties, it involves embracing pluralist democracy, the free market, and Muslim values. Electoral dynamics underlie ideological moderation.' Wickham (2004: 206) provides a similar understanding of ideological moderation, defining it as

> the abandonment, postponement, or revision of radical goals that enables an opposition movement to accommodate itself to the give and take of 'normal' competitive politics. It entails a shift towards a substantive commitment to democratic principles, including the peaceful alternation of power, ideological, and political pluralism, and citizenship rights.

Broker and Kunkler (2013: 177–178) suggest that opposition Islamist movements can undergo a type of de facto moderation that is evidenced through the policies they support and the coalitions they form, even though these actions may be contrary to the movement's Manifesto. Consequently, a movement may enter a coalition with previously derided secular parties, and/or they may demonstrate an increased tolerance of specific policy positions to signal their progressive moderation surreptitiously. This can be indicative of the leadership's tactical and/or ideological moderation in situations where they must remain cautious of displaying any overt signs of moderation, lest they lose the support of their core constituents.

There have been several influential studies into the efficacy and operationalisation of the IM framework using various Islamist movements as case studies that

have expanded the empirical and theoretical boundaries of knowledge. These studies demonstrate the multitude of interweaving factors that drive and constrain the moderation process. Therefore, they provide key causal indicators that go towards explaining the scope and limits of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. They also illustrate how problematic it is to provide a generalisable conceptual framework that adequately accounts for a movement's behavioural and/or ideological moderation.

Schwedler's comparison of Jordan's IAF and Yemen's *Islah* Party has some particularly relevant findings in terms of assessing the causes of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour, specifically concerning the centrality of coalition building and ideological justification (Schwedler 2006: 24). Her seminal study concluded that the IAF's worldview had become more moderate, pluralistic, and tolerant of differing perspectives because of its leadership's ability to justify its reformist actions within the terms of the movement's existing ideological and Islamic tenets (Schwedler 2006: 192). Schwedler demonstrated that the IAF had altered its worldview because its ideological boundaries had been gradually redrawn to include, or at least tolerate, a wider diversity of actors, practices, and narratives (Schwedler 2006: 192). Alternatively, *Islah* had not changed its worldview appreciably enough to have undergone any measurable ideological moderation. Schwedler noted that IAF's progressive moderation was in part because it operated in a monarchical system. This enabled the IAF to undertake a broader range of pluralist styled actions, particularly forming political alliances, which did not directly challenge the monarchy's hegemony.[4] However, *Islah*, which operated in an electoral presidential system, had to be far more circumspect with their political activities and who they formed alliances with, lest this was seen to amount to too much of a threat to the regime's continued viability (Schwedler 2006: 194–195).

Wickham's (2004) examination of Egypt's *Wasat* draws attention to the role that a group's leadership can have on the moderation process. She argues that *Wasat*'s ideological moderation was driven by a combination of political learning and strategic calculation on the part of its leadership. Like Schwedler, Wickham (2004: 207) concluded that *Wasat*'s ideological moderation was assisted by the formation of alliances with other political parties and the party's willingness to take advantage of the limited institutional openings and incentives provided by Egypt's regime. Importantly, Wickham noted that electoral participation alone did not necessarily translate into the movement's ideological moderation. For Wickham, ideological moderation is driven by the political learning of *Wasat*'s leadership that led to a transformation in its core values and beliefs. As a result, *Wasat*'s leadership ceased looking inwards and began engaging in sustained dialogue and cooperation with other groups to achieve organisational objectives. Importantly, Wickham (2004: 225) observed that despite *Wasat*'s leaders not having previously accorded a high priority to democracy, they gradually adopted a democratic agenda to assume the moral high ground vis-à-vis the authoritarian Egyptian regime.

Browers (2009) also highlighted the ability of Islamists to negotiate with other groups as a key signifier of a shift in political behaviour. Her analysis examined

intellectuals from the *Kifaya* (Enough) Movement in Egypt and the JMP in Yemen. She asserts that the focus on structures rather than agents that defined previous IM studies overlooks both the impetus and the outcome of cross-ideological interactions (Browers 2009: 9). For Browers, the process of moderation is strongly generated by central intellectual figures of the *wasatiyya*, or moderate trend, from disparate ideological movements, who construct largely oppositional frameworks to focus their attention on areas of concern while avoiding areas of ideological contestation. These points of concern highlight areas of ideological commonality and foster cross-ideological interactions that have produced a rhetoric that Browers (2009: 10–11) contends is traditionally associated with liberalism and based on the notions of democracy and human rights. The result of these interactions contributes to these disparate Islamist and non-Islamist movements adopting more accommodationist approaches to potential rivals and the formation of strategic alliances (Browers 2009: 176).

While Browers (2009: 177) acknowledges that the sustainability of these alliances remains uncertain, there are several important lessons to be gleaned from her analysis with respect to the causal factors concerning shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. First, there was a transformation in the thinking and strategy of both movements. Second, the coordination indicates the changing character of Islamist opposition within Egyptian and Yemeni networks that crossed not only ideology but also generations. Finally, there was the emergence of a new political generation formed through a common experience in dialogue and defiance of authoritarian state regimes. Notably, Browers (2009: 179) concludes by noting that 'moderation . . . requires intellectuals who are free to interact and develop alternative frameworks for politics and society.'

The Paradox of Democracy and the role of institutions in the moderation process

Once Hamas made the commitment to participate in elections, it also had to broaden its policy appeal to encompass the range of popular political opinions expressed by Palestinian society (Markovits 2012: 9). Hamas recognised that if it wanted to expand its support base, then it needed to maximise its voter appeal and acknowledge that its previous strategy of unilateral armed resistance had lost its allure to an increasing number of Palestinians (Tezcür 2010a: 71). This strategic evolution can create problems not just for Hamas's leadership but also for its members. Prior to 2006 Hamas's electoral appeal, ideology, and core tenets revolved exclusively around the rhetoric of opposition, with its use of armed resistance playing a key role (Tibi 2012: 5). However, once the leadership made the decision to participate in electoral politics, a fundamental shift in the focus, meaning, and intent of Hamas's political rhetoric was necessary to justify this major shift to its membership, core constituents, and the electorate.

Panebianco (1988: 10) makes the point that all political movements consist of two broad categories of members: believers who are inspired by collective interests and focus on solidarity, self-identification, and ideological achievement; and

careerists who are motivated by status, power, and material inducements. This division poses a potential problem for any movement like Hamas that had, at least initially, a quite narrow support base. Once the decision is made to participate in electoral politics, a movement's leadership must make crucial decisions concerning which policy positions are promoted and which are placed in abeyance, and whether to dilute or modulate policies that may be articles of faith (Schwedler 2011: 359). Consequently, a movement's leadership undertakes a delicate policy balancing act to retain traditional followers, presumably supportive of existing policy stances, while simultaneously seeking new adherents swayed by fresh policy alternatives couched in more restrained terms. As Sánchez-Cuenca (2004: 326) states, 'Moderation generates a trade-off between gains in policy and losses in ideological principles.'

One of the factors in determining the likelihood of a movement to moderate its policy positions is the ideological distance between it and the median voter on the policies in question (Sánchez-Cuenca 2004: 326). If this distance is relatively small then the chances of a movement making ideological compromises might be relatively good, given that any compromises are likely to be relatively minor and presumably more convincing given the relatively small distance. Importantly, as this process is conducted on a policy-by-policy basis there does not have to be wholesale change to all a movement's policies. Essentially, the policy moderation conundrum means the leadership undertakes a cost/benefit exercise as they attempt to find the least costly route to achieving political objectives while maintaining as many of the movement's ideological precepts as possible (Sánchez-Cuenca 2004: 330).

The result of these exercises is that a movement's behavioural and ideological moderation are almost never comprehensive. There will be issues and policies where a movement will be willing to negotiate and concede, and equally there will be articles of faith that it will never agree to compromise or negotiate (Ashour 2009: 6–7). By focusing not just on any shifts in Hamas's policies but also on any adjustments to how it implements and promotes those policies, a greater appreciation of the causal factors influencing the limit and scope of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour can be achieved. This then can be used in any assessment of Hamas's possible behavioural and/or ideological moderation.

However, there is a danger of Islamist movements like Hamas evincing commitments to democratic ideals while in opposition and then once in power reconfiguring the political system to make it undemocratic (Schwedler 2013: 1350006-4). This possibility is referred to as the 'Paradox of Democracy' and explains why studies employing the IM hypothesis tend to focus on a group's ideological moderation. Despite the examples of Iran in 1979, Sudan in 1989, and Algeria in 1992, which have generated the perception that Islamist political participation must be viewed with caution, Schwedler (1998: 25–26) contends that there are no cases of Islamist movements assuming power via elections only to reveal their undemocratic nature.

Schwedler (2013: 1350006-5) argues that the Paradox of Democracy can be mitigated by the presence of robust state institutions. Political institutions can be

formal and informal and are based on a set of rules, norms, or standard operating procedures that are widely recognised and accepted, structuring and constraining a movement's actions in a specific arena (Knight 1992: 1). Institutions can place limitations on movements like Hamas, meaning that even if they do come to power there is sufficient institutional power and constitutional restraints to restrict any authoritarian proclivities they might have, thus preserving the existing nature of the system (Schwedler 2006: 20). Consequently, institutions shape, or attempt to shape, the scope of a movement's tactical moderation by creating, administering, and controlling its access to political space (Schwedler 2006: 12, 14). This significantly limits the ability of the movement to participate in the political system without instituting substantive internal reforms that would preclude it from actively challenging the existing political status quo (Schwedler 2013: 1350006-5). The institutional dictates of the democratic process, the pressure of appealing to voter sentiments, and the desire and need for coalition bargaining act together to constrain a movement's less than democratic policies and inclinations (Ruparelia 2006: 318).

Brown contends that the same institutional and/or regime constraints exist in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes, where despite their democratic rhetoric they have no genuine desire to relinquish power through effective electoral competition (Brown 2012: 20). State institutions by their very nature are potential sources of power, especially in these authoritarian and semi-authoritarian political systems. It is important for the ruling elite's long-term survival to either co-opt state institutions or render them powerless, particularly if they could hinder the elite's monopolisation of power and influence (Orvis 2006: 107).

In addition to external state institutions providing policy boundaries within which opposition political movements operate, Buehler (2013: 211) raises the equally valid point that internal party structures or institutions can also influence a movement's shift in political behaviour at both the national and local levels. He makes the point that at the national level, state institutional incentives are relatively high, so there is a greater chance of institutional constraints affecting the movement's moderation. However, at the local or sub-national level these same institutional influences are less pronounced, and anecdotally there is less incentive for the movement to employ moderated policies at the sub-national level. Buehler (2013: 12–14) argues that often opposition movements with a strictly hierarchical power structure, such as Hamas, are better able to implement successful policy changes at all levels. Individual cadres at the sub-national level must conform and adhere to the dictates of the national leadership which enforces strict compliance through its internal institutional structures and design.

As noted earlier, within the Palestinian context, the role of institutions is particularly important. Given Fatah's political hegemony in the OPT, these institutions – particularly the judiciary, Legislative Council, and bureaucracy – have become organs of Fatah with no genuine institutional independence, and certainly no ability to constrict and regulate Fatah's political operations. Indeed, Gunning notes that the creation of the PA fundamentally altered the balance of power in the OPT

between the quasi-state apparatus and Palestinian civil society, as it provided Fatah the veneer of legitimacy and institutional strength that Hamas simply could not match (Gunning 2009: 43–44). Given the central role that institutions play in the state-building process and in the moderation process, Hamas's institutional reformation and capacity-building agenda forms the analytical locus to understanding the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour.

Notes

1 The OECD defines a fragile state as having a 'weak capacity to carry out basic functions of governing a population and its territory and lacking the ability to develop mutually constructive and reinforcing relationships with society.' See OECD INCAF Report (2010), cited in Podder (2012: 7).
2 For a description of the situation in Afghanistan, see Mazarr (2014). For a description of the situation in Somalia, see Williams (2014).
3 In April 1950, Jordan annexed the West Bank, incorporating Palestinians into the Jordanian social, economic, and political environment; Palestinians were issued Jordanian passports. It was only in July 1988 that King Hussein finally announced the severance of financial and administrative ties between Jordan and the West Bank (Sayigh 2011: 16, 621–622). Additionally, many Zionists have consistently advocated a plan whereby Palestinians evacuate the West Bank and relocate to Jordan, claiming that the two nations have far more in common than Palestinians and Israelis (Susser 2012).
4 Clark (2006: 555–556) challenges this assertion concluding in her study that the IAF only cooperated with other parties on matters that had no bearing on *shari'ah*.

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2 Hamas

Balancing pragmatism, principles, and purpose

Introduction

Like many Islamist movements, Hamas can be somewhat enigmatic, making it difficult to categorise. It was launched at the beginning of the First Intifada (1987–1991) to simultaneously resist Israeli occupation and Fatah's hegemony of the efforts to establish an independent Palestinian state (Abu-Amr 1993: 5–6). Hamas is an offshoot of the PMB and acts as an ideological bridge between Palestinian nationalism and Islamism. Hamas does not see these two ideological strains as being mutually exclusive, as success in one area is thought to hasten the realisation of the other (Mishal & Sela 2006: 42). As Hroub (2010b: 30) explains,

> Hamas considers that its power is to be found in this link, the strengthened alloy of these two separate strands of Palestinian political activism: the national secular liberation movement that has confronted Israel, *and* the Islamist religious movement that largely has not.

This ideological combination works to Hamas's advantage as it forges together Palestinian nationalists who have a strong attachment with Islam and others with deep religious convictions who yearn for a sovereign Palestinian state (Hroub 2010b: 30).

It is the addition of national liberationism to its ideological framework that sets Hamas apart, not just from other Islamist movements but also from other Brotherhood-styled movements. The urgency of Hamas's national liberation goals strongly shapes its ideological and political orientation, contributing to this separation. As Brown (2012: 198) notes, 'In a few years, Hamas has traversed the ideological distance that its sister movements could barely cross in a generation.' As such, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict strongly defines Hamas, influencing both its decision-making processes and ideological maturation.

To provide the necessary framework to judge any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour, it is necessary to explore various facets of Hamas's ideological development and maturation. As such, this chapter is divided into several sections. The first section provides a brief history of the MB and its presence in Palestine/OPT. While this is relatively well known, understanding Hamas's antecedence provides

an insight into the movement's ethos and internal dynamics, particularly its decision-making processes and how, with its national liberationist discourse, Hamas's narrative engenders enduring support among an increasingly sceptical Palestinian polity.

The second section outlines Hamas's internal structure and worldview. This provides an appreciation of its relative strengths and weaknesses as a movement and as a government. Delving deeper into Hamas, the third section examines its ideological construction and development. Here the importance of the combination of national liberationism and Islamism in Hamas's ideological narrative will become clearer. To provide further conceptual depth, the final section consists of a brief analysis of three influential persons who have played a part in the development of Hamas's ideological narrative: Sheiykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Sayyid Qutb, and Sheiykh Ahmed Yassin.

The Muslim Brotherhood – a background

The MB is an enormously successful Islamist movement whose philosophy has proved so influential throughout the Muslim world that it has been described as the flagship organisation of Sunni revivalist Islam (Wickham 2013: 20). The MB and its affiliated movements have come to play key political and social roles in the Arab world, at various times enjoying parliamentary representation in Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen. This makes it one of the most powerful and active political movements in the region and the larger Muslim world (Hroub 2010b: 6–7).

Hassan al-Banna, a highly educated and deeply pious Egyptian primary school teacher, formed the MB in 1928 (Helbawy 2010: 62–63). Al-Banna condemned the injustices and perniciousness of British colonial rule and wanted to transform Egyptian society into one that replicated the Muslim community established by the Prophet Mohammad. He believed in the establishment of an Islamic state where there would be no distinction between religion and government, and where the Qur'an and the *sunna* would form the basis of all parts of life (Abu-Amr 1993: 6). The MB concentrated on personal development as the precursor for the improvement of society. This provided it with a broad and flexible philosophy that contributed to it possessing a diverse range of organisational expressions from the social, to the political, to the militant (Brown 2012: 62). Al-Banna defined the MB as 'a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organisation, an athletic group, and cultural-educational union, an economic company, and a social idea' (Mitchell 1969: 14).

The MB did not interpret the Qur'an and *sunna* literally, rather they sought to use Islam as a framework to establish a modern and pious Egypt. As such, the Brotherhood's vision of the state and Islam's role in it were very much in line with the views advocated by influential Islamic intellectuals of the time, such as Rashid Rida and Muhibbal-Din al-Khatib, rather than being rooted in the more literalist interpretations of Islam that predominated other Salafist-styled movements. The MB did not oppose Europeans outright, merely the deleterious effects that

European cultural hegemony had wrought on Egyptian society and its ability to re-engage with Egypt's cultural and religious history (Pargeter 2013: 20–21).

The MB was never a particularly ideologically driven movement, nor was al-Banna an influential Islamic intellectual, with the MB's ethos favouring action and organisation over ideology. Indeed, as Strindberg and Wärn (2011: 78) note, 'the MB set itself up as a revolutionary vanguard intent on stimulating mass action through propaganda by the deed.' The movement's predominant political message promoted social reformation over the acquisition of unilateral political power. While the MB encouraged the establishment of a legal system incorporating *shari'ah*, they believed that this could occur only once social reformation was complete, meaning that the impetus for *shari'ah* would come from the people, not the movement. In keeping with its incrementalist orientation, the MB advocated the use of *ijtihad*, or personal reasoning, to allow Muslims to mesh the tenets of Islam and *shari'ah* with the needs of the modern Muslim community (Wickham 2013: 24). Consequently, for the MB, Islam was far more than just the sum of its legislation; it was a system that allowed for individual and collective reformulations and adaptations of its laws to modern life (Roy 2011: 64).

The MB advocated a gradualist approach to social reformation and saw themselves as the custodians of the traditional way of Arab/Muslim life, one where religion plays a central and guiding role, acting simultaneously as a social filter and bulwark so Muslims could comprehend and cope with the vagaries of modern life (Wickham 2013: 22–24). The MB believes that Muslims are held back only because they have distanced themselves from Islam, and that the basis for all reforms lies in a return to the teachings and laws of Islam. In keeping with this, they promote engagement in the social, cultural, religious, political, and military spheres of society (Hroub 2010a: 166). Importantly with respect to Hamas and its core objective of a Palestinian state, the ethos of the MB revolves around the building of a state where Muslims could live their lives according the religious precepts of the Qur'an, free from the religious, social, and cultural constrictions of Enlightenment-inspired European powers. This places it in opposition to Zionism's ethos which, as will be discussed in the next chapter, seeks to establish a state where Jews can live unencumbered by the very same European forces.

The Brotherhood in Palestine

While the MB had always been actively engaged in the 'Palestinian Question', it took until 1945 for it to establish its Palestinian affiliate, the PMB. By 1947, there were 25 branches throughout Palestine with a combined membership of between 12,000 and 20,000 (Jensen 2009: 11). The PMB's popularity stemmed not only from the Palestinian resistance to British occupation but also the equally pressing issue of increased Jewish immigration. The movement's opposition to the latter was not religiously based, with al-Banna arguing that assuaging past European persecution of Jews by inflicting injustices on Palestinians was immoral. During *al-naqbah*, the MB trained and equipped about 10,000 members from its affiliate branches and sent them to fight alongside the Arab armies (Helbawy 2010: 70).

This gained the PMB tremendous support and respect, increasing its membership and influence. Among the plethora of Islamist and Arab nationalist movements evolving in the milieu of the refugee camps, the PMB's narrative proved to be especially popular with its melding of Islam and resistance, its emphasis on *jihad*, and on proclaiming the absolute need for Palestinians to be self-sufficient and responsible for recovering their land (Sayigh 2011: 49).

Divided territories – divided experiences: the PMB in the West Bank and Gaza

The experiences of *al-naqbah*, the 1967 war, and the accompanying exodus of Palestinian refugees shaped and differentiated the lived experiences of Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza and would have a profound effect on Hamas's future organisational and ideological development.

The West Bank and East Jerusalem

Following *al-naqbah*, Jordan took control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. While the PMB worked closely with the Jordanian regime, it initially remained out of politics and concentrated on religious and social work. The PMB in the West Bank comprised mostly merchants, landowners, middle class officials, and professionals (Mishal & Sela 2006: 25). After Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950, the PMB began to participate in Jordanian politics, casting itself as the 'loyal opposition' (Mishal & Sela 2006: 17). However, many Palestinians saw Jordan's King Hussein as pro-US and pro-Israel, causing them to increasingly view the PMB with suspicion (Tamimi 2009: 20). Life in the West Bank under Jordanian control retained the traditional familial and tribal structure, and Western influences were far less intrusive. Therefore, the contrast between life before and after *al-naqbah* was not as profound for Palestinians here as it was elsewhere. Not surprisingly, the sense of Palestinian nationalism and militancy within the West Bank PMB was not as prominent as it became in Gaza (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 37).

The quiescent nature of occupation changed once Israel gained control of the West Bank in 1967. The West Bank (or Judea and Samaria as it is known to Israelis) is of enormous cultural and ideological importance to Zionism's own state-building objectives and narrative. The acquisition of these historic Jewish regions meant that for the first time the state of Israel began to resemble the biblical Eretz-Israel. While Israel initially promoted its occupation as a positive development for Palestinians, in reality it was the beginning of their efforts to progressively create circumstances where the West Bank was for all intents and purposes part of the Israeli state. This resulted in the gradual expropriation of traditional Palestinian social, cultural, political, and economic structures, which in turn contributed to the progressive and deliberate destruction of Palestinian national identity in the West Bank (Heller 1980: 185–187). Successive Israeli governments also sought to deprive West Bankers of their ability to maintain and/or develop

any viable economic independence by implementing policies intended to ensure the territory's economic subservience to the Israeli state. These policies stifled the traditional Palestinian agrarian economy, forcing farmers off their land and into Israel's burgeoning economy to work as labourers (Jamal 2005: 24).

While the PLO opposed Israeli occupation from the Diaspora, the PMB adopted a quiescent strategy. Initially their mantra of preparing the Palestinian population for future battle through reconnecting with Islam was shunned. However, it gained potency as West Bankers became increasingly hostile to Israel's growing social, cultural, and political repression, as well as the PLO's apparent inability to ameliorate their situation and establish a sense of Palestinian nationalism (Abu-Amr 1993: 8).

Gaza

The situation in the Gaza Strip was very different. After *al-naqbah*, the PMB was the largest political movement in the territory and focused its attention primarily on addressing the parlous conditions of the refugees who flooded into the Strip (Gunning 2009: 27). Initially under Egyptian control, the Gaza PMB suffered a similar fate to Egypt's MB, with Nasser's regime persecuting and declaring it illegal (Abu-Amr 1993: 7). However, for many Gazans the benefits of Egyptian rule quickly flowed through, with Gaza City becoming a popular Egyptian holiday destination. This led to the territory's modernisation and westernisation, with numerous beachside restaurants and cinemas opened throughout Gaza City (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 37).

Egyptian repression coupled with ubiquitous Western cultural hegemony resulted in the Gaza PMB becoming insular. This led to the movement incorporating a Palestinian nationalist discourse into its ideological narrative that became more militant, forged around a craving not just to liberate Mandatory Palestine from Israeli occupation but also to unshackle Palestinians from the scourge of Western societal dislocation. The Gaza PMB's rhetoric developed a noticeable anti-systemic character that, while keeping with traditional MB tenets, also aimed to develop a distinctive Palestinian political and cultural ethos, forged in the ideological crucible of repression and occupation (Tamimi 2009: 20–21). The urgency and vigour associated with these nationalist sentiments meant that Gaza's PMB became Hamas's ideological engine room, driving its ideological evolution far more than the relatively quiescent West Bank. It also meant that Gaza would become Hamas's spiritual home.

While the IDF actively repressed Palestinian nationalist movements in their newly acquired territories, the PMB was left largely to its own devices and set about instituting a systematic process of reconnecting Palestinians with Islam (Mishal & Sela 2006: 19). The 1967 war proved to be a paradoxical fillip in the gradual transformation of the traditional theological, ethical, and philosophical language of Islam into the action-orientated political language of Islamism, and in the OPT the PMB was at the forefront of this transformation (Strindberg & Wärn 2011: 69).

The PMB began to expand its religious footprint in Gaza through the construction of nearly 200 new mosques between 1967 and 1989 (Mishal & Sela 2006: 21). The PMB also launched the *al-Jam'iyah al-Islamiyah* (the Islamic Society) to conduct educational, recreational, and sporting programmes for Gaza's youth (Tamimi 2009: 36). In 1973, the PMB established the *al-Mujamma' al-Islami* (the Islamic Centre) in Gaza. The Centre became popular very quickly, enabling the PMB to expand its activities throughout the Strip, becoming responsible for establishing mosques, kindergartens, schools, and clinics, and soon dominated the delivery of social services to Gazans (Tamimi 2009: 36–37).

The establishment of these Islamic institutions was also in response to the PLO's efforts to widen and deepen Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. As well as their provision of social services, these institutions formed part of the PMB's strategy of ensuring that they possessed a viable Islamic alternative to the resistance efforts ascribed by the secular nationalist PLO (Robinson 1997: 137).

Destined to challenge – the birth of Hamas

In 1979, the PMB faced its first real internal turmoil when a number of militant members split to form the PIJ. This schism occurred because the PMB refused to adopt a more belligerent attitude towards Israeli occupation. The PIJ advocated a far more strident form of Palestinian nationalism, believing that the re-establishment of Palestine was far more important than ensuring the gradual Islamisation of Palestinian society (Strindberg & Wärn 2011: 87–88).

The schism triggered internal debate in the PMB concerning the efficacy of continuing its quiescent policy and the role that militancy might play in re-establishing Palestine. Consequently, the leadership decided to establish a military wing (Hroub 2000: 33). By 1985 'the Project,' as it was called, had an organisational form and leadership separate from the PMB (Rabbani 2008: 68–69). The only decision left was when to launch it. On 8 December 1987, an Israeli tank transport crashed in Gaza, killing four Palestinians and injuring several others. After the funerals, thousands of Palestinians in Gaza began to riot. In the ensuing days, the unrest spread to the West Bank, sparking the First Intifada.[1]

On 14 December 1987, Hamas announced its appearance on the Palestinian political stage by issuing a communiqué calling on Palestinians to rise up and resist Israeli occupation (Abu-Amr 1997: 235). Hamas was meant to complement, not replace, the activities of the PMB, but such was its popularity, with its amalgamated ideological narrative of militancy and social change, that Hamas quickly subsumed the PMB to become the dominant Islamist actor in Palestinian politics. In doing so, Hamas inherited the PMB's extensive social welfare network, providing the nascent movement with enormous institutional support and social capital (Gunning 2009: 39). This meant that Hamas's militancy soon extended to challenging the PLO's ideological and political hegemony over the nature and direction of Palestinian self-determination efforts (Mishal & Sela 2006: 36–37).

The inception of Hamas also marked the beginnings of the structural transformation of Palestinian society, whereby a distinctive counter-elite began to

challenge the hegemony of the Palestinian notables that had been in place for centuries (Robinson 1997: ix). The notables' dominance was a leftover from the Ottoman Empire and their eclipse was a function of continued Israeli occupation that had seen the effective elimination of the Palestinian peasantry, continued land appropriation, and the creation of a Palestinian university system (Robinson 1997: 14). As Robinson (1997: 19) notes, the new elite was a product of the territories, rather than a product of the Diaspora. Consequently, they were a larger cohort, younger, better educated, and from more modest class origins. Importantly for Hamas, the new elite were simultaneously ardent supporters of Palestinian nationalism and vigorous opponents of Israeli occupation. The transformation also enabled Palestinian society in the OPT to be mobilised in a more systematic fashion for the first time. In turn, this enabled the collective action of Palestinians to be sustained for significant periods of time.

Hamas's internal structure and sources of authority

Understanding Hamas's internal structures, decision-making bodies, and sources of authority reveals the relative strengths and weaknesses of its decision-making processes (Gunning 2009: 95). The movement is divided into five constituent elements: Gaza, the West Bank, Prisoners, the Diaspora, and the IQB. These elements reflect both the disaggregated nature of Palestinian life, and Hamas's organisational vulnerabilities in its conflict with Israel. Each element has their own developmental history and an equal say in Hamas's decision-making processes. This equanimity keeps Hamas's decisions closely attuned to the domestic situation, with Hamas remaining cognisant of how its decisions affect Palestinians in the OPT. This is a key distinction from Fatah, with Hroub (2000: 59) observing that 'it propels Hamas to be politically realistic within the constraints of the possible and to limit the use of grandiose and ill-fitting slogans.'

Internal structure

Hamas is a tightly compartmentalised and hierarchical movement, dividing Gaza into seven districts and the West Bank into five. Each district is further divided into sub-districts and then into local units of villages or refugee camps, with each district having committees for education, publications, finance, and prisoners (Mishal & Sela 2006: 158). Local cell members elect their leaders and representatives to sit on district *shura*, or consultative, councils. Each district *shura* council then elects representatives to sit on the national *shura* council (*majlis shura*), which then elects Hamas's Political Bureau (*al-Maktab al-siyasi*) (Gunning 2009: 98–99). Hamas's conflict with Israel's security and intelligence organisations means that local units are strictly quarantined from each other, with members able to communicate only with other unit members. Different units and districts can only communicate with each other through specially designated IQB couriers (Mishal & Sela 2006: 158).

The *majlis shura* consists of approximately 12 members and serves as the equivalent to a state legislature. Its principal function is to provide normative backing and moral justification for Hamas's political conduct and major decisions and to determine its overall strategy and political aims (Gunning 2009: 99–100). The Political Bureau is the equivalent to a state executive and consists of approximately ten members responsible for implementing the *majlis shura*'s strategies. While it does not have the mandate to set policy, the Political Bureau has gradually obtained increased control over, and greater obedience and compliance from, Hamas members. Nevertheless, the *majlis shura* retains the power to disband the Political Bureau should it exceed its mandated authority, though this has never happened. For practical and operational reasons, most members of these two institutions reside outside of the OPT, normally in neighbouring Arab countries (Mishal & Sela 2006: 162).

Notwithstanding Hamas's hierarchical structure, its compartmentalisation means that the ability of its various command and control levels, from the Political Bureau to the District, to dictate the movement's day-to-day operation is restricted. This results in local activists having considerable autonomy of action, which has resulted in the political leadership being occasionally unaware of, and unprepared for, impending military actions against Israel (Mishal & Sela 2006: 159). This organisational structure sets Hamas apart from other MB-styled movements, and works in Hamas's favour because its operational flexibility enables the movement to adjust more readily to leadership change at all levels in the event of imprisonment, deportation, or assassination. The immediacy of these threats, and the occupation in general, means that internal tensions are driven primarily by tactical and strategic disagreements rather than the potentially more corrosive ideological differences. This has resulted in Hamas being able to largely insulate itself from internal ideological fissures between the constituent elements (Mishal & Sela 2006: 160).

This is not to say that tensions do not exist, the most notable being between the leadership triumvirate of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank ('inside' leadership), and the exiled communities ('outside' leadership) (Hroub 2010b: 116). After Yassin's imprisonment in 1989, Hamas recognised that it could not afford to have a leader come exclusively from within the territories. The interim leadership consisted mostly of senior 'inside' members deported from the territories, who were primarily university-educated technocrats in liberal professions. Broadly speaking, the 'inside' leadership tend to adopt more pragmatic positions regarding their relationships with Israel and Fatah. This comes from experiencing the hardships of the occupation, the siege, and the daily prospect of conflict with either or both adversaries (Hroub 2000: 59). The basis for their rise to power derives from their ability to cope with periods of organisational crises, as well as their capacity to raise funds from friendly governments and communities. The 'inside' leaders are elected from the OPT's rank and file membership meaning that they have a closer personal connection with local members and with the Prisoners (Mishal & Sela 2006: 161).

The 'outside' leadership, while also consisting primarily of tertiary educated technocrats, tend to subscribe to a more strident form of political Islamism

advocating a top-down style of revolution, rather than the grassroots-inspired revolutionary narrative generally propagated by the 'inside' leadership. Like the 'inside' leadership, this more direct approach is a product of their environment, conversely from not having to deal with the exigencies of the occupation, the siege, and the contest with Fatah and Israel (Mishal & Sela 2006: 161). The 'outside' leadership was initially established because the PMB recognised that Hamas needed an external presence to generate financial and political support outside of the OPT and to act as a backup for the internal leadership should any of the leadership be removed through imprisonment or assassination (Hroub 2010b: 115).

Tensions occasionally arise over which leadership holds sway when determining Hamas's overall strategic direction, and are most likely a reflection of the differing pressures that the three leaderships groups feel. While Hroub (2010b: 116) notes that it is difficult to determine which group possesses more power within Hamas, in his opinion the Gaza leadership group appears to have the slight edge in determining Hamas's overall political strategies, particularly in the post-election era. Highlighting the division of responsibilities, Hroub (2010b: 116) explains that 'while it is safe to say that the two-branched inside leadership controls the muscles of the movement, the outside leadership controls financial resources and external contacts.' Indeed, Spyer (2012: 44–51) argues that the rise to prominence by Hamas's Gaza leadership was a product of the 2007 schism, the need to consolidate and enforce Hamas's power in Gaza, and the reduction in power and influence of the outside leadership following the revolutionary upheavals in Egypt and Syria.

However, neither the 'inside' nor 'outside' leaderships can be characterised as being inherently 'radical,' 'militant,' or 'moderate,' nor that Gaza's leadership is necessarily more militant, moderate, or radical than the West Bank's.[2] Moderates, militants, and radicals exist in the Diaspora and throughout the OPT in equal measure, which contributes to Hamas's ideological and operational cohesiveness in that all points of view are canvassed before decisions are made (Hroub 2010b: 118). While tensions occasionally become public, they never threaten to fracture Hamas, merely slowing down its decision-making processes and reducing its ability to cope with rapidly developing political and military situations (Hroub 2000: 59).

Pointedly, Hamas has maintained its unity and internal integrity despite simultaneously struggling against Israeli occupation/siege and Fatah's political dominance for 30 years. Hroub (2010b: 117) argues that this is partly due to Hamas's religious values that encourage organisational cohesion and partly due to its MB antecedence whose culture similarly promotes cohesion over contested views. While militant, moderate, and radical views exist within Hamas in equal measure, they tend to be based on issues rather than on temperament or to being geographically defined. As such, no one person or issue has emerged around which militants, moderates, and/or radicals can coalesce and threaten Hamas's internal unity.

This internal cohesion appears to set Hamas apart from other Islamist movements that have suffered various degrees of internal disunity and factionalism that have adversely influenced their efficacy.[3] In this respect, it is perhaps a measure of

the centripetal forces of Hamas's zeal for Palestinian self-determination and the constant domestic and international repression the movement faces that provide its members with a galvanising sense of purpose and solidarity that seemingly transcend factionalism (Hroub 2010b: 117–118). Equally, it reflects the success of Hamas's leadership triumvirate who, despite these enormous pressures, have been able to maintain and sustain this unity of purpose and prevent any debilitating factionalism or the development of a personality cult.

Despite occasional tensions, the 'inside' and 'outside' leadership assist in Hamas's inherent pragmatic decision-making. In the OPT's cloistered and combative political environment, Hamas's worldview, originally expressed through its Charter, was strictly segregated into areas of truthfulness and falsehood. This dichotomy was interposed with their assessment of concentric circles surrounding Palestine: first Arabic, then Islamic, and then the international community. However, the existence and associated operational and strategic importance of the 'outside' leadership provided Hamas with a more pragmatic assessment of the role of the international community in addressing the 'Palestinian Question.' As Hamas grew in stature, so the 'outside' leadership began to interact with regional and international actors in a more concerted fashion. As the leadership triumvirate grasped the complex reality and nuances of international diplomacy, their worldview gradually shifted, and they began to acknowledge and accept diverse political and ideological opinions and interpretations (Hroub 2010b: 22–23).

Political and religious authority

The existence of the *majlis shura* and the Political Bureau prevents unilateral decisions being taken by any of Hamas's leadership cadre. The internal electoral process simultaneously legitimates their members and each institution, reinforcing their respective authority. Indeed, there is no guarantee of re-election to these representative bodies, enhancing the collective and individual authority of their members (Gunning 2009: 101–102). Instructively, there are term limits placed on key decision-making positions such as the chairman and prime minister. This prevents any one person, or groups of people, from dominating these crucial positions for extended periods of time and leading to accusations of internal authoritarianism. These elections also allow Hamas as a movement the opportunity to rejuvenate itself, with new leaders having fresh ideas elected at regular intervals. Because of these institutions' representative nature, Hamas members are not afraid to criticise and express dissent at contentious decisions. This means that both institutions are compelled to consult widely to garner members' opinions on prospective decisions. The *majlis shura* reflects the collective will of Hamas's membership, with normal policy decisions requiring a simple majority and those fundamentally affecting Hamas's direction requiring a two-thirds majority (Gunning 2009: 104).

This contrasts with Fatah's leadership structure under both Arafat and Abbas, which is viewed by most Palestinians as corrupt, nepotistic, and dictatorial (Rubin & Rubin 2003: 233–234). Charismatic authority, like that exhibited by Arafat, is condemned within Hamas unless it is used in the service of the movement. This

even extended to Yassin, who despite his reverence throughout Hamas was overruled on several occasions by the *majlis shura*. The same also holds true for the leadership of Meshaal and Haniyeh who, despite the constrictions imposed upon Hamas after the 2006 election were unwilling and/or unable to assume unilateral control of Hamas (Gunning 2009: 105–106).

Instructively, Hamas does not employ religious authority to vet its political candidates, meaning that religious authority can only become political authority through elections (Gunning 2009: 116–117). This is not to say that Islam is not a central component driving Hamas and its membership. For Hamas, Islam provides the framework for debate and contention. As such, religious authority emanates from individuals exhibiting pious behaviour, having religious knowledge, and being affiliated with mosques or religiously inspired charities (Gunning 2009: 117–118, 125). Religious authority has an informal institutional role within Hamas in that it is not concentrated in any one institution or person. Religious knowledge is highly valued among the membership for the understanding of Islamic jurisprudence. Hamas's leadership cadres are well versed in Islamic law and history, but this knowledge rarely comes from any formal religious training, instead stemming from self-education, which is consistent with the Brotherhood's mantra of self-improvement through Islam.

While religious knowledge is important, the extent of this knowledge reflects an individual's efforts at piety rather than as a prerequisite for leadership. On this point, Gunning (2009: 119) observes that 'Hamas seems to value "secular" political and administrative expertise more than "religious expertise," meaning that arguments over political strategies rarely contain any theological facets, concentrating instead on worldly practicalities.' Thus, religious authority complements but never supplants a leader's institutional authority, meaning that a leader's personal capital accumulates by possessing both religious and institutional authority simultaneously. Nevertheless, there is a concomitant expectation from Hamas's membership for its leaders at all levels to have the religious knowledge necessary to be able to frame internal debates appropriately and to display a requisite amount of religious disposition (Gunning 2009: 125).

While there is much to be said for Hamas's representative character and the deliberative nature of its decision-making processes, it does mean that its ability to respond quickly to rapid shifts in the political environment remains problematic. For a decision to be considered authoritative and binding, all constituent elements and the membership need to be consulted. This cumbersome process restricts risk taking, with Gunning noting that the *majlis shura* and Political Bureau have few avenues through which to debate new positions or garner support (Gunning 2009: 112). This laborious decision-making process is exacerbated by Israeli occupation that restricts the freedom of movement and communication between the two territories and between the OPT and the Diaspora. The occupation has also hardened members' attitudes towards Israel, making any attempt to compromise on issues associated with the GoI inherently moribund (ICG 2006: 6). As such, the prospect of Hamas making extensive policy changes, particularly concerning controversial issues such as the formal recognition of Israel, remains highly problematic.

Resistance as **jihad**

Hamas's periodic resort to violence after 2005 is predominantly contextual and a response to the asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians. Given Hamas's Islamist antecedence, resistance is constructed through the prism of Islam, with Sadiki (2010: 359) noting that 'Islam as faith and praxis, inspires a covenant, binding the community of resisters with God as well as with fellow human beings.' Only rarely has Hamas engaged in fratricidal conflict with Fatah and it has never precipitated a violent act outside the confines of Israel/Palestine. Hamas's use of violence is thus tied inextricably to the ethos of resistance to Israeli occupation and its quest to realise a sovereign Palestine. As noted earlier, Hamas believes resistance is a multifaceted term, and is applied equally to resisting Israeli occupation and resisting Fatah's hegemony over Palestinian self-determination efforts.

A key facet of Hamas's narrative is the dichotomy between its resistance that includes the use of violence and Fatah's that does not. For Hamas, a sovereign Palestine can only be achieved through directly challenging Israeli occupation, charging that where military occupation exists, military resistance should be expected (Hroub 2010b: 45–46). More broadly, Sadiki (2010: 358) argues that Hamas transmutes the operationalisation of resistance into a way of being, thinking, and acting, so much so that military resistance is as important as piety, charity, schooling, propaganda, or music. Despite Hamas's characterisation of resistance encompassing various facets, in many ways it lacks specificity. This enables Hamas to craft a narrative that is difficult to counter effectively, and enables it to project its military and non-military activities within the broader resistance rubric, such as its DRS (Hroub 2010b: 46).

Hamas is able to incorporate the concept of *jihad* into its resistance narrative and the struggle for a sovereign Palestine. The essential component of *jihad* centres on the struggle to attain various forms of 'freedom,' which can be accomplished by the heart, the tongue, the hands, or the sword (Khadduri 2005: 307). In the Palestinian sense, Tamimi (2009: 173) claims that 'jihad was a struggle for the freedom for the community to worship according to their monotheistic faith and for the right to invite others to embrace it.' For Hamas, the fundamental challenge confronting Palestinians necessitates the invocation of *jihad* as an essential principle of its struggle against the Israeli state. *Jihad* must be implemented for the Palestinian people to be free: free from occupation, free from foreign interference and influence, and free to reconnect with Islam.

That Hamas's invocation of *jihad* is directed solely at challenging Israeli occupation is a key source of its legitimacy at the organisational and individual levels (Gunning 2009: 127). Gunning (2009: 127–128) notes that within Hamas individuals gain legitimacy and stature by regularly risking death and imprisonment, and by their ability to evade these two fates. This stature is reflective of the individual's piety, modesty, self-sacrifice, and overall leadership abilities. Intriguingly, very few of Hamas's senior leaders have ever belonged to the IQB, which may point to the relative importance Hamas members place on their elected leaders having primarily political rather than military experience.[4]

Ideological continuity and change

Islamism is a very broad category encompassing a plethora of perspectives on the role and operationalisation of Islam in society. As Tibi (2012: 1) observes,

> Islamism is not *mere* politics but religionized politics. In the case of Islamism, the religionization of politics means the promotion of a political order that is believed to emanate from the will of Allah and is not based on popular sovereignty.

Along similar lines, Ashour (2009: 4) argues that Islamist groups are socio-political organisations that use their understanding and interpretation of the sacred texts to justify their political principles, ideologies, behaviours, and objectives.

What appears to be a common variable is how an Islamist movement understands the role that Islam can and/or should play in politics. Consequently, questions like 'What do Islamists mean by Islam and Islamic?,' 'What is their understanding and operationalisation of *shari'ah*?,' and 'What is their understanding of an Islamic state?' all come into sharp focus when analysing an Islamist movement's ideology and worldview. What is crucial in any understanding of Islamist movements is that there will inevitably be differing answers to these questions depending upon which movement is analysed. It is also true that while Islamism is not necessarily synonymous with Islam, there is no Islamism without Islam (Browers 2005: 76). Therefore, acknowledging the existence of differing interpretations of Islam allows important ideological distinctions to be made concerning the various types of Islamist movements that exist, from Brotherhood-styled movements like Hamas, to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and ISIS (Browers 2005: 76–77).

By acknowledging the many faces of Islamism, what becomes clearer is that while Islamists may have a few similar ideological and theological principles, how they manifest themselves, and how they are portrayed and viewed, are linked to the continually evolving social, cultural, and political contexts within which these movements operate, and concomitantly their appreciation of that context (Strindberg & Wärn 2011: 63). Consequently, Hamas's ideology, its political and social discourse, its worldview, and its views on 'the state' need to be judged within the context of not only its struggle against Israeli occupation and its ongoing competition with Fatah but equally how it perceives its evolving role in these two struggles.

As a Brotherhood-styled movement, there are some inherent tensions within Hamas between political pragmatism and the ethical and moral boundaries of Islam. Hroub (2000: 54–55) notes that like other Islamist movements Hamas has tended to veer towards political pragmatism as it becomes more experienced in political terms. Nonetheless, Hamas maintains a belief that religious principles frame its politics. As Hamas has become more politically involved, it has found a paucity of relevant contemporary Islamic jurisprudence to provide a sufficient religious framework and guidance. Rather than seeing this as a political

impediment, Hamas has taken steps to address the legal lacuna that originates from its ideological duality and the associated need to remain closely attuned to the vagaries of public opinion. In doing so, Hamas has acquired the ability to extricate itself from seemingly intractable ideological dilemmas by adopting a politically pragmatic approach, enabling it to find an appropriate balance between religious principles and political interests (Hroub 2000: 57–58).

Hamas's melding of Islamism with national liberationism means that its framework of Palestinian nationalism is grounded in and moulded by Islam. Hamas's dual ideological objectives include the liberation of Palestine and the Islamisation of Palestinian society (Hroub 2010b: 31). Hamas's quest for statehood sets it apart from other notable regional Islamist movements/political parties such as Turkey's AKP, Tunisia's *Ennahda*, Morocco's PJD, and Egypt's MB party. In fact, Hamas's national liberationism is often a neglected and unseen facet of its ideological discourse, with academic analyses tending to focus almost entirely on its Islamist character. However, national liberationism is so central to Hamas's raison d'être that to modulate or disregard its contribution to Hamas's ideological narrative is to misrepresent Hamas and misconstrue the reasons for its continued popularity and respect among Palestinians.

National liberationism and resistance remain central to Hamas's ideological narrative with Hroub referring to this combination as 'resistance legitimacy.' According to Hroub (2010a: 175),

> The legitimate leader (or organisation) is the one who holds the banner of resistance and revolution, advancing, and bringing the goals of liberation closer. Thus, the identifier of legitimacy is the measure of its resistance against the occupier. A leader or party would suffer great damage to its legitimacy if it were perceived as non-resistant.

Due to Hamas's focus on achieving Palestinian statehood, it can be unclear whether it is primarily an Islamist movement or a national liberation movement. Addressing these uncertainties, Hroub (2006) explains,

> From its inception, Hamas strove hard to harmonise the two currents within its movement: the national liberationist and the religious Islamist. These two forces (each combining intellectual and mobilising forces) were neither necessarily contradictory nor fully harmonious. They walk hand in hand in certain periods, clash at others or move at a different pace – depending upon the conjunctural political conditions.

In Hamas's ideological framework, national liberationism's popularism tempers Islamism's reformist inclinations, and counters its quiescence by ensuring that it remains focused on and energised by the liberation of Palestine. This focus encourages Hamas to refine its ideological narrative regularly, adapting to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict's perpetually changing political and social dynamics. This popularism also means that Hamas remains highly attuned, though susceptible, to the

vagaries of public opinion. Because Hamas strives to harmonise these two ideological currents, there emerges an ingrained pragmatism in Hamas's operational ethos that enables it to navigate occasional ideological inconsistencies and contradictions without suffering a loss of support or purpose.

This unique ideological interplay explains why Hamas's narrative continues to evolve and has adapted from its original rhetorical and ideological guise to its more recent pragmatic and political one that has seen it develop and then implement a DRS (Hroub 2010a: 176). Indeed, Dunning (2015: 4) notes that 'political and ideological ideas are not hermetically sealed entities but part of a process of borrowing and synthesis.' The maturation and refinement of Hamas's ideological narrative also reflects the movement's development and its ability to redefine and adapt its narrative concerning its simultaneous contests with Israel and Fatah in the quest for Palestinian statehood.

Hamas's ideological evolution

It is not possible to analyse Hamas's evolving worldview without addressing its Charter and the other influential treatises the movement has published. When viewed collectively rather than in isolation, these documents illustrate Hamas's gradual ideological maturation over a range of key issues and its progressively more nuanced understanding of Palestinian politics. This maturation reflects the changing context in which Hamas finds itself, and the need to adapt and adjust its ideological narrative to reflect current political realities.

Hamas's Charter was published in August 1988, and it remains a problematic document for the movement (see Hamas Covenant 1988). The Charter was Hamas's first coherent attempt at informing Palestinians about what it represented. It is without doubt a document of its time and is obdurate on many issues, particularly relations with Israel and achieving Palestinian independence. The Charter seeks to challenge the PLO's social and political hegemony, and attempts to position Hamas as the PLO's primary domestic opposition. While the Charter contained many similarities with the PLO's own Charter issued 20 years earlier, it cloaked these tenets in the veil of Islam to give it sufficient rigidity and singularity of purpose that would set Hamas apart from the PLO ideologically (Mishal & Sela 2006: 43–44).[5]

The Charter was reportedly written by Abdel Fattah al-Dukhan, a PMB elder in Gaza and occasional second in command to Yassin. Nevertheless, he was neither one of the movement's ideologues nor one of the future leaders in the Diaspora (Caridi 2012: 101–102). Sayigh (2011: 631) dismisses the Charter as a formative document, noting that

> it was authored by Islamist cadres in Gaza, whose prolonged geographical isolation, and limited exposure to the outside world (even including the West Bank) were reflected in simplistic political analysis and lack of social content, and in their recourse to broad generalisations, crude stereotypes and conspiratorial theories of world history and politics.

Informatively, the Charter's contents and tenor were not debated or discussed by any of Hamas's constituent elements, perhaps explaining why it is rarely, if ever, referred to by Hamas officialdom (Tamimi 2009: 148–149).

The Charter was written at a time when Hamas was a 'blank canvas,' politically speaking, and it broadly reflects the Gaza PMB's discourse on resolving the 'Palestinian Question' (Tamimi 2009: 150). Importantly though, the Charter creates political distance between Hamas and the PMB by focusing primarily on Hamas's core message of resolving the 'Palestinian Question' through *jihad*, with little attention paid to the Brotherhood's core message of societal reformation (Abu-Amr 1993: 12). It is also important to bear in mind that the Charter was published only a few months into the First Intifada, before the PLO issued its Declaration of Independence in November 1988, and before the Intifada forced the PLO and the GoI to actively seek a resolution to the 'Palestinian Question' that culminated in signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Despite the tendency for many analysts to portray the Charter as immutable and as Hamas's only defining ideological treatise, Hamas considers it an embarrassment (Caridi 2012: 197).[6] Indeed, the president of the Union of Palestinian Ulama, Sheikh Hamed Bitawi, has been quoted as saying, 'The Charter is not the Qur'an; we can change it. It is merely the summary of the Islamist movement's positions in its relation to other factions, and of its politics' (Bitawi 2008, cited in Caridi 2012: 106). For decades, Hamas's response to any criticism it receives because of the tenor of its Charter has been to periodically publish new documents that evince a progressively nuanced and contextual reappreciation of its ideological narrative. This was considered preferable to issuing a revised Charter, which many in Hamas see as an unacceptable capitulation to external criticism (Hroub 2010b: 29). As noted earlier, the ideological maturation demonstrated in these subsequent treatises is attributed to the increasing influence of Hamas's external leadership, and the ability of the leadership triumvirate to access external sources of information, primarily via the internet.

Anecdotally, the publishing of these supplementary treatises appears to coincide with critical junctures in both Hamas's history and the history of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. For example, Tamimi notes that Hamas's first foray into attempting to clarify its raison d'être was in the late 1990s at the behest of Western diplomats in Jordan (see Tamimi 2009: 265–270). With the Accords having failed to result in an independent Palestine, and with the PA/Israeli conflict becoming increasingly intractable, there appeared to be greater interest in knowing more about Hamas and its ideological precepts. The language and tone of this document, titled 'This Is What We Are Struggling For,' are completely different from the Charter's zero-sum rhetoric, and it contains none of the Charter's religious symbolism. The document seeks to explain why Hamas is resisting Israeli occupation and contextualises the various Oslo Accords from Hamas's perspective.

In June 2000, just prior to the failed Camp David summit and the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Hamas's Political Bureau published a more expansive treatise that presented a detailed exposition of Hamas's history and its involvement in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict (see Tamimi 2009: 271–283). Building on the

1990s treatise, it presented a detailed explanation of why Hamas resisted Israel and the Peace Process. It also sought to present Hamas as more than just a violent resistance movement, evincing a political and a military programme. Like its predecessor, it was primarily a political document designed to explain, not preach, with Islam portrayed as a vehicle of peace, not war (Tamimi 2009: 283). In 2006, Hamas's political party CR, published its Election Manifesto (Tamimi 2009: 292–316). While the details of this will be discussed later, the Manifesto is a document outlining a programme to govern, marking a significant shift in Hamas's political behaviour and ideological maturation. It outlines a comprehensive and secular political programme intended not just for Palestinian but also for international digestion.

In May 2017, Hamas announced that it had published a new policy document (see Hamas 2017). The document was the latest attempt by Hamas to expound a fresh vision and political trajectory for the movement that reflected the reality of its current political situation. Referring to the new document, Meshaal (2017, cited in al-Jazeera 2017) stated, 'It is intended to serve as a guiding principle for the Hamas organisation to deal with new emerging realities in our Palestinian society, our conflict with Israel and in the outside world.' The new document was also an attempt by Hamas to expound to Palestinians and the international community how Hamas was a more flexible and adaptive movement politically, and whose current ideological narrative had little in common with its Charter. Hamas hoped that the new policy document would serve as a new ideological reference point for the movement that would supersede the Charter.

While the document reiterated some of Hamas's core objectives, such as supporting the right of return for Palestinian refugees and seeing Jerusalem as a permanent right for Palestinians, it also contains some interesting clarifications. Most notably was Hamas's public reiteration that it accepted that any future Palestinian state would, for the time being, consist only of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. As discussed in more detail later in the study, this position was not necessarily new for Hamas. However, it was the first time that it formed such a central pillar of Hamas's ideological narrative. Also of note was Hamas's announcement that it had severed its ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. Importantly, this was not an ideological split but merely an organisational one. As will be highlighted in Chapter 8, this decision was in response to Hamas's efforts to improve its increasingly fraught diplomatic relationship with Egypt.

Despite the political and diplomatic significance of these two announcements, the document also included clear caveats, particularly concerning the problematic issue of the Palestinian state. Here Hamas emphasised that its acceptance of this truncated version of a future Palestinian state was an interim measure. It certainly did not amount to either the formal recognition of the state of Israel or the repudiation of Hamas's utopian goal of seeking a Palestinian state from 'the river to the sea.' Hamas was also insistent that the 1967 ceasefire lines should become the border between the interim Palestinian state and the Israeli state (Hamas 2017).

Hamas also sought to clarify that its struggle was not against the Jewish nation per se, but with Zionism. One of the key criticisms of the Charter was its

anti-Semitism. This resonated deeply in the US and Europe, and clarifying this point so directly speaks to Hamas's desire to free itself from the opprobrium attached to this term by these influential actors. As an Israeli security source noted, '[Hamas] wants to be a legitimate organisation and understands that its demand for Israel's elimination deprives it of that status. They are not changing their skin, but are considering changing their behaviour' (Anon. 2017, cited in Caspit 2017). Despite these political clarifications, Hamas remained adamant that it retained the right to resist Israeli occupation of the OPT with violence. As the document (Hamas 2017) states,

> Resisting the occupation by all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as a strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.

As will be seen throughout this study, the document reflects many of the lessons that Hamas had learnt from its experiences of governing Gaza unilaterally for ten years. In particular, it reflected the enormous domestic and regional pressures on Hamas, and how Hamas sought to relieve these pressures somewhat by attempting to address key areas of concern. That the document contained no real surprises for Palestinians and was intended primarily for regional and international consumption is reflected in the reaction to the document's release by Palestinians in the OPT. In a poll conducted nearly two months after its release, 31.5% of Gazan and 63.6% of West Bank respondents had not heard of the document. Of those who had read the document, 34.4% of Gazan and 11.8% of West Bank respondents believed that it simply reiterated Hamas's existing positions and principles. Additionally, 44.1% of Gazan and 22.4% of West Bank respondents believed that Hamas released the document to present itself to the world as a moderate Islamist movement. Perhaps as a sign of the domestic indifference shown toward this document, 44.7% West Bank respondents did not know why Hamas had released the new policy document (PCPSR 2017: Poll No. 64).

While these documents display a broad consistency in Hamas's ideological tenets, there is also recognition that for Hamas to remain a relevant and viable political actor there must be some form of symbiosis between its ideology and the context within which the movement finds itself. This is especially true since in its relatively short history, Hamas has transitioned from a movement relying solely on the use of occasionally egregious violence to a movement that was successfully elected to power, and who governs under increasingly challenging conditions (Brown & Hamzawy 2010: 161). What becomes clear is that as Hamas becomes more politically experienced, it has developed the ability to reframe its ideological narrative in political rather than religious terms (Brown & Hamzawy 2010: 169). The increased political space facilitated by these nuanced articulations allows Hamas ideological room to manoeuvre according to changing circumstances while remaining true to its core tenets. It also provides sufficient

space for Hamas to articulate its evolving ideological narrative to members and the Palestinian public, ensuring that the movement retains its support base while garnering non-traditional support.

Intellectual guideposts: al-Qassam, Qutb, and Yassin

The chapter's final section provides a brief exposé of three people who have played key formative roles in determining the nature and scope of Hamas's ideological narrative. These are Sheiykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Sayyid Qutb, and Sheiykh Ahmed Yassin. Understanding their influence on Hamas adds further conceptual depth to its broader ideological narrative and provides a greater understanding of why Hamas's narrative resonates with the Palestinian populace.

Sheiykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam

Sheiykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam was a widely respected Syrian-born cleric who preached Islamic revivalism and resistance through *jihad*. Al-Qassam railed against the perniciousness of British occupation and the deleterious effects of Zionist immigration in 1930s Palestine. Despite being killed by British troops in 1935, al-Qassam provided a prominent example for Palestinians on how to form a grassroots Islamist movement based on faith, social and political works and eventually, armed resistance (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 18–19). Indeed, al-Qassam's life and death provided the model and catalyst for the first Palestinian rebellion against occupation known as the Great Revolt (1936–1939) (Sayigh 2011: 2).[7] The import of his actions, and what they meant to Palestinians then and now, cannot be underestimated, with future Israeli PM Ben-Gurion opining at the time that al-Qassam's death represented the first time that the Arabs have seen a man prepared to give his life for an idea (Ben-Gurion n.d., cited in Caridi 2012: 131).

Born in 1883 in the north-west Syrian town of Jabla, al-Qassam attended Cairo's prestigious al-Azhar University in 1902, where he absorbed various schools of Islamic political thought, including Sufi mysticism (Sanagan 2013: 325–326). He also became exposed to the teachings and thoughts of influential Islamic intellectuals Mohammed Abduh and Rashid Rida.[8] Within these teachings lay a distinct anti-colonialist underpinning and the need to confront existing political and religious status quos directly – facets that Hamas would later internalise and project.

Al-Qassam arrived in Haifa in 1921, having escaped from Syria after agitating for the overthrow of French rule. He began preaching at Haifa's Istiqlal mosque, which was located in one of the poorest sections of the city where the destitute and marginalised members of Palestinian society lived. Al-Qassam taught the Qur'an, and conducted literacy classes for the poor in the belief that an energised and educated opposition could be spurred to action against the dual problems of British occupation and Zionist immigration (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 23). He co-founded the Young Men's Muslim Association (YMMA) and became involved

in a style of political activism that embodied a more militant form of Palestinian nationalism, challenging the traditional power structures dominated by Palestinian elites, absentee landowners, and ineffective political parties (Caridi 2012: 132–133). Mirroring the later distinction between Hamas and Fatah, al-Qassam's popularity was because he lived and worked among ordinary people. He was not part of the traditional political and religious elites whose passivity and apathy towards the challenges facing the Palestinian nation spurred al-Qassam into action (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 24).

While al-Qassam opposed British occupation, it was the rapid influx of Zionists into Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s and the accompanying expropriation of Palestinian land that saw him eventually make the transition from religious and political activism to militancy and the formation of armed groups to carry out attacks on the Zionist kibbutzim (Caridi 2012: 134). Al-Qassam's death at the hands of the British made him the first Palestinian martyr, and his life serves as a metonym for the Palestinian experience (Knudsen 2005: 1376).

The fact that al-Qassam remains a revered figure among Palestinians speaks volumes for his importance as perhaps the first Palestinian nationalist leader. In its Charter, Hamas pronounced that it was one of the links in the chain of struggle against Zionism that began with al-Qassam (Article 7, Hamas Covenant 1988). Later, Hamas would name the IQB after al-Qassam. As an Islamist movement with a quiescent past, linking itself to this key Palestinian nationalist figure provided Hamas with credibility as a Palestinian nationalist movement and was indicative of the political genre that Hamas sought to emulate.

Sayyid Qutb

Sayyid Qutb is credited with formulating the theoretical basis of radical Islamism in the post-colonial Sunni Muslim world (Calvert 2010: 1). Qutb was born in 1906 in Upper Egypt, and after finishing school he moved to Cairo where he graduated as a teacher in 1928. For a time, he was a member of the nationalist party, *Wafd*, but he became disillusioned by the ruling elites' moral bankruptcy and the enormous economic, political, and social inequities between Egypt's rich and poor. Between 1933 and 1951, Qutb worked for the Ministry of Education, a period that saw him become loosely associated with some of the groups opposed to British rule. In 1948, he was sent to the US, which Akhavi (2013: 159–160) notes was an epiphany for Qutb and cemented his growing hostility towards capitalism and the unfettered operation of the market. When he returned to Egypt in 1951 he joined the MB, later becoming the director of its Propaganda Office.

After the 1952 Free Officers coup had installed Gamal Abdel Nasser as Egypt's president, Qutb served as the Brotherhood's liaison with the new regime. However, their relationship deteriorated quickly after the MB's campaign for *shari'ah* to be introduced throughout Egypt was rejected. After the failed assassination of Nasser in October 1954, Qutb was arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced to 25 years hard labour. He was released briefly in 1964 before being rearrested following the publication of his book *Milestones* in 1965. After another brief trial, Qutb was

executed in August 1966, later becoming a martyr and symbol of Islamic resistance (Akhavi 2013: 161).

Qutb's conceptual legacy is that he shifted the emphasis of Islamist political thinking from combatting exogenous threats to Islam, as advocated by al-Banna, to urging Muslims to confront the corrupt cultural and political foundations within their own countries (Calvert 2010: 1). Qutb was not looking for a past utopia like the Salafis, but towards the future, seeking to provide a suitable framework for Muslims to engage in political action to rid themselves of the state of *jahiliyya* (Calvert 2010: 15). Qutb (1953, cited in Sivan 1985: 83–84) railed against the secular regimes that dominated the Arab world, charging that they were in a state of *jahiliyya*.[9] In the Qutbian definition, *jahiliyya* is not epochal as in previous understandings of the term but is a condition that can be assigned to an individual, group, or regime.

For Qutb, *jahiliyya* existed because these regimes had imposed, or had allowed, someone else to assume the position of highest political and legal authority. According to Qutb, this position, known as *hakimiyyah*, can only rest with God. Therefore, if a regime had installed rulers and had institutions that perform such roles, then a state of *jahiliyya* had emerged. For Qutb, the concept of *hakimiyyah* was the prism through which he viewed and interpreted the world's political systems, dividing them into Islamic and *jahiliyya* (Khatab 2002: 147). Qutb's reconceptualisation of both terms established a 'friend-enemy' dichotomy where notions of compromise and negotiation with a strong enemy are dismissed as foolhardy and counterproductive (Calvert 2010: 204).

During his time in prison Qutb contemplated on a wide range of topics, with Calvert asserting that this period marked his true conversion to Islam – that is his absolute submission to God (Calvert 2010: 200). Qutb's prison experiences of torture, privation, and humiliation transformed a moderate intellectual into a radical Islamist political theologian advocating *takfir* (excommunication) and jihadism (Moussalli 2012: 9). In the books he wrote in prison, *Social Justice in Islam* and *The Battle of Islam and Capitalism*, he constructed an argument intended to mobilise Muslims in the direction of change within the framework of the state. However, after the killing of several prisoners by guards, Qutb's views crystallised around the notion that ultimate success could no longer stem from simply mobilising the polity to affect societal reform. Qutb shifted his emphasis from equating Islam with social justice to the fundamental issue of political legitimacy. What was required was leadership from a select group of suitably purified people to awaken the polity, then instigate and control the revolution (Calvert 2010: 202–203).

For Qutb, the most appropriate vehicle through which to awaken the people and rid them of the scourge of *jahili* was *jihad*. Like al-Banna, Qutb wanted to rescue the notion of *jihad* from being just concerned with the taming of bad desires and inclinations. Qutb believed that lesser, or violent *jihad*, was essential and needed to be used as the template for sustaining and directing the struggle against Islam's enemies. *Jihad* would become the primary vehicle for societal reformation and reconstruction (Calvert 2010: 222). Qutb's reconceptualisation of *jihad* commanded the Arab people to throw off the yoke of secular nationalist governments,

by force if necessary, because these governments were preventing Muslims from accessing the benefits of Islam.

Just how much Qutb influenced Hamas organisationally and individually is unquantifiable. There is a tendency for the MB to remain silent on Qutb's more radical and violent pronouncements, preferring instead to focus on his many contributions to Islamic thought (Calvert 2010: 279–280). Certainly, there are Qutbian themes that resonate throughout Hamas's ideological narrative, particularly the characterisation of its conflict with Israel, and the 'friend-enemy' dichotomy in the face of power asymmetry. The concept of using suitably purified people to spark a revolutionary transformation in society appears to have some resonance in Hamas's narrative, particularly in its formative years when it sought to carve out a separate ideological space for itself. However, whether Hamas necessarily depicts Israel and Fatah as being in states of *jahili* and uses this as justification for their conflict against them is debatable, especially at the organisational level. It is also worth noting that Hamas's views on the operationalisation and implementation of *shari'ah* are more pragmatic and inconsistent with those of Qutb (Gunning 2009: 68–69).

However, it is Qutb's emphasis on activism and the attainment of social justice in the face of oppression that has most influence on Hamas's ideological narrative, especially concerning its desire for independent state. Qutb uses Islam's tenets to encourage and justify vigorous social and political activism aimed at Islamising society (Moussalli 2012: 12). Like al-Qassam, there is present in Qutb's writings an underlying theme of challenging the traditional political and religious status quo forcefully. Qutb also believed that Muslims needed to metamorphose from quiescence to action to achieve their goals. This underlying theme appears emblematic of Hamas's development from its PMB antecedence to its current form.

Sheiykh Ahmed Yassin

Sheiykh Yassin was born in 1936 in the village of al-Jurah near the modern Israeli city of Ashkelon. The son of a moderately wealthy landowner, Yassin's family was forced to flee to a Gazan refugee camp following *al-naqbah* (Abu-Amr 1997: 226). Yassin's lived experience was the trauma and humiliation of the refugee camps, where issues of poverty, homelessness, and abandonment proved pivotal in his ideological development. The misery of the camp and its occupants served as a constant reminder to Yassin of his personal dispossession, and by extension the Palestinians' plight.

In the refugee camps, the PMB was the most prominent among the plethora of political and religious groups vying for support. The Brotherhood's participation in the 1948 war was highly publicised, and many Palestinians were aware of its mission and views. Yassin and many other Palestinian youths were drawn to the PMB because of its resistance to Israeli occupation and agitation for the resurrection of the Palestinian state. He began to attend mosque regularly, becoming exposed to al-Banna's teachings. In 1952, Yassin sustained a back injury that

would eventually leave him a quadriplegic. Despite his injury, he finished school and was granted a position in 1965 at Ain Shams University, Cairo. However, before he could take up the position Egyptian authorities arrested him as part of a crackdown on PMB activities in Gaza. Yassin was banned from travelling to Egypt, and unable to undertake tertiary studies he formally joined the PMB in 1966 (Abu-Amr 1997: 226–229). Tamimi (2009: 17) notes that Yassin joined the PMB as a gesture of defiance.

In Yassin's mind, not only had the Zionists taken Palestinian land and cast them adrift as a stateless people reduced to eking out a living in squalid refugee camps, but the secular Arab nationalist regimes had seemingly abandoned Palestinians to that fate. Despite the PMB's desire to assist in Palestinian liberation, they remained reticent about joining the PLO, believing it to be Nasser's geopolitical tool. Additionally, constant Egyptian crackdowns weakened the movement in the OPT, meaning that they adopted a more quiescent attitude towards armed resistance throughout the 1960s and 1970s, eroding their support in the OPT (Abu-Amr 1997: 230).

While the flame of resistance burned brightly in Yassin, he recognised that for victory to be achieved, Palestinian resistance must have stamina and organisation. Yassin took advantage of several political openings than helped him build a formidable political-religious movement that would eventually be able to challenge the PLO's ideological and political hegemony in the OPT (Abu-Amr 1997: 230). The first opening was presented by the 1967 war. The defeat of the Arab armies led to the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. After 1967 Yassin returned to teaching, with Israeli occupation paradoxically allowing him to travel regularly throughout the OPT spreading his views and knowledge. Yassin understood that Palestinians had to be prepared for revolution, and he concentrated on preaching to Palestinian youth who were at the forefront of Palestinian activism. With the PLO seemingly focused on life in the Diaspora and largely dismissive of the quiescent PMB, Yassin began the process of convincing Palestinians to reconsider the cogency of the PMB's political narrative for societal reformation and activism (Tamimi 2009: 19–21).

The second opening was presented by another defeat of the Arab armies in 1973. The aftermath of this defeat gave Yassin's message about the need for societal reformation and activism more cogency and import. Yassin saw Palestinian society as anaemic and in need of a return to Islam to resist Israeli occupation. Yassin portrayed Israeli occupation as a direct threat to the national and Islamic essence of Palestinian society that had to be resisted by any means (Tamimi 2009: 35; Abu-Amr 1997: 232). After 1973, the PMB redefined its role in the OPT, transforming their intellectual and ideological discourse into practical social service programmes via voluntary institutions (Abu-Amr 1997: 233; Tamimi 2009: 37).

The *al-Mujma' al-Islami*'s success meant that by the mid-1980s it was one of the most influential institutions in Gaza, providing Yassin and the PMB with significant political power and social leverage (Tamimi 2009: 38; Abu-Amr 1997: 233). Yassin began to be included in discussions concerning major issues for Palestinians in the OPT and he became a key factor in ensuring national consensus in Gaza (Abu-Amr 1997: 233). Later, the PMB gained control of Gaza's only

university, the Islamic University, from the PLO when its student representatives won control of numerous student organisations. It soon became a PMB stronghold, and by the 1980s its graduates, loyal to Yassin, were employed in mosques serving to disseminate his religious and political ideas (Abu-Amr 1997: 234). Despite the obvious importance of the mosques, it was the universities that proved a huge boon for the PMB because they were allowed greater autonomy from Israeli forces and they were better able to construct independent ideologies (Robinson 1997: 138). They also formed central flashpoints in the national struggle against Israeli occupation, especially in the lead-up to the First Intifada. The numerous student organisations that flourished in the universities were responsible for political recruitment and organisation of the new political elite across the ideological spectrum. These students organised direct confrontations, demonstrations, and clashes with the Israeli occupation (Ghanem 2001: 42).

These religious, social, and political activities gave the PMB, and Yassin in particular, a degree of legitimacy among Palestinians that was to prove decisive when he and other PMB leaders launched Hamas in 1987. It was only then that the GoI began to take specific interest in Yassin's activities (Abu-Amr 1997: 234). Yassin was arrested several times, and he was eventually assassinated in March 2004 on the orders of PM Sharon who wanted to prevent Hamas from assuming control of Gaza when Israel withdrew from the territory in 2005 (Tamimi 2009: 206).

Yassin's legacy was that he conflated the traditional PMB religious narrative with Palestinian nationalism. Yassin's nationalist discourse was not secular, in contrast to that of Fatah/PLO. It dealt with Palestinians' need to reconnect with Islam, throwing off the shackles of Israeli occupation, and the PLO's accommodationist secularism. Yassin promoted a brand of liberation theology that was influenced heavily by his lived experiences of dispossession and humiliation (Abu-Amr 1997: 247). For Yassin, Palestine could only be regained through active resistance, and that could only be sustained and organised successfully through the reformation of Palestinian society along Islamic lines. According to Yassin, the power asymmetry between Israeli and Palestinians meant that the latter needed to choose the most effective form of resistance, which inevitably led to the use of violence (Abu-Amr 1997: 242–243). As with al-Qassam and Qutb, Yassin advocated social and political activism to challenge the existing status quo and justified the use of violence to redress oppression and dispossession. Nevertheless, there was an inherent pragmatism in Yassin, and he was a moderating voice against the more militant and radical elements in Hamas. He actively countenanced a *hudna*, or long-term ceasefire, with Israel in return for the Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 ceasefire lines (Tamimi 2009: 159). Yassin was part revolutionary and part reformist, reflecting his MB antecedence, and its multifaceted strategic outlook (Abu-Amr 1997: 252).

Notes

1 For an explanation of the circumstances underpinning the Intifada, see Sayigh (2011: 607–613).
2 According to PA Presidential Advisor Akram Hanniyyah, the West Bank tended to be more sophisticated than Gaza, presumably due to the latter's long-term isolation.

Hanniyyah noted that in the immediate post-election environment, this resulted in Hamas's West Bank leadership asking harder questions and providing more nuanced replies. Hanniyyah also detected a shift in influence from the outside leadership to Gaza's leadership that reflected the growing importance of elected PLC members. See WikiLeaks (2006).

3 Brown (2012: 128–129) notes that in September 2009 an entire faction of Jordan's IAF resigned over organisational issues that would take years to reconcile. Equally, Hamas's solidarity is in direct contrast to that of Fatah's, whose history is replete with internal divisions and factionalisation. See Sayigh (2011: 561–567).

4 This has changed slightly with the election of Yahya Sinwar as the leader of Hamas in Gaza in February 2017. Sinwar spent 23 years in an Israeli gaol where he led Hamas prisoners. According to sources quoted in the media, Sinwar's rise to power is seen as a bridge between Hamas's political leadership and the increasingly influential IQB. See Younes (2017).

5 Also see The Palestinian Nation Charter.

6 For examples of the former, see Tibi (2010).

7 For an analysis of the Revolt, see Yazbak (2000: 93–113).

8 Abduh was among one of Egypt's leading modernists who sought to meld Western modernity with the more traditionalist Islam. He argued for a return to the pure and simple time of the *salaf*, and for Muslims to use *ijtihad* to deal with contemporary challenges in accordance with the Qur'an and *sunna*. Rida argued that Islamic law needed restoration and reform for Islam to return to being a central facet of people's lives. He rejected the traditional medieval legal interpretations employed by the *ulama* believing that new rules should be derived from the four jurisprudential schools (*talfiq*). See Saeed (2013: 32–33, 34–35).

9 According to Qutb, *jahiliyya* (barbarity) signifies the *hakimiyyah* (domination) of man over man, or rather the subservience to man rather than to Allah. It denotes rejection of the divinity of God and the adulation of mortals.

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3 Between a state and occupation

Surviving Israeli state-building

Introduction

To understand what motivates and drives Hamas, both as an Islamist movement and as a national liberation movement, it is necessary to appreciate both Hamas and Israel's conceptualisation of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and their relationship with each other's competing state-building efforts. Understanding these complex relationships provides the justification and motivation for Hamas's move into politics, and why it needed to implement its DRS. As noted in Chapter 1, all groups participating in politics have ideological 'red lines' where there is little likelihood for negotiation and compromise. Given the context of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, Hamas's signature 'red line' is having to negotiate with Israel, with the movement publicly opposed to any such moves under the current circumstances. Hamas also refuses to accept the legitimacy of the Israeli state, further complicating the issue (Meshaal 2013: 19–25).

Nevertheless, the willingness and ability of Hamas to negotiate and compromise with ideological rivals is one of the core indicators of the moderation process and is key to revealing the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour in this area. Despite Hamas's intransigent rhetoric on recognising and negotiating with Israel, its actual political behaviour is more ambiguous and nuanced (Gunning 2009: 195). For Hamas, the problem is how to reconcile its apparent opposition to negotiating with Israel with its move into mainstream Palestinian politics that would, by implication, necessitate some political interaction and even negotiation with the GoI, particularly concerning the operationalisation of Israel's occupation. Does it refuse outright to negotiate with Israel or are there circumstances within which this could occur? What internal and external forces influence the willingness of Hamas to shift its behaviour concerning its relationship with Israel? And if there are any shifts in its attitude towards Israel, how does Hamas explain and justify them ideologically to its constituencies?

This chapter aims to provide answers to these questions by exploring and accounting for any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour concerning these key issues. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first half of the chapter begins with a brief examination of the legal criteria for being recognised as a state. It then analyses the ideological underpinnings of Israel's occupation through an analysis

of Zionist ideology and Israel's understanding of how to manage the 'Palestinian Question.' It then provides a conceptual framework for understanding the function of Israel's occupation before concluding with an analysis of Israel's occupation in operation. This analysis demonstrates the environment confronting Palestinians and why the occupation is such a clarion call for Palestinian resistance. The second half of the chapter then analyses Hamas's justifications for its qualified opposition to the Peace Process and with having to negotiate with Israel. It also examines Hamas's reaction to Fatah's own evolving strategy concerning the Peace Process to explain the reasons for Hamas's opposition.

Map 3.1 Israel and the Occupied Territories

Source: www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/israel.pdf

When is a territory a state?

Within the context of the contest between Israelis and Palestinians over land, it is useful to examine briefly the international legal criteria for statehood to provide a touchstone for any prospective Palestinian state. The most widely accepted formula for assessing a state's status is the Montevideo Convention (1933). According to Article 1, a 'state' must meet four criteria:

1 A permanent population;
2 A defined territory;
3 A government; and
4 The capacity to enter into relations with other states.

(Avalon Project 1933: Art. 1)

A state of Palestine consisting of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem would satisfy all these criteria. First, there is a permanent Palestinian population that has continuing and historical links with the land. Second, there is a defined Palestinian territory, first outlined by the Conference of San Remo and later enshrined by Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations that established the Mandate of Palestine (see San Remo Resolution 1920; The Covenant of the League of Nations 1919: Art. 22). Palestinian territory was then redefined by the 1949 Armistice Agreements Israel signed with Jordan and Egypt. These boundaries were later reaffirmed by UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 (see Avalon Project 1949a, 1949b; UNSC 1967, 1973).

Third, the Oslo Accords (see Avalon Project 1993) formally established the PA as the administrative institution for Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Since that time, the PA has attempted, with varying degrees of success, to establish its political authority in the OPT despite the GoI limiting its scope of control severely in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Hamas being subjected to a political and economic siege, and episodic invasion in Gaza.[1] This is a crucial point in the legal debate over Palestine's status, because it highlights the importance that obtaining domestic sovereignty plays in the attainment of statehood. As Crawford (2007: 57) explains, 'international law defines "territory" . . . by reference to the extent of governmental power exercised, or capable of being exercised, with respect to some territory and population. Territorial sovereignty is not ownership of, but governing power with respect to, territory.'

Finally, the government of Palestine can maintain relations with other states through its representative offices around the world performing tasks commensurate with formal diplomatic missions, and establishing relations with host governments. Palestine also participates in various international organisations such as UNESCO, and more recently the ICC and INTERPOL.[2] Additionally, since 1995 the PA has issued passports that are accepted by numerous states, including the US, as appropriate legal documents for entry into their territory, illustrating that many in the international community recognise that Palestine exhibits

state-like qualities (Quigley 2010: 211–213). It would appear then that Palestine has what international jurists term an 'international personality,' satisfying all the requisite criteria for statehood from a legal perspective.

Nevertheless, the key consideration as to whether Palestine can be classified a state under international law is Israel's occupation.[3] Watson contends that due to the GoI's almost complete territorial control of the OPT Palestine cannot be considered a state under international law (Watson 2000: 62). However, Quigley (2010: 219–221) argues that when Israel occupied the OPT, Palestinians did not cede sovereignty to Israel; they were simply deprived of the capability of exercising sovereignty over their territory. For Palestinians to lose their sovereign rights, Israel would have to make a formal claim of sovereignty over those territories it currently occupies – something it has refrained from doing. So while the Palestinian ability to exercise territorial sovereignty in the OPT is severely impeded by Israel's occupation, it would appear as though while remaining a significant impediment to obtaining statehood, the occupation does not necessarily preclude Palestine being considered a state under international law.

In the OPT, the extent of Palestinian 'sovereignty' is determined by the Oslo II Accord (see ACPR 1995). The Accord provides a framework for the partition of space and the reorganisation of power within the OPT (Gordon 2008a: 35). The Accord divides the West Bank up into Areas A, B, and C. The PA was given full autonomy in Area A, consisting of 3% of the land and 26% of the population. It was given partial or shared autonomy in Area B, consisting of 24% of the land and 70% of the population. In Area C, accounting for the remaining 73% of the West Bank, the PA has no jurisdiction whatsoever, but retains responsibility for administering the remaining 3% of the Palestinian population (Rubenberg 2003: 67).[4] Similarly, the Gaza Strip was divided into Yellow and White Areas. Yellow Areas were the rough equivalent to Area B in the West Bank and accounted for approximately 23% of the territory. White Areas were the rough equivalent to Area A and accounted for slightly less than 10% of the territory. The remaining approximately 67% of Gaza was the equivalent to Area C in the West Bank, with the PA having no authority (Gordon 2008a: 35–36).

Nevertheless, these figures can be misleading, particularly in the West Bank. Because of Israel's occupation regime and the measures instituted by the IDF during and after the Second Intifada, neither Area A nor B is contiguous. Area A is divided into 11 sections and Area B into 120 sections. Only Area C remains contiguous (Gordon 2008a: 43; see Map 3.2). Each of these divisions created new internal boundaries within the OPT, further complicating Palestinian state-building efforts. They also created their own specific laws and regulations governing the activities of Palestinians, the scope of the PA's activities, and the strength of its institutional power (Gordon 2008a: 35).

Zionism, the occupation, and the Palestinians

Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem is now over 50 years old and its daily operation colours the lived experience of generations of Palestinians, including the leaders and members of Hamas. For Palestinians, the

occupation is an omnipresent entity that influences and controls every aspect of their lives. In many ways, understanding the vagaries and changing functions of Israel's occupation and the role it plays in Israel's state-building narrative allows for a deeper and nuanced comprehension of the factors influencing the scope, limits, and causation of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour in relation to its dealings with the Israeli state. Understanding this evolving relationship also provides for a greater understanding of the underlying forces that influence the fluctuating nature of Hamas's conflict with Fatah for control of the Palestinian resistance agenda.

The ideological driving force behind Israel's occupation and its state-building narrative is Zionism, which has been described as one of the most potent collective movements of the twentieth century (Rose 2005: 14–15). As Yigal Allon, general of the IDF and one-time acting PM of Israel, stated, 'Zionism is, in sum, the constant and unrelenting effort to realise the national and universal vision of the prophets of Israel' (Jewish Virtual Library 1975). Indeed, the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 was the culmination of the Zionist project, engendering an ideological facet to both the Israeli state and its state-building efforts.

Zionism's political guise, adopted in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was a reaction to anti-Semitism's transformation from religious persecution into political persecution. This resulted in anti-Semitism moving out of the confines of its traditional religious guise into the more potent nationalist one. The beginning of the era of mass political participation in Europe meant that European Jewry became the quintessential 'other,' transmuted into a xenophobic cause célèbre for radical political movements on the left and the right of the political spectrum (Shapira 1999: 3). Zionists came to believe that the survival of the Jewish nation was utterly dependent upon the acquisition of a territory within which Jews formed the demographic majority – a place where they would remain the dominant section of society and would be solely responsible for determining their own fate (Chowers 2012: 7).

Modern Zionism's ideological construct is thus partly nationalist, partly colonialist, and partly liberationist. The notion of 'liberation' is crucial to the construction of Zionism's narrative and it manifests itself in many ways throughout its ideological discourse. There is liberation from the past, with its attendant narratives of exile and the 'Diaspora mentality.'[5] Then there is liberation from those held responsible for the perceived passivity and timidity of Diaspora living, including the Jewish religious elite. Finally, there is liberation from the anti-Semitic injustices inflicted upon the Jewish community in Europe (Beit-Hallahmi 1993: 50).

Deeply scarred and repulsed by the ghetto experience, Zionism attempts to reconstruct Jewish history so that nothing of substance or worth is to be found from their time in exile. The Zionist meta-narrative de-legitimises and ignores everyone and everything directly and indirectly associated with the Diaspora. For Zionists, the history of Jewish life in the Diaspora is one replete with weakness, docility, and powerlessness. Zionists wanted to return an impotent European Jewry to nature and to the virtues of self-defence. The Hebrew man would replace the feeble

and apolitical Diaspora Jew, with sole Jewish sovereignty over Eretz-Israel considered the panacea for the ordeal of exile (Hurvitz & Zeevi 2014: 69–70).[6] Therefore, Zionism seeks to present itself as the counterculture to the Diasporic Jew, and crucially as their political and national redemption (Hurvitz & Zeevi 2014: 69). For Zionists, Jewish identity does not come from its experiences in the Diaspora but from its time in Eretz-Israel. According to the Zionist narrative the Romans expelled the Jewish people from their traditional lands, meaning that they did not leave voluntarily (Beit-Hallahmi 1993: 51–52). This interpretation establishes an incontrovertible and enduring link between the Jewish nation in the present day with its historic past, a past where exclusive Jewish sovereignty existed over Eretz-Israel (Piterberg 2008: 94).

The yearning to regain their ancestral homeland, resulting in the renormalisation of the Jewish experience, forms another powerful and formative aspect of modern Zionist ideology (Piterberg 2008: 94). In the Zionist narrative the return of the Jewish nation to Eretz-Israel means redemption, not just for the nation but for the land itself. For Zionists, the two entities are symbiotic: Jews cannot feel completely fulfilled while separated from Eretz-Israel and 'the Land' cannot be separated from its traditional Jewish inhabitants. The Zionist narrative emphasises that only when the two are reunited can each gain from and give benefit to each other. Therefore, the Zionist slogan of 'A land without a people to a people without a land' is not akin to the concept of *terra nullius*, but rather an attempt to cement their ancestral proclamation that Eretz-Israel logically belongs to the Jewish nation (Piterberg 2008: 94). Importantly though, this reappraisal of Jewish history, with its emphasis on Jewish sovereignty over Eretz-Israel, was an important first step in de-legitimising any attempt by Palestinians at making any similar sovereign claims in the future (Shapira 1999: 42).

Zionism vs. the Palestinians

The function of Israel's occupation is a manifestation of Zionism's failure to consider seriously what the role and status of Palestinians would be in the new Jewish state (Lustick 1980: 28). A prime reason for this failure can be attributed to how Zionists perceive Palestinians in relation to their state-building agenda, particularly in the ideologically important areas of Judea and Samaria. This perception has its genesis partly in the philosophies of one of the early internal Zionist movements, known as Revisionist Zionism, which founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky around 1935 (Cook 2006: 3). Revisionism arose from feelings within the Zionist movement that a fresh political approach was required to address the 'Palestinian Question' (Shavit 1988: 30). Jabotinsky argued that the notion that a Jewish state would naturally evolve through patience and persistence was a fallacy. Unlike the Zionist leadership, Jabotinsky acknowledged the existence and legitimacy of an Arab national movement and that movement's desire to achieve independence. He reasoned that just as European Jewry desired a separate Jewish state, so too must Palestinians desire a separate state of their own. However, Jabotinsky believed that as the Arabs had plenty of land and the Jews none, then the cause of the Jews was

more pressing (Jabotinsky 1926, cited in Shapira 1999: 157). Jabotinsky adopted a zero-sum attitude towards the actions of the Zionist movement. If it was by necessity a colonising movement, then it should accept the fact and carry out its mission regardless of any opposition from the indigenous inhabitants (Brenner 1984: 74–75).

Prophetically, Jabotinsky realised that given the stakes involved for both nations, there could be only one winner. Consequently, there could never be a lasting negotiated settlement or compromise that could ever meet the needs of both peoples, which was complete sovereignty over Mandatory Palestine. Expressing a European sense of cultural, societal, and political superiority, Jabotinsky reasoned that because the Jewish nation was more advanced than Palestinian Arabs in every sense it was more entitled to the land. It was because he realised that Palestinians would never willingly acquiesce to the establishment of a Jewish state that he believed that they must be confronted with a powerful fait accompli. Consequently, 'The only way to reach an agreement [with the Arabs] is an Iron Wall – that is to say, strength and security in Eretz-Israel whereby no Arab influence will be able to undermine its foundation' (Sariged 1999: 102).

The 'Iron Wall' was a metaphor for the systematic, but calibrated, use of force to compel Palestinians to compromise over their acceptance of Jewish sovereign claims to territory in Mandatory Palestine based on the Palestinians' acceptance of reality, not rights (Lustick 2008: 30). The concept of a wall was intended to demonstrate to Palestinians that they would never be allowed to interfere in Zionism's principal goal of establishing a sovereign Jewish state (Shavit 1988: 253–256). Despite Jabotinsky's attitude, he did not preclude any future agreement with Palestinians. However, any such an agreement would only come after the 'Iron Wall' had crushed all Palestinian yearning for sovereign independence, forcing them to approach a victorious, but magnanimous, Jewish state to negotiate a cessation to hostilities. Until that point arrived, Jabotinsky reasoned that no negotiation with Palestinians of any sort could, or should, be entered into (Sariged 1999: 104–106).

Jabotinsky's conceptualisation added a security facet to Zionism's existing historical and theological facets concerning the raison d'être of the Israeli state. This new narrative resonated with all sides of Israeli politics. This was especially so with members of the conservative Likud Party that was founded in 1973 by Menachem Begin and based its ideological position on Jabotinsky's arguments (Naor 2015: 470). When Begin became PM in 1977, Likud released its policy platform, declaring:

> The right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel is eternal and indisputable and is linked with the right to security and peace; therefore, Judea and Samaria will not be handed to any foreign administration; between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty.
>
> A plan which relinquishes parts of western Eretz-Israel, undermines our right to the country, unavoidably leads to the establishment of a 'Palestinian

> State,' jeopardises the security of the Jewish population, endangers the existence of the State of Israel, and frustrates any prospect of peace.
>
> (Jewish Virtual Library 1977)

Likud would become the dominant political force in Israeli politics, with conservative governments including Likud leading Israel for 32 of the past 41 years. In turn, this had ramifications for how these governments interpreted and reacted to Palestinian resistance and state-building efforts. Likud's ideological treatises refashioned Israel's narrative concerning Palestinian resistance and state-building efforts. Within this narrative, Palestinian resistance is not aimed at achieving an independent Palestinian state but at preventing a Jewish one. This allowed successive Israeli governments to reframe the raison d'être of Israel's occupation. In this reformulated narrative, the occupation was not the act of an aggressor who had conquered territory not legally theirs, but that of a defender who had occupied territory that would be used by a belligerent adversary as a base to threaten the ongoing security of the Israeli state (Naor 2015: 467). Ipso facto, the occupation was and is essential, not just to protect the Israeli state as a sovereign entity, but to protect the idea of an Israeli state as a territory controlled exclusively by Jews for Jews. This reframing also meant that successive Israeli governments have been able to effectively legitimate Israel's occupational politics through ethical principles and to refashion its policy narrative accordingly (Abulof 2014: 2653–2654). Just as importantly, it has enabled these governments to successfully de-legitimate any Palestinian claims for statehood as being the antithesis of a sovereign state of Israel.

Understanding Israel's occupation regime

Azoulay and Ophir (2013: 209) contend that to appreciate fully the occupation's vagaries and operationalisation it is necessary to understand the basis of the Israeli state. They explain that the 1948 Israeli state was the culmination of three state projects that were woven together to form the Israeli occupation regime that existed until 1967:

1. A majoritarian project aimed at achieving a Jewish majority through Jewish immigration and Arab emigration (forced and voluntary), and the exclusion of non-Jews from most governing institutions;
2. A colonial project meant to take over vast areas; to found new, exclusively Jewish towns and villages; and to reduce the Arab presence throughout these areas; and
3. A destruction project meant to demolish large parts of the Palestinian habitat, annihilate traces of civil Jewish-Arab relations, reduce the physical and symbolic presence of the Palestinians, build over ruins of their homes, and change the country's landscape and infrastructure.

Soon after the capture of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967, the GoI attempted to provide validity to the occupation by formulating a narrative within

which it could be recognised under international law. In this legal clarification, the occupation of the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula were different from the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The former were parts of internationally recognised sovereign states – Syria and Egypt, respectively. The latter were not. They were entities artificially created by the 1948–1949 ceasefire agreement with Jordan, with neither being recognised internationally as parts of the sovereign Jordanian state. Within this legal narrative the state of Israel had simply supplanted the Jordanian state as the state that had established legal control of the territory to the exclusion of all other claims (Naor 2015: 467).

With the occupation provided with a veneer of legality, in the post-1967 era it evolved into a combination of distinct yet overlapping ruling apparatuses overseen by the GoI: one operating predominantly inside the OPT and the other operating predominantly inside the Israeli state (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 183). This means that Israeli occupation should be perceived as a separate, uniquely characterised form of political rule or regime (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 201).[7] Since its establishment, this regime has intensified and solidified into a unique, rigid, sustainable system of government, a regime that reproduces itself and imposes constraints on all governmental actions, plans, and initiatives in its purview (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 208).

Covertly, the regime establishes numerous interlocking control mechanisms consisting of state institutions, legal devices, bureaucratic mechanisms, and physical structures that produce new modes of behaviour, habits, interests, tastes, and aspirations among Palestinians (Gordon 2007: 456). Overtly it conducts house demolitions, curfews, settlement construction, administrative detention, deportation, closure of education facilities, disconnection of electricity and water, and targeted assassinations (Darcy 2003: 57). The occupational regime creates a situation whereby Palestinians in the OPT are governed differently from Israelis. The law is administered differently, and Palestinians in the OPT are subjected to the repressive arm of the Israeli state in dissimilar ways to Israelis. This creates a situation whereby Palestinians in the OPT are excluded from Israeli consciousness because they are both non-Jews and non-citizens (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 204, 208).

Gordon (2007: 464) argues that Israel's occupation regime involves regulating and managing the territories' economic, medical, education, and political institutions as well as the inclinations, identity, and behaviour of every Palestinian. Their only recourse against this regulation is limited to demonstrations, petitioning the Israeli High Court, diplomatic negotiations, or armed resistance (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 204). The occupational regime accentuates and perpetuates violence, which in turn legitimises and reinforces its asymmetric status quo (Bornstein 2008: 107). Ross (2014: 121) argues that most Israelis believe that maintaining the current asymmetry is necessary to ensure that their future remains bearable, despite increasing international dissatisfaction and occasional opprobrium at the occupation's inherent inequities.

Since 1967, Israel's occupation regime has employed two types of occupational principles. The first was the Colonial Principle, which is a form of government

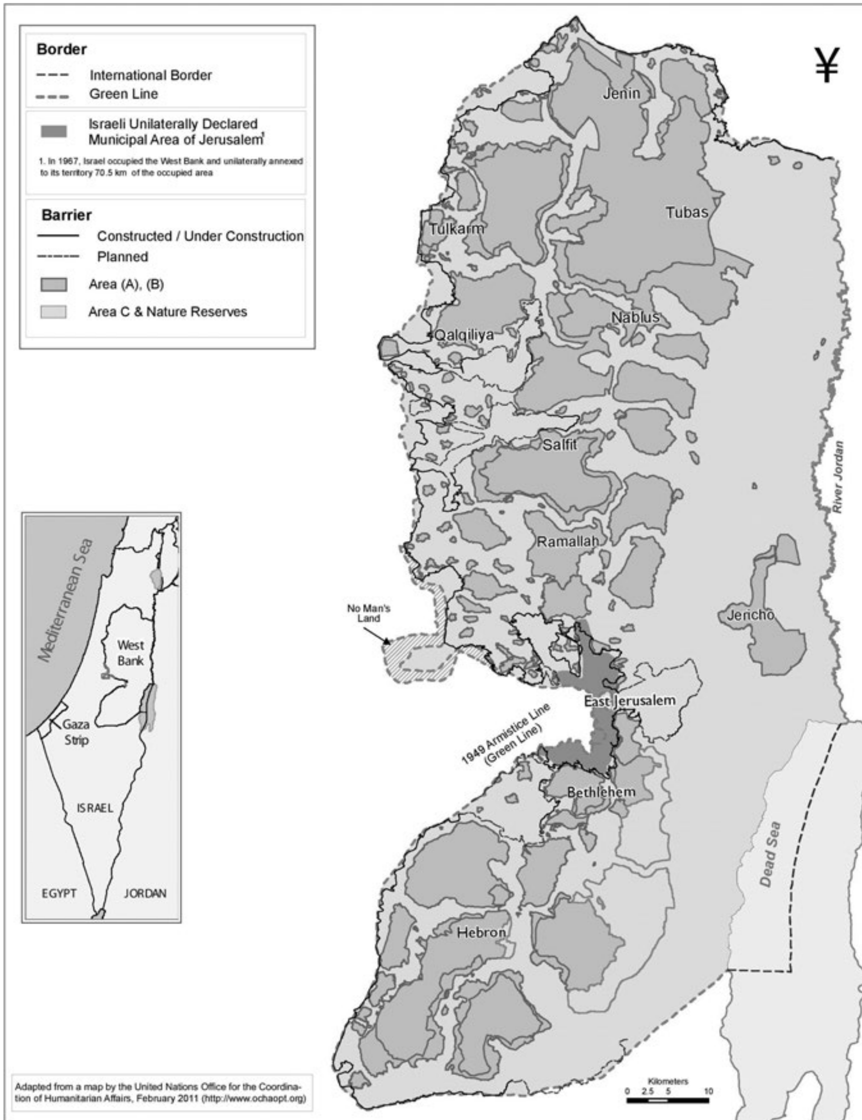
whereby the coloniser attempts to manage the lives of the colonised inhabitants while exploiting the captured territory's natural resources (in this case land, water, and labour) (Gordon 2008b: 199). This was the dominant strategy in the first decades of occupation, with the GoI instituting simultaneous policies intended to separate Palestinians from their land without integrating them into Israeli society (Gordon 2007: 459). Israel wanted the land but not the Palestinians that came with it. To enforce the Colonial Principle, the GoI imposed a disciplinary regime in the OPT designed to impose homogeneity among Palestinians that would regiment daily life to increase economic output while concomitantly enervating their political perspicacity (Gordon 2007: 462).

This principle lasted until the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987, when increased levels of Palestinian violence forced the GoI to adopt a fresh strategy. The implementation of the Oslo Accords in 1993 signalled that the GoI had embraced a new approach to occupation: the Separation Principle. This approach changed the occupation regime's power structures whereby the GoI transferred the occupation's daily administration to Palestinians while maintaining hegemony over the extraction of resources through the control of Palestinian space. Under this principle, the GoI rescinds responsibility for the daily lives of Palestinians but retains the same, or even increased, levels of control over every aspect of Palestinian life (Gordon 2008a: 34–35, 38). Importantly, the inherent segregation of the Separation Principle does not mean that Palestinians are superfluous. As Azoulay and Ophir (2013: 221) aptly observe, 'Everything separated remains inside; nothing is totally removed, distanced or annihilated. Separation is dynamic, ongoing, and continuous.'

The GoI operationalises its Separation Principle by implementing a 'Closure Policy' that involves myriad interlocking physical and bureaucratic structures and obstacles designed to regulate and closely monitor Palestinians' freedom of movement to access everyday facets of existence such as food, education, health, employment, religious, and familial needs within the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Hass 2002: 6–7). These restrictions are in stark contrast to the freedom of movement accorded to Israelis, who can move without restriction in and out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem without encountering any aspect of the regime (UNOCHA 2007: 58–60). The cumulative effect of over 50 years of Israeli occupation has left Palestinians without a private space to shelter and without a public space that is not strewn with the literal and figurative ruins of their previous existence. In the contested areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the 'destruction project' is used as a tool to illustrate vividly the temporariness of the Palestinian presence on land Israel considers its own (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 217–218).

Separation in the West Bank

Having dealt with the occupation's ideological underpinnings, it is necessary to see how Israel's occupation is operationalised in the OPT. This is key to understanding why Palestinians resist, and why they accord Hamas legitimacy as it struggles against the constraints of Israel's occupation. It also provides insight into



Map 3.2 The West Bank

Source: http://passia.org/maps/view/75

why Hamas opposes the Peace Process and remains obdurate towards the formal recognition of the Israeli state.

As noted earlier, the GoI enforces its Separation Principle in the West Bank through its 'Closure Policy.' This policy uses various occupational structures as the primary method of segregating Palestinians and Israelis while simultaneously

entrenching Israeli sovereignty. These structures consist of checkpoints, partial checkpoints, earth mounds, roadblocks, trenches, road gates, road barriers, and earth walls (OCHAOPT 2012: 38–39). A 2012 UN Report noted that in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, there were 542 obstacles including 61 checkpoints, of which 35 are permanently manned. This figure does not include the Security Barrier, a further 112 obstacles in the Hebron area, and an average 410 so-called flying checkpoints deployed each month that operate for several hours a day. These are designed to control access to East Jerusalem, Palestinian towns and cities, and Israel (OCHAOPT 2012: 32). Bornstein (2008: 121) observed that 'checkpoints have created a more circumscribed form of control, imprisoning West Bankers . . . in their villages and towns, and rupturing the social and economic fabric in which they live.'

While many of these structures were constructed during the Second Intifada, the GoI now employs them to divide Palestinians, confiscate their lands, and vitiate their livelihoods (Bornstein 2008: 121). Tilley (2010: 5) suggests that the principal goal of these structures, in combination with other GoI measures, is to induce such misery and degradation upon Palestinians that a 'soft transfer' emerges: a kind of self-induced mass emigration whereby Palestinians will decide to move away from their ancestral lands to live more peaceful and productive lives.

The Oslo II Accords (1995) marked the entrenchment of the Separation Principle and legitimised the West Bank's ghettoisation. As noted earlier, the West Bank was divided up into Areas A, B, and C (Rubenberg 2003: 67). If West Bankers refrain from moving, they can remain in these hermetic ghettos constructed by the GoI and have virtually no contact with the occupation regime. If they wish to go to work or the market, visit friends and/or relatives, or access government services in the OPT, then they encounter the regime's occupational matrix that regulates all movement using these checkpoints, separation barriers, seam zones, trenches, and roadblocks (Gordon 2008b: 211–212).

Palestinian movement within the West Bank is regulated and restricted further by Israeli officials issuing Palestinians with different types of passes – some allow the holder to stay overnight in Israel, some require the holder to return to the OPT by dusk, and a small minority allow the holder access to Israel for a month. The numbers of passes granted varies monthly with no explanation given by Israeli authorities for the difference. This means that any Palestinian travelling from the West Bank to Israel for work, for example, cannot be consistently guaranteed a pass (Hass 2002: 7–8). As Hass (2002: 8) writes, 'an entire society [is] stratified and segmented on the basis of whether one [has] access and in what portion, to the "privilege" of freedom of movement.'

The most overt sign of the Separation Principle is the Separation Wall. It was built as an obstacle and includes a system of fences, an anti-vehicle component, patrol roads, and a trace path on either side to disclose the footprints of infiltrators, plus warning and surveillance systems (B'Tselem 2012a: 13–14). Despite the GoI claiming that the 'Wall' protects the Israeli state, it serves to separate Palestinians from Palestinians, forcing their increased movement that results in increased contact with the GoI's occupation regime. The Wall's route is the result of a

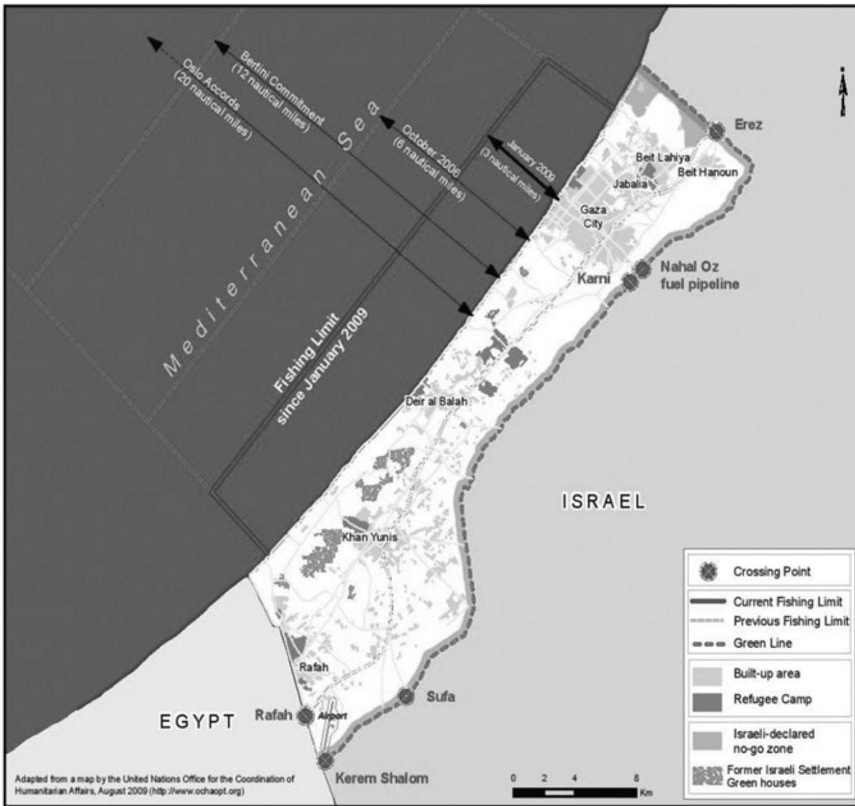
multiplicity of technical, legal, and political conflicts over territory, demography, water, archaeology, and real estate, becoming emblematic of the occupation regime itself (Gordon 2008b: 213). B'Tselem (2012b) estimates that approximately 500,000 Palestinians are affected to some degree by the construction of the Wall. The Wall's route continues the occupation regime's policy of cleansing Israeli space of any Palestinian presence, meaning the Wall's role is to attempt to establish separation *in* the OPT, not *from* the OPT (Azoulay & Ophir 2013: 222).

The GoI also utilises West Bank settlements as an integral part of their occupational regime. When Begin assumed the prime ministership in 1977, the number of West Bank settlements grew exponentially, with future PM Ariel Sharon given carriage of coordinating their expansion. Sharon saw the settlements as both strategic military assets and as a way for Israel to reclaim Judea and Samaria (Aronson 1990: 67). In keeping with his military philosophy, Sharon ordered settlements be constructed on the high ground. They would abut existing Palestinian communities, expropriate their land, and contribute to the pressures associated with the 'soft transfer' of Palestinians (Smith 2007: 414). Sharon's settlement plan created 'security fingers' that assisted in separating Palestinian communities, preventing contiguous Palestinian territory in the West Bank (Aronson 1990: 71) (see Map 3.2). According to the latest figures supplied by B'Tselem, at the end of 2015 there were a little over 588,000 settlers in the West Bank. Of these, an estimated 382,900 settlers were in the West Bank proper, located in 127 government sanctioned settlements, and approximately 100 settlement outposts of contested legality. The remaining 205,200 settlers were in and around East Jerusalem (B'Tselem 2017). The scale of settler immigration into the West Bank subverts the possibility of creating a Palestinian state in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 (Gordon 2008b: 117).

Separation in Gaza

While the GoI's overall aim in the West Bank is to segregate Palestinians from Israelis while simultaneously expropriating Palestinian land, its strategy towards Gaza takes on a belligerent tone. This is a by-product of both the GoI's actions taken against Palestinians during the Second Intifada and Hamas's 2006 election victory. During this period, the GoI, supported by the international community, implemented a range of political and military measures to combat the levels of extreme violence aimed at Israeli citizens (Dowty 2012: 177–178).[8]

After the IDF's withdrawal in August 2005, Gaza became surrounded by two sets of buffer zones – one 500 metres wide and the other 150 metres wide – in which movement is severely restricted due to IDF warning fire (see Map 3.3). The GoI uses these zones in a similar fashion to the Separation Wall, in that it does not seek to excise Gaza from Israel, merely to segregate and confine Gazans, thereby controlling their access to Israel. The GoI does not consider Gaza as 'occupied,' despite the IDF commanding all entry and exits points into Gaza, the sea space off the Gazan coast, and dominating its air space. The GoI also maintains the right to use military force against targets in Gaza as required. What the GoI accomplished with its segregation was to make the PA, and later Hamas's government,



Gaza Strip Crossing Points:

Erez:	Open six days for international aid workers, medical and humanitarian cases.
Nahal Oz:	Partially open on five days a week for limited types of fuel.
Karni:	Closed since 11 June 2007. Grain conveyor belt operational three days a week. Cement lane completely closed since 29 October 2008.
Sufa:	According to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) no longer a crossing point (last open on 12 September 2008).
Kerem Shalom:	Open six days a week for limited movement of authorized goods.
Rafah:	Open on ad hoc basis.

Map 3.3 The Gaza Strip

Source: http://passia.org/maps/view/52

responsible for administering Gaza and for the provision of basic services to its citizens, while vitiating any Palestinian government's ability to realise this problematic task (Smith 2007: 531).

Hamas's 2006 electoral victory altered the political and strategic relationship between Israel and Gazans appreciably. While some hailed the victory as an

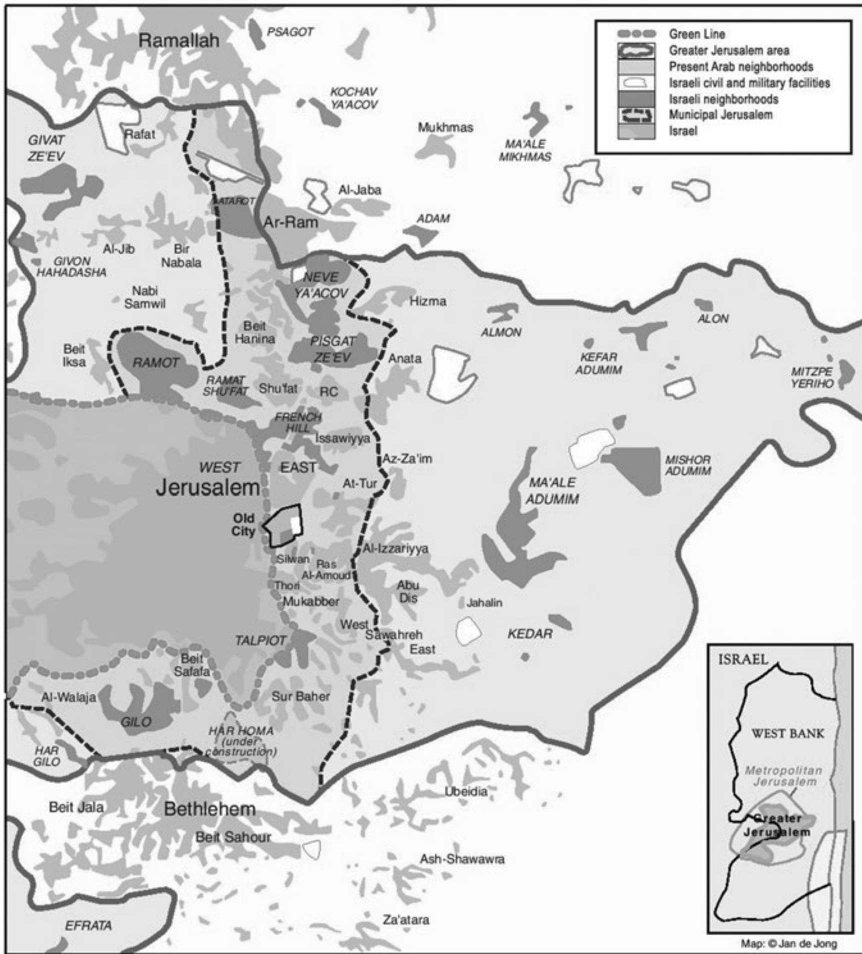
important moment in Palestinian democracy, paradoxically it legitimised the economic, political, and cultural segregation of Gaza by Israel and the Quartet on the grounds of ensuring Israel's security (Tamimi 2009: 225). The GoI adopted an enhanced version of its Closure Policy by blocking all forms of movement into and out of Gaza. It stopped all cross-border traffic, banned all exports, and prevented Palestinian labourers from crossing into Israel for work. It also severely restricted the importing of goods and materials. Only the basic necessities such as wheat, flour, frozen meat and vegetables, dairy products, rice, vegetables, fruits, vegetable oil, and fuel supplies are allowed through (see Figures 5 and 6) (ICG 2008: 1). Additionally, all money transfers from Arab or Islamic countries were blocked, causing a significant deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the territory (PCHR 2007: 7).

After the June 2007 schism, the GoI imposed further restrictions on imports (see Figures 5 and 6). These severe restrictions mean that food security for Gazans remains tenuous at best, with the WFP noting that 50% of Gazans are food insecure (WFP 2017). Because of Gaza's dense urbanisation, the export of goods and labour is the only viable method for providing a sustainable income. The closure of the crossings and the imposition of the buffer zones mean that most Gazans are also prevented from accessing any available agricultural land and gaining sustainable employment. Fishing is now limited to just three nautical miles from the coast and along an 18-nautical-mile corridor, significantly affecting the prolonged viability of this traditional industry (UNSCO 2012: 13).

The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate rapidly, with grave concerns held by international aid organisations concerning the ongoing water and electricity supply crises. According to a May 2017 UNSCO Report, Gazans suffer from severe electricity shortages, experiencing blackouts for between 12 and 18 hours a day (UNSCO 2017: 18). These electricity shortages undermine the functioning and provision of basic services such as healthcare and water treatment. The latter is particularly problematic, because Gaza obtains its water from an aquifer and needs electricity to run the pumps to access the water. According to the deputy head of the PWA, Mazen al-Banna, most Gazans have access to just 60 litres of clean water a day. In some areas of Gaza, this is reduced to just 29 litres because of broken water pumps and lack of electricity. To add further cause for concern, the increased use of the aquifer because of population growth has led to seawater seeping into it, making its salinity levels eight times the level recommended by the WHO. Al-Banna also noted that raw sewage flowing into the sea was similarly contaminating Gaza's water supply, adding to the already parlous health situation (Middle East Monitor 2017).

Separation in East Jerusalem

The GoI's Separation Principle has greatly affected Palestinian life in East Jerusalem. For Israelis and Palestinians, sovereignty over Jerusalem is synonymous with state legitimacy: the right to exist as a nation and a state, and the fulfilment of their respective nationalist aspirations. So central is the association between Jerusalem and legitimacy that after its reunification in 1967 many in the GoI believed that it



Map 3.4 Jerusalem

Source: http://passia.org/maps/view/63

would lead directly to peace with their Arab neighbours, and with Palestinians. Sovereignty over Jerusalem serves to affirm the Israeli state's power and resolve to enforce its legitimacy, and sends a message to the Arab world that they must reconcile with the fact that Israel will never relinquish control over the city (Aronson 1990: 10–14).

Historically, Jerusalem has been the focal point for Palestinian political, civil, economic, religious, and cultural life. Various Palestinian institutions and charitable organisations located within the city are responsible for providing social services, not just to Jerusalemites but also to Palestinians throughout the West Bank.

However, since 1993 the GoI has circumvented and destroyed any organised Palestinian political presence within East Jerusalem. While the PA remains the largest employer of Jerusalemites, its ability to implement its policies and undertake the provision of social services has been hampered appreciably (ICG 2012d: 2–4). Consequently, Palestinians in East Jerusalem face hardships and deprivations concerning their continued residency status, access to health and education facilities, and the ability to plan and develop their communities (UNSCO 2012: 10).

With Jerusalem as part of the Israeli state, the GoI can implement its majoritarian and colonial projects. While the West Bank and Gaza Strip became subject to Israeli military administration after 1967, the reunited city and 28 neighbouring Palestinian villages were assimilated quickly into the Israeli state, expanding the city's environs by about 70 km2 (Gordon 2007: 457; ICG 2012d: 3). Israelis greeted Jerusalem's reunification with quasi-messianic fervour. Not only did the GoI seek to absorb the city into the Israeli state, but they also set about implementing policies that rendered any future division gradually more difficult, expensive, and improbable (ICG 2012c: 4). In 1980 the Knesset passed the 'Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel' Act (The Knesset 1980). The law addressed concerns about the prospect of negotiations between Arab leaders and the GoI resulting in the division of Jerusalem (Zank 2016: 21–22). The Act claimed that Jerusalem was the capital of Israel and that its unity needed to be preserved. Importantly the Act was vague as to exactly where the geographical boundaries of Jerusalem were, allowing successive governments to incorporate additional territory into Jerusalem's municipal boundaries (Zank 2016: 27). Of most import was the fact that the Act was intended as a legal instrument to assert Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem without having to integrate the Palestinian population into Israeli society (Zank 2016: 28).

As well as altering Jerusalem's territorial character, the GoI also set about reshaping its demographic make-up, aiming for a population ratio of 70% Jewish to 30% Palestinian (ICG 2012c: 4). Since 1967, the GoI has given permission for the construction of numerous settlements surrounding Jerusalem, expropriating Palestinian designated land (see Map 3.4). While the overall number of Israelis residing in Jerusalem itself is falling and the number of Palestinians increasing, the number of Israelis residing in areas captured in 1967 has ballooned. In 1972, they constituted just 4% of the population; in 1993, it was 25%; and in 2012 it stood at 40%, meaning that an estimated 80% of all settlers reside within a 25 km radius of Jerusalem (Choshen & Korach 2014: 13; ICG 2012d: 4). According to a UN report, between 1987 and 2004 the area covered by Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem increased by 143% (UNOCHA 2007: 78–80).

The settlements contribute significantly to the restriction of movement for Palestinians into and out of the city, predominantly through their associated infrastructure of bypass roads, checkpoints, and tunnels (OCHAOPT 2011: 52–53). As can be seen in Map 3.4, there is an inner ring of settlements located generally within the municipal borders and an outer ring incorporated into Israel via the Separation Wall. The inner ring of settlements is in densely populated Palestinian areas, with the stated aims of ensuring that their contiguity is fragmented and pre-empting any

negotiated settlement between the GoI and the PA from making East Jerusalem the capital of the Palestinian state. In East Jerusalem, the GoI's Separation Principle not only segregates Palestinians and Israelis, but it also separates Palestinian Jerusalemites from access to basic services and potentially from the rest of the West Bank. The GoI's continued segregation policies have produced what has been termed a failed city with a dismantled Palestinian leadership, moribund political scene, infrastructure in disrepair, social fabric asunder, and unsafe streets (ICG 2012d: 28).

Hamas, *hudnas*, and Palestinian statehood

Now that Israel's occupational regime has been explained both from ideological and operational perspectives, it is now necessary to link this to Hamas's perception of the contentious issues of participating in the Peace Process and recognising the Israeli state. It will then be possible to understand how Israel's occupation influences the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour in these two policy areas.

For Hamas, the goal of establishing a Palestinian state is tied to its contention on the legitimacy of Israeli state. Hamas views the Israeli state as a European colonial enclave occupying Islamic land, perpetuating regional Western hegemony, and preventing the *umma*'s revival (Tamimi 2009: 157). Hamas's Charter proclaims that Palestine is an Islamic *waqf*, or religious endowment, consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgement Day (Hamas Covenant 1988: Art. 11). Such a stipulation infers that no one has the right to forfeit sovereignty over any part of Palestine. Gunning (2009: 199) notes that the inclusion of the *waqf* concept makes any Israeli appropriation of land in the West Bank an attack not just on Palestinians but also on Islam itself.

In 2000, a Hamas memo proclaimed, 'Hamas considers the conflict with the Zionist project a civilizational and existential conflict that cannot be ended without eliminating its cause, which is the establishment of the racist colonial Zionist entity in the land of Palestine' (Tamimi 2009: 278). As noted previously, this appreciation makes the notion of an independent Palestine simultaneously an inspiration and an aspiration for Hamas (Sen 2015: 211). However, this contentious position should be reconciled with the political reality that there is no chance of achieving an independent Palestinian state to the extent envisaged by this utopian rhetoric.

As will be described in more detail in Chapter 4, after Hamas's 2006 election victory it became vulnerable to strident and politically damaging criticism over its lack of a firm policy position concerning its vision for a future Palestinian state, and whether it would participate in any negotiations with Israel. Since that time, Hamas's leadership has attempted to shift its narrative by adopting more pragmatic policy positions that it can justify politically to its various constituencies while remaining within its existing ideological framework. To accomplish this, Hamas began by separating its narrative concerning its trenchant and unwavering opposition to Israeli occupation from its evolving and increasingly nuanced narrative concerning its position on any future Palestinian state. Where once Hamas saw the

end of Israeli occupation as being synonymous with the liberation of all of Palestine, it began to divide this issue up into two distinct, yet complementary, objectives. The first is a long-term utopian view, where Hamas continues to argue against the Israeli state's legitimacy and advocates for the restitution of a sovereign Palestine from the 'river to the sea.' The second acknowledges current political realities, with Hamas advocating a short to medium-term view of accepting the notion of a truncated Palestinian state based on those territories Israel conquered in 1967 (Caridi 2012: 150–151).

The import of these subtle distinctions is borne out by the 2017 policy document (Hamas 2017). During the announcement, Meshaal (al-Jazeera 2017) stated,

> Hamas considers the establishment of a Palestinian state, sovereign and complete, on the basis of the 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital and the provisions for all the refugees to return to their homeland is an agreeable form that has won consensus among all the movement members.

This was not the first time that Hamas had made such a dramatic concession. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, Hamas made a similar announcement in the lead-up to the signing of the Mecca Agreement in 2007 (Mecca Agreement 2007). Nevertheless, the distinction between then and now is that for the first time, a truncated Palestinian state became a central pillar of Hamas's ideological narrative rather than simply a policy position.

Nevertheless, Hamas still refused to relinquish its desire for a Palestinian state from 'the river to the sea.' Here the 2017 policy document neatly encapsulates Hamas's evolving narrative concerning its vision of a future Palestinian state:

> Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts. Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus.
>
> (Hamas 2017)

What Hamas appears to be saying is that while it refuses to relinquish its long-term organisational goal of the restitution of Palestine from 'the river to the sea,' it is willing to place this desire in abeyance and support the establishment of a truncated Palestinian state for the sake of national consensus. While this position may appear Janus-faced, by crafting its narrative in such a way means that Hamas can officially adopt a more pragmatic and politically expedient, medium-term position. This generally reflects the position of many Palestinians, is broadly acceptable to

the international community, and is reflective of international law concerning any future Palestinian state. Importantly, this can be done without making any potentially ruinous ideological compromises by relinquishing its quest for a Palestinian state in its entirety.

One of the ways that Hamas can justify this strategy ideologically is by proposing a *hudna* with Israel. A *hudna* is a legally binding truce recognised in Islamic jurisprudence concerning the cessation of hostilities between adversaries for an agreed period. It can be long or short, depending upon what the relevant parties consent to. The notion of a *hudna* is linked to modernist interpretations of defensive *jihad* that views it as a strategic mechanism for regulating the conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims (Milton-Edwards & Crooke 2004: 297). Once a *hudna* is established, its terms are considered sacred, becoming a religious duty for Muslims (Tamimi 2009: 156–159). On several occasions, Hamas has offered the GoI the opportunity of entering a *hudna* of varying lengths from 10 to 30 years, though Israel has declined every time (Hroub 2010: 56–57).

Hamas uses the concept of a *hudna* to differentiate its strategy from that of Fatah's. A *hudna* only calls for the cessation of hostilities for a predetermined time. It does not amount to a peace treaty with all its attendant concessions. Hamas argues that any *hudna* with Israel would not mean that it has abandoned *jihad* against the Israeli state but merely has placed it into abeyance (Hroub 2010: 56–57). Instructively, any *hudna* would provide Hamas with the jurisprudential justification to cease advocating for Israel's destruction without having to recognise Israel's legitimacy. Free from having to liberate Palestine, Hamas could then concentrate on shaping Palestinian politics and legislation (Gunning 2009: 235). This rationale enables Hamas to attack Fatah's integral role in negotiating the Oslo Accords and participating in the subsequent Peace Process negotiations.

There are many incentives for Hamas to adopt such a pragmatic position. First, Hamas wants to demonstrate that it can craft a political narrative that respects the differences in Palestinian public opinion concerning the Peace Process. As Figures 3 and 4 illustrate, support for the Peace Process in Gaza and the West Bank are remarkably different. In Gaza, support has been progressively waning since 2010. However, in the West Bank, where most Palestinians reside, support for the Peace Process has proved surprisingly resilient. Because Hamas does not concern itself solely with the political situation in Gaza to the exclusion of the rest of the OPT, it needs to ensure that its narrative appeals to all Palestinians.

Second, in the wake of its unexpected election victory, Hamas's advocacy of a truncated state was necessary to assuage the fears of the international community. Most of the international community accept the legitimacy of the Israeli state along the Green Line defined by the 1949 Ceasefire Agreements, and later legitimised by UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. Concurrently, the UNGA and the UNSC recognise that the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza are under Israeli occupation. While the international community are willing to work with Palestinians to reach a mutually acceptable deal to implement a peace treaty, they would never countenance anything that might result in the destruction of the Israeli state. In the face

of US and Israeli intransigence after its 2006 election victory, Hamas recognised the importance of international support, especially from the Europeans.

Finally, Hamas's acceptance of a truncated state is different from that of Fatah's. While Hamas nominally accepts this as a short- to medium-term goal, they argue that the borders of this interim state must be along the 1949 ceasefire lines. This puts it at odds with Fatah's acceptance of a process of mutually agreed land swaps that would enable Israel to retain existing West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements in return for ceding sovereignty over land elsewhere.[9] Hamas's progressively shifting narrative justifies its continuing resistance to the ceding of any further Palestinian land while simultaneously painting Fatah's negotiating position as weak and ultimately harmful to the cause of Palestinian statehood. As Meshaal (2008, cited in Rabbani 2008: 80) states, Hamas demands, 'A state *on*, and not *within*, the 1967 borders. On the borders of 4 June 1967, including Jerusalem, [and] the right of return, with full sovereignty, and without settlements.'

Intriguingly, any acceptance by Hamas of a truncated Palestine would by definition amount to the de facto acknowledgement of the state of Israel. However, Meshaal (2013: 25–26) explains that there is a clear difference between acknowledging the existence of an Israeli state and the formal process of recognising an Israeli state under international law. For Hamas, any legal recognition would legitimise *al-naqbah*, the 1967 war, and continued Israeli occupation, without any Israeli reciprocity concerning the recognition of Palestinian rights, particularly the right of return and the right to self-determination. This objection is one that all Palestinians can immediately identify with and goes to the very heart of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. As Meshaal (2013: 27) explains,

> Our legitimacy derives from the Palestinian people; the ballot box, Palestinian democracy, the legitimacy of the struggle, the sacrifices of the resistance and our Arab, and Islamic roots. What we strive for is the recognition of Palestinian rights; the right of our nation to freedom, self-determination and an end to the Israeli occupation.

Hamas and the Peace Process – between principle and pragmatism

The arguments surrounding the potential for the Peace Process to achieve an independent Palestinian state are at the core of Hamas's contest with Fatah. If Fatah is successful in negotiating Palestinian statehood, their legitimacy and political authority in the OPT would be enhanced exponentially. If its efforts concerning the Peace Process are unsuccessful, the converse is true. The contest between Fatah and Hamas is therefore strongly rooted in their duelling narratives concerning Palestinian statehood and the Peace Process.

Anecdotally, any decrease in support for the Peace Process assists Hamas's narrative of opposing the negotiation process in its current form. Conversely, any increase in support benefits Fatah's strategic narrative of a diplomatic resolution to Palestinian self-determination. Nevertheless, Hamas's policy narrative

concerning the Peace Process must be cognisant of the difference in public support for the Peace Process between Gaza and the West Bank (see Figures 3 and 4). Consequently, Hamas's policy narrative concerning the Peace Process is shifting and becoming more nuanced. This continues Hamas's process of separating its resistance to Israeli occupation from its evolving position on a future Palestinian state.

Because of the strident criticism levelled against it in 2006, Hamas has come to accept the need for a negotiating framework or forum within which negotiations with Israel concerning the establishment of a Palestinian state could take place. However, Hamas remains opposed to any actual negotiations with Israel taking place in the current circumstances. This opposition is driven by both principle and pragmatism and underpins the applicability of Hamas's DRS. From a principled position, Hamas strongly opposes the Peace Process and the endless negotiations as a means to an end. Hamas argues that for negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis to be fair and just, there needs to be an equitable balance of power between the two sides. If this balance does not exist, then any agreement is merely the result of the weak capitulating to the demands of the strong (Meshaal 2013: 19). This position is central to Hamas's belief that its DRS will produce the conditions necessary for just negotiations. In Hamas's narrative, its resistance is aimed at forcing Israel to incline towards peace, and if this occurs, 'it is the fruit of struggle, resistance and the possession of power' (Meshaal 2013: 20–21). Thus a dual strategy of political and armed resistance contrasts with Fatah's unilateral strategy of seeking Palestinian statehood through negotiations alone. Hamas maintains that without resistance, Fatah remains in a subservient position vis-à-vis Israel, as Israel can dictate the negotiation process without engaging in reciprocity (Meshaal 2013: 20–21).

Hamas contends that when negotiations are undertaken in such an asymmetric environment, they undermine and are burdensome to the Palestinian cause. This asymmetry allows Israel to manipulate the negotiation process while continuing to build settlements and enervate Palestinian national identity (Meshaal 2013: 22–23). By opposing negotiations in this asymmetric environment, Hamas can propagate a cogent narrative of upholding its principles and defending Palestinian rights. Conversely, Fatah can be painted as being complicit in perpetuating the current status quo that is based on compromises and concessions (Hroub 2010: 60).

This was why Hamas opposed the Oslo Accords and by extension all negotiations that followed, believing them to be a betrayal of basic Palestinian rights (Tamimi 2009: 190). In their opinion, 'the Oslo Accords . . . would not lead to a state or to independence or to restoration of the rights of our people' (Rabbani 2008: 61). Hamas asserts that the Accords have served to resolve Israel's concerns while relegating Palestinian concerns to an indeterminate and uncertain future classification of 'Final Status.'[10] Here again, the justifications that Hamas uses in voicing opposition have become predominantly political and increasingly refer to international legal conventions to add jurisprudential weight and cogency to their argument. The 2017 policy document (Hamas 2017) notes that 'Hamas affirms that the Oslo Accords and their addenda contravene the governing laws of international

law in that they generate commitments that violate in inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.'

At the time, Hamas sought to de-legitimise the Accords by claiming that they had no popular mandate. Hamas argued that because the Accords represented such a radical departure from accepted Palestinian national goals, the PLO should have sought the approval of the Palestinian people via a referendum (Gunning 2009: 204). Such a referendum could have produced a consensus position through the involvement of all Palestinian factions, not just a remote Diaspora leadership with little comprehension of Israeli occupation and the lived experiences of Palestinians in the OPT. A referendum would also have enabled Hamas to articulate their counterargument. Instructively, given that a referendum would almost certainly have been passed, it would have provided Hamas with political cover, should it at some point have to abandon its armed resistance to Israeli occupation (Hroub 2010: 59–61).

Despite this principled objection to the Peace Process, there is a pragmatic side to Hamas's stance. Hamas's actions during the First Intifada meant that it had achieved significant support from Palestinians. By 1992, it was strong enough politically vis-à-vis Fatah/PLO to challenge their political control over numerous representative organisations in the OPT. However, the signing of the Oslo Accords changed the OPT's political dynamic irrevocably, and with it, Hamas's strategic appreciation of the conflict and its relationship to Israel and Fatah. Gunning (2009: 42–43) argues that the Accords were meant to stem the inexorable rise in Hamas's political power in the OPT, and that Hamas's opposition to the Accords needs to be viewed in this context. Until 1993, Hamas had been at the forefront of resistance to Israeli occupation. This changed with the apparent success of Arafat's diplomatic strategy, posing an existential problem for Hamas (Mishal & Sela 2006: 66–67). The possibility of Hamas having to abandon its strategy of armed resistance to Israeli occupation in favour of a peaceful coexistence with the Fatah-dominated PA would have removed Hamas's political distinctiveness that could have eventually led to the destruction of its political power (Mishal & Sela 2006: 68).

A poll conducted soon after the signing of the Accords revealed that 64.9% of respondents favoured them, with the majority (44.9%) believing that they would result in the creation of a Palestinian state and promote Palestinian rights. Furthermore, most respondents (44.7%) indicated that the signing of the Accords increased their support for the PLO. The signing of the Accords also effectively ended the First Intifada, with 46.5% of respondents agreeing that it should be stopped to ensure the Accords' success. Similarly, 51.2% of respondents did not accept the counterarguments from Hamas and other Palestinian factions, with 80.3% believing that they should utilise democratic dialogue to contest the Accords (PCPSR 1993: Poll No. 1).

The Accords' official recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians was another bitter blow for Hamas. Hamas understood very well the increased international legitimacy that came with membership of the PLO. Consequently, Hamas had hoped to utilise its rising popularity and political support in the OPT to force its way into the PLO as Fatah's equal. With Fatah

resuming its dominant position in the OPT following the Accords, any attempt to join the PLO would mean having to accept Fatah's suzerainty (Caridi 2012: 119).

The Accords have largely been superseded by the Quartet's 2003 Roadmap (see UN 2003). Since that time, the asymmetry between Israel and the Palestinians has worsened and the prospects of a Palestinian state remain elusive. As Hamas had hoped, the Palestinian public has become disillusioned with the ability of Fatah and Abbas to negotiate an equitable agreement successfully. In a poll conducted towards the end of the last round of peace talks in 2014, while 47.5% of respondents favoured Abbas's decision to return to negotiations, 70.8% did not believe that the parties would reach an agreement. Similarly, 57.3% of respondents believed that the two-state solution was no longer a viable option given the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, with 73.8% believing that there will not be a Palestinian state in the next five years (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 51). Hamas's narrative concerning the futility of negotiating with Israel has become increasingly salient. In a further sign of public disillusionment, the December 2016 poll showed that 62.2% of Palestinian respondents favoured abandoning the Oslo Agreements (PCPSR 2016: Poll No. 62).

Fatah's UN strategy: Hamas's response

The Peace Process has been Abbas's primary forum for negotiating the establishment of a Palestinian state. However, it has become so intractable that any genuine progress towards resolving the Final Status questions is increasingly problematic. Through bitter experience, Abbas has learnt that the status quo of the Peace Process means that negotiations have cost Fatah support and credibility from a sceptical Palestinian public.[11] As one Palestinian stated,

> we don't just want you [Fatah] to keep giving political statements . . . you [are] supposed to be a liberation movement, not a political party in a state. And then I've seen you [Fatah], having very nice suit in the UN or Geneva, having pictures. This is not what we want. We expect you to express all the outrage on us, telling the people what we are suffering, not going in a suit.
>
> (pers. comm. 9 January 2017)

This interpretation of Fatah's diplomatic strategy places it in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis its political and ideological competition with Hamas. Despite Israel's political and economic siege, Hamas remains a powerful and viable political rival. With Abbas welded to achieving a diplomatic solution to the 'Palestinian Question,' he has gradually come to realise that he needs to develop an alternative strategy aimed at reconfiguring the status quo of the Peace Process.

Through experience, Abbas became increasingly convinced that due to ideological and political factors he could not trust current Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu to negotiate in good faith. Moreover, successive US administrations appear unwilling and/or unable to pressure the GoI to enter negotiations unconditionally (ICG 2011: 1).[12] Beginning in 2011, Abbas embarked upon his own version of

'resistance' by internationalising the Palestinian/Israeli conflict through seeking increased Palestinian participation in the UN and its affiliated institutions to pressure Israel to negotiate equitably on the Final Status issues (ICG 2010: 17).

Abbas's internationalisation efforts constituted a calculated diplomatic assault on Israel and its attempts to stymie Palestinian statehood desires. This approach was meant to contrast with the apparent ineffectiveness of Hamas's DRS and its episodic resort to armed resistance. The internationalisation strategy would allow Abbas to propagate a positive political narrative that incorporates the Palestinian public's growing scepticism with the Peace Process while offering a viable alternative by way of an enhanced PLO status at the UN and membership of numerous international organisations. Confronted by Israel's occupation regime that undermines both social cohesion and the formation of a distinctive Palestinian national identity, Abbas shrewdly utilised the symbolism of his UN strategy to attempt to reinvigorate Palestinian social cohesion. Abbas's diplomatic resistance strategy is not about supplanting the Peace Process as the premier venue for negotiating a peaceful settlement with Israel. Rather, it was about enhancing Palestinian international legitimacy to redress the Peace Process's inherent power asymmetry.

Despite its international veneer, this strategy is also directed at Fatah's domestic political competition with Hamas by seeking to reconnect with the Palestinian public and regain some of its floundering legitimacy, especially after the 2006 election and the 2007 schism. It was intended to demonstrate to Palestinians that a diplomatic strategy is indeed capable of forcing Israel to negotiate equitably on the Final Status issues. Abbas hoped that any measurable success in his UN strategy would enhance Palestinian support for Fatah.

A September 2010 poll conducted towards the end of another round of Peace Talks highlights the imperative for an alternative strategy for Fatah and Abbas, especially as many of the concerns mirrored the critiques espoused by Hamas. After the GoI had authorised further West Bank settlement construction, 65.7% of respondents believed that Abbas should withdraw from the negotiations, with 62.8% believing there was a low or very low chance of the negotiations yielding any agreement. Additionally, 50.8% of respondents questioned the legitimacy of any agreement that might have been reached, while 71.3% believed it was impossible to reach a settlement with Israel on the Final Status issues (PCPSR 2010: Poll No. 37). The poll also revealed that 71.7% of respondents believed that the PA's policy of peaceful resistance was incapable of ending the occupation and stopping the growth of settlements. Nevertheless, 49.1% opposed a return to armed confrontation with Israel, with 54.8% believing that this would fail to achieve Palestinian national goals. When possible, alternatives were canvassed, 69.1% of respondents favoured going to the UNSC to obtain state recognition, though 75.5% believed that the US would use its veto to prevent this (PCPSR 2010: Poll No. 37).

After substantial internal debate, Abbas applied for Palestinian statehood to the UNSC on 23 September 2011. The UNSC then referred it to the Committee on the Admission of New Members for examination and report (UNSC 2011).[13] While the committee subsequently failed to recommend to the UNSC that Palestine be admitted, the bid raised important issues that seemed to vindicate Abbas's decision

to instigate his UN venture. First, for the first time the UN supported the assertion that Palestine met the preconditions for statehood outlined in the Montevideo Convention. Second, it demonstrated Abbas's willingness to withstand the enormous diplomatic pressures placed upon him by Israel, the US, and other Quartet members, much to the apparent surprise of many Palestinians (ICG 2012a: 2). As an ICG Report (2012a: 3) observed,

> The West Bank gatherings to watch the live broadcast . . . were euphoric. This had less to do with expectations that the move would lead to independence than with the thrill of witnessing a distant leader transformed, however briefly, into a voice speaking forcefully on behalf of all his people.

Finally, the submission thrust the inequities of the Peace Process into the international spotlight, with the Quartet issuing a statement critical of the GoI's negotiating tactics. It also acknowledged the PA's state-building efforts and promised to support and enhance its independence and sovereignty (UN 2011). Though the bid failed, the diplomatic machinations it unleashed demonstrated to Palestinians that Abbas's UN strategy had the ability to place intense diplomatic pressure on Israel and the US, something that the Palestinian leadership had been unable to do for decades.

Hamas's response to the bid is instructive. While they were sceptical of its success, they established a committee to report on the bid's potential legal and political aspects. Hamas was also very cautious about providing Fatah with any excuse to blame it for the strategy's failure (ICG 2011: 15). Any success or failure had to be Fatah's alone. Nevertheless, on 11 October 2011, just a little over two weeks after Abbas's submission, Hamas announced that it had reached an agreement with Israel whereby, in return for the release of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, Israel would agree to the conditional release of over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners (WikiLeaks 2006).[14] The news of the release of so many prisoners was met with rapturous approval, particularly in Gaza, with tens of thousands flocking to the streets waving the green flag of Hamas (Haaretz 2011a, 2011b). Hamas's decision to release Shalit after holding him captive for over five years cannot be coincidental. This strategic decision diverted considerable domestic attention away from Abbas's internationalisation efforts and towards Hamas's ability to address a key concern of Palestinians: the fate of Palestinians languishing in Israeli gaols.[15] What becomes clear is that while Hamas was prepared to accept Fatah's internationalisation efforts, they were not prepared to accept Fatah achieving any legitimacy fillip that might enable them to prop up its waning political authority in the OPT. What also becomes clear is that Hamas sought a calculated response to the situation that demonstrated political finesse and an understanding of the underlying political situation in the OPT.

In 2012, Abbas tried again to bring the Palestinian case before the UN. This time he advocated the more expedient option of seeking approval from the UNGA to upgrade the PLO's status to non-member observer in line with that given to the Vatican, Taiwan, and Kosovo (Elgindy 2011: 102). This would allow the PLO to

gain admittance to UN-affiliated institutions such as the ICC and the ICJ. Despite strenuous objections from Israel and the US, on 29 November 2012 the UNGA voted to grant Palestine the status of 'non-member observer state' (UNGA 2012). The date itself held great symbolism for Palestinians as it was the 65th anniversary of UNGA Resolution 181, which had formerly divided Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian zones (ICG 2012b: 20). This success meant that the PLO could now apply for membership to numerous UN institutions, increasing its international legitimacy and providing Fatah with numerous avenues through which to seek redress for Israel's allegedly illegal actions in the OPT. For the first time in the history of the conflict, Palestinians possessed a diplomatic weapon that had the potential to counter the GoI's subversion of negotiations for Palestinian statehood. Equally, international law recognises the ability of the Palestinians to enter international treaties to be a key attribute of state sovereignty (Kattan 2014: 63).

Despite the overwhelming success of the UN upgrade, it was greeted with little fanfare in the OPT. On 14 November 2012, the IDF had launched Operation Pillar of Defence, and this fresh conflict between Israel and Hamas completely overshadowed the submission, with the world's attention focused not on events in New York, but on those in Gaza. Paradoxically, Abbas's diplomatic success was eclipsed by the stoicism of Hamas fighters. Palestinians appeared aware of the empty symbolism of a UN bid that would do little to either ameliorate the debilitating conditions of the occupation or compensate Gazans for the destruction and loss of life caused by yet another IDF invasion.[16]

Undeterred, Abbas used his newly acquired diplomatic weapon during the 2013–2014 negotiations with Israel. When the negotiations reached a stalemate, Abbas announced that the PLO had applied for observer status at 15 UN institutions related to human rights and international law. These included the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention) (Ravid 2014). By the end of April 2014, the PLO decided to sign a further 63 UN accords to challenge Israel's international legitimacy, with a senior PLO official declaring, 'We want the occupation to cost Israel dearly in political and international terms' (Khoury 2014). While accession of these international treaties did little to ameliorate the conditions in the OPT, it did send a clear message to the GoI and the US that Abbas was prepared to bypass the obstacles preventing the creation of a Palestinian state by using international institutions and treaties.

In 2014, seeking to capitalise on the diplomatic opprobrium directed at Israel after the failure of yet another round of negotiations, and Operation Protective Edge, Abbas decided to submit another application to the UNSC for Palestine's formal recognition. On 30 December 2014, after more than three months of feverish diplomatic exertions by Palestinians, Europeans, Americans, Israelis, and various Arab states, the Jordanian UN delegation submitted a draft resolution. The resolution called for borders based on the 1967 ceasefire lines with mutually agreed land swaps, the phased withdrawal of all IDF troops by the end

of 2017, a resolution to the refugee question based on the Arab Peace Initiative, international law, and relevant UN resolutions, a just solution to the status of Jerusalem, and an equitable settlement on the remaining issues including water, and prisoners (UNSC 2014). Intensive diplomatic efforts meant that the submission failed to garner the requisite nine votes needed to ensure a symbolic US veto (Ahren 2014).

Given the immense diplomatic capital Abbas invested in the lead-up to the submission, the monumental diplomatic pressure he was subjected to, and the inevitability of a US veto, the question must be asked, why did he proceed? One explanation is that the failed negotiations with Israel, and the UN submission were simply processes that needed to be completed for Abbas to justify his ultimate objective: gaining admission to the ICC.[17] The import of the UN Committee's recognition that Palestine met the Montevideo Convention's statehood conditions in 2011, in concert with the PLO's upgraded status in 2012 allowed Palestine to satisfy the ICC's jurisdictional preconditions (Zimmerman 2013: 304–306). On 9 December 2014, 122 member states voted to grant Palestine observer status at the ICC as a precursor for full membership (The Times of Israel 2014). Shortly after, on 31 December 2014, Abbas signed 22 international agreements including the Rome Statute, seeking membership to the ICC (Khoury & Ravid 2014).

Gaining membership of the ICC would provide Abbas with the potential to vitiate Israel's international standing and force it back to the negotiating table, presumably without the Palestinians being in a subservient position. The ICC option was arguably the more effective course of action for Abbas because it did not stray too far from the Peace Process rubric that remains the only internationally accepted forum for resolving the 'Palestinian Question.' The ICC is also far more aligned with European ideals, and keeps Abbas's diplomatic endeavours closely allied to his newly acquired European benefactors. It also means that the US and Israel have far fewer avenues through which to influence Palestinian efforts to redress the power imbalance of the Peace Process.

While gaining admission to the ICC was laudable and represents a significant diplomatic victory for Abbas, there are several issues that detract from any benefits he may reap. First, the GoI continues to dominate the OPT, even with any potential ICC intervention. Second, any case against Israel would take years, if not decades, to resolve, and would do little to ameliorate the precarious economic and social conditions facing Palestinians in the short to medium term, especially in Gaza. Importantly, any legal success enjoyed by the Palestinians would be largely symbolic, with jurisdictional issues potentially precluding and/or inhibiting any successful prosecution. As Kontorovich (2013: 980) explains,

> Since Israel is not a state party, the Court could only have jurisdiction if the conduct occurs on the territory of Palestine. Yet even if Palestine is considered a state, its territory is significantly undefined. In particular, the settlements are not 'on the territory' of Palestine, although they are on territory that Palestine claims . . . Admissibility, however, depends on the present.

Conclusion

What this chapter illustrates is the scope and limits of Hamas's shifting political behaviour caused by the subtle and nuanced modifications it has made to its political relationship with Israel. As discussed, the operation of Israel's occupation regime, primarily through its closure policies, makes life for Palestinians in the OPT, including Hamas members, increasingly precarious. Making visible the reach and design of Israel's occupation regime, and its impact upon the daily lives of Palestinians, allows for a more detailed understanding of why the Palestinian belief in resistance, in whatever form, is so central in their national ethos. This in turn signifies why a DRS, with its combination of political and armed resistance, is such a potent strategic framework for Hamas. As will be explained throughout the rest of this book, having a DRS enables Hamas to better tap into the well of discontent and hostility created by the social, political, cultural, and societal injustices of the occupation. This enables Hamas to service and enhance its own ideological narrative, particularly concerning its competition with Fatah over the function of resistance in the struggle for independence. For Hamas, resistance in whatever manner is key to defeating Israeli occupation, which would realise a sovereign Palestine.

Nevertheless, after its 2006 election victory, Hamas was faced with the problem of having to develop new, potentially explosive policy positions concerning the Peace Process, and any future Palestinian state that simultaneously satisfied several competing constituencies. Using its trenchant opposition to Israeli occupation as an ideological and organisational bulwark has enabled Hamas to evince a separate, though complementary, narrative concerning its evolving position on a Palestinian state and on the Peace Process. Concerning any future Palestinian state, Hamas's modified narrative simultaneously accepts current political realities concerning the likely parameters of any future Palestinian state, that is one consisting of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Like it did with its position concerning armed resistance, Hamas has placed its utopian desire for a Palestinian state from 'the river to the sea' into abeyance. Importantly, this objective has not been discarded enabling Hamas to continue to claim ideological continuity. Significantly, Hamas's new policy position is grounded in international law and reflects the formal position of various Quartet members. This increases its legitimacy, making it harder to criticise without appearing dogmatic and myopic.

Concerning the Peace Process, Hamas normatively accepts the broad negotiating framework that it supplies. However, Hamas refuses to negotiate with Israel while the inherent power asymmetry within the Peace Process continues to favour Israel. While Hamas remains opposed to negotiations under these conditions, it certainly does not rule this option out altogether should the asymmetry be resolved. This distinction allows Hamas to craft a subtle narrative that explains its negotiating stance to domestic and international audiences while providing it with the space to manoeuvre politically, should the circumstances dictate.

No longer does Hamas evince zero-sum narratives concerning these two problematic issues. By incorporating political rationales, it can promote a more

compelling and justifiable policy narrative, particularly to the international community. The relative success of these efforts is measured by the fact that Hamas has been able to implement these shifts in its political behaviour without altering its ideological narrative in such a way as to cause potentially catastrophic ideological compromises. This provides Hamas with a degree of space within which to manoeuvre politically and ideologically. In this way, Hamas can adapt to changing public opinion or political exigencies more easily, whether this is towards accepting having to negotiate with Israel or towards rejecting any proposed negotiation.

Nevertheless, these positions do come at some cost to Hamas. While it has been relatively successful in avoiding any damaging ideological schisms, Hamas continues to leave itself open to accusations from external actors such as Israel and/or the US, that these caveats make it appear disingenuous and/or Janus-faced concerning these two contentious policy areas.

Notes

1. This point is discussed in detail in two UNSCO Reports. See UNSCO (2011) and UNSCO (2012).
2. Palestine was granted admission to the ICC in December 2014, and to INTERPOL in September 2017. See ICC (2015) and INTERPOL (2017).
3. Quigley notes that the ICJ, the UNSC, the UNGA, and the Supreme Court of Israel all consider the West Bank and Gaza being under a belligerent occupation. See Quigley (2010: 219).
4. Later agreements would see these percentages alter slightly with Area A increased to 18%, Area B decreased to 22% and Area C decreased to 64%. See Gordon (2008a: 36).
5. Beit-Hallahmi (1993: 50) states that Zionists coined the term ‘Diaspora mentality’ to symbolise the weakened, passive and docile Jew of the ghetto.
6. As part of this transformation, Zionists promoted Hebrew as the national language as opposed to Yiddish. The former was associated with the ideals Zionist wanted to inculcate upon the Jewish community and an attachment with their history, rather than Yiddish which was a language born in the Diaspora. See Piterberg (2008: 95).
7. Azoulay and Ophir (2013: 191) define a ‘regime’ as ‘a system of rule, or more precisely, an abstract form with a relatively stable outline, an idea of sorts of the relations between a government and the governed, and of various groups of governed among themselves.’
8. Indeed, Sharon convinced the Bush administration that Hamas and the entire Palestinian leadership were wholly implicated in terrorism, and that there was no real difference between Arafat and bin Laden. See Mearsheimer and Walt (2007: 205).
9. The formal idea of mutually agreed land swaps was first raised during the 2000 Camp David talks. The Palestinians and Israelis agreed in principle that Palestinians would get some territory from pre-1967 Israel in return for Israeli annexation of some of the West Bank: the land occupied by the settlements. This concept has continued to be part of all future Peace Process negotiations. See Pressman (2003: 17).
10. In the Oslo Accord’s DoP, questions concerning the future of settlements, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem were deferred for subsequent negotiation. These are the issues of most importance to Palestinians and are technically the remaining issues to be resolved between Palestinians and Israelis, hence their classification as ‘Final Status.’ See Rubenberg (2003: 48). According to the DoP, negotiations concerning these issues were due to commence as soon as possible, but no later than the third year of the interim period.

See 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, Article 5' (1993), cited in Quigley (2010: 173).

11 For insight into the 2013–2014 negotiations and why they failed to achieve a peace agreement, see Goldberg (2015).

12 Many analysts viewed Netanyahu's re-election in 2009 as PM as a setback for the Peace Process given his well-stated preclusion to any land-for-peace deal with the Palestinians. See Del Sarto (2009: 421–428).

13 The plan's principal flaw was that it had no strategy for dealing with a US veto. This led some to argue that its real purpose was to provide Abbas with political space and time to decide how best to proceed with the moribund Peace Process. See ICG (2011: 16).

14 Hamas militants captured Shalit during a raid on an IDF post by on 25 June 2006. According to Hamas officials, the raid was in response to the deaths of nine Palestinians in Gaza from a stray IDF shell. See WikiLeaks (2006).

15 In the September 2011 poll, Abbas's approval stood at 52%, while in the December 2011 poll it had increased to 59.7%. However, this did not translate into increased support for Fatah, which went from 44.6% in September to 43.3% in December. See PCPSR (2011: Poll No. 41); and PCPSR (2011: Poll No. 42).

16 It has been suggested that rather than the Gaza war ruining any potential legitimacy fillip for Abbas, that the timing of the submission was Abbas's attempt to limit Hamas's legitimacy fillip. See White (2013: 141).

17 For an analysis of the machinations of Abbas's decision to join the ICC and the associated problems created by this decision, see Kattan (2014).

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4 The political learning curve

The promises and perils of electoral participation and success

Introduction

Since its launch in 1987, Hamas has participated in many elections for professional associations and labour and student unions. Indeed, by 1992, it had won control of enough of these organisations to constitute a political threat to Fatah's hegemony in the OPT (Gunning 2009: 143–144). Despite these electoral successes, Hamas declined to participate in the 1996 PLC election because it believed that it was a product of the Oslo Accords, and it thought that any participation would legitimise the institution and the Accords (Caridi 2012: 124–125). Then in 2005, Hamas decided not to run a candidate in the presidential elections primarily because it believed that Israel's occupation regime undermined the role of the presidency in furthering the cause for Palestinian statehood (Ghanem 2010: 122). However, Hamas did choose to participate in the 2006 PLC elections. What then explains this shift in Hamas's political stance, and importantly, how did Hamas explain this shift to its supporters and to the Palestinian public?

To answer these questions, this chapter investigates the evolving political environment in the OPT in the lead-up to the 2006 PLC elections and its immediate aftermath to determine the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political stance with respect to its electoral participation. The chapter begins by providing a conceptual framework within which to understand the role of elections and electoral participation for Islamist movements like Hamas. It continues with an analysis of the 2004–2005 municipal elections, the 2005 Cairo Accord, and Hamas's Election Manifesto. These not only provide context but also the framework to understand Hamas's electoral participation. The chapter concludes by analysing the responses to Hamas's 2006 election victory from Hamas, Fatah, Israel, and the US.

Understanding the role of elections

While participating in national elections may have been new for Hamas, there are many examples of other Islamist movements participating in similar elections throughout the Arab world, from Algeria's FIS to Tunisia's *Ennahda* and Egypt's MB. Mecham (2014: 18) notes that Islamist movements have the unique potential

to mobilise large sections of the public given their active involvement in civil society via Islamic schools, mosques, endowments, and social networks. These social institutions provide Islamist movements with distinct advantages over their secular rivals when it comes to capitalising on institutional support to disseminate their political message to as many people as possible.

Elections are important tests for any political movement, but especially for Islamist movements, given that they are to varying degrees anti-systemic, or at the least anti-status quo. The decision to participate in elections is indicative of the movement's willingness to operate within the confines of the political system rather than opposing it from the outside (Hwang 2009: 24). Nevertheless, when examining any shifts in political behaviour that participating in elections may indicate, it is also necessary to examine the type of political system the elections are being conducted in, and the associated institutional rules and practices (Zeghal 2008: 32–33). As discussed in Chapter 1, political institutions play an important role in creating, administering, and controlling an actor's access to political space (Schwedler 2006: 12, 14; Grinberg 2010: 16–19).

Brown observes that in semi-authoritarian systems, such as the OPT, ruling regimes construct a set of rules that invite Islamist groups to participate in elections and then lose (Brown 2012: 15). Elections are important for the regime because they can become a vehicle for regulating the relations between the regime and the opposition. The regime uses elections in one of three ways: either as a monitoring device to keep track of opposition movements and determine which is the most threatening; as a way of co-opting the opposition to support, rather than oppose, the regime; or as a way of dividing the opposition by favouring certain opposition parties over others (Brown 2012: 22; Sinno & Khanani 2009: 36).[1]

Islamist movements, like Hamas, understand that the opportunity to participate in elections is conditional that they are not electorally competitive. Any hint of competitiveness would swiftly bring about regime repression (Brown 2012: 25). Therefore, understanding why Hamas participated in the 2006 election can indicate the causal nexus behind any shifts in its political behaviour, particularly the evolving nature of its resistance to Israeli occupation, and its competition with Fatah.

The main advantage that opposition groups like Hamas gain from participating in these apparently unwinnable elections is that they become opportunities for them to work within the system to deepen and expand political opportunities by cooperating to varying degrees with the ruling regime (Hamzawy & Brown 2008: 51). Like all potential political entrants, Islamist movements undertake a cost/benefit analysis to determine whether to participate in elections. This can involve a complex series of internal debates as the leadership attempts to balance short-term with long-term organisational objectives. They also must decide whether any ideological compromises that might be necessary are worth the cost of participation. Noting these conditions and developing and implementing a DRS with its political resistance component legitimised Hamas's efforts to challenge Fatah's dominance of Palestinian politics.

Once Islamist movements decide to participate in elections, they must then grapple with a series of important questions. First, how prominent and explicit should Islam be in their policy portfolio? As discussed previously, Hamas must be cognisant that the Palestinian public remain opposed to attempts to Islamise Palestinian society in too narrow a sense (Hroub 2010a: 173). This becomes germane when considering the contentious issue of how Hamas envisages the role of *shari'ah* when governing. Hamas needs to achieve an appropriate balance whereby the tenor of its policy platform speaks to both the broader Palestinian public to obtain votes, and to its traditional supporters to retain votes.

Second, how ideologically flexible should the movement's policy portfolio be? For any Islamist movement participating in elections, their Manifesto becomes an immensely important document because it is often the first time it has had to publicly articulate its position on a wide range of policies. This policy specificity constitutes a shift in orientation because many movements tend to avoid specificity to allow for greater political manoeuvrability and plausible deniability (Mecham 2014: 19). However, to sell itself and its policies to the wider public, Hamas had to develop policies that appeal to swing voters. These policies need to be centrist positions that are culturally conservative while being politically liberal (Kurzman & Naqvi 2010: 59).

However, having a wide range of policy positions, coupled with specificity, opens the movement up to internal and external criticism because the greater the amount of policies in the Manifesto equates to increased levels of compromise in the policy formulation process. Determining what policies Hamas includes and excludes in its Election Manifesto, and how these are articulated, can be important indicators of behavioural shifts. They are also key indicators of Hamas's assessment of what areas it can best challenge Fatah politically, and equally where it considers itself vulnerable politically. Again, Hamas needs to achieve the correct balance between retaining votes from traditional supporters, and attracting votes from non-traditional supporters. This involves a degree of political learning through trial and error, and compromise. This process of formulating an Election Manifesto can be indicative of movement along the moderation continuum towards adopting a more inclusive and centrist policy suite.

One clear consideration for Hamas's potential electoral participation is the prospect of wielding political power in the OPT. As Gunning (2009: 145–146) observes, the previous election victories by Hamas in professional association and union elections were largely symbolic and did not result in Hamas gaining access to any political power in the OPT. The political reforms instigated first by the 2003 Roadmap, and then by the 2005 Cairo Accord, provided Hamas with the first chance to access political power in the OPT. Such a situation is enticing for Hamas because it wants to reform Palestinian society and drive through political changes, particularly their political resistance goals of challenging Fatah's political hegemony, and reconfiguring Palestinian political institutions to enable them to advance the case for Palestinian statehood.

Municipal elections and the changing face of Hamas's electoral participation

Israel's consecutive assassinations of Sheiykh Yassin and Dr al-Rantisi in early 2004 deeply wounded Hamas and marked a critical juncture in its political evolution. Rather than resulting in increased militancy, they freed the movement to have a wide-ranging internal debate about participating in the electoral process as a strategy for challenging Fatah's hegemony in the OPT and as an additional facet to its resistance to Israeli occupation.[2] Even though Hamas opposed the Accords, and by extension the PA, it recognised that the PA possessed an increasing amount of institutional power and legitimacy in the OPT. Hamas realised that refusing to participate in any future PLC elections would rob Hamas of the opportunity of transmuting the respect it had gained in the Second Intifada into political power (pers. comm. 9 January and 8 February 2017; Roy 2011: 199). If Fatah could contest any election unchallenged, it would be able to simply reassert its political hegemony in the OPT and mean a return to the status quo of political life in the territories.

This led to Hamas reappraising the function and operationalisation of its resistance and meant it adopted a nuanced political narrative in the post-Intifada period. The opportunities created by these assassinations allowed Hamas's new leadership of Khaled Meshaal and Isma'il Haniyeh to develop and implement a DRS with political resistance assuming a dominant role. This marked the beginning of Hamas's transition from a resistance movement to a quasi-political party (Rudolph 2008: 87).

This debate became more germane following Arafat's death in November 2004. His death robbed Fatah of their totemic leader, whose reverence among Palestinians was unparalleled. His replacement, Mahmoud Abbas, lacked Arafat's legitimacy and institutional power base, making Fatah and Abbas vulnerable politically.[3] Arafat's death also accelerated the crisis of representation and legitimacy within Palestinian politics, and Abbas struggled to relegitimise and recalibrate the Palestinian political system. To assert his political authority, he proposed a series of municipal, PLC, and presidential elections that would occur within the framework proposed by the 2003 Roadmap. Abbas understood that without Hamas's participation, Palestinians and the international community would not consider these elections as legitimate. Consequently, he offered Hamas participation in government and access to political power in return for a cessation of violence. This position suited Hamas. With public support for the Intifada waning, and Israel hinting at evacuating Gaza, Hamas wanted to increase its level of political participation hoping to transmute popular support into institutional power (Roy 2011: 199; pers. comm. 9 January and 8 February 2017).

In May 2004, the Palestinian Cabinet announced that municipal elections would occur in four rounds, with the first two rounds taking place in December 2004 and May 2005. As part of Abbas's recalibration proposals, the Cabinet released the PA's Reform Action Plan in September 2004 (see PNA 2004). The plan outlined policies concerning the implementation of financial transparency and

accountability, the ratification of laws supporting financial reforms, establishing a market economy through revitalising the private sector, reforming the judicial system via administrative reform, mandatory training for judges, and capacity building for the court system (PNA 2004). Despite the broad scope of its reform goals, the plan merely served to highlight the PA's compromised functionality and efficacy, reinforcing the perception of corruption, bureaucratic malfeasance, and institutional incompetence among Palestinians.

The municipal elections assumed greater importance for Hamas because it intended to use them as a litmus test for its electability (Caridi 2012: 171–172). Contesting municipal elections was a natural entry point for Hamas as the councils were primarily administrative institutions dedicated to service provision throughout the OPT, and were not considered part of the institutional apparatus formed by the Oslo Accords. This meant that participation posed little ideological concern for Hamas (Caridi 2012: 171).

In the December 2004 elections, the voters indicated a clear preference for Hamas. While Fatah gained the majority of seats in both rounds, the combination of proportional representation and direct election tended to obscure the level of Hamas's popularity that was not just confined to Gaza but extended throughout the OPT.[4] The extent of Hamas's popularity became more apparent in the May 2005 election, with Hamas winning the popular vote in a landslide, gaining 270,000 more votes than Fatah (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 243).[5] While Fatah dominated rural areas, Hamas controlled the major urban centres winning the majority of seats in Rafah, Beit Lahia, and al-Buraji (Tamimi 2009: 213). In Gaza, Hamas won seven of the ten municipalities contested, gaining 65.2% of the popular vote (Ghanem 2010: 117). As one Palestinian noted,

> Not necessarily people voted for Hamas because they believe in Hamas ideology or Hamas outlook. A lot of them voted for Hamas . . . like an act of revenge from Fatah. Because of what they suffered, corruption, abuses, all this years. So, they wanted to give Fatah a lesson, that look we will vote for Hamas.
>
> (pers. comm. 9 January 2017)

As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, there is a noticeable spike in the popularity of Hamas and CR in the June 2005 poll. Instructively, there is a difference between Fatah's support in the West Bank compared to Gaza that is reflective of the fact that Hamas plays a far more prominent role in Gazan life than in the West Bank, which is dominated by Fatah. In the West Bank, Fatah's support did not suffer appreciably from the election result (see Figure 1). However, in Gaza there is a perceptible decrease in support for Fatah, alongside the noticeable increase in support for Hamas (see Figure 2).

In a PCPSR exit poll, when respondents were asked if corruption existed in the current councils, 61% indicated affirmatively. Then when asked if the newly elected councils with their Hamas majorities would fight corruption, 93% responded affirmatively. The poll provided further evidence of the influence that

corruption in the PA had on the voting preferences of Palestinians. The top three reasons for voters selecting candidates were perceived incorruptibility, level of education, and religiosity (PCPSR 2004–2005: Special Poll).[6] Hamas's victory had a profound effect on both movements. For Fatah, the result signalled the end of its political hegemony in the OPT. While for Hamas, the victory gave it confidence that its political narrative resonated with the Palestinian public.[7] It also meant that they needed to ensure that they had the appropriate balance between political representation and armed resistance (Ghanem 2010: 116).

The strong performance by Hamas enabled it to demonstrate its alliance building acumen for the first time. According to a January 2006 intelligence report, in those councils where Hamas did not possess a majority, for example in Bethlehem and Ramallah, Hamas was able to form political alliances with PFLP members and independents to achieve a majority and join blocs of Christian members. In Jenin, Hamas convinced local PIJ leaders to support Hamas instead of fielding their own candidates thus increasing its own vote. The report also noted that any efforts to introduce an Islamist agenda either were opposed by the population outright, largely in line with community expectations, or muted by the necessity for political alliances. However, the report did note that Hamas's willingness to form alliances did not extend to Fatah, with the constant tensions and lack of coordination between the two movements contributing to increasing lawlessness in some municipalities (WikiLeaks 2006c).

Hamas now began a series of internal deliberations about participating in national elections that lasted for about four months. This process is indicative of not only its deliberative internal decision-making processes, but also a growing sense of political maturity and pragmatism. As Hamdan recalls,

> During Hamas's internal discussions in 2005 about whether or not to take part in the elections, one of the most important questions that came up was: if we win the elections this time, what happens if we lose the next time? Are we willing to give up the authority if we lose? The answer was clear: if you accept the process, you have to accept it all. You can't say 'I will accept the democratizing process if I win the elections but will be against the process if I lose.'
>
> (Hamas 2011: 63)

The eventual decision to participate was not universal with a number of members raising the common objection that participating in elections constituted the de facto legitimation of the occupation and of the institutions created by the Oslo Accords. Those who favoured participation countered these concerns by arguing that participation would increase Hamas's legitimacy and enhance its ability to affect change, particularly concerning the problematic Peace Process. Importantly, those in favour argued that participation did not equate to the abrogation of armed resistance to Israeli occupation but merely the opening of another front of resistance (Bhasin & Hallward 2013: 83).

There are several factors behind Hamas's eventual decision to seek election to the PLC. First, as noted by those who favoured participation, if elected it would

enable Hamas to have a voice in the decision-making processes concerning any deal that Fatah might negotiate as part of the Peace Process. As discussed in Chapter 3, Hamas argued that the Peace Process negotiations failed to address key Palestinian concerns, meaning that Palestinians needed to recalibrate their negotiation strategies concerning Palestinian statehood (Hamas 2011: 61). To accomplish this, Hamas wanted the PA to become the primary advocate for the resolution of the 'Palestinian Question' (Rabbani 2008b: 68). Hamas believed that the institution needed to metamorphose from merely having an administrative function into one driving the more important state and institutional capacity-building functions necessary for statehood.

Hamas believed that Fatah was limiting their negotiation strategy to achieving Palestinian autonomy, rather than the more expansive goal of attaining Palestinian sovereignty (Rabbani 2008a: 72). In Hamas's view, this negotiation stance undermined the Palestinians' ability to resist Israeli occupation and their subsequent efforts to realise a Palestinian state. Hamas reasoned that negotiations could only succeed through the united strength of all Palestinians, hence their demand for a pluralistic political system involving contributions from all representative groups (Rabbani 2008b: 68).

Second, electoral participation was something that the Palestinian public expected as a sign of Hamas's seriousness about governing and realising an independent Palestinian state by whatever means. While Hamas was a prominent actor in Palestinian politics, Palestinians wanted it to demonstrate that it had evolved in political terms and had learnt from its experiences. As Meshaal explains, 'The people demanded that just as we had assumed our responsibility to resist the occupation with them, so should we bear our responsibility in participating in the administration of our internal affairs and in implementing reform' (Rabbani 2008b: 68).

Indeed, Szekely (2015: 276) argues that Hamas used its extensive and efficient social service programme as a form of political advertising rather than as a forum for buying votes, rewarding supporters, or isolating constituents. Hamas's extensive social service programme is perhaps the clearest delineating factor between Hamas and Fatah and is something that many Palestinians admire, even if they dislike Hamas overall or are not recipients of any aid. Promoting their social service programme is Hamas's way of proving to Palestinians that they can contribute productively to furthering Palestinian national goals. More importantly, when Hamas incorporated this programme into its broader political narrative, it formed a key campaign tool to attract new voters. This highlights how Hamas was undergoing a transition from being a movement primarily associated with violent resistance to one where the use of violence was secondary to electoral participation and effective governance (Szekely 2015: 276–277).

Third, Hamas was aware of political realities, such as the need to establish a workable power-sharing arrangement with Fatah. While the later Cairo Accord foreshadowed a pluralistic system, this more inclusive political environment was predicated on the fact that Fatah was expected to win the majority in any national elections. Hamas recognised that it needed to be part of a government composed of all representative Palestinian groups, and prove that it was willing to share

power. Hamas hoped that this would provide it with some measure of institutional protection from external forces uneasy about its participation (Milton-Edwards 2005: 318). Hamas was also pragmatic enough to recognise that the technocratic Abbas was the only 'acceptable' Palestinian face for Israel and the Quartet (Caridi 2012: 169).[8]

Finally, where Hamas entered the political system, first at the municipal level and then via the PLC, is indicative of how it perceived its role in Palestinian politics – reforming the national government institutions, improving administrative competence, and recalibrating the Palestinian negotiation strategy in the Peace Process. For Hamas, the decision to engage in the political process is a long-term project and was not undertaken lightly. The decision is not some form of political opportunism or an attempt to reap unilateral political power (Milton-Edwards 2005: 321–322). The real power in Palestinian politics, especially with respect to the Peace Process negotiations, lies exclusively with the presidency. If Hamas wanted unilateral political power in Palestine, then it would have contested the presidential elections. Instead, it chose to enter Palestinian politics at the municipal and PLC levels because they excelled in delivering social services and re-establishing law and order. Within the Palestinian context, local governance matters, even more so because in the absence of a state there is no genuine centre of authority, especially after Israel's ghettoisation programme and institutional destruction wrought during the Second Intifada. As Milton-Edwards (2005: 319) explains, 'Local governance matters . . . when the political power at the centre of society – the state – is defective, weak or just plain absent.' Hamas and various NGOs provided the bulk of services ordinarily the responsibility of the state. Through service provision, Hamas wanted to solidify its political support and transmute this into electoral success.

This internal debate is indicative of a gradual shift in Hamas's political behaviour, with the leadership appearing to have made the important decision to accept the vagaries of the electoral process despite the risk of rejection. It is also indicative of a growing sense of political maturity and sophistication within Hamas, with the leadership and members debating both the tactical and strategic consequences of political participation. For Hamas, electoral participation marks the beginning of the reformation of Palestinian politics. If elected, Hamas could then proceed with broader institutional and societal improvements as part of its state-building agenda (Hamas 2011: 63–64). Importantly, there was a growing understanding within Hamas that for Palestinian statehood to be advanced, both Hamas and Fatah needed to collaborate and have equal responsibility for governing and determining the course of the Peace Process (Hamas 2011: 63).

The 2005 Cairo Accord – restructuring Palestinians politics

In March 2005, all 13 Palestinian factions signed the Cairo Accord representing another critical juncture in Palestinian politics (Cairo Accord 2005). The Accord was the culmination of a series of formal and informal negotiations between Hamas and Fatah after Arafat's death that were sponsored by Egypt. With Hamas's

success in municipal elections and Israel's impending withdrawal from Gaza, Abbas wanted Hamas and the other Palestinian factions to enter into an agreement that would integrate them into the political system. Abbas hoped to be able to assert his control over them and prevent any unilateral and politically destabilising actions from his chief political rival, Hamas (ICG 2006a: 4). While the Accord was the first sign that Fatah's political hegemony had weakened, it also provided further impetus for a shift in Hamas's political behaviour and its preference for political over armed resistance.

Despite Abbas's motives, the Accord represented a significant political victory for Hamas on several issues. First, the Accord recognised the primacy of resistance in challenging Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian state. The fact that 'resistance' assumed such prominence legitimised and strengthened Hamas's decision to adopt a DRS. While the Accord placed Hamas's use of armed resistance into abeyance, it did not call for its rejection or abandonment. In line with the strategic balance of the DRS, the use of armed resistance became a strategically defensive tool to be wielded at the Political Bureau's discretion. The Accord called for the continuation of the *tahdiy'ah* with Israel and stipulated that dialogue should remain the sole means of interaction between the Palestinian factions (Cairo Accord 2005).[9]

Second, the Accord foreshadowed the end of Fatah's hegemony of the PLO, stating that it should now include all Palestinian factions (Cairo Accord 2005). While the PLO had been in hibernation since the advent of the PA, it remained the only internationally recognised legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas had previously declined to join the PLO because it meant doing so under Fatah's suzerainty. However, Hamas's decision to join was seen not only as sign of Fatah's weakening hegemony but also of Hamas's increased willingness to play a more substantive leadership role in Palestinian politics by working with the rest of the factions to further the goal of statehood. Hamas also intended to restructure the PLO by ending its monopoly over the affairs of Palestinians in the Diaspora, reactivating political life outside of the OPT, and allowing Hamas to compete with Fatah on an equal footing (Ghanem 2010: 121–122).

Third, the Accord committed all factions to undertake the institutional reform of the PA, and to holding municipal and Legislative Council elections (Cairo Accord 2005). This was tacit acknowledgement of the failure of Fatah's rule and the weakened state of Palestinian political institutions. The factions believed that democratic elections were the only panacea for this institutional malaise. It also meant that Fatah had lost its ability of determining if and when elections were held and the way they were conducted. Political plurality and institutional independence now appeared to dominate the factions' political thinking. In Hroub's (2006) assessment, the signing of the Accord meant that 'Hamas was making important leaps in the direction of becoming a more politicised movement at the expense of a being a religion-inspired military one.'

Palestinians perceived the signing of the Cairo Accord to signify the end of the Second Intifada and the beginning of a new phase of political life in the OPT – one that would see Palestinians elect a legislative body committed to reinvigorating

their governing institutions to ensure probity, professionalism, and bureaucratisation. As Caridi (2012: 196) notes, 'Hamas's decision to participate in Palestinian electoral politics [was] interpreted by the Palestinian population as a specific *political proposal*: an alternative to those who had ruled thus far.' Crucially, the Accord signified that Fatah's single-party rule had failed to achieve statehood and that future attempts must have as their foundation Palestinian political unity.

Change and Reform's Manifesto

In preparation for the forthcoming PLC elections, Hamas created a separate political party, Change and Reform. This was another important preparatory step in Hamas's political evolution, signalling that the movement was intent on prioritising electoral participation over military action (Wiegand 2010: 61). It was also important for Hamas to show that it had the capacity to develop a policy platform that appealed to West Bankers as much as it did to Gazans.

When assessing the underlying causes, scope, and limits of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour, it is important to understand the relationship between CR and Hamas. As Brown (2012: 142) explains,

> A political party may be ideally suited to take advantage of any legal openings and to turn out the vote in elections – but it also has liabilities . . . such as fostering new leaders and new followers, imposing a new legal framework, generating new interests and diverting movement resources.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Hamas never viewed CR as a completely autonomous political party but as the most effective tool for articulating its political narrative (Mishal & Sela 2006: 115). This ensured there was some political distance between the two organisations that would enable Hamas to claim credit for any electoral success while simultaneously possessing an equal measure of plausible deniability should CR fail (Brown 2012: 146).

This political distance enabled CR to have a slightly different political persona than Hamas by adopting and promoting those policy positions that were ideologically problematic for Hamas but had broader public appeal. CR also needed this political distance to avoid allegations that it lacked autonomy, which might be indicative of Hamas not being committed to electoral participation and to potentially using the party as a democratic 'Trojan horse' (Wiegand 2010: 61). Consequently, CR's wide-ranging candidate list consisted of senior Hamas figures, non-members, and activists comprising prominent figures from its charitable and religious education institutions, wives of prisoners and men killed by Israel, and professionals who had ties with Hamas (Klein 2007: 447–448). Gunning (2009: 164) notes that Hamas appeared to choose its candidates on their perceived administrative abilities rather than on their ideological rigidity or religiosity, preferring secular proficiency and political capital to religious expertise.

Nevertheless, Hamas ensured that CR and its membership remained on a tight leash so that any policy deviation was not too drastic and so that its separate

leadership structure did not become an alternative centre of power (Brown 2012: 146). Like the IQB, Hamas structured CR so that while it was provided with a degree of tactical flexibility and a separate leadership structure, its strategic direction remained the purview of the Political Bureau. This was a function of the DRS. Both the IQB and CR are not separate entities operating under the organisational umbrella of Hamas. They were both formed by Hamas to perform specific functions and were ultimately controlled by the Political Bureau. This means that these elements provide input into the strategic direction and narrative of CR. Conversely, both entities influence to varying degrees the overall strategic and ideological narrative of Hamas.

To establish its political credentials, CR published a Manifesto that some within Hamas claim was the movement's most important political document since the Charter, and marks the beginning of Hamas's political transformation (al-Sha'er, cited in Caridi 2012: 186). There has been significant discussion about the meaning of the differences between these two important documents. Klein (2007: 450) explains that these differences are not about deception or representative of empty political rhetoric, rather, 'they are a product of a change and modification of lines of thought as part of the process by which Hamas has become a political movement.' A key part of this change is that the Manifesto, not the Charter, needs to form the basis upon which Hamas is judged contemporaneously.

The Manifesto is primarily a document outlining Hamas's programme for political resistance with its emphasis on the normative and empirical institutional capacity building of the PA (Caridi 2012: 187). While resisting the Israeli occupation is mentioned normatively, how that resistance expresses itself is not addressed in any detail. The Manifesto seemingly divests military resistance to the IQB while making CR responsible for political resistance. It proposes a detailed set of governance procedures covering a broad range of topics and policy areas that seek to implement good governance strictures. The Manifesto incorporates key normative democratic principles such as the separation of powers, political pluralism, and the peaceful alternation of power, further signifying a gradual ideological evolution on the part of Hamas. The one caveat is that these shifts only apply to CR and not necessarily to Hamas, the Islamist movement. While Hamas understands that these normative shifts are important signifiers of its democratic credentials, how and to what extent Hamas would implement them, and how it and CR deal with any problems and/or contradictions, will be indicative of any further shifts in Hamas's ideological evolution.

While the Manifesto is not necessarily a reliable predictor of how Hamas would operate in government, it does represent the political discourse that Hamas wanted to have with Palestinians (Kurzman & Turkoglu 2015: 107–108). The Manifesto is a comprehensive policy document containing detailed formulations of CR's fiscal, social, health, education, human rights, housing, agriculture, women's, and youth policies (see Tamimi 2009: 292–316). It was a sign that Hamas was shifting away from advocating long-term utopian and unachievable objectives that encapsulated its previous ideological treatises. Now Hamas was focused on shorter-term practical political aspirations designed to ameliorate and address the current needs

of Palestinians. By avoiding the use of ambiguous religious language that characterised the Charter, the clearly articulated goals of the Manifesto could be understood easily by Palestinians (Hroub 2010b: 20).

The Manifesto highlights those areas where Hamas is strongest, such as providing effective and efficient social services, and downplays areas where it is weakest or open to criticism, like its opposition to the Peace Process and the prospective role of Islam (Szekely 2015: 282–283). The Manifesto, while directed primarily at Palestinians, is also a document meant for regional and international consumption as it incorporated the institutional capacity-building and democratisation initiatives first advocated by the 2003 Roadmap. In doing so, Hamas attempted to provide Palestinians, as well as any regional and international benefactors, with evidence of its evolving character and shifting political behaviour. This is indicative of the level of political learning accomplished by Hamas's leadership triumvirate, particularly concerning how the movement understands and responds to the electorate's mood, and can justify any shifts in its political behaviour in political rather than religious terms.

Highlighting CR's anti-corruption bona fides, the Manifesto illustrated Hamas's policy priorities. Hamas wanted to eradicate corruption because they believed it contributed to weakening the international Palestinian front and undermined the foundations of national unity (Tamimi 2009: 292–294, 298). By reforming PA institutions, ridding them of corruption, and establishing institutional probity, transparency, and professionalism, Hamas wanted to revitalise, refocus, and unify Palestinian efforts to achieve a sovereign state. Hamas was able to construct their national campaign around this issue because most of the public, regardless of their views on other policy options of Hamas, generally agreed that it was better able to deal with systemic corruption.

Szekely (2015: 285–286) argues that Hamas's reputation in this area enabled its candidates to promote themselves as being honest, forthright, and non-corrupt, the antithesis of Fatah's candidates. Indeed, the name 'Change and Reform' was emblematic of the public's desire for political and social reform, especially among the politically apathetic youth. The nexus between Hamas and accountability presented Hamas with the opportunity to introduce the public, particularly younger voters, to its broader political narrative. If they were willing to listen to Hamas on its anti-corruption policies, perhaps they were willing to consider their other policy positions.

Hamas also understood that its Islamist ideology complicated the perception the public might have of CR. Hamas knew that if it wanted its political transformation to be supported by Palestinians then it needed to demonstrate that its electoral participation did not presage any intention to Islamise Palestinian society. To assuage any community concerns, the Manifesto modulated the role that Islam would play in any government containing Hamas. Pragmatism, gradualism, and community consultation appear to provide the foundation for Hamas's proposed style of participating in a government. Of interest is how Hamas intended to deal with the at times contrary association between Islam and politics, particularly the role of *shari'ah*, and the potential conflicts between divine and popular sovereignty

in Hamas's legislative programme. While the Manifesto evinces the centrality of Islam as a frame of reference and way of life, it also affirms that Hamas accepts the core democratic principles of political pluralism and the peaceful alternation of power (Tamimi 2009: 293).

Hamas was also careful to avoid any appearance of introducing a theocracy, favouring a secular form of governance. The Manifesto indicated that *shari'ah* would be the 'main' source of legislation, rather than the 'sole' source of legislation, leaving CR enough political room to be legislatively pragmatic without compromising its ideological tenets. This position is consistent with how Hamas views *shari'ah*. Hamas understands that *shari'ah* is not a comprehensive legal doctrine; there are gaps and silences that need to be filled, and this is done through the passing of legislation by a popularly elected legislative body. Given that *shari'ah* addresses only a very small area, legislation would be expected to fill the legal void (Gunning 2009: 80). Hamas also promoted the importance of institutional checks and balances in recognition of the fallible nature of human beings and the corrupting influence of power (Gunning 2009: 58). It envisaged introducing of a clear separation of powers, revitalising the Constitutional Court, and restructuring the Supreme Judicial Council (Tamimi 2009: 299).

The 2006 election – a critical juncture

Despite the portent of the municipal electoral results, the December 2005 PCPSR poll reveals some interesting results in terms of popularity. As can be seen in Figure 1, in both the West Bank and in Gaza Fatah held a clear lead despite a slight increase in support for CR in the West Bank. Surprisingly, since the May 2005 municipal elections CR and Hamas suffered a marked loss of support in Gaza (see Figures 1 and 2). As such, in the December 2005 poll, 53% of respondents believed that Fatah would win the forthcoming election, with the majority, 49.7%, indicating that they would vote for Fatah's candidates. However, most respondents, 30.4%, indicated that the commitment to fight corruption and implement reform measures would determine which candidate gained their vote, with 86% of respondents believing PA institutions were corrupt, and 46.8% believing this would increase in the future. The ability of any future government to improve governance and material standards was also at the forefront of voters' minds, with 37.3% nominating increasing unemployment and poverty, 24.8% the occupation, and 24.7% the spread of corruption and lack of internal reforms as the key problems facing Palestinians (PCPSR 2005: Poll No. 18).

While it was clear that this emphasis on fighting corruption and implementing governance reforms favoured Hamas, other polling results were less encouraging. On questions concerning who was better placed to improve economic conditions, push the Peace Process forward, protect national unity, protect refugee rights, and enforce law and order, most voters still favoured Fatah (PCPSR 2005: Poll No. 18). While the municipal results shocked Fatah, there was little obvious sign of its broad-based rejection by the electorate at the national level. Overall, these attitudes indicate a degree of political sophistication and engagement by the Palestinian

public despite decades of semi-authoritarian rule and Israeli occupation. Palestinians appeared cognisant of the relative strengths and weaknesses of both movements – supportive of Hamas's proposed good governance agenda while remaining equally supportive of Fatah's diplomatic acumen, and could delineate who should be responsible for what. What Palestinians appeared to be indicating was that they expected a coalition government that could take advantage of the inherent strengths of both movements to advance the Palestinian cause.

Despite a series of postponements, the first free and open Palestinian elections were held on 25 January 2006 and brought about a dramatic and unexpected result, with Hamas winning 74 seats to Fatah's 45 (Tamimi 2009: 218).[10] Despite this seemingly emphatic win, Fatah still retained significant voter support. The mixed voting system of proportional representation and the majority vote, coupled with a splintering of Fatah's vote, made Hamas's victory appear more emphatic. As Hilal (2006: 17) notes, 'Hamas did not have the majority, only the plurality: 36.5% of valid votes against 63.5% for Fatah, the PLO factions and independents combined.' Despite Fatah's poor reputation for corruption and maladministration in the PA, the Palestinian public appeared to have voted strategically to ensure political and ideological diversity in the prospective Palestinian Parliament.[11] This type of voter behaviour may have been the result of Palestinians recognising that any future coalition government containing Hamas would be expected to negotiate with Israel over Palestinian statehood efforts. Given the continued antipathy between Hamas and Israel, Palestinians needed to ensure that Fatah retained a strong presence in the future Parliament.

While it had been well known prior to the election that Hamas would likely receive a healthy portion of the vote, most projections still had Fatah gaining a narrow victory.[12] Hamas's unforeseen election victory can be attributed to three factors: first, it was a result of years of dedicated public service provision and spiritual support that the PMB, and then Hamas provided to Palestinians. Indeed, Hroub notes that at least half of those who voted for Hamas supported its political programme and declared objectives (Hroub 2010b: 64). Second, there was the failure of the Peace Process to achieve any measurable advancement towards self-determination, with Palestinians having little faith in Fatah and Israel being able to negotiate an acceptable agreement. Third, not only had Fatah failed vis-à-vis the Peace Process, they had failed in equal measure to govern the OPT effectively. The PA was riven with corruption, nepotism, and bureaucratic malfeasance. While Fatah officials lived extravagant lifestyles, unemployment, and poverty throughout the OPT increased substantially (Hroub 2010b: 64–65). As one Palestinian noted,

> Not necessarily people voted for Hamas because they believe in Hamas ideology, or Hamas outlook. Most of them . . . voted for Hamas, like an act of revenge from Fatah. Because of what they suffered, corruption, abuses, all this years. So, they wanted to give Fatah a lesson that look we will vote for Hamas.
> (pers. comm. 9 January 2017)

Again, Hamas's choice of candidates and the general tenor of their electoral campaign based on the provision of good governance reflected this hostility to the perceived governance failures of Fatah (Gunning 2009: 182).

Instructively, Hamas's victory cannot be attributed to its Islamist antecedence. Hamas avoided running on a religious platform, with Hroub (2010b: 65) noting that 'people were voting for Hamas as a national liberation movement that promised change and reform on all fronts.' Throughout the campaign, Hamas deliberately downplayed its religious agenda, emphasising instead the need for political reform by implementing good governance measures (Brown & Hamzawy 2010: 170–171). These were strategies designed to provide a clear solution for Fatah's twin failures. It is worth noting that Christian and secular Palestinians voted for CR, with Hamas also supporting several Christian candidates and later appointing a Christian member as its Minister for Tourism (Hroub 2010b: 65).

Notwithstanding some dire predictions of what Hamas's victory would represent, two salient points are worth highlighting.[13] First, while Hamas's political authority had received an immense fillip, it had entered Palestinian politics on the clear expectation that it would share power with Fatah in a coalition government (ICG 2006b: 2). Participating in a coalition government as the minority partner would allow Hamas the space it needed to make the transition from opposition to government and shield it somewhat from the colossal pressures that participation in this highly charged and sensitive political system entailed (Usher 2006: 22). It would also allow Hamas the latitude to continue to resist Israel's occupation militarily, while still participating substantively in the political life of the OPT (pers. comm. 12 July 2017). Additionally, any unilateral electoral victory would mean having to negotiate and compromise with the GoI. This would have created numerous ideological conundrums that Hamas's leadership was unwilling and perhaps unable to address (Hroub 2010b: 63).

Second, as noted earlier, the Palestinian political system is designed to ensure that the actual power and authority to influence the Peace Process lies exclusively with the presidency and not with the legislature. While the legislature is responsible for domestic matters, the power to accept or veto prospective laws, and to conduct diplomatic negotiations remains solely within the president's constitutional purview (The Palestinian Basic Law 2002). The president also has the constitutional power to sack the PM and to dictate policy direction to the PLC and its Cabinet. To override any presidential veto, Hamas would require a two-thirds majority in the PLC, which it did not possess. Crucially, while control of some of the numerous security agencies had been divested to the Cabinet, the president retained command over the National Force and the PA's intelligence wing, while control of the judiciary remained firmly with Fatah loyalists (Shikaki 2006: 123–124). Furthermore, while the new Hamas-dominated PLC would clearly have a prominent say in the debate over the details of any prospective peace deal, the ultimate forum for ratification was the PLO, which again remained under Fatah's control (Pradhan 2008: 312).

So while Abbas would have to contend with a potentially oppositionist legislature, his actual ability to direct Palestinian politics and to conduct international

negotiations was largely unaffected. What the elections did accomplish, though, was to strip Fatah of its unfettered control over Palestinian politics, meaning that the PLC had suddenly become something more than just an institutional rubber stamp for presidential policy priorities and aspirations.

On 18 February 2006, Abbas gave a speech to the PLC where he attempted to exert a degree of control over the new government by indicating that it should not deviate from the previous policy of negotiations with the GoI concerning the Peace Process. Abbas reiterated his belief that the only path to security was through a just peace, meaning that there is no place for any military solution to the current conflict. While he remained committed to resisting continuing Israeli occupation, Abbas repeated his assertion that the negotiation process was a political choice, and that Palestinians should still develop other forms of peaceful popular struggle. Furthermore, he emphasised the continuing importance of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In a clear message to both Hamas and the international community, Abbas reiterated that the PLO remained the superior institution to the PA (Anon 2006a: 206–208; WikiLeaks 2006p).

On 28 March 2006, the PLC formally approved the new government's political platform and its 24-member Cabinet, which included one women, Maryam Saleh, as Minister for Women's Affairs, and one Christian, Joudah Murqos, as Minister for Tourism and Antiquities. In a harbinger for future criticisms, Fatah and independent PLC members criticised Hamas's platform for lacking the necessary detail and for failing to articulate a response to Israel's unilateral approach towards its relations with the new government (WikiLeaks 2006t).

Hamas's reaction to its election victory

Despite its apparently emphatic election victory, the extent of Hamas's political authority in the OPT was a fragile perception for several reasons. First, Hamas was the first popularly elected government in an openly contested election in the OPT that unseated an entrenched regime and the first popularly elected Islamist movement in the Arab world. This situation was viewed by many Arab regimes with some alarm over its precedent, especially given Hamas's Brotherhood antecedence (ICG 2006b: 24; Caridi 2012: 251). Like other movements that have made the transition from opposition to government, Hamas needed to acquaint itself with the vagaries of its newly acquired responsibilities. This involved a period of power consolidation and Hamas needed to adjust to the capriciousness and hostility of national, regional, and international actors towards its newly acquired political power. The uncertainty surrounding this adjustment period left Hamas open to sniping and assault, physically, and politically, from Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet (Zartman 1989: 134–135).

Hamas was keenly aware of the magnitude of the challenging domestic and international dynamics and made concerted efforts to allay domestic and international fears by continually emphasising its political pragmatism and moderate position. To calm the diplomatic situation, on 28 January 2006 Meshaal reiterated that Hamas had extended its *tahdiy'ah* with Israel, remained committed to forming

a unity government containing elected members of all Palestinian factions, and intended to respect the commitments negotiated between Fatah/PLO and Israel (Tamimi 2009: 224–225). The following day, Haniyeh also sought to emphasise Hamas's moderate attributes by reiterating that its principal political goal was forming a national coalition government consisting of as many factions as possible (WikiLeaks 2006f). What Hamas needed was sufficient space within which to design and implement a political strategy to deal with the multitude of unforeseen problems it was confronted with after the election. Nevertheless, Hamas's organisational unpreparedness for majority government coupled with its cumbersome internal decision-making processes worked against it, increasing suspicion concerning its political objectives.

On 28 February 2006, Abbas sent Hamas a letter of appointment instructing them to form a new government. The letter contained three 'considerations' that Abbas wanted the new government to observe when formulating its new programme. First, the government should accept all UN resolutions relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Second, the government should accept all Arab League summit resolutions, including the 2002 Peace Plan. Finally, the new government should accept all agreements signed between Israel and the PLO since the Oslo Accords (Usher 2006: 28–29). As will be discussed later, Abbas had essentially instructed the new government to incorporate the Quartet's stipulations into its political programme.

After receiving Abbas's letter, Hamas set about attempting to form a national unity government composed of elected representatives from all factions, not just Fatah. Hamas tried to find any common ground with Fatah on the two groups' political programmes to retain Fatah's administrative support (Caridi 2012: 213). However, these efforts quickly foundered in the febrile post-election atmosphere. Not only did Hamas fail to reach any compromise with Fatah, they also failed to convince any of the other Palestinian factions to join their new government. According to Hroub (2006: 16), there were two principal reasons for this failure. First, Hamas refused to acknowledge the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinians. Second, Hamas refused to subscribe to the UN resolutions concerning Palestine, and any of the agreements negotiated between the PLO and Israel. However, Hroub (2006: 15) also notes that the negotiations on forming a national unity government may very well have been doomed from the beginning given the degree of mistrust that existed between all the Palestinian factions, not just between Hamas and Fatah.

Despite this failure, Hamas remained determined to form a government, while leaving open the prospect of other factions joining later. On 20 March 2006, the government announced its Cabinet to be headed by Isma'il Haniyeh (Anon 2006b). Despite the US frightening off many technocrats and independents that Hamas had hoped to include to increase the government's international credibility, the Cabinet still contained several technical experts, intellectuals, lawyers, and professionals, some with doctorates from Western universities (Caridi 2012: 215). The leadership of Hamas was determined to change the negative perception of Hamas that pervaded western governments and media. It wanted these governments to realise that

Hamas had transformed from a movement synonymous with suicide bombings into one committed to parliamentary participation (Caridi 2012: 217–218).

In line with this, on 27 March 2006 Haniyeh gave a speech before the PLC in which he outlined the political programme of the new Hamas government (C-SPAN 2006). For the first time, Hamas articulated how it proposed to govern the OPT. Not only was this a significant moment in Palestinian political history, it was an important moment in the study of Islamist movements transitioning away from a reliance on violence towards a focus on political participation. The stakes for Hamas and its new government were enormous. Haniyeh's speech would be scrutinised by the international community, the Quartet, Israel, Fatah, regional and domestic Islamists, Palestinians, and its own membership to ensure that the intended programme met their respective expectations and desires (Hroub 2010b: 152).

In general, the speech struck a moderate tone, and it provides an opportunity to compare how Hamas's political programme in opposition matched its political programme for government. Overall, the new government's programme represents clear shifts in Hamas's political behaviour that builds on the agenda outlined in CR's Manifesto. It continues Hamas's move away from relying on restrictive and trenchant religious justifications of its political and ideological positions and objectives towards adopting more expansive and nuanced political justifications. Instructively, the speech contained several indications of just how much Hamas was willing to expound its commitment to the democratic process and the extent of its ideological transformation in certain policy areas.

Haniyeh began his speech by reiterating Hamas's trenchant opposition to continued Israeli occupation, declaring that the government's top priority would be to protect the right of Palestinians to resist the occupation that 'restrict[s] our nation and put us in reservations and camp towns' (C-SPAN 2006). He proclaimed that Palestinians had a right to an independent and viable status with East Jerusalem as its capital and committed the government to destroying the settlements and the Wall. He also upheld the government's right to ensure the right of return for Palestinian refugees, guaranteeing their compensation, and to protect Palestinians from policies associated with Israel's occupation regime (C-SPAN 2006). Haniyeh also stated that Palestinians should not be punished collectively because they had elected Hamas through democratic means, and that the economic and political siege inflicted on Palestinians 'will never diminish our resolve and diminish our great people and this government will lead Palestinians to a free and dignified life' (C-SPAN 2006). As noted in the previous chapter, Hamas appears to reaffirm these positions to provide an ideological bulwark to shield itself somewhat from any criticism concerning its adoption of more politically conciliatory policy positions. They are a signal that while the movement maybe shifting towards a more moderate policy positions in some areas, it does not mean that it has abandoned the core aspect of its raison d'être: resisting Israeli occupation.

Throughout the speech, Haniyeh attempted to position his government as the legitimate representative of Palestinians, stressing that given its victory in democratic elections, the new government should be allowed to implement its

programme without internal and external hindrances and interference (C-SPAN 2006). This was a message directed as much to the US and Israel as it was to Fatah. However, Haniyeh also made a point of acknowledging the authority and position of Abbas as president of the PA, indicating that Hamas was willing to operate within the existing political system by committing the government to respecting the constitutional relationship between the PLC and the president so that they could work collaboratively to further Palestinian national interests. This was an important point by Haniyeh, because he was committing the government to operate according to the Palestinian Constitution or Basic Law, which had been ratified by Arafat as part of the 2003 Roadmap. Up until this point Hamas had opposed almost the entire premise of the Roadmap and its various stipulations on the reformation of the Palestinian political system. The concession was also an olive branch to Abbas and Fatah, an attempt to create an atmosphere more conducive to cooperation rather than the mistrust and occasional hostility that had affected the relationship between the two dominant Palestinian factions.

Indicative of Hamas's shifting political behaviour, Haniyeh made mention at various times of the government's commitment to respecting the rights of citizens and of advancing the democratic principles of tolerance, pluralism, and cooperation. For example Haniyeh noted that the government wanted to restructure the OPT's ubiquitous security services so that they would be responsible for the applying the rule of law without breaching Palestinians' constitutional rights, collective freedoms, or civil rights (C-SPAN 2006). Haniyeh also spent some time discussing the government's pledge to reform the financial and administrative sectors of the PA that would include institutional checks and balances and enforcing bureaucratic transparency. These reforms were aimed directly at fighting corruption within the PA, thus addressing one of CR's key campaign pledges. Furthermore, Haniyeh stressed the government's commitment to encouraging the private sector in the OPT as a way of attracting foreign direct investment, claiming 'we can give them economic security through the right rules and laws' (C-SPAN 2006). Haniyeh also emphasised the importance of an independent judiciary that would protect Palestinians' human rights and assist the executive in achieving the rule of law in the OPT. According to Haniyeh (C-SPAN 2006), an independent judiciary 'gives the society the feeling of security and safety and the feeling of fairness.'

Instructively, at one point Haniyeh seemed to place the secular concepts of democracy and the rule of law above Islam, stating

> enhancing democracy means that we have to all accept the rule of law and to have no other loyalties, religious or families or anything. The government will continue to preserve the constitutional rights of every citizen and preserve them in a way that protects the human rights and freedoms and liberties of each Palestinian.
>
> (C-SPAN 2006)

In fact, except for asking for God's help at various times during the 45-minute speech, Haniyeh did not once mention religion or Islam directly. In many ways,

Haniyeh's speech mirrored CR's Manifesto by committing the government to implement institutional reforms, to fight against corruption in the PA, increase the educational opportunities of Palestinians, and enhance the role of women in Palestinian society.

Perhaps the most important piece of information contained in Haniyeh's speech was his declaration that the new government would

> work with the previous agreements that the PLO had already signed and the Palestinian Authority has signed with national responsibility and in a way, that will work to the interests of our nation . . . and this Cabinet with all departments will continue to take into consideration the interest of our nation and the sectors that put us in contact with the Israelis.
>
> (C-SPAN 2006)

Furthermore, Haniyeh stated that his government would 'deal with the international resolutions that are related to the Palestinian cause with great national responsibility in a way that also protects the rights of our nation' (C-SPAN 2006).

The language that Haniyeh used to frame Hamas's position is instructive, and is further evidence of the growing political sophistication of Hamas. Haniyeh continued Hamas's strategy of separating its trenchant opposition to the occupation from its gradually more nuanced position on the Peace Process. Haniyeh acknowledged publicly for the first time that a Hamas government would operate in concert with the political system established by the previously reviled Oslo Accords, and with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, in a 'responsible' way. Unlike the language contained in its Charter, Hamas was no longer calling for the destruction of the Israeli state or for establishing a Palestinian state in its place. Haniyeh's acknowledgement effectively ended Hamas's ideological opposition to the Oslo Accords. From this point on, Hamas agreed to govern within an institutional framework that would see any potential sovereign Palestinian state consist of only the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Without expressly stating as much, Haniyeh signalled that Hamas was willing to change how it would deal with the Palestinian struggle for statehood, and what any future Palestinian state would look like.

Crucially, the statement did not amount to the outright acceptance of the Oslo Accords or legitimise the Peace Process through which they were arrived at. It also did not amount to an explicit recognition of the Israeli state, even though such a recognition is implicit in, and a central tenet of, the Oslo Accords and the Peace Process. Haniyeh's speech is an acknowledgement of the political reality in the OPT that governing means doing so within the institutional parameters of the PA. It is also an acknowledgement that Hamas was studiously avoiding any firm position on potentially destabilising ideological red lines. In the speech, Haniyeh makes no direct mention of Israel or to how his acknowledgement would alter how Hamas and its government prosecute the struggle with Israel for Palestinian statehood. Additionally, Haniyeh also avoided recognising the PLO's position in Palestinian politics that had been a key precondition for the other

Palestinian factions. Hamas still held the position that the PLO could not be called the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people if Hamas and other Islamist movements were excluded. Hamas retained its demand that the PLO needed to be reformed in accordance with the Cairo Accord before it would agree to join (Hroub 2006: 17–18).

Revealingly though, Haniyeh places a caveat on the extent of Hamas's acceptance and compliance with the tenets of the Accords and the subsequent agreements. He notes that Hamas consents to 'work' with these agreements only insofar as they 'will work to the interests of our nation.' Similarly, he notes that the government will deal responsibly with the UNSC resolutions 'in a way that also protects the rights of our nation' (C-SPAN 2006). What Haniyeh appears to be saying is that the government would be willing to 'work' within the current political framework only so far as the government believes that it serves the Palestinian national interests. The corollary to this notion is that should the government come to believe that aspects of these agreements and resolutions become contrary to Palestinian national interests, then they would not be bound to abide by them. Therefore, while the new government may accept the Accords and the UNSC resolutions as the basis of future negotiations it does not necessarily consider the tenets of those agreements as immutable. By including these caveats, Hamas appears to be looking to the future and the uncertainty of the Peace Process negotiations. Demonstrating its increasing political sophistication, Hamas uses these caveats to provide it with sufficient political room to manoeuvre so that it can judge the veracity and efficacy of any future negotiated agreement between Palestinians and Israelis, and whether it believes such an agreement meets the Palestinian national interests.

Within this caveat lies the divisive issue of who – the PLC or the presidency – gets to decide what is and is not in the Palestinian national interest. Given Hamas's recent electoral victory and majority in the PLC, they could lay claim to determining what these national interests were as a reflection of the public's will. However, given the fact that diplomatic negotiations remain the sole purview of the presidency, Abbas could equally lay claim to deciding what the Palestinian national interests were when negotiating on any possible peace agreement with Israel. Given that Hamas and Fatah would have diverging interpretations of what is and is not in the Palestinian national interest, it did not bode well for any form of agreement between the movements on a negotiating stance, let alone on any prospective peace deal.

Despite the ambiguity surrounding Hamas's commitment to the Oslo Accords and the Peace Process, the speech marks a significant shift in the political behaviour of Hamas. Gone is the blunt and strident language of the theologian contained in the Charter, replaced by the occasionally Janus-faced and capricious language of the politician. Hamas appeared to be learning the art of politics, making it the dominant vehicle through which Hamas articulates and prosecutes its struggle against Israel and Fatah. From an immediate political sense, it is important to note that Haniyeh's speech also addressed the three 'considerations' set out earlier by Abbas, having previously accepted the premise of the 2002

Arab League Summit. Again, this is a key shift in behaviour, with Hamas willing to compromise on its previously strident opposition to the Quartet's stipulations to achieve its political objective of forming a workable government, and by extension, gaining a political voice.

Despite these positives, the speech omitted a crucial aspect of any Palestinian political actor's programme. What would be Hamas's negotiating stance concerning the Peace Process negotiations? It was one thing to accept the premise of the Peace Process framework; it was another thing altogether for Hamas to begin to articulate bargaining positions on an issue so sensitive and potentially divisive. In the post-election furore, the Quartet and Israel shifted their point of contention with Hamas from requiring good governance and the democratic transformation of Palestinian politics, to ensuring the retention of the Peace Process's status quo. The Quartet and Israel demanded that the new Hamas government renounce violence, recognise Israel, and accept all previous Palestinian/Israeli agreements (Tamimi 2009: 225). Floundering under the enormous diplomatic pressure, and unable to arrive at a consensus position quickly, Hamas vacillated, slowly enervating any international support they had accumulated after their election victory (ICG 2006b: 4). Just as importantly for Hamas, the Palestinian public also wanted to know what Hamas's views and policy positions were concerning the Peace Process. It was one thing to remain ambiguous on your policy stance while in opposition. It was another thing to carry this policy ambiguity into government. The uncertainty on Hamas's policy stance concerning the Peace Process partially accounts for the reduction in support for both Hamas and CR in the months following the election (see Figures 1 and 2).

This omission, couple with Hamas's unpreparedness for its PLC majority, exposed the movement's political Achilles' heel – their complete lack of definitive bargaining positions concerning the Peace Process. The challenging issues of whether Hamas would negotiate with Israel over a sovereign Palestine and to what extent were they willing to compromise to achieve Palestinian sovereignty remained largely unresolved.[14] CR's Manifesto had focused overwhelmingly on addressing domestic governance issues, leaving Hamas's position on the Peace Process deliberately indistinct. Hamas's electoral victory exposed the movement's failure to articulate a policy alternative to the Peace Process negotiations and the recognition of Israel. The Manifesto simply called for Arab unity of purpose towards resolving the 'Palestinian Question,' decrying the occupation's perniciousness, and urging the international community to assist in achieving Palestinian statehood (Tamimi 2009: 297–298).[15]

Hamas had not formulated clearly what it would do differently from Fatah to resolve the contentious issues of East Jerusalem, international borders, the right of return for refugees, and whether it would agree to formally recognise Israel. While Haniyeh had committed the government to protecting the rights of Palestinians, this did not amount to any definitive policy. This policy lacuna highlights how sensitive and fractious these matters were for Hamas. Hamas assumed that as a junior party in any coalition government, the president, and thus Fatah, would be responsible for representing Palestinian interests internationally. Any input by

Hamas would take place within the confines of its minority position in the PLC, and only after it had arrived at a deliberative internal policy consensus.[16]

To create sufficient space, Hamas launched numerous policy 'test balloons' designed to gauge public opinion (ICG 2006b: 3). This created confusion and a degree of suspicion among the international community. These 'test balloons' were ambiguous and lacked any of the policy specificity necessary to placate either the Quartet or Israel, or to inform a puzzled public of Hamas's actual preferences concerning the Peace Process. This ambiguity reinforced suspicions held by Israel and the Quartet that Hamas held ulterior motives concerning the Peace Process, specifically that it intended repudiating all previous Agreements by starting afresh, despite what Haniyeh had informed the PLC (ICG 2006b: 3–4).

The lack of any unified position within Hamas also meant that CR's role in the debate was stymied because it lacked any authority and parameters within which to negotiate a compromise, or even to use its political distance to articulate a more amenable solution that would be broadly acceptable to Hamas and the Quartet/Israel. This reinforced the misgivings held by Israel and the Quartet that there was no political and ideological distance between Hamas and CR (ICG 2006b: 4). Hamas's poor response is indicative of its lack of a suitable ideological framework to cope with the decision-making immediacy that comes from having to govern unilaterally. While Hamas's methodical decision-making process functioned adequately in opposition, it failed to deal with the intense pressures now being placed on the government in such ideologically sensitive policy areas.

Hamas's failure to articulate an appropriate response to the demands made by Israel and the Quartet did not bode well for the new government. Hamas's vacillation on these important issues raised serious doubts among Palestinians and its detractors about Hamas's fitness to govern. Any international support for Hamas's new government quickly evaporated, allowing Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet to implement their political and economic countermeasures without any serious objections. In many respects, Hamas became politically trapped by its unexpected electoral success and the accompanying weight of expectation. According to one prominent Palestinian academic, this sense of entrapment was manifested by its increasing resort to violence against Fatah that eventually led to the 2007 schism (pers. comm. 12 July 2017). Nevertheless, these policy shortcomings and militant streak are not necessarily indicative of Hamas displaying undemocratic qualities. While incredibly important in assessing the scope and limits of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour in this policy area, they are not necessarily indicative of Hamas's (in)ability to govern and willingness to implement the governance norms set out by CR's Manifesto and the government's programme.

Fatah's reaction to its election loss

Fatah's profound shock following its election loss cannot be underestimated. So closely had the movement melded itself to the PA that it had all but lost its ability to survive as a coherent movement outside of the power it exercised through the PA (Brown & Hamzawy 2010: 174). To deal with Fatah's loss of power and retain

control over a shell-shocked movement, Abbas reverted to Arafat's much maligned leadership style by ensuring firm control of security, information, and economic agencies in the West Bank and then selectively redistributing a measure of control to acolytes to instil fealty (Nofal 2006: 32). Notwithstanding Fatah's embarrassment, there was little Abbas could do constitutionally to impede CR's ability to govern, as even the Basic Law's emergency powers precluded the PLC's dissolution and the calling of fresh elections (Brown 2006: 2–3).[17] While Abbas publicly recognised CR's victory and tasked it with forming a unity government, Fatah leaders precluded any member from negotiating with Hamas. Fatah's strategy was to conduct a range of delaying and spoiling tactics designed to inflame the sense of mistrust between the two movements. To enforce this strategy, Fatah aimed to isolate Hamas economically and politically, thereby impeding its ability to perform the functions of government (Caridi 2012: 206–209). Fatah hoped that this dual isolation would force Hamas's government to either conform to Fatah's political agenda or fail completely, necessitating fresh elections and a return to the status quo of majority Fatah rule (Caridi 2012: 203).

Economically, Abbas was intimately aware of the PA's precarious situation and its overwhelming reliance on international financial benevolence. According to then WB President James Wolfensohn, the PA required approximately USD 165 million per month to operate. Of this, USD 50–60 million came from tax revenue collected by Israel and transferred monthly, with approximately USD 35 million coming from taxes the PA collected directly. The remaining USD 70–80 million came from external donations (Wolfensohn 2006, cited in ICG 2006b: 22). If any of these revenue streams were interrupted, then it would seriously impede the PA's ability to provide essential government services, even to be able to pay its employees.[18]

Abbas immediately began transferring control of various financial institutions from the PLC to the presidency. On 4 February 2006, he announced that control of the PIF would immediately come under the purview of the presidency, resulting in nearly USD 1 billion held by the fund being controlled by the president rather than the PLC (WikiLeaks 2006k). Abbas then appointed secretaries general for the PA's personnel, salaries, and comptroller institutions, ensuring that all reported directly to him. Furthermore, Abbas established a Constitutional Court, whose role was to adjudicate any dispute between PLC and the president, including the right to veto any parliamentary law it deemed unconstitutional (Usher 2006: 28). On 13 February 2006 Fatah convened a session of the PLC. During this session, held without any representation from newly elected CR members, the PLC granted Abbas the power to appoint judges to the Constitutional Court and changed PLC by-laws to allow senior Fatah leader Ibrahim Khriesheh to be appointed secretary general of the PLC even though he had not been elected (WikiLeaks 2006r).[19] Subsequently, all nine judges appointed to the Constitutional Court were Fatah loyalists. The portent of these political manoeuvres was to restrict CR's ability to govern without the president's direct legislative approval.

Abbas also began to alter the chain of command for the numerous security agencies, as they remained the PA's chief source of formal power. This alteration would

ensure that their control either remained, or became the purview of, the presidency (ICG 2006b: 11). Abbas also considered appointing security chiefs to the Palestinian NSC to balance Hamas's incoming presence. In this way, it was hoped that the NSC could function as a 'parallel Interior Ministry,' ensuring that the PASF served the president's interests and not the PLC's (WikiLeaks 2006j).

Despite these actions, there were two existing pieces of legislation that already ensured that Abbas retained effective control over the PASF. First, the Security Services Law provided the president with effective administrative control of the PASF through the mandatory creation of an Officer's Committee consisting of senior security chiefs appointed by the president. Second, Basic Law provided the president with the power to hire and fire these chiefs without the prior approval of the PLC. Accordingly, these two laws meant that while the Hamas government would retain operational control of the PASF, and be responsible for the provision of law and order in the OPT, PASF commanders would still be constitutionally required to answer to the president. Importantly for Abbas, this division of responsibility would likely insulate him from any associated criticism should the Hamas government fail (WikiLeaks 2006q).

In April 2006, Abbas bolstered the Palestinian Presidential Guard, and established an additional security organisation tasked with policing the Gaza-Egyptian border crossings at Rafah with both organisations reporting directly to the president, rather than the PLC (ICG 2006b: 12). Again, this was done to limit and impede CR's ability to control law and order and hinder its ability to establish its domestic sovereignty in the OPT.

Abbas also hoped that with the prospect of a majority Hamas government, he would be able to convince the GoI to loosen its grip on the West Bank to improve economic conditions. Abbas wanted to create a fresh narrative of diplomatic progress in the Peace Process, with improving economic conditions in the West Bank and the prospect of a debilitating Israeli siege in Gaza influencing public support to an extent that it would weaken Hamas sufficiently or even trigger its collapse (ICG 2009: 26).[20]

The motivations for Fatah's attempts to re-establish its dominance were manifold. A Hamas majority in the PLC meant relinquishing control of the institution responsible for receiving and dispersing the billions of dollars of foreign aid and investment. The EU alone contributed nearly EUR 1 billion annually, with the US averaging annual contributions of approximately USD 500 million (Witney 2013: 6; Zanotti 2013: 1). The prospect of Fatah's patronage networks and clientelistic governance regime being dismantled after international benefactors turned off the spigot to this river of money, or control of it being handed to its ideological rival, threatened to fracture Fatah (Rabbani 2008b: 70).

Also, there were those in Fatah who firmly believed that the only viable and acceptable path to establishing a sovereign Palestine rested on the Palestinian acceptance of the two-state solution. There was a fear that Hamas's ascension to power would compel the international community to adopt a harsher diplomatic tone concerning future negotiations, potentially scuppering or further delaying the prospects of establishing a Palestinian state (ICG 2006b: 10).

Israel's reaction to the election

After the election, there was a growing perception within the GoI that Hamas's victory should be sabotaged because it represented a danger to the GoI's state-building efforts in the OPT. In particular, it threatened the established status quo between Israelis and Palestinians, especially with respect to the Peace Process and Israel's refusal to relinquish its claims to the West Bank (Caridi 2012: 251). The GoI and IDF understood immediately that Hamas's victory threatened to overturn their occupational structures in the OPT, particularly the role that the PA played in policing the OPT for Israel. With the PA potentially controlled by Hamas, its ubiquitous security agencies would all fall under their purview, making continued Israeli manipulation problematic (Reinhart 2006: 150). It also challenged the GoI's established narrative that the Palestinian leadership was weak, its governance dysfunctional, and its capacity to deliver security absent (Shikaki 2009: 4).[21] The prospect of a unity government also placed into question the continued efficacy of Israel's strategy of keeping political and social links between Gaza and the West Bank severed, and dealing with them as independent entities with different problems and solutions (ICG 2015: i).[22]

Accordingly, the GoI began to implement a strategy designed to excise Hamas from Palestinian politics by subverting its ability to govern effectively and encouraging the perception that, given its terrorist antecedence, Hamas should not be allowed to assume any role in the Peace Process (Caridi 2012: 203–204).[23] When Hamas demurred over accepting the Quartet's three diplomatic stipulations, Israel imposed a range of economic and political sanctions designed to constrict Hamas's ability to provide essential government services (Tamimi 2009: 226).

Almost immediately, the GoI ceased transferring tax revenues and fees it collected on behalf of the PA (ICG 2007: 2). The GoI also stopped all cross-border traffic with Gaza, banned all exports, prevented Gazan labourers from crossing into Israel for work, and restricted the importing of goods and materials. Israel only allowed the basic necessities, such as wheat, flour, frozen meat and vegetables, dairy products, rice, vegetables, fruits, vegetable oil, and fuel supplies into Gaza (see Figures 5 and 6; ICG 2008a: 1). Additionally, Israel blocked all money transfers from Arab or Islamic countries causing Gaza's humanitarian situation to deteriorate quickly as people had less money with which to buy food and pay for basic utilities (PCHR 2007: 7). Finally, between June and August 2006, the GoI gaoled 40 elected Hamas PLC representatives including the newly elected speaker, Aziz Dweik, meaning that the new government was unable to achieve a quorum (ICG 2008b: 1; WikiLeaks 2006x). The members' imprisonment also meant that the PLC was unable to overturn any of Abbas's presidential decrees, pass any laws that might contradict these decrees, or attempt to force any political compromise over presidential elections that were due at the beginning of 2010 (Challand 2009: 14).

While the GoI may have been acting in concert with Fatah to achieve Hamas's isolation, it was certainly not working towards any increase in the economic and political fortunes of Fatah, such as those envisaged by Abbas. In fact, the 2006 election result presented the GoI with the justification it needed to propagate a

narrative that would institutionalise the territories' disaggregation. This narrative was based on projecting the vision of relative economic normality in the Fatah-administered West Bank versus the belligerent and dangerous Hamas confined to Gaza and subject to a political and economic siege.

The Quartet's reaction to the election

Like Israel, the Quartet understood the ramifications a successful and unified Palestinian government headed by Hamas could have on maintaining the status quo of the Peace Process. The election results pressured Quartet members, principally the US, and to a lesser extent the EU, to adopt a far more interventionist diplomatic stance designed to force Hamas to conform with accepted Peace Process negotiation dynamics or face economic and political isolation. According to Sadiki (2009: 179–181), policies promoting democracy and plurality were replaced by policies of singularity and ostracism, with intimidation and economic blackmail becoming key tools in the Quartet's efforts at democracy manipulation in the OPT.

To shield a shell-shocked Fatah, the Quartet's actions served to perpetuate and accentuate the evolving Palestinian political polarisation. This strategy influenced the US to insist that if Hamas were going to be permitted to participate in the Peace Process negotiations then they would have to accept all the previously negotiated Agreements. Fatah was the preferred Palestinian negotiation partner of the US, and the Bush administration would not accept any attempt Hamas might make to restructure or adopt a 'blank slate' approach to Palestinian/Israeli negotiations. As then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (2011: 418) pronounced, 'it was one thing to acknowledge that Hamas had won, and quite another to accept its program.'

The US placed extreme diplomatic pressure on Abbas to use his presidential authority to dissolve Hamas's fledgling government. According to US State Department talking points prepared for Abbas:

> Hamas should be given a clear choice, with a clear deadline: . . . they either accept a new government that meets the Quartet's principles, or they reject it. The consequences of Hamas's decisions should also be clear: If Hamas does not agree within the prescribed time, you should make clear your intention to declare a state of emergency and form an emergency government explicitly committed to that platform. If you act along these lines, we will support you both materially and politically.
>
> (Rose 2008)

Even before Hamas had a chance to digest the enormity of its victory and take tentative steps towards establishing a unity government, the Quartet had determined the parameters of Hamas's future involvement in Palestinian politics: it could change or fail (ICG 2006b: 34).[24] The Quartet issued a statement on 30 January 2006 reiterating the diplomatic principles deemed appropriate for all Palestinian representative institutions to abide by – non-violence, recognising Israel – and

accepting all previously negotiated agreements including the Roadmap (UN 2006). To enforce Hamas's compliance, the Quartet also included funding conditionality (UN 2006). Secretary Rice (2011: 419–420) admitted that the Quartet's stipulations were repeated in the likelihood that Hamas would reject them, giving it the pretext to begin Hamas's political and economic isolation. With Hamas struggling to articulate a response to these demands, the US and EU took this to mean that Hamas had rejected the principles and severed all economic assistance to, and diplomatic ties with, the Hamas-controlled PA (Tocci 2013: 35–36).[25]

To begin with, the US Treasury prevented all economic transactions with the PA and pressured other international financial institutions, aid organisations, and governments to do likewise. USAID issued instructions to all its contractors to have no contact with the PA. Additionally, the Arab Bank froze the PA's Single Treasury Account that was its principal financial vehicle for collecting and disbursing revenues. Other Arab banks followed suit, with Hamas officials claiming that USD 347 million in Palestinian funds were frozen (ICG 2006b: 23). While the Arab banks acted out of fear of sanctions, it was a bitter blow for the new government, believing that they would receive a degree of regional solidarity to insulate them from the Quartet's opprobrium.

With Fatah on the brink of collapse, the Quartet needed a mechanism to bolster it financially without aiding the Hamas-controlled PLC. To solve this dilemma, the Quartet established a TIM that would enable financial aid for Palestinians to continue (Tocci 2013: 36). The TIM Implementation Unit dispersed funds directly to vetted individuals rather to the institutions for whom they worked.[26] The TIM also dispensed fuel to targeted institutions such as Public Healthcare Clinics and the NGO Hospital in Gaza (WikiLeaks 2006y). These disbursements were crucial in the public relations war against Hamas. In 2006, the PA employed nearly 172,000 Palestinians and its wages accounted for approximately 60% of its operating budget, meaning that PA salaries supported an estimated 29% of the territories' population (ICG 2006b: 22). As an ICG report (2006b: 34) opined, the objective of these tactics was 'to find ways to strengthen Abbas, thereby circumventing the government and persuading Palestinians that Hamas is the real obstacle to progress.'[27] This financial strangulation would remain in force until either Hamas capitulated to Quartet demands and accepted its three stipulations, or their government failed, precipitating fresh elections.

At the same time as Hamas was attempting to form a unity government, the US was endeavouring to thwart these efforts, with UN Representative Álvaro De Soto reporting, 'The US . . . sent unequivocal signals to independents who had been approached about joining the government that they would be ill-advised to do so' (De Soto 2007: 21). In De Soto's opinion, a unity government could have been achieved immediately after the January election, and a year of debilitating and rancorous inter-factional violence avoided, had the US adopted a more conciliatory approach towards Hamas's political participation (De Soto 2007: 21).

As well as economic strangulation, senior Bush administration officials Secretary of State Rice and Deputy National Security Advisor Abrams developed a plan that was approved by President Bush to arm Fatah security forces to

instigate the forcible overthrow of Hamas's government (Rose 2008). Towards the end of 2006, Lieut. Gen. Dayton, the US-appointed security co-ordinator, met with senior Fatah official Mohammed Dahlan and promised him approximately USD 86 million to 'dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism and establish law and order in the West Bank and Gaza' (Rose 2008). While the funds failed to materialise, Secretary Rice apparently contacted various Arab governments asking them to equip Fatah with numerous small arms to facilitate the overthrow of Hamas (Rose 2008).

The by-product of the Quartet's financial and political buttressing of Fatah was that they linked the two actors in the minds of Palestinians. Abbas's legitimacy among Palestinians was dealt a substantial blow by his willing acceptance of the Quartet's agenda that Palestinians perceived as an effort to retain Fatah's power. Palestinians had elected Hamas to the PLC, and Abbas's reactions smacked of desperation and hubris.[28] His links with the Quartet, especially the US, also compromised his political independence, casting a shroud of complicity over any action Abbas took (Caridi 2012: 209). It also weakened the Quartet's subsequent efforts to engineer Abbas's rehabilitation in the minds of Palestinians. Conversely, Hamas could point to Abbas's bolstering as a sign of weakness and an inability to represent Palestinian national interests.

The Palestinians' reaction to the election

Despite the various attempts to excise the new Hamas-led government from Palestinian politics, a March 2006 poll provides an insight into the importance that governance played in Hamas's victory, and Palestinian views on the responses by Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 19). Support for CR had solidified since the election, with 70.4% of respondents believing that Hamas would succeed in government. Meanwhile, Fatah's support dropped substantially just two months after the election (see Figures 1 and 2). Interestingly, when asked why Hamas had won, 36.6% of respondents nominated 'an Islamic authority that rules according to shari'a and religion,' with 35.6% nominating 'a clean authority that fights corruption.' When asked why Fatah had lost, 51.9% of respondents believed it had been punished for the spread of corruption in the PA. Furthermore, while 91.3% of respondents believed there was corruption in PA institutions, 64.6% of respondents believed that it would decrease following Hamas's election. Interestingly, on the question of who should have greater power, the PLC or the president, 44.2% versus 32.4% of respondents believed it should be the PLC (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 19).

On the crucial issue of whether the Hamas government should recognise Israel, 60.8% of respondents believed that Hamas should not. Similarly, 59.2% of respondents believed that Hamas should not cave into the international community's demand to recognise Israel. Interestingly, 78% of respondents believed that even if the international community did cut off financial aid to the PA, Hamas would be able to function through donations from Arab and Muslim countries (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 19).

Equally important though, was the public's views on Hamas and the Peace Process. If Israel decided to open negotiations with the new government, 75.1% of respondents believed that Hamas should negotiate, with 53% of respondents wanting the new government to begin implementing the Quartet's Roadmap (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 19). Similarly, 81.9% of respondents indicated that they preferred the Palestinian and Israeli governments resolve their differences through negotiation and not unilateral action(s). Nonetheless, these desires were accompanied by a strong dose of political reality and the cogency of Hamas employing a DRS, with 44.5% of respondents thinking that reconciliation with Israel was not possible ever, and 52.4% of respondents continuing to support armed attacks against Israeli civilians. Indeed, 66.9% believed this dual approach of negotiation and attacks helped achieve Palestinian national and political rights, where a unilateral approach of negotiation had not (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 19).

What these results demonstrate is that while Palestinians may have favoured Hamas's policy positions, there remained a firm expectation that if provided with the opportunity, the new government was expected to participate in negotiations with Israel to attain Palestinian statehood. With Hamas in majority control of the PLC, the public had a clear expectation that Hamas would participate actively in the Peace Process, making the debate within Hamas over its response more germane. The polling results also provide clear evidence of the public's support for Hamas's DRS.

Over the next few months, the financial restrictions imposed by Israel and the Quartet placed an increasingly heavy burden upon Palestinians. The lack of sufficient revenue meant that employees could not be paid, and this had a trickle-down effect, with less money being spent throughout the OPT, especially in Gaza (ICG 2007: 2–3). In September 2006, public service workers went on an indefinite strike, with the industrial action specifically targeting the revenue generating institutions of the Ministry of Finance and Customs (ICG 2007: 7). The effect on the Palestinian economy was devastating, with a UNRWA report noting a 64.3% increase in the deep poverty rate between the second half of 2005 and the first half of 2006, rising from 17.3% to 27.5%, with much of this increase occurring in Gaza (UNRWA 2006: iii).

In polling conducted in September and December 2006, the message to both sides was clear, with Hamas's inability to resolve its differences with Fatah and begin governing starting to affect its political support (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 21 and 22). In the September poll, CR's overall dissatisfaction was 53.6%, rising to 62.3% in December. In both polls, most respondents were increasingly dissatisfied with the new government's efforts to enforce law and order, carry out reforms, tackle corruption, ameliorate the effects of the occupation, and improve economic conditions. Over this period, combined support for CR declined from 38% in September to 35.8% in December, while combined support for Fatah rose from 40.9% to 42.4% (see Figures 1 and 2).

Most concerning of all for Hamas was that in the December poll, approximately 48% of Palestinians believed that the CR-led government should resign, with 60.5% believing that this should be followed by fresh presidential and

parliamentary elections. The December poll contained further bad news for Hamas with 57.7% of respondents indicating that if an independent Palestinian state were established, it should recognise Israel. This was a remarkable turnaround in support, given that just nine months previously nearly 60% of Palestinians polled believed that Hamas should not cave into international demands to recognise Israel. To add to Hamas's anxiety, over 90% of Palestinians surveyed believed that the conditions for Palestinians in the territories were bad (PCPSR 2006: Poll No. 22).

The lesson for Hamas was clear, financial strangulation had caused the already parlous economic conditions experienced by Palestinians in the OPT to worsen, and this directly affected Hamas's support among Palestinians. Despite winning a decisive electoral victory, the efforts of Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet had damaged Hamas's political authority. The strangulation strategy stripped Hamas of the strategic initiative to control and influence the political and diplomatic narrative. With Israel tightly controlling access to external finances, food, water, electricity, and other basic services, Hamas found itself trapped by the very constrictions that afflicted Fatah in governing the OPT. Palestinians expected Hamas to have an answer for the governance problems that existed already, even without the imposition of the siege. When Hamas appeared to have no immediate answers for these prevailing problems, irrespective of the siege, their support suffered. As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, support for both CR and Hamas began an inexorable decline from their height after the 2006 election. Only briefly in 2014, and again in 2015, would CR be able to match Fatah's support in the West Bank or in Hamas's stronghold of Gaza. The situation was compounded by the fact that Hamas's leadership remained cognisant that for their strategic goals to be realised, the movement needed to be an integral and not a peripheral actor in Palestinian politics. Only by retaining representation in the PLC could Hamas hope to institute its reforms of both the PA and the PLO, progressively stripping away Fatah's hegemony of these two premier representative institutions (Caridi 2012: 240).

Conclusion

This chapter highlights several key issues concerning the scope, limits, and causation of the shifts in Hamas political behaviour concerning its participation in the 2006 elections and their aftermath. First, the opprobrious international reaction to Hamas's victory is a vivid demonstration of what happens when an opposition party in a semi-authoritarian system is unfortunate enough to win an election it was meant to lose. Instead of being the junior partner in a coalition government, Hamas found itself in the majority. This exposed Hamas to enormous domestic and international pressures from Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet that it had few immediate solutions to. Hamas's inability to manage these pressures adequately, highlights some of the inherent weaknesses of its decision-making processes. These weaknesses sapped any international support for the new government and placed it on the strategic defensive, forcing it to react to rather than drive events.

Importantly, Hamas's tentative responses raised questions among Palestinians about whether it could govern in such a contentious political environment.

Nevertheless, Hamas's reaction to this hostile situation is instructive and is indicative of the importance that it placed on retaining its newly won political status. Having representatives elected to the PLC meant that for the first time, Hamas would be able to wield political power in the OPT. This was the goal of the first version of Hamas's DRS: engaging in the normative capacity building of the PA to challenge the status quo of Fatah's negotiating position vis-à-vis the Peace Process and its vision for achieving Palestinian statehood. Hamas was determined to remain a viable political actor, and from the very beginning wanted to allay any international concerns over what its victory meant for the future of this relationship, particularly vis-à-vis the Peace Process. Palestinians had elected Hamas to government, and they expected Hamas to do more than just focus on its governance reform agenda. The public expected Hamas to engage effectively with the Peace Process and with Israel. So instead of withdrawing from the political stage in the face of this opprobrious behaviour, Hamas chose to emphasise its moderate credentials and commit itself to remaining within the political system. Indeed, it went further, and began to make conditional yet important concessions in areas of key ideological meaning, particularly concerning its political relationship with Israel.

Hamas also sought to allay international fears about what style of governance it would implement. It promoted actively a secular style of governing that largely reflected the positions laid out in CR's Manifesto. When Haniyeh outlined Hamas's political programme, he emphasised Hamas's commitment to democratic principles such as political pluralism, tolerance, and cooperation. He also accepted publicly the primacy of a Palestinian political system established by the once reviled Oslo Accords and the Quartet's 2003 Roadmap. These were important and necessary, shifts in Hamas's stance that provided it with much needed political space within which to manoeuvre and adjust its narrative according to fluctuating circumstances. The chief problem was that Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet remained determined to undermine Hamas's newly acquired political authority in the OPT. This concerted pressure required Hamas to make further changes in its political behaviour to adapt to this challenging and capricious political environment. The question is, could Hamas rise to the challenge?

Notes

1 The issue of co-option is supported by Meshaal, who believed that US support for Palestinian elections was a tactic for corralling Hamas's resistance to the established Palestinian-Israeli relationship by allowing them entry into the political system. In this way, Hamas would be forced to assume some responsibility for political decisions made by Abbas and the PLC. See Rabbani (2008b: 67–68).

2 Meshaal notes that a key part of this debate was not only the costs and benefits of participation but equally the costs and benefits of not participating. In his view, despite the ruinous costs of participation, things would have been worse for Hamas, and for Palestinians, had they not participated. See Rabbani (2008b: 69).

3 Usher (2006: 21) argued that the reason that the US advocated for Palestinian elections so strongly was to rid Abbas's government of any legitimacy deficit, enabling them to continue to control the Peace Process.

4 In the December poll, Fatah gained control of 17 councils to Hamas's nine. In the May poll, Fatah won 50 councils, Hamas 28, the PFLP one, and four councils went to secular coalitions. See Caridi (2012: 167); and Tamimi (2009: 209–213). Despite Hamas's strong showing, a close advisor to Abbas in Gaza, Marwan Kanafani, informed the US political officer in Tel Aviv that in Gaza Hamas was the least of his problems. The political officer described other Abbas advisors as being ebullient, believing that Hamas's participation in the recent council elections signalled a new era of political cooperation between the various factions. See WikiLeaks (2005).

5 Of the 78 'Hamas' candidates, it was estimated that only 30–35 had any direct affiliation with Hamas itself. The remainder were chosen because of their 'clean' reputation, and who either shared or identified with Hamas's anti-corruption or 'clean government' platform.

6 According to a senior Fatah member Abdulsami Effrangi, Fatah's candidate list contained the names of members apparently reviled by Palestinians for alleged corruption. Additionally, the choice of candidates was weighted on maintaining political influence by key government figures, not electability. See WikiLeaks (2005).

7 Hamas's narrative was enhanced further when Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. Hamas immediately claimed this as a victory for its long-standing strategy of resistance and its steadfast refusal to bow to Israeli oppression. The cogency of Hamas's strategy was in stark contrast to Fatah's policy of negotiations that had failed, not only to result in any measurable advancement towards statehood, but had resulted in the Palestinian state appearing more remote. See Caridi (2012: 182–183).

8 This is also borne out by the intelligence assessment of Shin Bet, which believed that prior to the election Hamas's goal was to gain control of the Ministries of Health, Education, and Welfare to increase its capabilities and to finance its activities in the OPT. Concerning the Peace Process, while Hamas was apparently content to leave the Peace Process to Abbas, he would have to consider the views and positions of Hamas. See WikiLeaks (2006a).

9 A *tahdiy'ah* is a temporary *hudna*, a period of 'calming' between two adversaries. Given the association with *hudnas*, a *tahdiy'ah* also carries with it a degree of religious obligation in adhering to its terms. See Tamimi (2009: 166).

10 While Hamas may have been surprised by their win, in the assessment of the IDF Hamas had campaigned vigorously with the view to gain ministries in the next government. In this case, the IDF's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Halutz, stated that the GoI could never negotiate with the future Palestinian government. See WikiLeaks (2006b).

11 Elsayyad and Hanafy (2014: 118–199) state that strategic voting occurs when given the resounding success in initial rounds of voting, later-stage voters can decide to give other parties a chance to ensure a more balanced Parliament. While voting in the 2006 election occurred on only one day, Hamas had gained significant political momentum from its emphatic municipal council election victories to induce a similar situation.

12 A poll conducted days before the election showed support for Fatah on 32.3% and support for CR at 30.2%. See JMCC 2006.

13 For examples of these predictions, see Satloff (2006).

14 On 12 March 2006, Hamas released guidelines for the next PLC Cabinet. Like Haniyeh's speech, Hamas failed to outline clearly its position concerning the recognition of Israel, claiming that no one faction or cabinet can tackle the issue, only the Palestinian people. See Anon 2006b; WikiLeaks (2006a); and WikiLeaks (2006s).

15 The fact that Hamas was never challenged seriously during the campaign to articulate its position concerning the Peace Process is further evidence that Palestinians expected a Fatah victory, with a strong Hamas presence in the PLC.

16 In a meeting between senior Hamas leaders and Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Soliman on 6 February 2006, the Hamas leaders informed Soliman that they were happy for the PLO to take care of any Peace Process negotiations with Israel. Hamas also informed Soliman that they wanted to establish a *hudna* with the GoI in return for a cessation of targeted assassinations and the release of prisoners. See WikiLeaks (2006h).

17 This very issue was discussed by the PLC on 13 February 2006 and provoked a fierce reaction from Hamas, who claimed Abbas was precipitating a bloodless coup in retaliation for Hamas's victory. See WikiLeaks (2006m).

18 According to the PA's Deputy Finance Minister al-Wazir, the PA feared that it could collapse within 48 hours because Palestinian and Jordanian bankers were unwilling to extend the PA credit given the election result. With the GoI already refusing to transfer tax revenue and without any bridging loans, al-Wazir stated that the PA would be unable to pay government salaries. See WikiLeaks (2006d).

19 In the first joint session of the PLC held on 6 March 2006, Hamas nullified these measures. However, Fatah responded by referring the resolution to the High Court, declaring that they would boycott all further sessions until the court had decided. See WikiLeaks (2006r).

20 Despite this, Fatah recognised that it was ill-prepared to resume governing legitimately and needed to time to rebuild and prepare for any subsequent elections. Consequently, the US was asked not to be too punitive with its economic sanctions against Hamas, lest it trigger a collapse before Fatah was prepared to resume governing. See WikiLeaks (2006j).

21 On 26 January 2006, Acting PM Olmert issued the following statement: 'If a Palestinian government is formed with Hamas participation, the Palestinian Authority will become a terrorist Authority, which the world and Israel will ignore and render irrelevant . . . a Palestinian Authority with Hamas is not a partner.' See WikiLeaks (2006e). Despite this strident approach, the head of Shin Bet, Yuval Diskin, advised caution. While supporting GoI policy towards Hamas, Diskin advised that the GoI should carefully study Hamas's policy and involvement in any future 'acts of terror' before reacting. He also noted that in his opinion Hamas understood that a policy of terror would be a mistake once it assumed control of the PA. See WikiLeaks (2006o).

22 In a meeting between the IDF's Military Intelligence Director Amos Yadlin and the US ambassador in Tel Aviv on 12 June 2007, Yadlin claimed that Israel would be happy if Hamas obtained control of Gaza because the IDF could then treat Hamas as a hostile state rather than as a non-state actor. See WikiLeaks (2007).

23 After the election, it was reported that Knesset representatives from all three major parties concurred that the international community should isolate the new government, and that the current situation was a setback for the Peace Process. See WikiLeaks (2006g).

24 Despite this, several sources informed the US that the quick collapse of the Hamas government was highly unlikely. Indeed, the PA's Interior Ministry Director General Ibrahim Salamah believed that the Palestinians' ability to endure hardships coupled with external support, principally from Iran, would mean that the Hamas government would endure. See WikiLeaks (2006l). Dr Mustafa Barghouti from the Independent Palestine Party also told the US this. Barghouti advised that any efforts by Fatah to undermine the new government would be seen by Palestinians as a US/Israeli-backed plot that would end up generating increased support for Hamas. See WikiLeaks (2006n).

25 This severance was meant to be absolute. When the newly elected Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, accepted a congratulatory call from PA Prime Minister Haniyeh, it 'generated surprise and consternation in Washington, in view of US and EU policy against contact with senior Hamas officials.' Despite the message delivered to Haniyeh by Prodi being consistent with US and EU policy, 'the problem was the message delivered to Hamas by accepting the call. This had been a gift to Hamas.' See WikiLeaks (2006u).

26 On 23 July 2006, the PA President's Office began disbursing USD 91 million to suppliers, PA employees, PA pensioners, and social hardship cases. See WikiLeaks (2006w). A second round of disbursements was made to health sector workers on 4 September 2006. See WikiLeaks (2006z).

27 The Quartet appeared to have adopted the tactic of placing all the blame for the financial situation on Hamas's apparent recalcitrance concerning its acceptance of the three stipulations. In a briefing with senior members of Italy's newly elected Prodi government, they agreed that 'the key challenge [was] to help the Palestinian people to understand that the financial problems facing the PA were the result of Hamas actions, not the international community.' See WikiLeaks (2006v).

28 In a February 2006 meeting in Muscat between Oman's Chief Ambassador Ahmed al-Harthy and US Ambassador Baltimore, al-Harthy warned that US actions were placing Abbas in an impossible position. If he supported Hamas, it would provide the GoI with an excuse to marginalise him as they had done to Arafat. If Abbas acceded to US demands, it would be undemocratic and political suicide. Al-Harthy also informed Baltimore that Hamas understood it needed to moderate its position concerning Israel to be accepted by other Arab states. He also implored the US to provide Hamas with suitable space to form government and to adopt this more moderate position. See WikiLeaks (2006i).

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5 Governing Gaza

The ‘slow assassination’ of Hamas

Introduction

Israel’s prolonged economic and political siege of Gaza raises questions about the durability of Hamas’s political authority and by extension its capacity to achieve domestic sovereignty in Gaza. With its relationship with Fatah also increasingly fractious, Hamas needs to project an image of possessing political authority in Gaza to restore a degree of normality to life in Gaza (Berti 2015: 16). The siege has caused the legitimacy of the government to become tied closely to its ability to govern Gaza effectively. This meant that the role of Hamas’s DRS had to change from the reformation and institutional capacity building of the PA to ensuring Hamas’s political survival.

The myriad problems confronting Hamas, particularly concerning this conflation of effective governance with political authority, raises poignant questions concerning how Islamist movements cope with the complexities and vicissitudes of governing. What shifts in political behaviour are necessary to make the transition from opposition to majority government? What role will *shari’ah* play in policy development and implementation? How are the challenges to the government’s political authority to be addressed? And how should shifts in a movement’s political behaviour be rationalised to the public and its supporters? This chapter aims to address these questions by investigating how Hamas responds as a government and as a movement to the complexities of governing Gaza. It begins by providing a theoretical framework within which to judge the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas’s political behaviour. It then analyses how Hamas responds, both as a government and as a movement, to the myriad challenges of governing, particularly its resort to implementing soft-Islamisation and soft-authoritarian policy frameworks.

Governance, and ‘good’ governance

Before assessing the efficacy of Hamas’s governing regime, it is necessary to understand what ‘governance’ is. Chhotray and Stoker (2009: 3) define it as ‘[being] about the rules of collective decision-making in settings where there are a plurality of actors or organisations and where no formal control system can

dictate the terms of the relationship between these actors and organisations.'[1] In essence, governance is about promoting security, protecting property rights, reducing societal problems, and taking control of the steering of societal developments such as nation-building (de Vries 2013: 4). De Vries (2013: 4) makes the point that by placing the normative prefix of 'good' before governance means that any analysis of governance becomes an assessment of how governments act, rather than what they do. Klugman (2002: 271) defines 'good governance' as being

> epitomized by predictable, open, and enlightened policy making (that is transparent processes); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.

In many respects, 'good governance' is an assessment of the relative success and failure of the normative changes a government makes to the system rather than the government's ability to provide a suitable standard of living and measurable improvements in people's lives. Therefore, understanding the debates around the decision-making processes of policy development and policy implementation can provide valuable insights into the scope, limits, and causation of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. This becomes particularly germane when determining whether Hamas has adopted any normative shifts to its behaviour that might be indicative of an ideological turn.

The public's perception of Hamas's policy agenda and implementation plays an important part in determining its performance-based legitimacy.[2] Additionally, 'good governance' has become closely aligned with democratic performance, making an assessment of 'good governance' linked to a government's democratic credentials (Chhotray & Stoker 2009: 111). Again, this has significant ramifications for Hamas and the recognition of its political authority in Gaza by Palestinians and the international community. The implementation of anti-corruption measures, maintaining the rule of law, and institutional capacity building are key determinants that Palestinians and the international community use to judge a government's legitimacy in the OPT.

For Palestinians, the issue of 'governance' is perhaps the most significant factor differentiating Hamas from Fatah in their ongoing competition over the right to rule in the OPT. This is because 'governance' in the Palestinian case is more than just about effectively administering the territories and providing social services to Palestinians. Since the inception of the PA in 1994, Palestinians have always envisaged the institution as possessing more than just an administrative function. Palestinians took advantage of the Oslo Accords framework to provide the PA with state-building and national reconstruction capabilities that included a Parliament capable of writing and passing laws, functioning ministries, and a security force (Brown 2010b: 371).

Accordingly, 'governance' has become a key battleground in Palestinian politics because it provides a benchmark for the Palestinians and international community to assess which government – Hamas or Fatah – has the capacity to govern

effectively according to democratic standards. Achieving these standards helps affirm the legitimacy of Hamas in the OPT. To be sure, Hamas's performance legitimacy has been obstructed by its struggles with Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet (Lake 2009: 332). 'Governance' thus forms a key part of Hamas's political resistance. As already discussed, from a state-building perspective effective governance plays a key role in determining the strength and durability of Hamas's domestic sovereignty.[3] Demonstrating the capacity to govern effectively allows Hamas the opportunity to prove to Palestinians, and to the broader international community, that they are more than just soldiers and ideologues, but they can be competent bureaucrats and managers as well (Szekely 2015: 275).

The challenge from Salafi radicals in Gaza

The political, social, and economic isolation caused by Israel's siege affected Hamas's relations with the more radical and militant groups in Gaza. Post-9/11, Gaza had become home to a range of more militant Islamist groups that were, for a time, of little concern to either Hamas or Fatah. These groups promote a broad spectrum of radical and militant Islamist ideologies, from the pan-Islamism of al-Qaeda to the *takfirism* of what would later be known as ISIS. These Salafi-Jihadist groups opposed any form of diplomatic or electoral participation, accusing Hamas of political and religious treason. They argued that participating in a secularised government undermined Hamas's religious purity of purpose and enervated its ability to fight Israeli occupation (Roy 2011: 222).

The potency of this argument remained intense for many younger Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, who had lived through the privations of the Second Intifada and the continued disillusionment with the political process in general. While Hamas as a movement may have decided to participate in politics, the cogency of this decision did not make sense to this section of Palestinian society whose perceptions of Israel's occupation made anathema any political participation. Indeed, many of these younger Palestinians struggled to rationalise this decision given that Hamas had for decades excoriated Fatah for doing the same thing. In their eyes this made Hamas just as complicit as Fatah in perpetuating the occupation through collaboration. While some took a less violent path, more ideologically driven Gazans came to believe that Hamas was simply not pure enough in its Islamist interpretation, and they began to seek out those more radical and militant Salafi-Jihadist movements (Brenner 2017: 66–67).

The rise in prominence of these militant groups is also a product of the parlous conditions in Gaza, regional influences, and later the Arab Uprisings. Since 2004, Hamas had sought to portray itself as a moderate Islamist movement, one completely distinct from the Salafi-Jihadists who viewed the conflict against Israel as merely part of the larger and more important global defence of Muslims against non-Muslims (Milton-Edwards 2014: 260; ICG 2011: i). Consequently, Hamas's relationship with these groups has been rather Janus-faced. Prior to the 2006 election, Hamas largely viewed these groups in a positive light, seeing them as useful tools in their ongoing resistance to Israeli occupation (Brenner 2017: 178). Like

Fatah when it controlled Gaza, Hamas used the presence of the groups as a convenient ideological foil to illustrate to other Arab regimes, and later the international community, the ideological distance between the more considered approach of Hamas, and the more militant and radical alternate approach of the Salafi-Jihadists (Milton-Edwards 2014: 261).

Initially, these groups only challenged Hamas's political authority via their dissenting rhetoric. However, as the siege intensified, and economic and social privations worsened, it gave rise to more overt forms of dissention. With Hamas's ability to ameliorate the effects of the siege largely ineffective, the various Salafi-Jihadist groups began to have a greater relevance in the political dynamics in Gaza (Zibun 2010: 161). This was inflamed further by the growth in internet access throughout Gaza. This exposed Gazans to the numerous Salafi-Jihadist websites proffering radical and militant solutions to the injustices of foreign occupation. Events in Afghanistan, Iraq, and later Syria added further fuel to the fire of militancy expounded by the Salafi-Jihadists (Brenner 2017: 67–68).

After the 2007 schism, the security situation in Gaza was tenuous, and with the Salafi-Jihadist groups' popularity rising, they soon began to pose a threat to the maintenance of Hamas's political authority in Gaza in two main areas. First, they presented a danger to Hamas's continuing *tahdiy'ah* with Israel by orchestrating attacks against Israel that included firing rockets and/or mortar rounds, attempted kidnappings, and assassinations. They also began taking foreigners hostage, including journalists, NGO workers, and activists. Second, and perhaps more importantly, they posed an ideological threat to the dominance of Hamas's Islamist narrative in Gaza (ICG 2011: i; Milton-Edwards 2014: 268–269). While the threat to the *tahdiy'ah* was countered more easily, an attack on Hamas's Islamist credentials was an attack on the legitimacy of its DRS.

In the aftermath of the 2007 schism, militant Islamists tried to condemn Hamas by attacking its ideological credentials as both an Islamist movement, and its commitment to the liberation of Palestine via *jihad*. Some Salafi-Jihadist groups excoriated Hamas for assuming political control in Gaza, passing legislation, failing to implement *shari'ah* comprehensively, and for its close links to Shi'ite Iran and Alawite Syria. The international repudiation of Hamas after its 2006 election victory, the perceived failure of their democratic experiment, and the collective punishment inflicted upon Gazans by Israel and the Quartet all left Hamas vulnerable to persistent ideological criticism (ICG 2011: 22). Consequently, many of these Salafi-Jihadist groups began promulgating a 'Look East' political narrative that promoted ideologically anti-Western, radical, and *jihadi* discourses. This was in clear opposition to Hamas's discourse concerning political participation that was increasingly being associated with 'The West,' and the ideological baggage that this entails (Milton-Edwards 2014: 260). As Milton-Edwards (2014: 263) notes,

> The issue is, whether the Salafi-jihadist message . . . has found appeal in the Gaza Strip amongst the many hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who sit poor and dispossessed by Israeli occupation, and the apparent indifference or double standards of the Western world.

To intensify the pressure on Hamas, various Salafi-Jihadist groups began to integrate the Palestinian struggle into their jihadist narratives. Salafi-Jihadist leaders and their literature began to highlight ideological inconsistencies in Hamas's political policies and strategies, accusing it of sophistry, denouncing its role in the 2007 schism, and of instigating the deadly assault against fellow Muslims (Milton-Edwards 2014: 262–264). This argument gained traction among both a dispirited and restless youth, and disenchanted rank and file members unconvinced by their leadership's political direction and apparent ideological compromises (Caridi 2012: 312–313; ICG 2008a: 24–26). Addressing this point, a Hamas activist reportedly stated:

> boys support the military option, because the international community no longer has much appeal to them. They believe that the international community supports only those who hold the power, those who have the strength, and that it does not bear those who made democratic choices.
>
> (al-Masri 2010, cited in Caridi 2012: 309)

This narrative became more germane with the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings. Early on, Hamas sought to capitalise upon the initial successes of various Brotherhood-inspired movements by conflating their triumphs with those of Hamas. By incorporating these regional successes into its narrative, Hamas sought to link Fatah's government with the failed authoritarian regimes that were being toppled. In doing so, Hamas associated itself with the future and Fatah with the past. However, as the Uprisings stalled the effects of the siege began to affect Hamas's legitimacy in Gaza, especially as it was now the governing authority rather than a movement advocating systemic reform (Milton-Edwards 2013: 61–62). Within the evolving context of the Uprisings, the Salafi-Jihadists claimed that Hamas was no longer in the vanguard of regional political transformation but part of the very political apparatus the Uprisings were seeking to overthrow.

The result of these machinations was a degree of political fragmentation inside Hamas as some members and supporters, emboldened by what was happening elsewhere in the Arab world, openly voiced their disapproval at Hamas's political strategy by supporting the more radical movements in Gaza (ICG 2012: 15). While the number of deserters was never that great, given the pressures that Hamas was being subjected to, any sustained loss of support and internal destabilisation could be potentially debilitating (Sayigh 2011b: 16).

Hamas's political response to the challenge

How Hamas reacted to the threats to its political authority posed by the Salafi-Jihadist groups is instructive, particularly concerning how it deals with other Islamists with whom it shares a degree of ideological affinity. Additionally, Hamas had to remain cognisant that its responses would be scrutinised by West Bankers and the international community for any discrepancies in its narrative, especially concerning the Islamisation of Gaza. To begin with, Hamas adopted a practical,

though distinctly authoritarian, response that is emblematic of its deepening pragmatism and political maturity. Hamas remained sensitive to accusations that it was encouraging any Salafi-Jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda and later ISIS. While Hamas tolerated their presence in Gaza, it was not about to let them interfere and/or intervene unilaterally in the already fractious Palestinian/Israeli conflict and its equally problematic contest with Fatah (ICG 2011: 14).

To defend itself, Hamas adopted a three-pronged approach. First, to quell these militant movements' military operations, Hamas's security services engaged in frequent arrest operations, incarcerating leaders and members of any group that attempted to openly flout and/or challenge its authority in Gaza. Either these groups chose to adhere to Hamas's control or their members were arrested and imprisoned indefinitely (ICG 2011: 8–11).[4] This was the dominant approach during the first two years of Hamas's rule in Gaza. Hamas's security forces were given almost a free hand to deal with these groups in whatever manner they deemed most effective.

Once inside gaol, Hamas adopted slightly subtler tactics, sending in clerics and psychologists to counsel radicalised members to 'bring them back to the fold.' A Hamas study revealed that many prisoners were disaffected youth, with little education and job prospects, and who had once been low ranking members of the military wings of various movements including Hamas, the PIJ, Fatah, and the PRCs (ICG 2011: 21). Rather than seeing these prisoners as criminals, Hamas saw them more as misguided Muslim brothers whose attitude was a response to a poor and misguided understanding of Islam. The prevailing opinion within Hamas was that there was the prospect of rehabilitation through 'proper' religious education (Brenner 2017: 178).

Second, Hamas propagated a political narrative aimed at both domestic and international audiences. Internationally, Hamas expounded its ideological distance from these other radical and militant Islamist movements hoping to reinforce not only its moderate Islamist credentials but also the cogency and efficacy of its political strategy. After the 2007 schism, Hamas concentrated on projecting a 'business as usual' approach. CR attempted to revive the PLC, despite Fatah's boycott, the impossibility of West Bank representatives being allowed to travel to Gaza, and the imprisonment of so many of its newly elected parliamentarians. Hamas also reshuffled its Cabinet to fill the vacant positions hoping to project to Palestinians and the international community a sense of professionalism and a determination to govern effectively (Berti 2015: 15–16).

The government emphasised that they intended modelling their style of governing on that of Turkey's AKP. Consequently, they continued professionalising and bureaucratising the PA and improving the capacity of Gaza's political and social institutions (Sayigh 2010: 3). Commenting on the government's endeavours, former editor in chief of Hamas newspaper *al-Resalah*, Ghazi Hamzi (cited in Sayigh 2011b: 120–121) stated:

> Although . . . Hamas perceives Islam as the best way of tackling the problems of the Palestinian nation, it also strongly believes in a gradual, reformatory,

> and 'locally owned' [process]. Hamas propagates and implements Islam through education, socio-political institution building, and academic work.

Finally, Hamas became more vociferous in declaring its nationalist attributes, its commitment to Palestinian liberation, and most importantly, its Brotherhood credentials (Milton-Edwards 2014: 262–264). In keeping with its Brotherhood ethos, Hamas has always opposed the more doctrinaire expression of Islam, preferring to evince an alternative political agenda for Palestinians grounded on pragmatism and incrementalism (Milton-Edwards 2016: 63). Since Hamas's decision to participate in the electoral process, it has been determined to attempt any political reform from inside the political system rather than advocating for its overthrow and reconstruction. Hamas wanted to highlight to Palestinians the differences between its more pragmatic approach and the approach advocated by the radical, militant, and anti-systemic Salafi-Jihadists.

To accentuate this dichotomy, Hamas co-opted and incorporated the narratives and discourses of ideologically similar movements such as the PIJ, the PFLP, and the PDFLP. Not only did this subordinate these factions to Hamas's authority, it condensed the long-standing Palestinian 'resistance' discourse, allowing Hamas to monopolise how moderate political Islam was represented in the OPT (Sayigh 2011b: 10–11; Sayigh 2011a: 12–13, 110). According to Sayigh (2010: 4–5), Hamas also instituted a broad-based discourse with its rank and file through its broadcast media and internet services. The discourse championed its Islamisation efforts in Gaza and was meant to reassure Hamas members that the process of governing did not equate to a lessening of the importance of Islam. Nevertheless, such was the impact of the Salafi-Jihadists ideological attacks on Hamas that the movement became gradually less inclined to pay the ideological price imposed by Israel and the Quartet for recognition and legitimacy (Milton-Edwards 2016: 72).

Hamas's religious response to the challenge

As the ideological conflict with the Salafi-Jihadists developed, Hamas decided it needed to control as much of the 'Islamic infrastructure' in Gaza as possible to restrict the religious space available to the Salafi-Jihadists. Since its inception, Hamas has consistently maintained its practice of using the mosque as a place of worship, as an institution for learning, and as a political organisation (Abu-Amr 1994: 77). The mosque is where people congregate regularly without attracting any adverse attention from the IDF or Fatah. This allows Hamas the opportunity to engage with the public intellectually, politically, and culturally by targeting all age groups as well as both genders (Balousha 2013). Hamas began using mosques as prime recruiting arenas, especially for leadership aspirants, and they provided the movement with a measure of 'symbolic capital' among Palestinians (Gunning 2009: 122–123). When Israel began laying siege to Gaza, the mosque also became an arena for the distribution of food and financial aid (Schaeublin 2011: 66). As the siege intensified, the provision of aid to Gazans became emblematic of the struggle, not just between Hamas and Fatah but also between Hamas and the

Salafi-Jihadists, with Hamas claiming that only it had the institutional capacity to provide for the peoples' needs in such a parlous political and economic environment.

Given the central role that mosques had assumed, Hamas sought to consolidate its authority over all mosques operating in Gaza, including those operated by the Salafi-Jihadist movements. In this way, it imposed its Islamist narrative upon the populace by training and allocating its own preachers to mosques and establishing increased control over aid distribution (Sayigh 2010: 4). The result was that the religious space available to the Salafi-Jihadists was tightly controlled. Additionally, as the siege intensified, the populace became more dependent upon the government and the movement for their survival. Hamas's government was then able to emphasise its ideological dominance and legitimacy in Gaza by claiming credit for Gazans being able to resist the Israeli siege successfully.

Every mosque became responsible for collecting *zakat*, a religious obligation requiring Muslims to make annual contributions for philanthropic purposes (Schaeublin 2011: 6). When Hamas assumed control of Gaza in 2007, it established a separate Ministry of *Awqaf* (Ministry of Religious Affairs) to administer the collection and distribution of *zakat* in Gaza. By 2010, there were 32 registered *zakat* committees operating in Gaza, with the new government having established most of them. The government ensured that each committee operated effectively and appropriately, with respected members of the community and senior police officers often appointed to administer them. The result was that the Ministry could remove any non-Hamas representatives from the committees, meaning that sole credit for their work and the societal contributions they made could be attributed to the government (Schaeublin 2011: 68–69).

To localise the provision of aid, the Ministry made the decision to de-centralise control of the committees to give them a greater say over the collection and distribution of the money and to provide some financial training for the administrators (Schaeublin 2011: 68, 70). In this way, not only did local communities feel empowered and gain a sense of financial self-sufficiency, but the government was also able to boast about its Islamist credentials, further starving the Salafi-Jihadist groups of religious space and legitimacy.

Political and social incrementalism – Hamas's 'soft-Islamisation' of Gaza

With Hamas governing Gaza unilaterally, it began to implement its programme of reforming the PA through implementing a process of bureaucratisation and professionalisation. As part of this reformation, Hamas's government began to intensify its efforts to implement a process of 'soft-Islamisation' designed to enhance the role that Islam played in Gazan society gradually and selectively. Not only would this steadily increase the institutional capacity of the PA but it also would further neutralise the Salafi-Jihadists' ideological threat while simultaneously appeasing conservative Muslims in Gaza.

Nevertheless, the government had to be careful of reneging on its pre-election commitment to refrain from the systematic Islamisation of Palestinian society. This means there is a distinction between the goals of Hamas the government and the aspirations of Hamas the movement, which at times are not harmonious and create tensions. As an advisor to PM Haniyeh (2010 cited in ICG 2011: 26) outlines:

> Hamas as a movement emphasises Islam as a philosophy and way of life. But when we decided to contest elections, we did so in the framework of civil law, and we are committed to abiding by it. We can have Islamic views, but they must be expressed within the framework of the law.

Broadly speaking, Hamas's 'soft-Islamisation' approach is designed to guarantee that normatively Gaza's political and social institutions conform to Islamic ideals, while empirically building institutional capacity through bureaucratisation and professionalisation. Hamas hoped that this would ensure the efficient administration of Gaza, and the provision of government services (Sayigh 2011b: 48). This practical approach is necessary for three reasons. First, while most Gazans consider themselves religious and are more socially conservative than West Bankers, this does not necessarily mean they approve of the wholesale implementation and enforcement of *shari'ah* and other Islamisation initiatives in Gaza.[5] For example, in a December 2016 poll, only 13.5% of Gazans nominated building a religious society that applies all Islamic teachings as the most important national goal (PCPSR 2016: Poll No. 62). This remains consistent with Hroub's assertion that many Palestinians would resist any attempt to forcibly Islamise Palestinian society (Hroub 2010: 173). As one Palestinian observed, 'There was no doubt that Hamas saw that any attempt to force Islamisation could backfire, and it might influence or might have a negative impact on its efforts to have control' (pers. comm. 12 July 2017). Second, Hamas also remains cognisant that any Islamisation efforts could be misconstrued by the international community, especially given the persistent attempts by the GoI and the Quartet to de-legitimise the government and Hamas by linking them with Salafi-Jihadist movements like al-Qaeda, and later ISIS.

Finally, Hamas is aware that the way it governs Gaza is being keenly observed by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Any attempt to forcibly Islamise Gaza would have distinctly adverse effects on Hamas's popularity in these two territories. While Gaza is Hamas's political heartland, the bulk of Palestinians reside in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and it is in these two territories where the political and societal effects of the occupation are most deleterious. Even if Hamas can ignore public sentiment in Gaza, it cannot ignore it in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, meaning that its policy intentions are as much directed at Palestinians in these two territories as they are at Gazans.

Consequently, Hamas's 'soft-Islamisation,' rather than being all encompassing and literal, as advocated by the Salafi-Jihadists, is consistent with the Brotherhood's method of adopting a more socially conservative and incrementalist approach towards governance that is aligned more with community expectations, than normative ideological dictates. Hamas has been able to surreptitiously

articulate separate spheres of responsibility between Hamas the secular-orientated government, and Hamas the Islamist movement. The former is responsible for upholding existing laws guaranteeing personal freedoms and the provision of basic services, while the latter promotes and implements simultaneously its Islamist social and religious agendas (Sayigh 2010: 5). The reforms Hamas implemented in Gaza's legal and education systems, and how it deals with the issue of public morality are reflective of how Hamas operationalises its 'soft-Islamisation' approach and its institutional capacity-building efforts. Overall, Hamas's 'soft-Islamisation' approach is intended to increase the government's performance legitimacy and hence the political authority of Hamas in Gaza within a broad religious framework.

Reforming the legal system

As noted in Chapter 1, one of the integral facets of the state-building process is the capacity building of the extractive, coercive, and incorporative institutions of the state. At a base level, a state's legitimacy, and that of its government, is founded upon its ability to establish its domestic sovereignty through the administration of the territory it controls and from being able to enforce laws and ensure public order (Papagianni 2008: 51). Being able to restore law and order in Gaza was a key election promise and was central to Hamas being able to establish its political authority in Gaza. Any reformation process would instil trust in the government and the gradual acceptance from the public that Hamas could translate election promises into effective governance.

Therefore it makes sense that one of the first tasks undertaken by the Hamas government once it had assumed control in 2006 was to reform Gaza's legal system. According to Brown (2012: 10), this system is where Hamas's government most closely resembles that of a functioning state. While the system retains clear faults and imperfections, there exists a functioning judicial bureaucracy capable of administering independent justice in Gaza. Nevertheless, the application of *shari'ah* is a sensitive policy area for the government. Not only do most of Gaza's population view any such attempts with wariness, there are additional practical ramifications that also limit any aspirations the government and the movement may have.

Consequently, the government focused on effective service provision that is gradual and in line with community expectations rather than implementing a broader Islamic reform agenda that fulfils the movement's ideological objectives. Because of the 2007 schism, the governments in Gaza and Ramallah each professed to have the legitimate right to promulgate legislation to the exclusion of each other. However, Palestinians view any attempt to do so with apprehension, because it is seen as further entrenching the schism (Brown 2012: 12). This limits how Hamas's government implements an Islamic legal framework in Gaza.

When Hamas came to power it aimed to bureaucratise and consolidate a chaotic and dysfunctional criminal justice system. Remaining faithful to the framework forecast in its Manifesto, the government adopted a holistic approach to the

reformation process that saw *shari'ah* incorporated into the secular system, rather than supplanting it. This led to the establishment of a hybrid legal framework, with Sayigh (2011b: 76) explaining that 'the development of a justice system compris[ed] two principal components: a structured network of community-based conciliation committees along with a government-run judicial system embracing the existing civil (statutory) system, *shari'a*, and military courts.' While Hamas was willing to re-establish a functioning legal system, it also wanted Gazans to recognise their own societal responsibilities. Hamas believed that one of the key reasons for the levels of societal dislocation in Gaza was that Gazans were disconnected from the ethical and moral norms of Islam. Regaining social order through reconnecting with Islam would result in a more law-abiding citizenry (Brenner 2017: 180). Consequently, the government aimed to create a moral, pious, and law-abiding society that respects the personality of humans through self-monitoring, improvement, and adherence and piety toward God (Abu-Tayr 2010, cited in Sayigh 2011b: 89).

Conciliation committees

The formalisation of conciliation committees provides a good example of the operationalisation of Hamas's 'soft-Islamisation' in the legal system, and the practical and self-imposed limitations of Hamas's technocratic style of governing. Prior to 2006, Gaza's legal system, and the provision of law and order, were dysfunctional, chaotic, and arbitrary. The destruction of the PA's security infrastructure during the Second Intifada left many Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, reliant upon extended familial ties and loyalties to survive. Familial clans filled the legal void created by a paralysed PA and assumed an influential role in administering justice in the OPT. As the power of these clans increased, they 'weaponised,' not only to protect themselves against Israel but also to safeguard their fiefdoms from each other. Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 exacerbated this clan rivalry as they fought over the spoils of 'victory.' By 2006 they had become powerful alternate centres of power in Gaza who were loath to relinquish any of their hard-won influence (ICG 2007: 3–4).

To compound this situation, after Hamas's 2006 electoral victory, the Ramallah PA ordered its employees in Gaza to boycott the legal system causing the justice administration system to breakdown. To rectify this, Hamas's government began to formalise and bureaucratise the existing ad hoc conciliation committee system to restore societal security. Throughout Gaza, the government established approximately 36 committees, each headed by a religious scholar experienced in Islamic and customary law, and having a close liaison with local community police (Sayigh 2011b: 77–78). The committees had two main functions: first, to weaken the authority of the clan system of justice, and second, to ensure the implementation of the tenets of *shari'ah* in social arbitration rather than the more arbitrary clan adjudication system (Sayigh 2011b: 79–80). Moreover, the committees' role in the administration of justice in Gaza was limited, and their rulings had no official legal legitimacy. Their primary function was as informal arbitrators resolving

community disputes, rather than acting as formal semi-judicial institutions (Brown 2012: 10–11).

The government used *shari'ah* to provide an unambiguous and acceptable form of community justice that was distinct from the capricious clan adjudication system that had been allowed to develop under Fatah's rule. The government's focus was on institutional capacity building to ensure that key societal demands are met and troublesome issues addressed, while ensuring that the system had a distinctive Islamic frame of reference. The professionalisation and bureaucratisation of the social justice system was also a means of restoring Gazans' faith in the justice system overall, and by extension enhancing Hamas's political authority. While the system was not perfect, the public understood the legal and religious parameters within which the committees operated, providing a degree of consistency lacking under Fatah's administration.

Importantly, the conciliation committees ran in tandem, not in competition, with the civil criminal justice system. Their initial role was to lighten some of the government's financial and administrative burden. As the government slowly established its authority in Gaza, it set about modernising the dilapidated criminal and social justice infrastructure. This increased the system's institutional capabilities that allowed it to perform its role more effectively. From 2012 onwards, the government began employing more secularly trained judges who gradually assumed a greater caseload, meaning that the role of the conciliation committees slowly decreased.

Paradoxically, this modernisation process was assisted by a confrontation between the new government and the judiciary in late 2007 that again temporarily paralysed Gaza's criminal justice system. Hamas had established a Higher Justice Council to bypass recalcitrant judges who were blocking its reform process. When the judges refused to obey the council's directives and went on strike, the government took the opportunity of sacking about 44 judges and appointed replacements. The effect was almost immediate with observers indicating that the system functioned better than ever, with judges and courts becoming more productive and efficient (ICG 2008a: 12–13). Additionally, the government also deferred the implementation of the separate criminal code, preferring to retain the existing system that would provide a sense of legal consistency, and enabled the retention of a measure of legal complementariness with the West Bank (Brown 2012: 12).

Dealing with public morality issues

The area of public morality is where Hamas's incrementalism is more prominent, as the government and the movement seek to find the right balance between socially conservative and socially progressive policies towards women and their status in Palestinian society. The government's actions in this area also form part of their nation-building activities in that it contributes to building a sense of national identity through educating the public about the appropriate standard of behaviour. As such, Hamas's government has been vigilant in enforcing social mores, particularly concerning women. Throughout Gaza, a proper dress code for

women is enforced, men and women are separated on the beach, women are prevented from riding motorcycles, and women solicitors are required to wear the hijab in court (Sayigh 2011b: 94). These measures are largely in line with Gaza's more conservative society and the perception of the role of women in society. In pursuing these measures, the government could demonstrate its Islamist credentials, fending off criticisms from the Salafi-Jihadists and its own more conservative members and supporters.

Despite this, CR's Manifesto provides an insight into how Hamas attempts to find an appropriate balance in this area. On the one hand, the Manifesto classifies women as having a subordinate societal function requiring protection, guidance, and education. On the other hand, it also envisages women having relative equality in certain areas of social activity, noting that they are a partner in *jihad* and that appropriate legislation should guarantee and support women's rights. Additionally, the Manifesto noted that women's resources should be encouraged in the public sphere, and that the woman's role in building society should be highlighted (see Tamimi 2009: 360–370). This position would seem to be in line with community expectations. In a March 2005 poll, 77.2% of respondents agreed with the proposal of guaranteeing women about 20% of the seats in the new PLC (PCPSR 2005: Poll No. 15). In the lead-up to the election, Hamas campaigned hard to obtain the women's vote, spending large amounts on women-only rallies and festivals. On election day, Hamas reportedly had thousands of female activists on the streets throughout the OPT declaring their political allegiance to Hamas, apparently producing an electrifying sense of change (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 202–203).

After the election, Hamas had six female members elected to the PLC. These six members were not mere political window-dressing, with nearly all being professionals or community activists who had achieved tertiary-level education – one with a doctorate (Gunning 2009: 168–169). As a sign of its centrist inclinations, when Hamas members of the PLC convened for the first time in September 2007, one of the first bills passed allowed women to use their maiden names in the official registry (ICG 2008a: 12). While the bill may not represent a groundbreaking advancement in women's rights in Gaza, the fact that it was one of the first bills passed by the PLC is instructive. It seems to point to the fact that Hamas sees women as an important electoral asset that requires attention. As one of the female PLC members stated,

> There has been a positive shift in Hamas' perception of women. After being [first] employed to mobilize people, they are holding leadership positions, starting with the municipalities, Parliament, and ministries. They have even started to look into leadership positions within the organisation.
>
> (Abu-Amer 2015a)[6]

Nevertheless, prominent Palestinian politician Dr Hanan Ashwari countered this by arguing that Hamas's policy towards women merely made their life slightly more tolerable and failed to adequately address their continuing

subordinate status in Palestinian society (Ashwari 2007, cited in Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 207).

In 2015, media reports surfaced of two prominent Gazan women removing their veils (al-Ghoul 2015). While both women received support and vilification in equal measure, their decision was not a reaction to any direct Hamas policy but more social commentary concerning the role of religion in society. While there appears ready acknowledgement of rising religiosity in Gaza, many commentators noted that this is related to the social and economic conditions brought about by the siege rather than any deliberate policy platform instigated by Hamas. For one woman, removing her veil was a symbol of free choice and not necessarily having to conform to social norms. In her opinion, Gaza's religious conservatism is a product of its continued isolation and limited contact with the outside world (al-Ghoul 2015).

'Soft-Islamisation' and the education system

Typical of a Brotherhood-styled movement, education and learning play central roles in the dissemination of Hamas's Islamist narrative in Gaza (Hoigilt 2013: 63–64). Given this centrality, it might be expected that Gaza's education system would become a prime arena for deeper Islamisation. Not surprisingly, education policy objectives feature prominently in CR's Manifesto. However, the main thrust of these objectives revolves around secular themes of effective service provision, reducing class sizes, more schools, better facilities, and removing any institutional favouritism rather than transforming the education sector to reflect Hamas's Islamist ideology (Tamimi 2009: 301–303).

The capacity-building efforts in Gaza's education system also play a crucial role in Hamas's state-building efforts. This is because education involves most Palestinians irrespective of where in the OPT they reside. The education system cuts across numerous societal cleavages like religion, wealth, and social position and can be the mechanism for building collective national identity (Lee 1988: 32). As Boli, Ramirez and Meyer (1985: 159) argue,

> A [regime] promotes a mass education system in order to transform all individuals into members of the national polity and it supports a *uniform* system to build devotion to a common set of purposes symbols and assumptions about proper conduct in the social arena.

Consequently, education in the OPT serves three primary functions. First, it provides Hamas and its government with the opportunity to develop its institutional capacity to allocate resources and values to Palestinians. Second, it contributes to economic development by upgrading the skill levels of the population. Third, it allows Hamas to transform the parameters of identity to serve the requirements of its state-building agendas (Hovsepian 2008: 3).

Despite the importance of controlling the education agenda, there were several institutional restrictions that corralled any plans the new government may have

had to inculcate any Islamist agenda. The key constraint is that UNRWA, and not Hamas, was initially the predominant education service provider in the OPT.[7] While UNRWA consults with the Gaza and Ramallah governments on educational matters, it is not bound to accept any external interference in the way it educates Palestinians. As a movement, Hamas also runs several 'private' schools funded by *zakat* committees, however these only account for approximately 5%–7% of students in the OPT. All these 'private' schools are integrated fully into the OPT's education system, and though they offer additional religious classes, for the most part they follow the same curriculum as their 'state' counterparts (Hoigilt 2013: 66–67).

Interestingly, Hoigilt (2013: 69) makes the point that in these religious classes, there is very little political and ideological inculcation, with classes devoted to learning the Qur'an and pious ways of greeting and behaviour. The fact that these 'private' schools are financed through *zakat* and are prominent fixtures in the local communities further entrenches Hamas's bond with the community. Overall, though, there is little space for Hamas to advance its Islamisation process through reforming Gaza's education system should it wish to do so. Any attempt to Islamise the curriculum for Gazan students could damage their educational prospects and be seen by the public as another partisan endeavour designed to entrench the schism with Fatah.

After the 2007 schism, thousands of teachers employed and paid by the Ramallah PA boycotted Gazan schools. The boycott revolved around which government would pay the teachers' salaries. While it was meant to disrupt the provision of educational services in Gaza, it allowed the new Hamas government to replace these teachers with its members and supporters (Sayigh 2010: 2). With the new Hamas government quickly under financial pressure, it decided to pay only those teachers who worked, in addition to those people who it drafted into the education system to fill the many vacancies. Given Gaza's grim economic situation, this created a reservoir of institutional loyalty from teachers who were grateful of continuing employment, and Hamas converted this cohort from a pocket of resistance to a core constituency (Brown 2012: 13–14).

Despite the obvious tensions between Hamas and Fatah more broadly there is a degree of institutional cooperation between the two Education Ministries, especially concerning the important secondary school examination *tawjihi*, the results of which are crucial in gaining university admission (Brown 2012: 14–15). Hamas's government also remains keenly aware that all tertiary level degrees obtained by Gazan students must still be accredited by Ramallah, as West Bank tertiary institutions are more recognised internationally than their Gazan counterparts (Brown 2012: 14). Both governments readily acknowledge the importance of education for the future development of Palestinians, and recognise that any partisan division over such a crucial matter would reflect poorly on their legitimacy. It is in the interests of both governments, especially Hamas's, that the effective provision of education services be the primary goal rather than ensuring any ideological/religious compliance. As Brown (2012: 15) observes, 'While the hijab counters still exist, the overall tone of the educational discussion in Gaza focuses

much more on questions of administration, budgets, and workplace needs than the Islamization of society.'

Overall, Hamas's government remains cognisant of public opinion concerning these potentially divisive subjects, continues its practice of releasing legal and regulatory 'test balloons,' and adopts a tactic of 'advising and recommending' on appropriate community standards. The government implements these approaches to gauge just how far and in what areas it can safely pursue its 'soft-Islamisation' without incurring too much opposition from the public, while simultaneously mollifying the Salafi-Jihadists and its more conservative constituents. This means that any government enforcement programmes are implemented on an ad hoc and low-level basis, allowing the government a degree of plausible deniability should certain policies and/or regulations incur the population's ire (ICG 2011: 28–29).

What becomes clear is that Hamas's policy incrementalism includes a tendency to obfuscate and then explain as it seeks to align its tactic of 'advising' and 'recommending' with political reality. As Sayigh (2011b: 96) notes, 'Given this mixture of opacity and informality, the trend has mostly been toward de facto, rather than de jure, Islamization policies.' This means that the government leaves sufficient grey areas in its approach to allow a degree of policy and ideological flexibility and pragmatism to dominate, thereby ensuring that its 'soft-Islamisation' does not diverge too far from prevailing public opinion and expectations (Sayigh 2011b: 97–98). Instructively, when asked about allegations of Hamas 'Islamising' Gaza, Ihab al-Ghussein, head of Hamas's Media Office in Gaza, replied,

> In the end, the majority of Palestinians in Gaza believe we look out for the interest of Palestinians. We came to serve them. We were their choice. Whenever they choose something else, we will go home, unlike our brothers in Fatah.
>
> (Odgaard 2013)

Shifting red lines – Hamas's 'soft authoritarianism'

The government's 'soft-Islamisation' is accompanied by a 'soft-authoritarian' approach, whereby Hamas's government imposes clear boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable political and social behaviour. This restricts the space available for opposition voices while remaining cognisant of the government's current predicaments and the need to retain public support. As Brown (2012: 3) explains, 'It is an authoritarianism that polices and regulates opposition but allows it to operate within certain limits [and] enforces a set of constantly shifting red lines to govern political speech and action in public.'

Hamas's 2007 schism with Fatah increased security tensions in Gaza markedly, with Hamas determined to cement its political authority in Gaza and ensure that the government established a monopoly on the legitimate use of force in Gaza.[8] Hamas launched an extensive security operation targeting familial clans and political opposition groups simultaneously. The operation specifically targeted the Hilis clan, which according to an ICG report not only removed an alternate power base

within Gaza but it also sent a clear message to other clans that Hamas was prepared to use military force to assert its political authority in Gaza (ICG 2008b: 2–3).

Hamas's operation against political opposition in Gaza also targeted any remnants of Fatah that remained in Gaza. According to the ICG report, Hamas targeted 205 political, social, and cultural offices associated with Fatah. Despite vehement criticism from Fatah, this operation mirrored those conducted by Fatah in the West Bank targeting Hamas institutions. However, Hamas did not limit its operation to just Fatah, also targeting various institutions associated with the PIJ (ICG 2008b: 5–6). While many within Hamas's leadership triumvirate recognised the associated cost to its popularity, they considered the operation necessary to remove any threats to its political authority in Gaza (ICG 2008b: 8).

In addition to these more direct measures Hamas's government established a law and order matrix combining ideological motivation, political leadership, and an institutional system that was bureaucratically and ethically superior to Fatah's while remaining able to suppress any opposition to its rule (Sayigh 2011b: 110). The Islamic framework for this matrix means that the government could justify to Gazans that its prime objective in reforming the security sector was to rid Gaza of *fitna* (chaos) that had been pervasive during Fatah's administration. Once *fitna* was removed, then Gaza could be reformed into an ordered and moral society in keeping with Qur'anic tenets (Milton-Edwards 2008: 664). With such a framework, the government can demonstrate to Palestinians its governance, and law and order credentials. This has enabled Hamas to propagate a cogent governance narrative that assists in its competition with the Salafi-Jihadists and Fatah.

However, the government is willing to accord Gazans with a certain degree of space for voicing opposition, particularly on issues that they feel particularly strongly about. So long as groups and individuals do not challenge the government's behavioural boundaries, then it was willing to give them a degree of freedom and expression (Brown 2012: 5). For example, in Gaza, there is a relatively free press, and internet and media access are not curtailed seriously. Often, any 'restrictions' on press freedom have to do with complaints about the government not ensuring unfettered access, then it does the government attempting to implement any form of press censorship. While the issue of access is not solely the government's fault, with Israel restricting the availability of newspapers as part of its siege, Hamas does prevent Fatah-affiliated newspapers from entering Gaza. The resulting media monopolisation forms part of the ongoing competition between the two governments, and mirrors actions taken in Ramallah to prevent Hamas-affiliated news outlets from operating in the West Bank (Sayigh 2011b: 106).

There are some exceptions to this monopolisation, with Hamas's al-Aqsa television station allowed to broadcast into the West Bank and the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Station permitted to broadcast into Gaza. According to a 2012 Corruption Report, officials from both governments regularly appear on the other's television programmes and there has been a progressive increase in local television programmes spreading information and enhancing governmental accountability (CIA 2013: 61). The ambiguities surrounding a 'free press' are supported by polling results during 2016, where on average 23.4% of respondents

believed there was press freedom in Gaza, 44.5% believed there was press freedom to an extent, and 31.2% believed there was not any press freedom (PCPSR 2016: Poll Nos. 59–61).

Despite this, the social, economic, and political costs created by the siege have increased dissent among Gazans who question the government's democratic credentials. This in turn increased the levels of authoritarianism present in how the government responds to this discord. This has resulted in the government having little tolerance for any collective displays of dissent, such as unauthorised protest rallies, and it remains willing to crack down on any non-authorised political activity, including from the media, and especially from remaining Fatah members and Salafi-Jihadist movements (Brown 2012: 5).[9]

Notwithstanding these efforts to assert its political authority, Hamas was more circumspect with respect to Gaza's municipal councils and regional governors. Notwithstanding Hamas's electoral success in the 2004–2005 council elections, they controlled only 8 of the 25 municipalities in Gaza. The remaining 17 councils, including the two largest, Gaza City and Khan Yunis, remained controlled by Fatah-appointed mayors. Similarly, all five governors in Gaza were appointed by Fatah and remained loyal to the Ramallah PA. Immediately after the schism, Hamas replaced the mayors in the three municipalities that they had won in the March 2005 elections. The remaining municipalities and the governors retained their positions. That being said, reports noted that members of Hamas's Executive Force (*Tanfithya*) were present in all five governor's offices, and in those council offices not controlled by Hamas to monitor their activities (WikiLeaks 2007c).

Given the tense security situation, it might be expected that Hamas would immediately replace all Fatah-appointed governors and mayors to entrench their political authority further. That they did not is instructive. Hamas only took control of those councils that they could legitimately claim as having won in the May 2005 elections. While it may have been expedient to have these officials remain in place, it is also possible that Hamas was aware that given the societal trauma of the schism, any perception of the unilateral assumption of power in Gaza may adversely influence their political authority.

Reforming the security services

Like the legal system, reforming the security services in Gaza by strengthening their institutional capacity to obtain and maintain its monopoly on the legitimate use of force in Gaza was key to entrenching Hamas's political authority. Therefore, at the forefront of the government's 'soft-authoritarian' approach are the police and security services. Here too the government continued its pragmatic approach to reform outlined in its Manifesto. Again, it focused on the establishment and maintenance of law and order through increased bureaucratisation and professionalisation, rather than any ideologically driven normative reformation (Sayigh 2011b: 43).

Like their compatriots in the West Bank, Gaza's security sector consists of the civilian police, internal security agencies, and border guards. Despite a lack of

finances after the 2007 schism, Hamas's government has achieved a degree of security consolidation and professionalism far superior to that in the West Bank (Sayigh 2011b: 63). Once in power, Hamas's government established a clear chain of command, instituted civilian oversight, and implemented training regimes. These regimes extended to all levels of the security apparatus with recruit training focusing on the acquisition of specialist and administrative skills, while for more senior members there were courses on mid-level administration, preparation of budgets, project management, and road and traffic regulation (Sayigh 2011b: 63). According to Sayigh (2011b: 11), these reforms played a central role in consolidating the government's political authority in Gaza by restoring a degree of faith among Gazans in the independence and professionalism of the security services.

Executive force

The Executive Force (*Tanfithya*) provides a good example of the Hamas government's flexibility and practicality when it comes to establishing and maintaining security in Gaza, and how sensitive it is to maintaining public support. The *Tanfithya* was established in May 2006, in direct competition with Fatah's PSF that also operated in Gaza. It consisted of about 6,500 men predominantly recruited from the IQB, and was part of the Ministry of the Interior (Sayigh 2011b: 28). Hamas decided that the *Tanfithya* would be an instrument of the government, not the movement, and would play a key role in establishing the government's political authority in Gaza. The government used the *Tanfithya* to provide a highly visible policing presence on Gazan streets and in the refugee camps. Initially, the *Tanfithya* did not undertake ordinary police patrols or other mundane aspects of policing. Its primary role would be representative of the new government's reform attempts with assurances that it would to be effective and efficient, avoid corruption and nepotism, and be non-partisan in its service delivery (Milton-Edwards 2008: 668–669). As such, the *Tanfithya* developed a significant public profile via its own internet site, newspaper, radio station, propaganda videos, and mosque sermons (Milton-Edwards 2008: 671).

After the 2007 schism, the civilian police being paid by Ramallah went on strike, and the *Tanfithya* began to assume more general policing responsibilities, including participating in the government's regular public order campaigns. The *Tanfithya*'s role in Gazan security provision quickly expanded to include traffic, national security, protecting the crossings, dispute arbitration, criminal investigation, and social work (Milton-Edwards 2008: 669–670). However, the combination of these expanded responsibilities, the organisation's intolerance of any legal transgressions, a willingness to instantly resort to force, and a public perception that it was using its power to settle political scores soon led to accusations of overzealous policing practices and human rights abuses. While the *Tanfithya* remained disciplined, their reputation suffered from a perception of organisational opacity, and a lack of a reputable dispute and complaint resolution process (Sayigh 2011b: 28–29; Berti 2015: 18).

Given the *Tanfithya*'s role as an agent of Hamas's government, this loss of reputation influenced the public perception of the government at a time when it was under most threat. Responding to these domestic complaints, the minister appointed a bureaucratically empowered inspector general to provide institutional oversight (Sayigh 2011a: 16). In September 2007, the *Tanfithya* was disbanded altogether, replaced by three separate institutions: the Civil Police, the ISF, and the NSF, each with their own institutional independence. The government promoted the *Tanfithya*'s dismemberment as an effort to de-politicise policing in Gaza by removing the influence of the IQB in this publicly sensitive policy issue (ICG 2008a: 9). Hamas could ill afford to have a policing institution that lacked public trust and had gained a reputation for being above the law. The *Tanfithya* had served a purpose in establishing the broad framework for how policing would be conducted in Gaza. However, once the government realised that its over-zealousness was causing a public backlash, it responded quickly by establishing bureaucratic oversight and then disbanding the organisation altogether.

Dealing with the NGOs

The Hamas government has an awkward relationship with international and local NGOs that is emblematic of its desire to consolidate and centralise its control over the provision of government services in Gaza. Local and international NGOs have always been a vital source for providing basic services to millions of Palestinians, with an estimated 70%–85% of Gazans reliant on some form of assistance (Schaeublin 2011: 64). After Hamas's 2006 election victory, the Quartet's inclusion of funding conditionality to its stipulations for Hamas changed irrevocably the way that aid was financed and delivered to Palestinians. Qarmont and Beland (2012: 34) argue that conditionality was introduced with the aim of weakening the new government's ability to govern, to inhibit the provision of services to Gaza's citizens, and to precipitate the new government's eventual overthrow.

The international sanctions prevented aid donors from providing aid directly to the PA. This meant that most international aid was channelled directly to Abbas's office for subsequent distribution. In Gaza, international aid became focused on emergency relief and humanitarian intervention projects to limit any attempts Hamas's government may make to channel the funds into other projects. The provision of aid to Palestinians has always been highly politicised, but these actions made it more so, resulting in Hamas becoming suspicious of the aid donors' motivations (Qarmont & Beland 2012: 35–36).

Initially though, Hamas's government was willing to let NGOs continue their work unobstructed. As they were responsible for delivering so much necessary aid, it reduced the government's financial burden and enabled them to focus on other areas. However, after the 2007 schism both Fatah and Hamas began politicising Gaza's aid distribution efforts. To begin with, Fatah attempted to extend its 'market-share' of aid provision in Gaza to demonstrate its superiority in this field. Fatah hoped to regain some measure of authority in Gaza by demonstrating Hamas's inability to govern effectively. Therefore, control over the acquisition and

distribution of aid to Gazans became a focal point of Hamas's resistance to the siege and its competition with Fatah. As this competition intensified, the two governments became embroiled in reciprocal closures of local NGOs affiliated with the rival regime (Sayigh 2010: 3).[10] This was done both to limit the rival's presence in the territory they controlled and to rationalise the number of NGOs capable of delivering aid. As the Hamas government's financial woes deepened, it responded by attempting to assert more control over aid distribution. This led to accusations of increasing authoritarianism, and allegations of corruption against Hamas security officials, who allegedly demanded kickbacks in return to access to Gaza (Schaeublin 2011: 64–65).[11]

The competition over the distribution of aid assumed more importance after the 2008 Israeli invasion of Gaza. Hamas's financial plight had become precarious, and the government fixated on ending the siege and reopening Gazan entry points to allow desperately needed supplies to flow once again (ICG 2009: 1). After the invasion, the stoicism of Hamas fighters in defence of Gaza increased Hamas's popularity, and it was keen to exploit this by assuming direct responsibility for the extensive reconstruction efforts. While Hamas's government respected the UN and its efficient aid distribution and wanted this to continue, it also wanted domestic and international audiences to understand that it retained control of reconstruction efforts in Gaza (Caridi 2012: 272–273). The government thus required all NGOs to register with the Ministry of the Interior to gain permission to operate in Gaza. In this way, Hamas could increase regulation and control and vet NGOs, thereby preventing any associated with Fatah from operating in Gaza (Sayigh 2010: 3–4).

Nonetheless, the government had to be very careful not being seen to be publicly politicising aid distribution. With so many Gazans already relying on NGO aid for their survival, this reliance was magnified given the scale of destruction wrought by the IDF's invasion. The government could ill afford to be seen to be standing in the way of NGOs wanting to provide assistance for the sake of partisan political competition. Consequently, government officials engaged in frequent negotiations with NGOs to ensure superficial compliance with the regulations while ensuring that aid distribution was not impeded too much (Qarmont & Beland 2012: 41).

Problems associated with security consolidation

Overall, the government's 'soft-authoritarian' approach, in combination with the threats posed by Israel's siege and the Salafi-Jihadists, led it to centralise and consolidate its control over Gaza (Sayigh 2011b: 106–107). One of the problems this posed for Hamas was the perception developing among Gazans that there is little difference between Hamas the movement and Hamas the government, thereby repeating one of Fatah's key blunders (Brown 2010a: 41–44). One of the reasons why Fatah suffered so dramatically from its election defeat was the lack of any perceptible political distance between 'the movement' and 'the government.' Not only did Palestinians not recognise the distinction between the two entities, Fatah, as a movement, lost its own individuality

and sense of purpose. The decreasing political distance between Hamas and the government also raised similar questions concerning organisational and governmental accountability and opacity (Brown 2012: 15–16). This situation has worsened with time, and now there is little perceptible distance between CR and Hamas. Essentially, Hamas has subsumed CR in its attempts to consolidate it political authority in Gaza.

The decreasing political distance has also been the apparent cause of a conspicuous lack of any legislative oversight. With the PLC's effective neutralisation after the 2007 schism, it became problematic to deal transparently with any institutional over-reach, particularly by the police and security services. There have been accusations of extra-judicial justice being meted out to opposition activists in Gaza without any genuine effort to locate and prosecute the perpetrators (Sayigh 2011b: 107–108). Nevertheless, there have been some attempts by legislators to hold those in control of the security services to account. In May 2013, Hamas PLC members in Gaza held an extraordinary session questioning the Interior Minister Fathi Hammad about violations of freedom in Gaza. While the government hailed this as illustrating its determination to provide accountable and transparent governance, others questioned the session's effectiveness at resolving any of the issues raised (al-Ghoul 2013). However, the fact that such a session occurred at all indicates that Hamas is at least cognisant of the necessity to demonstrate a veneer of legislative oversight and accountability.

The searing experience of governing in such a contentious political environment has also meant that some more experienced members fear that Hamas is gradually losing its ethical and religious principles. The younger leadership cadres are apparently becoming less amenable to participating in internal debate and developing organisational consensus, and more prone to constructing and maintaining power (Sayigh 2011b: 119–120). As Sayigh (2011b: 127) observes, how these tensions are resolved internally will determine how the government and the movement deal with the continually vexing issues of reconciling with Fatah, establishing a unity government, how to approach the conflict with Israel, and the pragmatic resolution of the Peace Process.

The 2007 schism with Fatah, combined with episodic Israeli invasions, means that the security situation in Gaza remains tense, with Hamas determined to ensure its survival. This has meant that the government has called upon the IQB to play a prominent role in maintaining security in Gaza, resulting in them receiving more training and funding then the civil police and border guards. This has emboldened the IQB allowing it to dominate Gaza's security matrix, despite the restructure (Sayigh 2011b: 109). Unfortunately, this has worked against Hamas's efforts to de-politicise the provision of security in Gaza. Technically, the IQB has no part in the provision of security as part of the restructure. However, this has not been true in practice, with the IQB, at times participating in regular policing activities such as crowd control and law enforcement. That the IQB seems to choose when and where it becomes involved in security provision blurs the lines of responsibility between it and the other civilian agencies (Berti & Gutiérrez 2016: 1067–1068).

The constant threat to Hamas's political authority in Gaza has also increased the IQB's levels of militancy, and they appear to have embarked on a much more militant and Salafi Islamic fundamentalist orientation that is of concern for the government and Hamas (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 129). This has been exacerbated by the disagreement by some in the IQB of Hamas's decision to participate in politics. There was a sense among some members that this amounted to the tacit renunciation of Hamas's commitment to the armed resistance of Israeli occupation. According to Brenner (2017: 71–73), this has led some within the IQB to adopt radical and militant views that are inconsistent with, and opposed to, Hamas's own Islamist ideology.

Ultimately, these tensions have their genesis in Hamas and its government finding a suitable role for the IQB in its DRS (Sayigh 2011b: 125). While there is a degree of ideological affinity between the IQB and the Salafi-Jihadists in Gaza, Sayigh argues that the principal difference between the two is that the former has developed a determination to consolidate and utilise state power (Sayigh 2011b: 122). This has also meant that the IQB now has increasing input into government policy development and direction, particularly concerning relations with Israel and any reconciliation with Fatah.

While maintaining its political authority in Gaza through effective governance remains Hamas's primary goal, this is now more to do with regime preservation than any continuing ideological affinity with political participation. The combination of a parlous economic situation brought on by the siege and regular Israeli invasions has led to a decisive change in the balance of power within Hamas away from the political leadership and towards the military leadership (Milton-Edwards 2016: 78–79).

Dealing with the multitude of issues facing Hamas has eventually brought several internal disputes to the fore. In 2015, the media reported on apparent tensions between Hamas's military and political wings becoming public in the wake of Hamas's reconciliation with Fatah, the 2014 Gaza war, the fractious relationship with Egypt, and continuing tensions with Iran. As discussed in Chapter 2, these disputes are not ideological but tactical, with the reports noting that the tensions were primarily over the choice of potential allies, with the political wing favouring Saudi Arabia and Egypt and the military wing favouring Iran (Abu-Amer 2015b). While there is no clear indication as to exactly what these tensions meant, they did not result in the development of any factionalism or splintering in Hamas. Some analysts noted that the tensions were signs of the military wing's increasing domination over the political wing in the aftermath of yet another Israeli invasion of Gaza (Eldar 2015). However, other reports noted that while it was true that the IQB had assumed primary responsibility for dictating and conducting security policies in Gaza, this was not a sign of any discord, but perhaps an indication of the IQB's increased involvement in policy development and the normal to and fro of the decision-making process (Abu-Amer 2015b).

The IQB's mounting influence was reflected in Hamas's 2012 internal election results that saw several IQB members, including senior figures Ahmed Ja'abari and Marwan Issa, elected to Hamas's Political Bureau. While Haniyeh was also

re-elected, followed in April 2013 by Meshaal's re-election, the fact that senior IQB members ran for office and were elected, demonstrates both their increased popularity within Hamas, and their desire to extend their influence in the government (MAITIC 2012: 4).[12]

In February 2017, Hamas elected a new leadership team that included a new chairman, a new commander in Gaza, and new members of the *majlis shura* and Political Bureau. First, Yahya Sinwar was elected to replace outgoing Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyeh (Younes 2017). Then in May 2017 it was announced that Haniyeh had been elected to replace Meshaal (Khoury 2017). Both Meshaal and Haniyeh had completed their mandated maximum of two four-year terms in their respective offices. Sinwar was a senior member of the IQB who had spent over 20 years in an Israeli prison for killing Palestinian collaborators. Media reports noted that Sinwar was expected to act as a bridge between Hamas's political leadership and the IQB. Despite Sinwar's background, these reports also noted his distinct pragmatism and that his election did not herald any increased militancy from Hamas towards Israel or intransigence towards reconciling with Fatah (Younes 2017). Nevertheless, there is a degree of caution as to how the dynamic between Haniyeh and Sinwar would function. As one prominent Palestinian academic noted, 'Sinwar is a very strong man given Hamas's reliance on its military wing to control. One cannot underestimate the strength, and the power that Sinwar has, [so] the balance between the two is something yet to be seen' (pers. comm. 12 July 2017). Despite this, most observers agreed that Sinwar's election did not necessarily herald any strategic change in direction for Hamas, especially with the more moderate Haniyeh in charge overall (pers. comm. 29 June and 12 July 2017).

While the IQB is clearly taking a more active role in the political side of Hamas, it needs to be remembered that the *majlis shura* and the Political Bureau remain dominated by more politically moderate members. Additionally, Hamas's overall decision-making process remains the same – once the Political Bureau makes a decision it remains binding on all members regardless of internal affiliation.

Conclusion

What this chapter illustrates is the scope of the shifts in Hamas's political behaviour, and just as importantly, the limits of these behavioural shifts, when it comes to the problematic task of governing Gaza. Nonetheless, any analysis of the causation of these shifts cannot ignore the continuing restrictions placed on Hamas's capacity to govern by an Israeli siege intended to cause its government to collapse. As the siege gradually vitiates Hamas's capacity to govern as it wants, so Hamas becomes more intent on maintaining control, which in turn influences both the tenor, scope, and focus of Hamas's political resistance efforts and its behavioural shifts. This means that as a government and as an Islamist movement, Hamas is walking a fine line between retaining its political authority in Gaza and retaining public acquiescence to its rule.

Despite the pressures of the siege, an analysis of Hamas's performance in government exposes several uneven shifts in its behaviour, with public opinion

continuing to play an important role in influencing the development and implementation of the government's policy suite. The principal result of this has been that while Hamas has been able to increase institutional capacity in Gaza, it has been unable to undertake any its proposed state-building activities.

The subsequent shifts in Hamas's behaviour can be divided into two broad categories: political and security. In the political field, Hamas has had to cope with myriad challenges associated with governing Gaza unilaterally. Not only is Hamas's political authority challenged externally by Fatah, Israel, and the Quartet, but it is also being challenged internally by various emboldened Salafi-Jihadists movements. The ability of Hamas to govern Gaza effectively thus became a measure of its ability to exercise political power. To deal with these challenges, Hamas favoured the process of policy incrementalism that involved the implementation of a 'soft-Islamisation' policy framework that was in line with community expectations and designed to build institutional capacity based on the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of PA institutions. Instructively, this has resulted in religion playing a relatively discrete role in how Hamas governs. While Hamas uses Islam as a frame of reference, it has not created religious institutions that sit above existing secular governing institutions.

In the security field, the precarious situation, in concert with the continuing internal and external challenges, has contributed to shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. As the siege intensifies, the political distance between Hamas the movement and Hamas the government has narrowed substantially to the extent that there are fears that some younger members of Hamas's leadership cadre are becoming too focused on retaining power, thereby repeating one of the many failures attributed to Fatah. The seemingly perpetual threats to Hamas's political survival, predominantly brought about by the siege, have contributed to the IQB playing a more prominent role in Hamas's decision-making processes. This raises the question about whether this heralds a change in direction from Hamas towards adopting a more combative approach to its relationship with Israel. While there are signs of positive shifts in Hamas's behavioural moderation, the discernible signs of authoritarianism raises the question of whether the substantive ideological moderation of Hamas is possible in the current political environment.

Notes

1 Chhotray and Stoker (2009: 4) also note that the social interaction aspect of 'governance' relies on negotiation, signals, communication, and hegemonic influence rather than direct oversight and supervision.
2 Lake (2009: 332) argues that performance legitimacy, that is the ability to get things done, is the foundation of political authority.
3 Two UN reports dealing with Palestinian state-building efforts both note that the single greatest impediment to Palestinian statehood is the inability of Palestinians and Israelis to reach an agreement on the Final Status issues and the intensification of Israeli appropriation of Palestinian land. See UNSCO (2011) and UNSCO (2012).
4 Media reports surfaced alleging that Hamas had used various tactics to quell dissent within Gaza. For example see Suliman (2013).

5 In the 2017 PCPSR polling data, an average of 94.3% of respondents classified themselves as being religious or somewhat religious. See PCPSR (2017: Poll Nos. 63–66).
6 While there are several women sitting in district *shura* councils, the Political Bureau, which is where the real political power in Hamas lies, remains an all-male domain.
7 As of 2014–2015 this situation had altered. Of the 712 schools in Gaza, the Hamas government ran 394, UNRWA ran 252, and there were 66 private schools. See PCBS (2015).
8 On 19 June 2007, Haniyeh dismissed several PASF commanders loyal to Fatah and replaced them with commanders loyal to Hamas. Haniyeh then convened his Cabinet to discuss the security situation in Gaza. In a radio address, Haniyeh stated that Gaza belonged to all Palestinians, not just to Hamas, and called upon all security personnel to report for duty. See WikiLeaks (2007a) and WikiLeaks (2007b).
9 For example, on 7 September 2007, thousands of Gazans gathered in Gaza City, Dayr al-Balah, Khan Yunis, and Rafah for Friday prayers despite a government ban on large gatherings. The prayers also doubled as an anti-Hamas demonstration. As a result, several people were shot dead and scores injured as the *Tanfithya* attempted to retain control. See WikiLeaks (2007e).
10 On 27 August 2007, PM Fayyad dissolved 103 NGOs and charitable organisations that operated in the OPT, the majority of which were affiliated with Hamas. See WikiLeaks (2007d).
11 In a December 2016 poll, 73.5% of Gazan respondents believed there was government corruption. See PCPSR (2016: Poll No. 62).
12 Meshaal's re-election was not a foregone conclusion because he had previously stated his intention to step down. However, the leaders of Egypt, Qatar, and Jordan all applied heavy pressure on him to reconsider his decision because they viewed him as key to calming down the more militant voices within Hamas and to continuing its moderate political activities. See Zvi Bar'el (2013).

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6 Fighting to survive

Hamas and its confrontations with Israel

Introduction

At the core of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict is the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. As part of this struggle, there are competing normative demands from Palestinians for self-determination and from Israelis for self-defence (Rane 2009: 41). The presence of violence between Palestinians and Israelis is a manifestation of Israel's efforts to ensure its self-defence and Palestinians' competing efforts to achieve self-determination.

Israel ensures its self-defence by asserting control over land through occupation, particularly in the West Bank. As discussed in Chapter 3, Israel's control is achieved through expulsion, land confiscation, settlement building, and economic and political restrictions (Kapitan 2011: 495). Israeli governments have also propagated the narrative that any concrete moves towards an independent Palestine represents a direct threat to the existence of the Israeli state. This allows the GoI to characterise any form of resistance from Palestinians as acts of terrorism. This applies particularly to Hamas, whose resistance to Israeli occupation is understood by the GoI in purely military terms. As discussed earlier, affixing value-laden terms like 'terrorist' onto Hamas allows Israel to depict Hamas's resistance efforts as lying outside the boundaries of acceptable political behaviour. Because the type and levels of violence utilised by Hamas cannot be considered as ordinary, but extraordinary, it necessitates that Israel respond with levels of force that are extraordinary to deter and punish Hamas and its supporters (Strom & Irvin 2007: 586). In contrast, Hamas operationalises its resistance to Israeli occupation through its invocation of *jihad*. Accordingly, Hamas refuses to recognise Israel as a legitimate actor, and is willing to inflict violence on Israeli military and civilian targets (Baracskay 2015: 526). Within Israel's self-defence discourse, Hamas uses the concept of *jihad* to injure the Israeli state, and to bring about its eventual downfall (Litvak 2010: 721–722).

Nevertheless, the fact that Hamas is now a legitimate political actor while continuing to use and promote violence is not explained easily by the IM literature. The corpus assumes that groups must renounce the use of violence as an essential precondition for entry into the political system (Wickham 2004: 206; Huntington 1993: 170). Consequently, the IM literature views the use of violence as the

antithesis of politically moderate behaviour. However, Hamas was not required to renounce its use of violence or disband the IQB prior to participating in either the 2004–2005 municipal or the 2006 PLC elections.

When Hamas won the 2006 elections and became a legitimate member of the Palestinian political system, it meant that the movement could no longer be classified as a non-state actor. Peters, Koechlin, and Zinkernagel (2009: 14) note that a 'non-state actor' covers a wide range of organisations whose only common attribute is that they are not the state, and not governmental. Post-election, this characterisation cannot apply to Hamas. As detailed in Chapter 4, it is only Israel's political and economic siege, assisted by the Quartet and Fatah, which prevents Hamas from assuming its position as the legitimately elected majority party in the PLC, and forming government. This reality means that no longer is Hamas operating from outside of the political system. This situation changes fundamentally the dynamics of how Hamas's use of violence post-2006 should be characterised. Regardless of the rejection of Hamas's position in Palestinian politics by Israel and Fatah, when Hamas uses of violence post-2006 it does so as a state actor, not as a non-state actor. Therefore, whether Hamas's use of violence post-2006 can continue to be classified as illegitimate is debatable. What then is the function of Hamas's use of violence in the post-2006 election era? And how does it relate to Hamas's political participation? This chapter aims to provide answers to these questions. It begins by providing an alternative theoretical framework for Hamas's use of violence against Israel. Then through an analysis of the 2008, 2012, and 2014 wars between Hamas and Israel, the chapter aims to highlight how Hamas's DRS alters the way that its use of violence should be characterised.

While Hamas's armed resistance to Israeli occupation has always been controversial, it remains a central aspect of its DRS. Hamas believes that resistance can assume many disparate, yet connected, identities from defiance, protest, struggle, and challenge to rebellion, and revolution (Sadiki 2010: 358). As Sadiki (2010: 351) explains, 'Hamas articulate[s] a matrix of discourses which stress the continued physical and political occupation of a native homeland where nationalism, religion, and social deprivation converge to form the ethos of . . . resistance.' As discussed in Chapter 2, the idea of 'resistance legitimacy' is a key facet of Hamas's narrative, and is integral to the goal of statehood (Hroub 2008: 68–69). How Hamas operationalises its armed resistance to Israeli occupation also forms a key point of distinction between it and Fatah in their continuing competition over the right to rule in the OPT, and the most appropriate strategy for self-determination.

Since Hamas's launch in 1987, the characterisation and operationalisation of its resistance has altered considerably, especially since the advent of its DRS and its decision to participate in the electoral process. Indeed, it can be argued that Hamas is now in the third iteration of its armed resistance to Israeli occupation. In each of these iterations the meaning and context within which violence occurs is different. In the first version (1987–2000), Hamas was an NSAG, and used violence to express its opposition initially to Israeli occupation, and then more directly to the Oslo Accords, most notably through its use of suicide attacks. In the literature, Hamas is portrayed as a spoiler, who believed that any peace emerging from the

Accords threatened its power, worldview, and interests (Stedman 1997: 5). As noted in Chapter 3, Hamas feared that having to relinquish its armed resistance to Israeli occupation could lead to the destruction of its political power. Therefore, in this iteration Hamas used violence as a strategic political tool to thwart the GoI and Fatah reaching a viable peace agreement. Hamas believed that such an agreement would have resulted on a truncated Palestinian state that it vehemently opposed, believing it to be a colossal betrayal of Palestinian demands for an independent state (Tamimi 2009: 190).

Hamas's second iteration of violence occurred in the Second Intifada. Here, Hamas's use of violence was geared towards not just confronting Israeli occupation but also included attempting to mobilise supporters and maintain its support base to survive, succeed, and achieve political power (see Bloom 2007; Pearlman 2008). Mimicking the Lebanese Islamist movement Hezbollah's successful efforts to oust Israel from southern Lebanon, Hamas believed that its use of extreme violence would raise the costs of occupation too high, and Israel would be forced to evacuate the OPT.

Towards the end of the Second Intifada, the use of violence by Hamas transformed considerably, with suicide attacks ceasing to play a part in its struggle with Israel and Fatah. After 2004, suicide attacks were replaced almost entirely by mortar and rocket attacks as the primary demonstrative weapons of Hamas's resistance.[1] As discussed in Chapter 4, the 2005 Cairo Accord signalled the end of the Second Intifada for many Palestinians, ushering in a new political chapter in the OPT. It also signalled the beginning of the third iteration of Hamas's use of violence that saw a fundamental recalibration of its resistance to Israeli occupation, and the evolution and implementation of its DRS.

Hamas's election victory led to its resistance to Israeli occupation becoming multifaceted, with the emphasis on political resistance changing the dynamics of the contest between Hamas and Israel. This emphasis meant that the posture of Hamas's armed resistance changed from the strategic offensive to the strategic defensive. The nature of Hamas's DRS means that it now uses armed resistance to bolster, support, and defend its political resistance agenda. The response by Israel was to constrain the political space available to Hamas to exercise its political power in Gaza by imposing its political and economic siege. This is in conjunction with its periodic attempts to vitiate Hamas's military capability via the wars in 2008, 2012, and 2014. Therefore, the third iteration of Hamas's use of violence stems from the contest between Hamas and Israel over the former's demand for increased political space within which to exercise power to ensure its political survival. As Arendt (1970: 56) observed, 'Violence appears when power is in jeopardy.'

Within this new dynamic, the presence of violence is arguably a measure of the level of asymmetry between Hamas and Israel. Hamas uses violence to try to open political space for a dialogue with Israel on its capacity to exercise political power, and the Palestinian right to self-determination. Conversely, Israel uses violence to ensure non-recognition and to inhibit political negotiations from taking place (Grinberg 2013: 207). What has emerged is what Ayyash (2010: 104) has termed

as a 'violent dialogue' between Hamas and Israel over the former's right to have a voice in the governing of Gaza.

In Ayyash's framework, violence is not an abstract concept to be excised and analysed in isolation. Violence forms part of a much larger contextual narrative. In this case, Hamas's demand to have its political authority recognised and ultimately its desire to participate in the decision-making process concerning the Peace Process, and Israel's attempts to thwart these desires. Consequently, Hamas and Israel speak to each other with violence, not of, or about violence (Ayyash 2010: 104). Ayyash (2010: 104) argues that to speak to an opponent with violence necessarily involves two interrelated analytic instances. First, Hamas and Israel are agents of violence, and communicate with each other about their interpretation of the political struggle over their competing demands. Second, the dialogue is with the subject matter of the agents, as each agent learns to speak the language of violence to communicate with the other. In this instance, it is not only the issues over which Hamas and Israel fight that matter – the actual 'fight' itself becomes the subject matter. The overarching dialogue between Hamas and Israel concerns their competing demands for self-defence and self-determination. In many ways, violence becomes the lingua franca for Hamas and Israel, and they use it to communicate with each other in a language that is less restrictive and stilted then their diplomatic conversations.

As well as Hamas and Israel using violence as a form of communication, they use the instances of violence to propagate their messages to external audiences. Riches posits that there is a triangle of violence consisting of performers, victims, and witnesses (Riches 1986: 8–9). For Hamas, the messages from its 'violent dialogue' are not just meant for Israel but equally for Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and the international community. Similarly, Israel's messages from its 'violent dialogue' are not just meant for Hamas but also for Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs, and the international community.

To interpret the import of the 'violent dialogue' between Hamas and Israel, and to reconcile any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour concerning its use of violence, this chapter will analyse and highlight the key messages between Hamas and Israel that arise from an analysis of the 2008, 2012, and 2014 Gaza wars. Each of these three wars was a response to various factors that threatened to disrupt the asymmetrical relationship between Hamas and Israel. The 2008 war took place in the context of the threat posed to Israel's self-defence by Hamas's assumption of unilateral power in Gaza. The 2012 war took place within the context of the threat to Israel's self-defence posed by the Arab Uprisings and the ostensible rise of political Islam. The 2014 war took place within the context of the threat to Israel's self-defence posed by the apparently groundbreaking Palestinian unity government announcement. By analysing the relevant build-ups to these wars and the rhetoric used by Hamas and Israel before, during, and after the conflicts, this chapter seeks to explain the role of armed resistance in Hamas's DRS and, in doing so, establish a link between Hamas's use of violence and its ongoing political participation.

Challenging Hamas's right to rule – the 2008 Gaza war

The 2008 Gaza war, or Operation Cast Lead as it is known to Israelis, was a significant event in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict because it marked the first time that Israel and Hamas had engaged in combat since Hamas had assumed unilateral control of Gaza in 2007. Given the adverse reactions to its election, Hamas had been attempting to demonstrate to Palestinians, and the international community a willingness to negotiate successfully with the GoI. However, given its increasingly zero-sum relationship with Israel, Hamas needed a reliable negotiation vehicle without appearing to be in a subservient position. The various *tahdiy'ahs* between Hamas and Israel appear to serve this purpose. On 18 June 2008, Israel announced a six-month *tahdiy'ah* with Hamas after extensive Egyptian mediation that had begun after the 2007 schism (Caridi 2012: 265). While the *tahdiy'ah* did not relax any of Israel's import restrictions, it did promise relative peace for both sides. This allowed Hamas to focus its attention on establishing its political authority and ameliorating the social and economic conditions in Gaza created by the siege.

To begin with, Hamas concentrated on expanding its burgeoning tunnel economy. Everything from weapons, food, medicine, and livestock to mobile phones and clothes came through the smugglers' tunnels running underneath the Gazan-Egyptian border (Caridi 2012: 266). Hamas's government had assumed control over tunnel operations within weeks of the 2007 schism, imposing a tax on all goods coming into Gaza as another way of generating revenue. Despite this, the tunnel economy was largely symbolic with the amount of goods smuggled into Gaza not nearly enough to meet demand. The tunnels' main purpose was that they allowed Hamas to claim that they had managed to reduce Palestinian reliance on Israel for survival (ICG 2008: 18–19).

This is reflected in the fact that despite the tunnels, the overall economic situation in Gaza remained parlous with official imports plummeting. In November 2008, the UN reported that only 23 trucks a day reached Gaza, compared to 123 trucks in October 2008 and 631 trucks in December 2005 (see Figures 5 and 6). Even though most of the trucks entering Gaza contained food, the UN noted that access to food and water was increasingly difficult and daily lives were disrupted, with meat, dairy products, fruit, and vegetables hard to locate. The Israeli restrictions on goods entering Gaza also meant that there were frequent fuel shortages and daily power blackouts due to a lack of generator fuel (OCHAOPT 2008: 4–5). The GoI did allow a limited and erratic relaxation of the import restrictions, sanctioning the occasional entry into Gaza of sorely needed supplies, though the amount was only enough to stave off a potential humanitarian crisis.

By the beginning of November 2008, the *tahdiy'ah* had begun to break down. In the preceding four months, there had been sporadic and minor military exchanges between the IDF, Hamas, and other militant groups in Gaza.[2] Despite the *tahdiy'ah* being due for renewal at the end of the year, Hamas was reluctant to enter fresh negotiations with Israel with little prospect of gaining favourable or even equivalent terms (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 297–298; Caridi 2012: 267). It was

also apparent that Gazans retained little faith in the current *tahdiy'ah* to achieve any amelioration of conditions. In a November 2008 JMCC poll, the majority of respondents, 40.7%, believed the truce had made no measurable difference to the Palestinian national interest (JMCC 2008: Poll No. 66). Hamas understood that its political survival was contingent on being able to provide the necessary social services to Gazans. With economic and social conditions worsening, Hamas became fixated on achieving an end to Israel's siege and the reopening of Gazan entry points (ICG 2009: 1).[3] With few viable options available, Hamas felt compelled to open a 'violent dialogue' with Israel to renegotiate a fresh *tahdiy'ah* with more favourable terms (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 302).

Hamas began by accusing the GoI of failing to honour the *tahdiy'ah*'s conditions, and commenced invoking the memory of numerous martyrs in its communiques and publications to generate sympathy and support for any potential military escalation (Wagemakers 2010: 371). Interestingly, Hamas began using Islamic rhetoric more overtly to justify its actions. When Hamas talks about resistance in the context of its armed confrontations with Israel, the notions of self-defence within an Islamic framework becomes a potent signifier for justice and injustice, particularly concerning the occupation and what it represents. As one Palestinian put it, 'resistance is a part of [Palestinian] life. Resistance is not something isolated, so I mean Palestine for Palestinians, for Arabs, [and] for Muslims' (pers. comm. 8 February 2017).

In early November 2008, Hamas used the pretext of an IDF incursion into Gaza to launch a barrage of rockets into southern Israel (Cordesman 2009: 9). The IDF responded with air strikes, killing several Palestinians. Over the next six weeks, the military exchanges between both sides escalated with almost 200 rockets being fired into Israel and the IDF countering with numerous air strikes (UNGA 2009: 69–71).[4]

Despite its increasingly bellicose rhetoric, Hamas's leadership seriously underestimated and miscalculated the substance of the message it was sending Israel, and how the GoI would respond to such overt challenges to Israeli sovereignty.[5] On 27 December 2008, the IDF launched Operation Cast Lead, beginning with a powerful air offensive initially targeting police and security installations. The intensity and breadth of the air strikes shocked Hamas deeply with 155 Palestinians reportedly killed and over 200 wounded on the Operation's opening day (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 298).[6] According to the IDF's Deputy Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Dan Harel, the IDF provided the GoI with three potential objectives for the Operation: (1) a limited operation to achieve a better ceasefire agreement, (2) the seizure of Rafah and the Philadelphi Strip, and (3) retaking Gaza and destroying Hamas. According to Harel, while the GoI eventually opted for option 1, there was significant pressure from within the government for option 3 (WikiLeaks 2009b).[7]

As the death toll in Gaza mounted, Fatah's government ordered a crackdown on any prominent display of support for Hamas (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 301). Perhaps seeking to take advantage of Hamas's plight, Abbas also publicly questioned Hamas's willingness to renew the *tahdiy'ah* with Israel and implicitly questioned Hamas's need for armed resistance.[8] For many Palestinians, Abbas's

statement smacked of political opportunism and of abandoning Gazans to their fate in the face of the Israeli onslaught (ICG 2009: 13–14). This political hubris backfired when Palestinians in the West Bank, little concerned with domestic political theatre, sided with their Gazan brethren in protesting against Israel's use of overwhelming force. Fatah's security forces inflamed tensions further by aggressively repressing any form of protest (ICG 2009: 15–16).

Hamas's response to the IDF's air attacks was to fire as many rockets as possible, not for any military purpose, but to send a message to Palestinians, Israelis, and the international community that despite Israel's overwhelming military superiority they remained unable to stem the firing of so many rockets. The images of Hamas fighters and their fellow Gazans resisting the IDF's air assault began appearing in the Palestinian press, and were meant to be in distinct contrast to Fatah's apparent passivity (ICG 2009: 3).

Within the context of this war, it needs to be remembered that while the IQB may have been the dominant military force in Gaza, it was at best a well-trained and moderately equipped militia. It was no match for the highly trained and combat experienced IDF, equipped with the latest military hardware. Despite Egyptian efforts to broker a ceasefire, Hamas remained obdurate, confident in its ability to withstand the IDF's attacks. Hamas's refusal to countenance a quick ceasefire also made it guilty of hubris, and its truculent attitude cost many lives and resulted in the increased destruction of Gaza (Cordesman 2009: 10).

With Hamas unwilling to enter into negotiations over a ceasefire agreement, the GoI authorised the IDF to conduct a ground assault designed to engage and destroy Hamas's military, social, and political infrastructure. Towards the end of the Operation, the IDF also began destroying Gaza's economic infrastructure with an ICG report noting that the destruction in eastern Gaza was systematic and close to complete, with the entire expanse from the Israeli border to the rocket-launching area of Jabal al-Rais – a distance of some 1.5 km including farms, factories, and homes – virtually flattened (ICG 2009: 2). The war officially ended on 18 January 2009 with the announcement of a joint ceasefire that had eventually been brokered by Egypt. The 22-day conflict left approximately 1,430 Palestinians dead and around 5,300 wounded (Caridi 2012: 269). According to official Israeli figures, nine Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting, with an additional three Israel civilians and one soldier killed in southern Israel (UNGA 2009: 92).

Analysing the 'violent dialogue'

The consequences of the messages of defiance from Hamas

For Hamas, the principal goal of the war was to entrench its political authority in Gaza and ameliorate the conditions of Israel's siege. To accomplish this, its 'violent dialogue' with Israel conveyed simultaneous messages to Israel, Palestinians, and Egypt. Hamas's message to Israel and Palestinians was that it refused to be pushed out of Palestinian politics and was willing to confront Israel militarily to

achieve these two objectives. Hamas's message to Egypt was that it expected Egypt to help in its struggle with Israel, not hinder it (Cordesman 2009: 33).

Hamas undertook a delicate strategic balancing act whereby it was willing to run the risk of prolonging the war and accepting the increased civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure this would entail, to secure the best possible *tahdiy'ah* with Israel. Hamas gambled on the fact that Israel's military asymmetry worked to its strategic advantage internationally, and that the longer the war went on, the more this asymmetry would become apparent to the outside world.[9] Hamas surmised that as civilian casualties mounted, there would be increased international pressure on the GoI to reach a ceasefire Agreement with Hamas (Cordesman 2009: 33).

As well as placing pressure on Israel, a lengthy war would also increase the domestic and regional pressure on Egypt to broker an acceptable ceasefire. Since Hamas's 2006 election victory, its relationship with the Mubarak regime had been tense. The regime was suspicious of Hamas's link with the MB, and was concerned with how Hamas's election victory had destabilised the Sinai. Consequently, it cooperated with Israel to corral Hamas inside Gaza. The war represented the nadir of this relationship, and Hamas hoped to compel Mubarak's regime to adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards it. In particular, Hamas did not want Egypt's regime to interfere with its smuggling economy that was crucial for its resupply of weapons and ammunition (ICG 2009: 38–39; Cordesman 2009: 77–78).

In a limited sense, Hamas's strategic gamble paid off, and just surviving the IDF's air and ground offensives allowed it to project the perception of victory (Cordesman 2009: 33). Despite the heavy casualties and the destruction of societal infrastructure, Hamas and its bureaucracy in Gaza survived relatively intact. The temporary boost to Hamas's popularity, particularly in the West Bank (see Figures 1 and 2), was a product not only of the military asymmetry with Israel; it was also a reflection of the Palestinians' perception of Abbas's performance during the war. Hamas used the disproportionality of the IDF assault as a way of demonstrating its resistance legitimacy. Hamas was then able to transmute this into buttressing its political authority in Gaza. While Gazans may have been resentful towards Hamas for provoking the war, this was outweighed somewhat by their fury at Israel's disproportionate response and Abbas's perceived complicity.

These perceptions are borne out in the polling results. In a December 2008 poll, Abbas held a commanding lead over Haniyeh as preferred president, 47.5% to 38.3% (PCPSR 2008: Poll No. 30). However, in the March 2009 poll, Haniyeh's popularity rebounded to an extent whereby he held a slender lead over Abbas, 47.1% to 45.1%, as preferred president. Additionally, support for the performance of Haniyeh's government had risen from 35.7% in December 2008 to 43.3% in March 2009 (PCPSR 2008, 2009: Poll Nos. 30, 31). Indeed, the March 2009 poll revealed that for the first time since the 2007 schism, CR held a clear lead over Fatah, 34.6% to 25%, as to which government Palestinians considered the most legitimate.[10] This is also borne out in Figures 1 and 2 that show an increase in support for CR, especially in the West Bank. Interestingly, the temporary fillip to

Hamas's popularity occurred in an environment where 79% of Gazan respondents believed that they were worse off than they were prior to the invasion (PCPSR 2009: Poll No. 31).

The war also provided Hamas with a boost to its regional and international diplomatic profile, which in turn assisted its diplomatic agenda. The perceived disproportionality of the IDF's air and ground offensives caused regional governments and polities to display their support for Palestinians openly, and by association Hamas's government. There were public demonstrations of solidarity in Jordan and Lebanon, and several regional foreign ministers travelled to Gaza to witness the destruction and devastation caused by the war. Meshaal was even invited to a regional conference on Gaza held in Doha (ICG 2009: 7).

The politics of reconstruction

While Hamas was publicly emboldened by its perceived victory, it was also keenly aware that Gazans had suffered considerably because of its defiance causing a rising sense of resentment in Gaza. As Figure 1 illustrates, the boost in Hamas's popularity in Gaza was quite modest compared to that in the West Bank. It did not take long before CR's popularity also began to taper off. To mitigate this, Hamas attempted to exert some degree of control over reconstruction efforts. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, the international community's reaction to Hamas's election victory, and the Quartet's subsequent stipulations, meant that all international aid had to be directed through the Ramallah PA. International donors were not permitted to contribute funds that might flow directly or indirectly to Hamas and its government (Qarmont & Beland 2012: 35–36). While Hamas was eager to accept assistance from various NGOs for Gaza's reconstruction, it did not want financial control of these efforts placed into the hands of Fatah. Given the state of post-war Gaza, and its need to repair its relations with the people, Hamas wanted to demonstrate clearly to all national and international observers that it still maintained control of Gaza and could manage the reconstruction efforts (Caridi 2012: 271–274).

Abbas attempted to capitalise on the fact that international donors were baulking at the prospect of directly assisting Hamas by quickly establishing a reconstruction framework of his own that would be administered by the Ramallah PA (ICG 2009: 29).[11] Abbas wanted to create a positive reconstruction narrative, one where Fatah would play a dominant role, providing a reliable conduit for international efforts to alleviate Gazans' suffering. These efforts placed Hamas in an invidious position. While they were loath to accord Fatah any prestige, they could not let domestic political competition being perceived as interfering in efforts to ameliorate Gazans' plight (ICG 2009: 28–30).

The one crucial caveat to Abbas's strategy was that any material and money provided to Fatah for reconstruction had to run the gauntlet of Israel's siege and its restrictions on what goods entered Gaza. These restrictions meant that only a fraction of the material and finances necessary for rebuilding the shattered infrastructure made it to Gaza. Unfortunately for Fatah, this amount was roughly the

equivalent to the material that Hamas could smuggle into Gaza using its tunnels. Consequently, Hamas ensured that it claimed responsibility for much of the reconstruction activity that took place (ICG 2009: 31).[12] Despite this, 50.4% of Gazans remained unsatisfied with the government's reconstruction efforts versus 43.2% who were satisfied. Interestingly, the March 2009 poll showed that 46.7% of Gazans respondents believed that the most important priority for Palestinians should be reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, and unification of the two territories versus 20.7% who believed that reconstructing Gaza should be the top priority (PCPSR 2009: Poll No. 31).

The consequences of Israel's messages of self-defence

The chief message Israel wanted the war to convey was that it refused to allow Hamas's 2006 election victory, and what it might represent in the broader Palestinian/Israeli conflict narrative, to pose a threat to Israel's safety and security. As discussed earlier, the GoI considered Hamas's victory and its subsequent unilateral control of Gaza a significant danger. First, the war was an opportunity to degrade and/or destroy Hamas's military and political capabilities. Second, it was an opportunity to achieve a ceasefire agreement with Hamas that reflected the post-election political and military environment (Cordesman 2009: 33). Essentially, the war was an extension of the diplomatic dialogue between Israel and Hamas over its continued political participation.

From a military standpoint, Cordesman (2009: 59) reported that the IDF killed approximately 600 Hamas soldiers during the war, including 50 of its top explosive experts. Additionally, out of an estimated arsenal of 3,000 rockets, Hamas reportedly fired 600, and had a further 1,200 destroyed, thereby reducing its available arsenal significantly. From a political standpoint, the IDF vitiated Gaza's political, social, and economic infrastructure with the Government Palace, Archives Building, General Personnel Council, the Presidential Compound, and the Ministries of the Interior, Justice, and Culture either partially or completely destroyed (UNGA 2009: 93). To degrade Gaza's economic security, the IDF destroyed food supply installations, water sanitation systems, concrete factories, and residential houses. According to the UN commissioned Goldstone Report, these attacks were part of Israel's standing strategic objective 'to bring about a situation in which the civilian population would find life so intolerable that they would leave (if that were possible) or turn Hamas out of office, as well as to collectively punish the civilian population' (UNGA 2009: 256–257).

The Goldstone Report specifically investigated the targeted bombings of Gaza's prison and PLC building. The report noted that the PLC building would have allowed Gazan parliamentarians to hold joint sittings with their Ramallah counterparts (UNGA 2009: 94). As the GoI continued to classify Hamas as a belligerent non-state actor, it claimed that these buildings represented 'part of Hamas's mechanism of control.' However, the report rejected the GoI's arguments, concluding that these were attacks on civilian objects, and violated customary international humanitarian law (UNGA 2009: 99). The report appeared

to accept that Hamas was no longer a non-state actor, noting that Hamas was an organisation with distinct political, military, and social welfare components (UNGA 2009: 97).

Did Hamas and Israel really desire a ceasefire agreement?

Despite both Hamas and the GoI viewing the war as a vehicle for achieving a fresh *tahdiy'ah*, this did not really eventuate. While Egypt was able to negotiate a cessation to immediate hostilities, once this had occurred neither Hamas nor Israel seemed willing to negotiate in good faith over a binding ceasefire agreement. Both sides appeared satisfied that the conflict had allowed them to communicate their key messages to each other and other associated parties. In the end, the war became about perceptions, not military success, and the political and military stalemate following the cessation of hostilities allowed both sides to claim victory (UNGA 2009: 34).

According to an ICG report, in mid-February 2009 both sides reached a tacit understanding for a Gaza-only ceasefire agreement lasting 18 months that would facilitate the importation of all 'necessary materials' into Gaza (ICG 2009: 27). However, Israeli domestic political considerations intervened resulting in an agreement as fragile and uncertain as its predecessor.[13] Providing an insight into Israeli political thinking, an Israeli official informed the ICG that 'we are forcing Hamas to choose whether they want to fight Israel or consolidate their hold on Gaza. Economic pressure was very effective in the past in persuading Hamas to enforce the ceasefire and continues to do so' (Unknown 2009, cited in ICG 2009: 27). The lack of a binding *tahdiy'ah* allowed Hamas and Israel sufficient political space within which to manoeuvre politically and maintain a semblance of moral superiority. While Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire, Hamas rejected the Egyptian proposal and then issued its own unilateral one-week *tahdiy'ah*, allowing the IDF to withdraw from Gaza unmolested (Cordesman 2009: 67). Overall, the lack of a binding agreement was an indication of the extent of asymmetry between Hamas and Israel, with Israel comfortable in the knowledge that Hamas needed the appearance of a ceasefire more than it did. The one certainty to come from the war was that Hamas could transmute its resistance legitimacy into political authority in Gaza. This allowed Hamas to remain firmly in control of Gaza despite nearly three years of efforts to engineer its ousting.

Recalibrating the relationship – the 2012 Gaza war

On 14 November 2012, the IDF launched a series of air strikes against numerous targets in Gaza, marking its first serious military assault against Hamas in nearly four years. The aptly named Operation Pillar of Defence lasted until 22 November 2012, when another Egyptian-brokered ceasefire took effect. In many respects, this war had far less to do with Israel seeking to vitiate Hamas's social, political, and economic infrastructure and more to do with Hamas and Israel attempting to recalibrate their relationship in a rapidly changing geo-strategic environment.

The wave of revolutions pulsating through the Arab world, commonly referred to as the Arab Uprisings, heralded the rise of Brotherhood-inspired Islamist parties vying for political control throughout the region. This was exemplified by the overthrow of Mubarak's regime and the election of the Islamist Mohamed Morsi. While Hamas did receive some Egyptian assistance in the 2008 war, this was limited, sporadic, and done predominantly so Mubarak could claim he was assisting Palestinians in their struggle with Israel. Morsi's election in June 2012 threatened the long-established security status quo between Egypt and Israel, with some analysts predicting that Morsi's government would seek to recalibrate Egypt's diplomatic relationship with Israel and Hamas (Ayoob 2012: 88). In this increasingly unpredictable security environment, the GoI became concerned that its military superiority no longer provided the degree of deterrence for Hamas it once had.

While Hamas was generally optimistic about Morsi's election, its own domestic issues predominated. Hamas remained unsure of exactly what the various Uprisings meant for its political fortunes at the domestic and regional level. One of the unintended consequences of the Uprisings was that with so many states focused on their own domestic pressures, the 'Palestinian Question' faded into relative obscurity. As an ICG report (2012a: 13–14) noted, this regional inattention resulted in a substantial reduction in the financial support provided to Hamas. This in turn meant that the Hamas government had insufficient funds to pay its employees, forcing it to raise taxes, incurring the ire of an increasingly anxious Gazan population.

In the months preceding the 2012 war, there developed a routinisation of military engagements between Hamas and Israel, characterised as 'low-scale violence . . . punctuated by short, intense, [and] increasingly frequent escalations' (ICG 2012b: 1). Hamas was extremely cognisant that the stature gained from its continued resistance was central to mitigating the effects of the siege and remaining in control of Gaza. In this uncertain strategic environment, Hamas and the GoI both appeared eager to exhibit their respective military prowess and resolve, hoping to avoid any sign of perceived weakness (ICG 2012b: 8, 4; Ayoob 2012: 88–89).

On 13 November 2012, Israel escalated tensions by assassinating a key Hamas military commander, Ahmed al-Jaabari, the first such operation in years. The assassination was followed by a brief air campaign, with Hamas and other militant movements responding with rocket and mortar fire (ICG 2012b: 2). While the assassination of Hamas military commanders was not unprecedented, it appeared that the IDF was preparing the ground for the delivery of its military assault. Al-Jaabari had long been used by Egypt's security service as a conduit in negotiating ceasefires between Hamas and Israel. Additionally, he had played a central role in negotiations between Hamas and the GoI over the release of over 1,000 prisoners in November 2011 in exchange for the return of Israeli solider Gilad Shalit (ICG 2012b: 2). With such an influential intermediary out of the way, the IDF had an increased window of opportunity within which to conduct a military assault on Hamas before the inevitable ceasefire could be brokered.

The day after the assassination the IDF began its air campaign. Israeli Defence Minister Barak explained that it was intended to achieve four

objectives: to strengthen Israeli deterrence, to inflict serious damage to Hamas's rocket-launching infrastructure, to deliver a serious blow to Hamas, and to minimise the damage to Israel (ICG 2012b: 2). As part of the eventual ceasefire Agreement, Israel agreed not to attack Gaza by land, sea, or air, to cease assassinating key Hamas military commanders, and not to invade Gaza. Concomitantly, Hamas and other Gazan factions agreed to cease all attacks on Israel (David 2012).

Analysing the 'violent dialogue'

Israel's messages of self-defence

Ostensibly, Morsi's election had reduced the asymmetry between Israel and Hamas. With this in mind, the 2012 conflict symbolised a statement of intent from both sides. For Israel, it was about sending a message to Hamas that despite the changing geopolitical situation, the GoI had no fear of confronting them directly. Israel wanted to communicate to Hamas that nothing had changed in their relationship, and used the war to demonstrate its continued military asymmetry (ICG 2012b: 8).

With Israel concerned about the continued efficacy of its military deterrence strategy, the GoI appeared determined to use its violent dialogue with Hamas to demonstrate Israel's military strength and political will to induce the conditions necessary to negotiate acceptable terms for a fresh *tahdiy'ah*. Unlike the non-binding and tacit arrangement of 2008, replete with instability and uncertainty, the 2012 Agreement contained well-defined conditions for both sides. The need for these conditions is perhaps indicative of the GoI's desire to re-establish a degree of certainty in its security relations with Hamas, considering the political upheavals occurring throughout the Arab world. In a measured announcement after the signing of the *tahdiy'ah*, PM Netanyahu stated,

> I know there are citizens expecting a more intensive military operation, and it is very likely that one will be required, but right now, the right thing for the State of Israel is to take advantage of the opportunity for a protracted cease-fire.
>
> (Barak & Reuters 2012)

The recalibration of the Hamas/Israeli relationship also suited Netanyahu's domestic political agenda because, as with the timing of the 2008 Gaza war, Israeli general elections were due within two months. Concurrently, Abbas had threatened to seek UNGA recognition of Palestinian statehood – something the GoI opposed vehemently but was equally concerned about (ICG 2012b: 8–9; Verter 2012). The assassination of al-Jaabari, accompanied by a short and successful air campaign against Hamas, may have increased Netanyahu's domestic political capital at a very opportune time.[14]

Israel also directed a message to Egypt's new Islamist government. The ceasefire's negotiation process allowed the GoI to establish some diplomatic links with the new Morsi government. In doing so, the GoI could convey a message that it was unwilling to accept any fundamental change in their relationship, particularly any attempt to provide direct diplomatic and material support to Hamas (Benn 2012). In this respect, the GoI was successful. Despite the symbolism associated with various Egyptian initiatives during the conflict, Morsi appeared just as concerned as Israel with maintaining a relatively normalised diplomatic relationship. The new Egyptian government had too many domestic challenges to cope with, without being drawn into the diplomatic vortex of the 'Palestinian Question.' Despite Israeli fears, Morsi seemed to differ little from his predecessors in this area (ICG 2012b: 10–11).

The war also contained a couple of underlying subtexts in terms of the continuing competition between Israel and Hamas. First, while Israel predominantly used the war to negotiate a new *tahdiy'ah*, it was also a continuation of the GoI's efforts to degrade and inhibit Hamas's political authority in Gaza by again attacking and destroying Hamas's political and military infrastructure. Second, while the air campaign wrought significant damage to Hamas, the absence of a ground offensive meant that the war's objectives were limited. Hamas reasoned that given the rise in popularity of the numerous Salafi-Jihadist movements in Gaza, the GoI needed a functioning Hamas government to keep these in check. With Fatah not in a political or military position to resume control of Gaza, and the GoI itself did not want to reoccupy the territory it had withdrawn from six years ago (ICG 2012b: 5).

Hamas's messages of self-determination

The war provided Hamas with the platform to again propagate several domestic and regional political messages. Domestically, Hamas used the conflict to appease internal disquiet. This came predominantly from those concerned over Hamas's prioritisation of political resistance over armed resistance. There was an evolving opinion inside Hamas that in the present climate of the Arab Uprisings it needed to ride the revolutionary wave and demonstrate its political will to continue to confront Israel militarily. Additionally, there was the opinion that the assassination of such a respected senior military commander demanded a strident response from the movement with the evitable ceasefire apparently only becoming viable once the more militant sections of Hamas felt sufficiently satiated (ICG 2012b: 4–5). Not surprisingly, once the ceasefire announcement was made, Hamas Deputy Speaker Bahar declared, 'Resistance has achieved a historical victory against the occupation and laid the foundation for the battle of liberation of the full land and sacred sites' (Barak & Reuters 2012). The war also had the added advantage of enervating support for Fatah, with an ICG report observing that it had reaffirmed Hamas's staying power, attracted unprecedented international attention, and yet again reduced President Abbas and the PA to passive, powerless bystanders (ICG 2012b: 3).

As with the 2008 war, in the aftermath of the conflict, and seemingly irrespective of the costs to people, material, and infrastructure, Palestinian support coalesced

around Hamas providing them with a popularity fillip at the expense of Fatah (see Figures 1 and 2). Again, this was a temporary boost that mitigated somewhat the adverse effects of the siege, and in doing so rejuvenated Hamas's political authority in Gaza to a limited degree. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the boost in support for Hamas and CR because of the war in both the West Bank and Gaza. In contrast to the 2008 war, this boost in popularity occurred in both the West Bank and in Gaza.

Again, the more in-depth polling data illustrates the fillip that Hamas and CR received from the war, and by extension, the importance of resistance to Hamas's legitimacy among Palestinians. In the September 2012 poll, only 24.7% of respondents viewed life in Gaza as being good, as opposed to 52.2% feeling it was bad. However, in the December 2012 poll, despite conditions in Gaza becoming worse after yet another period of wanton destruction by the IDF, this opinion had altered significantly, with 43.1% of respondents believing conditions were good versus 33.1% believing them to be bad (PCPSR 2012: Poll Nos. 45, 46). Additionally, Haniyeh's government received another substantial boost in its approval rating, rising from 34.7% in September to 55.9% in December. In the prospective presidential race between Abbas and Haniyeh, the latter's 11% deficit in September had transformed to a 3% lead, 47.7% to 44.6%, in December. For the first time since the 2006 elections, CR was more popular that Fatah in Gaza, and were almost equal in the West Bank (see Figures 1 and 2 and PCPSR 2012: Poll Nos. 45, 46). In a clear sign of Hamas's public relations victory, 80.9% of respondents believed that Hamas had won the war. More importantly, Gazans appeared to be more inclined to view Hamas's DRS in a more favourable light, with 56.6% approving of Hamas's policies on how best to end the occupation, with only 27.9% favouring Abbas and Fatah's policies (PCPSR 2012: Poll No. 46).

Hamas's other message was to its Arab brethren. With the Arab Uprisings sidelining the 'Palestinian Question,' the war provided an opportunity to remind the Arab world of Gaza's tribulations. Once again, Hamas enjoyed diplomatic success, receiving several visits from regional politicians during the war as marks of solidarity, again conferring a degree of legitimacy on Hamas's government. Symbolically, President Morsi sent his PM through the Rafah Crossing into Gaza to witness the extent of destruction. This was followed by visits from the foreign ministers of Turkey and ten other Arab states, as well as the head of the Arab League, with an ICG report (2012b: 2–3, 6) noting that 'Gaza was in effect treated like a state and Hamas officials as statesmen.'

More broadly, the war allowed Hamas to appeal to prospective regional allies, principally Egypt, Turkey, and Qatar, who possessed both the financial resources and political capital Hamas required to alleviate the adverse effects of Israel's siege. Hamas's relationship with Syria and Iran had soured significantly over its lack of support for the Assad regime's assault on its rebellious population. Consequently, Hamas used the war to reorientate its regional support network, shifting from its traditional alliances, towards its prospective regional benefactors (Mohns & Bank 2012: 33).

Finally, on the domestic front, the war allowed Hamas to send a strong message to the various Salafi-Jihadists groups operating in Gaza. Like Hamas, they too had

been involved in carrying out rocket and mortar attacks against Israel. This reduced their military arsenal and subjected them to IDF counterattacks, diminishing both their military and organisational capacity. When the ceasefire agreement was signed, these groups similarly agreed to abide by the conditions of that Agreement. This enabled Hamas to reassert its authority over these groups because of their ceasefire obligations (ICG 2012b: 6–7; Benn 2012). This also meant that Hamas came closer to achieving a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within Gaza, thus limiting the Salafi-Jihadists' challenge to its political authority.

Extinguishing Palestinian unity – the 2014 Gaza war

Israel's invasion of Gaza in July 2014 was far more akin to 2008 than 2012. As with the two previous wars, the timeline in the lead-up to the 2014 war, and the GoI's military and political objectives, demonstrates the efficacy of armed resistance in Hamas's continuing legitimacy efforts, and the nature and operationalisation of the 'violent dialogue' between Hamas and Israel. Like the 2008 and 2012 conflicts, the 2014 war also took place within a distinct context. This time the 2014 consensus government agreement between Hamas and Fatah, and Israel's concerns over what this might herald for the establishment of an independent Palestine. This changing strategic environment formed the basis of Hamas and Israel's violent dialogue. The war also took place in the aftermath of a particularly acrimonious round of Peace Process negotiations where the GoI's persistent intransigence had reduced its political capital with the US and the EU.

In Gaza, the political situation had worsened appreciably following the overthrow of Morsi's government in July 2013. Egypt's new military regime had classified Hamas a terrorist group, destroyed many of the Rafah smuggling tunnels, and banned all activities by Hamas in Egypt as part of a plan to rid the Egyptian state of the MB's influence (ICG 2014a: 9–10; Haaretz 2014a). Morsi's overthrow altered Hamas's regional security appreciation dramatically with the asymmetry between Hamas and Israel increasing in Israel's favour. With little likelihood of any Egyptian involvement, and Hamas looking increasingly vulnerable, the GoI felt confident in adopting a more forceful military and political posture towards Hamas, issuing a thinly veiled threat to reoccupy Gaza and purge the territory of its military capabilities following a brief confrontation in March 2014 (Abu-Amer 2014a). While many commentators largely discounted this possibility, the IQB reportedly conducted several military exercises in preparation for any eventuality. Additionally, some media commentators speculated whether any prospective invasion, presumably limited in duration, could be part of a broader GoI strategy to finally excise Hamas from Palestinian politics, and then negotiate a political settlement with Abbas (Abu-Amer 2014a).

With Hamas's governance capacity increasingly constrained and hampered by the siege, and an accompanying lack of regional financial support, Hamas was now almost completely reliant on the GoI's benevolence for supplies into Gaza (see Figures 5 and 6). The continuing inability of Hamas to ameliorate these economic and social conditions also emboldened militant Islamist movements, such as the

PIJ, to challenge Hamas's political authority in Gaza in a more determined fashion. Overall, this meant that Hamas had little latitude to compromise with Israel over the terms of any new *tahdiy'ah* (ICG 2014a: 1–3; Eldar 2014a).[15]

There developed a view within Hamas's government that another war with Israel could be used as a political circuit breaker, potentially appeasing internal dissent, coalescing Palestinian support around Hamas, exposing the GoI's immiseration of Gaza, and embarrassing Hamas's Arab brethren into providing substantial financial assistance. Consequently, in the lead-up to the war, there developed the familiar routine of episodic military engagements between Hamas and the IDF (ICG 2014a: 2–3). However, such were the conditions in Gaza that Hamas was uncertain whether Gazans could or would tolerate any further wholesale destruction and social dislocation that would almost certainly accompany any war (ICG 2014a: 8). In a March 2014 poll, 60% of Gazans rated their situation as 'bad' or 'very bad.' When asked to choose the most pressing social issue confronting Palestinians, most Gazan respondents, 25.5%, nominated lifting the siege (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 51). However, the impending military crisis temporarily took a back seat to more immediate concerns following the signing the 2014 Unity Agreement between Hamas and Fatah.

The threat from Palestinian political unity

On 23 April 2014, Hamas and Fatah announced the formation of a consensus government with presidential, PNC, and PLC elections slated for late 2014 (al-Monitor 2014). PM Netanyahu reacted strongly to this fledgling Palestinian reconciliation, recycling his anti-Hamas rhetoric, 'Does he [Abbas] want peace with Hamas, or peace with Israel? You can have one but not the other. I hope he chooses peace. So far he hasn't done so' (Rudoren & Gordon 2014). Unambiguously articulating the GoI's position concerning the apparent threat to Israel posed by the consensus government, Netanyahu warned, 'As long as I am Prime Minister of Israel, I will never negotiate with a Palestinian government that is backed by Hamas terrorists that are calling for our liquidation' (BBC News 2014). Going further, Economic Minister Naftali Bennett called for PM Netanyahu to annex all West Bank settlements in response to the Palestinian announcement (Haaretz 2014b).

Immediately after the consensus government was sworn in on 2 June 2014, the GoI severed all contact, with Israel's Security Cabinet issuing the following statement: 'Israel will work, including in the international arena, to oppose the participation of terrorist organizations in the elections' (Khoury 2014a; David 2014).[16] This announcement was made shortly after PM Netanyahu had informed the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that the GoI would prevent the PA from conducting any elections in East Jerusalem (David 2014). In a further message to Palestinians concerning its displeasure at the establishment of a new government, on 5 June 2014, the GoI announced that it had approved the construction of over 3,000 new housing units throughout the West Bank's settlements (Levinson, David & Khoury 2014). In an opinion piece, the former ambassador and

permanent observer of the League of Arab States at the UN, Clovis Maksoud, opined that the GoI considered any form of genuine political reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas as an act of provocation. In his assessment, the GoI announced the additional settlement construction to penalise the Palestinians for their political reconciliation (Maksoud 2014).

One of the reasons for the GoI's intense displeasure at the signing of the Agreement was that it judged that the siege had finally made Hamas vulnerable and on the verge of financial and political collapse (Ibish 2014: 32–33). The latest Agreement allowed Hamas to withdraw from the centre stage of Palestinian politics to rejuvenate and re-establish its links with the Palestinian people (Eldar 2014b; Abu-Amer 2014b). However, it was clear that this withdrawal did not presage Hamas's broader departure from Palestinian politics. Hamas would most likely contest any future PNC and PLC elections, and the possibility of a repeat of 2006 was a clear and present danger for the GoI. If this occurred, the GoI feared that the international community, already disgruntled over its truculent attitude during the latest round of peace talks would place unprecedented diplomatic pressure on Israel to recognise the legitimacy of a Palestinian government containing Hamas.

De-legitimating the unity government

The simmering enmity between Hamas and Israel was thrust dramatically back into the forefront of public consciousness with the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers on 12 June 2014 (Haaretz 2014d). Almost immediately, Netanyahu blamed both Hamas and the new government, the former for committing the crime, and the latter for failing to prevent it (Eldar 2014). While Hamas officially denied any responsibility, the GoI dispatched nearly 7,500 troops to the West Bank and conducted the most extensive security operation since the Second Intifada, arresting hundreds of Palestinian activists, PLC members, and former prisoners. The Operation also forced the closure of numerous schools, media, and relief organisations throughout the territory. While the publicly stated goal of the Operation was to locate the kidnapped teens, in practice the IDF targeted Hamas infrastructure and activists in the West Bank, and more broadly Palestinian social and political infrastructure. The Operation had the clear objective of systematically enervating Hamas's organisational capacity in the West Bank, with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon stating plainly, 'Even if we locate and rescue the kidnapped boys, we won't cease this operation until we feel we have exhausted it' (Kuttab 2014b; Haaretz 2014c).[17]

When the bodies of the teenagers were discovered on 1 July 2014, PM Netanyahu declared: 'Hamas is responsible and Hamas will pay' (Eldar 2014d). He quickly outlined the GoI's strategy, while the IDF simultaneously launched numerous air strikes against targets in Gaza.

> [The first task of the government is] to reach the murderers and all those who participated in the kidnapping . . . [The second task is to] vigorously strike at

> Hamas members and infrastructures in Judea and Samaria, . . . [and the third task is to] act against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. If need be we will expand the campaign.
>
> (al-Ghoul 2014)

In the security operation's aftermath, it was established that a small IQB faction operating in Hebron had undertaken the kidnapping and murders (Eldar 2014e; Harel 2015).[18] Clearly, there were sections within Hamas just as desperate as the GoI to ruin the unity agreement. How much Hamas's political and military leaderships knew of the kidnapping and murders prior to, and immediately after, they were carried out remains highly contested.[19] What is clear though is that the GoI's public and political calls for revenge over the murder of the three teenagers were used as a diplomatic and political pretext to launch a major political and military assault on Hamas. This strategy had the simultaneous aims of de-legitimising the unity government, and vitiating Hamas's political and social infrastructure, and military capabilities throughout the OPT.

Netanyahu also broadened the scope of his narrative by linking his opposition to the consensus government to the establishment of an independent Palestine. In an interview given in the early stages of the subsequent military operation, Netanyahu made it abundantly clear that he would never countenance a fully sovereign Palestinian state. He stated unequivocally, 'I think the Israeli people understand now what I always say: that there cannot be a situation, under any agreement, in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the Jordan River' (Horowitz 2014). Linking the situation in Gaza with the evolution of an independent Palestine, Netanyahu prophesised,

> If we get out of Judea and Samaria, like they tell us to, there'd be the possibility of thousands of tunnels being dug by terrorists to attack Israel. Israel is not prepared to create another 20 Gazas in the West Bank.
>
> (Horowitz 2014)[20]

Remaining consistent with Likud's characterisation of Palestinian resistance, Netanyahu regarded the two-state solution as a security threat to the Israeli state. In an interview given after the war, Netanyahu reiterated that any future Palestinian state contiguous to Israel presented an unacceptable danger to Israel's security. In his opinion, any such entity must be subject to indefinite Israeli military occupation (Robert 2014). Israeli media reports noted that the apparent unmasking of Netanyahu's true feelings on this issue was largely unreported outside of Israel because he gave his admission in Hebrew (Beinart 2014). From this it could be argued that the GoI were cognisant of the fact that should Palestinians achieve any form of viable political unity between its two major representative movements it would be an important step forward in realising an independent Palestine.

Connecting Hamas to the kidnappings thus formed a crucial part of the GoI's efforts to de-legitimise the consensus government, and by extension the prospect of a sovereign Palestine. The GoI's message to potential international benefactors

of the new government was that the kidnappings demonstrated that Hamas remained a terrorist movement, despite its thin veneer of political respectability. Furthermore, as Hamas continued to remain part of the consensus government, it too became a tainted entity, with the GoI imploring the international community not to accord it any international recognition (Ravid 2014a). Finally, the GoI proffered a narrative that if Abbas did not immediately dissolve the consensus government, then his judgement and true design concerning the reasons behind his promotion of the two-state solution must also be called into question. As an Israeli PM's Office press release stated, 'Abu Mazen's words would have more substance if he dissolved his alliance with Hamas, the organisation behind this abduction and which calls for the destruction of Israel' (Khoury & David 2014).

The principal side effect of the IDF's security operation was that the new Palestinian government could not govern in such a fluid political and security situation: everything was placed into abeyance until the GoI decided otherwise. Abbas desperately scrambled to distance the new government from Hamas, fearing that the vortex of Israeli revenge would consume it. In a media statement, a Palestinian security official declared, 'If it is proven that Hamas abducted the settlers, this will leave a significant impact on the reconciliation. The PA will put its implementation on hold and will freeze it until things become clearer' (Abu-Amer 2014c). A Palestinian official reported that the GoI also threatened Abbas with a repeat of the siege Israel inflicted upon Arafat between 2002 and 2004, if he did not acquiesce to their demands to dissolve the new government (Abu-Amer 2014c).

However, the GoI had to be very careful about the extent and vigour of its security operation in the West Bank. The effective reoccupation of the West Bank was being met with increasing opposition, directed towards Israel and the PA. Indeed, media reports began to speculate that the IDF's collective punishment strategy could precipitate another Intifada (see Khoury 2014b; Pfeffer 2014). Palestinians believed the West Bank operation smacked of revenge, and was a pretext for a much broader Israeli strategy linked to the GoI's opposition to a Palestinian state. Retired Palestinian Gen. Wasef Erekat noted:

> Statements by Israeli officials confirm that there are multiple targets for the military campaign. These cannot be implemented in a few days and will need a long period of time. The search for the settlers has no time limit. Israel searched for Gilad Shalit for five years. Will the Israeli campaign continue for five years?
>
> (Melhem 2014)

Hamas and Israel begin their 'violent dialogue'

With the GoI successfully constructing a self-defence narrative against Hamas and de-legitimising the consensus government, it turned its attention to Gaza. On 8 July 2014, the IDF began Operation Protective Edge with a sustained air assault ostensibly in response to increased rocket launches from Gaza. Simultaneously,

the Israeli Cabinet approved the mobilisation of 40,000 reservists, indicating that the IDF intended to engage in an extensive ground assault on Gaza after its initial air offensive. Netanyahu was quoted as informing the army to conduct a continuous, methodical, and forceful campaign against Gaza. GoI sources were also quoted as saying that the Operation's objective was to exact a heavy price from Hamas, to hit it hard, and to create a significant attack that will lead to deterrence (Times of Israel 2014).

When Operation Protective Edge was launched, the GoI dropped all reference to the kidnapping and murder of the three teenagers from its 'violent dialogue' with Hamas, and the diplomatic narrative it was expounding to the international community. Israel's conflict with Hamas was no longer about seeking retribution for the murder of its children; now it was primarily a 'defensive operation' designed to combat Hamas's proliferation of rockets, and the provocative construction of an unexpectedly extensive and complex tunnel network. These were portrayed as representing a clear threat to Israel's continuing safety and security (Ravid 2014b).[21]

In the first week of the war, B'Tselem estimated that 172 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, including 34 children and 43 combatants (B'Tselem 2014). In response, Hamas and other groups in Gaza launched over 1,000 rockets into southern Israel (ICG 2014b: 1). On 17 July 2014, the IDF launched a large-scale ground assault on Gaza. By the time Israel 'felt exhausted' by its military exertions, and a ceasefire was eventually agreed to on 26 August 2014, an estimated 2,251 Palestinians had been killed, of whom 1,462 were civilians, including 551 children (OHCHR 2015a: 6). The fighting destroyed an estimated 18,000 houses, leaving approximately 108,000 people homeless. The conflict also saw 17 of Gaza's hospitals and 45 of its primary healthcare facilities damaged, the destruction of 26 schools, with damage occasioned to another 122. Finally, 20%–30% of the territory's water and sewerage network was damaged, along with 30%–50% of its water storage capacity (ICG 2014c: 4). The GoI reported that Hamas and other groups in Gaza fired between 4,000 and 4,500 rockets and mortars into southern Israel. This resulted in an estimated 10,000 Israelis being displaced, with an estimated 70% of Israelis in southern Israel leaving their homes (OHCHR 2015b: 20, 25).

Analysing the 'violent dialogue'

Israel's message to Palestinians

For Israel, the war's overwhelming message to the Palestinian political leadership was that the GoI would not countenance a political union between Fatah and any vestiges of Hamas. Not only was the GoI opposed to the prospect of a rejuvenated Hamas, but it also sought to capitalise on the failure of the Peace Process negotiations to provide a framework for establishing a Palestinian state. The GoI considered it paramount to prevent any prospect of Palestinian political unity that might gain crucial international support. If the establishment of a functioning Palestinian

government could be thwarted, then the GoI could continue to promote its narrative concerning the absence of an acceptable Palestinian negotiation partner.

To accomplish this, the GoI's narrative aimed to de-legitimise the consensus government, while the IDF vitiated Gaza's social, economic, and political infrastructure, and Hamas's military capabilities simultaneously. As the PIJ's secretary general, Dr Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, explained:

> as long as the Hamas government was in power in Gaza, Israel considered its own security was assured because of Hamas's disciplined commitment to 'quiet.' With the reconciliation and the formation of the consensus government, 'quiet' with Gaza was no longer a security issue. . . . So here is where the paradox lies: either the intra-Palestinian schism continues or there is a reconciliation process and Israel stops tolerating the status quo.
>
> (Anon 2015: 53)

Hamas's messages to Israel and Palestinians

For Hamas, the war was a message to Israelis and Palestinians that despite the latest unity agreement, and their withdrawal from an active role in the new government, they remained firmly in control of Gaza and were determined to remain a viable and functioning political actor in the OPT. However, Hamas's apparent willingness to engage in such a costly war with Israel was also a sign of how vulnerable it had become politically after years of an Israeli siege that had vitiated Hamas's political authority in Gaza. Hamas needed to demonstrate to Palestinians, and perhaps even to its own members, that in these most parlous of circumstances the leadership retained the capacity and willingness to injure Israel strategically, politically, and psychologically, regardless of the organisational cost. A UN report into the war noted that given that most rockets fired by Hamas were unguided, their actual military value in being able to attack targets precisely was extremely limited. The report concluded that it 'cannot exclude the possibility that the indiscriminate rocket attacks may constitute acts of violence whose primary purpose is to spread terror amongst the civilian population' (OHCHR 2015b: 29).

The continued immiseration of Gaza meant that unlike 2008 and 2012, Hamas was unable to accept a resumption of the prewar status quo. To regain a measure of the political authority it had lost during the siege, Hamas needed to extract some economic and political concessions from Israel. In similar circumstances to the 2008 war, an ICG report suggested that Hamas's failure to agree to any temporary ceasefire agreements early in the war was an effort to ensure that any fresh *tahdiy'ah* with Israel specifically addressed its primary political concerns. These included avoiding any demand for its de-militarisation, an end to Israeli and Quartet opposition to stopping Gaza's financial restrictions, an end to Israeli and US opposition to any future reconciliation agreements, and the role of the Hamas controlled PLC to act as check on the presidency. More immediately, Hamas needed any potential *tahdiy'ah* to address and ameliorate the debilitating effects of Israel's siege (ICG 2014c: 4–5).

Such was the determination of Hamas and Israel to achieve their stated objectives that once the 'fight' began, neither side was willing to acquiesce to any cessation of hostilities until each felt satiated. Despite the extensive loss of life, predominantly civilian, and the wanton destruction of Gazan infrastructure, Hamas's mere survival was again perceived as a victory, particularly on the crucial public relations front. As with 2008, Hamas's survival of the IDF's offensive was a clear message to Israelis and Palestinians concerning Hamas's fortitude and forbearance, and was enough to thrust a politically chastened Hamas back into the forefront of Palestinian resistance efforts. Notwithstanding the GoI's bellicose rhetoric, Hamas's leadership again guessed correctly that the ground invasion was not the precursor to reoccupation, which would have posed an existential threat to Hamas (ICG 2014c: 4). This gave the leadership an increased scope of possible military options, and meant that they did not need to commit fighters en masse in costly defensive battles to stave off outright military defeat.

Hamas's strategic appreciation of the war's potential political benefits is demonstrated by the polling results. As with the other two wars, Hamas transmuted its resistance successes into increased political support, once again at the expense of Fatah's popularity. The September 2014 poll revealed the extent of the reversal of Hamas's political fortunes. Despite 76.3% of respondents believing that conditions in Gaza were either 'bad' or 'very bad,' Haniyeh held a commanding lead over Abbas as preferred president, 54.6% to 38.1%, even though the former was no longer part of any government (see PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 53). Similarly, as Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, Hamas and CR received significant boosts in support because of the war. This was especially so in the West Bank where for the first time since the 2006 election, CR was more popular than Fatah. In Gaza, the war represented a high point in support for Hamas that had been growing for nearly a year. When asked who won the latest Gazan war, 69.4% of respondents nominated Hamas and the other resistance factions. Further to this, 79.5% of respondents supported the continued launching of rockets from Gaza against Israel until the GoI lifted the siege (PCPSR 2014: Poll Nos. 52, 53). Figure 1 also shows that while support for Hamas in Gaza tapers away, support for CR continues to outstrip Fatah's for a further six months. This is perhaps indicative of the success of Hamas's reconstruction narrative, and the prominent role Hamas's government assumed in the aftermath of the war.

The September poll also revealed some interesting perceptions of the consensus government's efficacy, and of Hamas's future role in Palestinian politics. Despite the consensus government having no real opportunity to prove itself, 57.3% of respondents believed that a government consisting of all factions should replace the current government dominated by Fatah. Crucially, many respondents believed that the Ramallah PA and Abbas were responsible for the consensus government's failure (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 53). This is a remarkable reversal from the June poll where 60.6% of respondents professed confidence that the unity government would achieve public expectations, and with 65.8% of respondents satisfied with speed that the reconciliation agreement was being implemented (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 52).

While Gaza's immiseration and social desolation continued unabated, the war had clearly rejuvenated Hamas's political fortunes. Despite Abbas's calls for the restitution of the political framework agreed to in April, an emboldened Hamas was not about to forgo its increased political authority brought about by the recent conflict. Hamas appeared unwilling to allow Fatah and Abbas to resume unilateral political control of Gaza without any recognition of Hamas's political, social, and military sacrifices. Hamas wanted to send a clear message to Fatah, Israel, and the international community that it remained firmly in control of Gaza, and most importantly remained a key political actor in Palestinian politics. The increased public support provided to Hamas by the 2014 war resulted in the restitution of the status quo between Hamas and Fatah.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis makes some pertinent observations concerning the role that resistance plays in Hamas's strategic narrative, and the benefits it derives from having a DRS. First, the 'violent dialogue' framework generates a fresh appreciation of Hamas's relationship with Israel. When, and under what conditions, Hamas chooses to speak with Israel using violence, and vice versa, means that the concept of violence is highly contextual and should not be interpreted as being mono-faceted or analysed in isolation, as it is in many of the securitised studies of Hamas. Each war took place within a specific context whereby the asymmetrical relationship between Israel and Hamas was threatened by certain events. Each side used the conflicts to communicate with each other to recalibrate and reassess their relationship without appearing weak, or having to compromise too much. Paradoxically, these violent communications seemed to act as safety values, relieving the intensifying political pressures on both Israel and Hamas that arose out of the nature of the competing demands for self-determination and self-defence. Importantly, despite the IDF's technological and numerical superiority at no time did any of these wars threaten the survival of Hamas. Similarly, despite declarations to the contrary, rarely were Hamas's objectives realised, meaning that their 'victories' were largely pyrrhic, accompanied as they were by extensive infrastructure, societal, and institutional destruction, and the wholesale loss of life and property.

Second, the three wars demonstrate the integral role that Hamas's resistance plays in its strategic narrative. Hamas promotes itself as the only major Palestinian movement willing to confront Israel militarily, regardless of the military imbalance and the organisational costs incurred. This allows Hamas to claim that it is the only movement genuinely seeking to pressure Israel to grant Palestinians statehood. In none of the wars did Hamas lose support. In fact, they gained support, albeit temporarily. This suggests that not only do Palestinians want Hamas to remain integral to Palestinian politics; they also want Hamas to continue resisting Israeli occupation.

Third, the chapter highlights the role that armed resistance plays in Hamas's DRS. The mutually beneficial aspect of the DRS means that after each war, Hamas

could transmute its popularity fillip into sustaining its political authority in Gaza that had been steadily eroded by Israel's siege. Having a DRS and being a legitimate actor in Palestinian politic means that Hamas uses its armed resistance to support its political resistance agenda. This means that Hamas's political and military agendas cannot be analysed as discrete undertakings. Seeing them as complementary activities facilitates a deeper understanding of the scope, limits, and causation of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour with respect to its armed resistance.

Finally, from a conceptual viewpoint, understanding the operationalisation of the relationship between Hamas's armed resistance and political resistance has some important ramifications for the apparent dichotomy between the use of violence and politically moderate behaviour. The interplay between Hamas's political and armed resistance means the link between the two is not as incongruous as it appears in the literature. When Hamas became a legitimate political actor and not a non-state actor, the function of its use of violence changed. No longer can Hamas's use of violence be classified as anti-systemic and/or the anti-democratic act of an external spoiler. Because Hamas's armed resistance appears to buttress its ability to remain a viable political actor in Palestinian politics, Hamas is actually using violence to defend its position in Palestinian politics.

Notes

1 In 2001 Hamas conducted 249 rocket and mortar attacks; in 2002, 292; and in 2003, 420. In 2004, Hamas conducted 1,157 rocket and mortar attacks against Israeli targets, representing nearly a 300% increase on 2003 levels. See IICC (2007). In the corresponding period, Hamas conducted 17 suicide attacks in 2001, but only conducted two in 2005. See CPOST.

2 For a description of circumstances facing Gazans from June to November 2008, see UNGA (2009: 62–69). Diplomatic reports note that during the period 4–12 November 2008, the IDF had killed 11 Hamas and PIJ militants and injured 15 civilians. During the same period, there were 68 rocket and mortar strikes against Israel. See WikiLeaks (2008a).

3 This is supported by diplomatic reports that state that Hamas's long-term strategic goal was to open the Rafah Crossing. In the short term, Hamas wanted unrestricted deliveries of construction materials, food, and fuel. According to these reports, while Hamas still wanted a new *tahdiy'ah*, it was more important for Gazans then it was for Hamas. See WikiLeaks (2008c).

4 For a comprehensive breakdown of rocket and mortar fire emanating from Gaza, see IICC (2008). Interestingly, diplomatic sources noted that most of the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel were most likely conducted by the PIJ. The reports also noted that when Hamas fired a rocket and mortar they were more likely to be aimed at vacant land indicating that these attacks were primarily symbolic. See WikiLeaks (2008b).

5 According to Fayyad, Hamas had miscalculated Israeli forbearance in the lead-up to the Operation, failing to consider the proximity of Israeli elections. See WikiLeaks (2008d).

6 There are also two additional factors concerning why the GoI choose to launch Operation Cast Lead. First, the government had an eye on the forthcoming election in February 2009. Second, the GoI and IDF were chastened by their respective performances in the 2006 Lebanon war and both had received harsh criticism for their perceived poor

performance. The relative success of Cast Lead was seen as redemption for both the GoI and the IDF and their leaders. See ICG (2009: 18–19, 21–22), respectively.

7 According to Cordesman, the GoI may have rejected option 3 because it hoped that any subsequent ceasefire agreement would prevent Hamas's resupply of heavy weapons, lead to an increased Egyptian security role on its Gazan border, and enable the West Bank PA to re-establish a legitimate presence in Gaza. See Cordesman (2009: 11).

8 A WikiLeaks cable revealed a meeting between then GoI Defence Minister Barak, US Senator Casey, and Congressman Ackerman in Tel Aviv, in which Barak stated that the GoI had approached Egypt and Fatah prior to the launching of Operation Cast Lead and asked if they were willing to assume control of Gaza once Hamas had been defeated. While both declined, it appears that Fatah had some prior knowledge of the assault on Gaza. See WikiLeaks (2009d).

9 According to Military Intelligence Brig. Majid al-Faraj, the Israeli offensive had only increased the popularity of Hamas throughout the Muslim world, particularly among West Bankers. Given Abbas's inability to affect any real change, then Hamas's actions could demonstrate to Palestinians the benefits of resistance as opposed to negotiations. Faraj also noted that unless Abbas and Fatah could achieve tangible results in stopping the IDF's offensive then it would affect their legitimacy. Similarly, Ahmad Sayyad, former head of the PA Bar Association, stated that West Bankers were frustrated at the PA and Abbas's perceived support of the IDF offensive. According to Sayyad, for West Bankers standing up to Israel and defending Palestinian rights were more important than factional loyalty. See WikiLeaks (2009a).

10 This compared to 28.1% and 29.5%, respectively, in the December 2008 poll. See PCPSR (2008): Poll No. 30.

11 A WikiLeaks cable reveals that the Ramallah PA and the GoI worked closely at ensuring that Hamas was totally excluded from the reconstruction process with the GoI insisting upon 'end-use assurances' for any construction materials entering Gaza. The Ramallah PA complied by using the banking system, which it still controlled, to ensure Hamas did not gain monetarily from the entry of reconstruction material and as a way of providing these 'end-use assurances.' See WikiLeaks (2009e).

12 In a report to the US's Israeli embassy, Consular General Saji al-Mughani noted that in the invasion's aftermath Hamas was working hard to appear professional and provide security. However, he noted that Hamas's popularity had decreased because Gazans blamed it for the recent conflict believing that the movement's MB agenda had 'trumped' the Palestinian cause. However, al-Mughani observed that this criticism was mitigated by the impression that Abbas and the PA had failed to support them during the conflict. While the PA was handing out cash for home reconstruction, most Gazans attributed this to the UN, and not the PA. Meanwhile, Hamas was handing out cash directly to home-owners, further mitigating criticism for the war's outbreak. See WikiLeaks (2009c).

13 According to the report, Defence Minister Barak wanted a formal ceasefire agreement while PM Olmert favoured linking any agreement with the release of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, who had been kidnapped by Hamas in 2006. See ICG (2009: 27).

14 A newspaper report also noted that the al-Jaabari assassination might prove beneficial for the more moderate sections of Hamas in their internal struggle over the favouritism of political resistance and the entrenchment of ties with Morsi's government. See Pfeffer (2012).

15 In March 2014, there was a brief military engagement between the PIJ and the IDF with media reports arguing that Hamas had been reduced to being a mere bystander, unable to prevent the PIJ from launching its rockets and mortars into southern Israel. See Balousha (2014); and Eldar (2014a).

16 In his 2012 report, Brown (2012: 18) noted that the current right-wing Israeli government would only ever see the prospect of Palestinian elections as a strategic threat, making them unlikely to occur.

17 In fact, Bouris explains that the GoI surmised relatively quickly that the teenagers were dead, but deliberately created false hope among Israelis to increase the domestic and international opprobrium against Hamas, and Palestinians more broadly, when they were eventually found. With such anti-Palestinian enmity, Netanyahu would be free to deal with Hamas in whatever way he sort fit, without incurring the levels domestic and/or international ire Israel endured after the 2008 war. See Bouris (2015: 112).

18 In August 2014, senior Hamas leader Saleh Arouri was reportedly recorded praising the actions of the IQB for kidnapping the teenagers; see Fiske (2014). Then in an interview Meshaal gave to al-Jazeera on 23 June 2014, he apparently admitted that members of the IQB were likely to have been responsible for the kidnapping and subsequent murders. See Eldar (2014c).

19 Most media opinions at the time suggested that given the parlous situation confronting Hamas and the fact that the leadership had only recently signed an agreement that offered them a degree of organisational relief, Hamas would not risk all of that and more to conduct such an operation. Additionally, the fact that the teenagers appeared to have been murdered very soon after capture and not held as bargaining chips suggested that this was an independent operation with short-term rather than long-term goals. See Kuttab (2014a).

20 Ibish (2014: 38–40) argues that some in the current GoI view any unity government, regardless of Hamas's participation, as both a security threat and a threat to the ideal of a greater Israel and needs to be unilaterally opposed. Maintaining and perpetuating Palestinian political disunity is seen as the most effective way of forestalling the implementation of the two-state solution.

21 Arguably, the change in the narrative leading up to the military assault was a deliberate tactic because of the kidnapping and murder of a Palestinian teenager on 2 July 2014, allegedly committed by Israeli settlers as revenge for the murder of the three Israeli teenagers. This robbed the GoI of the Operation's initial raison d'être. See Khoury, David & Lis (2014).

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7 The vacillating power-sharing dynamics of the territories

Introduction

Hamas's surprising election victory in 2006 not only made it a legitimate actor in Palestinian politics, but it also meant that for the first time Fatah had to consider sharing power with its chief political and ideological rival. While Hamas won a majority in the PLC, Fatah retained significant voter support, exacerbating the already stark factionalism present in Palestinian politics. This factionalism is more than simply political tribalism. It is grounded in the ideological contest between secular Arab nationalism and political Islam over the nature and course of Palestinian self-determination and the character of any future Palestinian state.[1]

As discussed previously, Fatah's inimical reaction to Hamas's electoral victory, which included its collaboration with the US and Israel in their efforts to instigate the failure of Hamas's government, intensified this factionalism. This means that any agreement reached between Hamas and Fatah is more than just an arrangement to share power. Any agreement would be a symbol of political reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah because it would legitimise Hamas's election victory, regulate and formalise the limited transfer of institutional power from Fatah to Hamas, and recognise Hamas's right to participate in governing the OPT. Consequently, this chapter investigates the extent and effect of the efforts to negotiate power-sharing agreements between Hamas and Fatah. It begins by providing a theoretical framework within which to understand the machinations concerning these agreements, before proceeding to analyse the 2007, 2011, and 2014 unity government agreements entered by Hamas and Fatah. In doing so, it aims to highlight and account for the oscillating centripetal and centrifugal forces that shape the scope, limits, and causation of shifts in Hamas's political behaviour in this area.

Within the IM literature, the ability of political actors to engage in a degree of cooperation, alliance building, and/or power-sharing with other political actors, even ideological rivals, is a key indicator of a shift in political behaviour towards adopting a more moderate political stance. This is because one of the principal effects of political inclusion is that when the incentives become strong enough, there is an expectation that actors will begin to enter into cooperative agreements (Schwedler 2006: 108). Within a parliamentary setting, it makes sense for actors to reach some sort of cooperative consensus, even with ideological rivals and

opponents, to secure specific legislative objectives, or alternatively to demonstrate an ideological purity of purpose to constituents (Brown 2012: 147).

Both Schwedler and Wickham observe that Brotherhood-styled parties in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen all managed to cooperate to varying degrees of success with other political parties, even long-time adversaries. This cooperation took different trajectories with Jordan's IAF and Egypt's *Wasat* both entering formal and informal alliances with Islamist and non-Islamist parties alike. However, according to Schwedler, Yemen's *Islah* Party was more circumspect about cooperating with opposition parties. Indeed, *Islah* displayed distinct hostility to some opposition parties, particularly the socialists (Schwedler 2006: 112–115). Despite the benefits of cooperation in assessing a group's shift in political behaviour, both researchers remain cautious about the theoretical import of cooperation alone being indicative of a party's ideological moderation (Schwedler 2006: 108–112; Wickham 2004: 213).

Clark explores this issue in more detail, noting that in the case of Jordan's FIS, while it used its cooperation with the HCCNOP to indicate its apparent moderate political attitude, this cooperation had strict boundaries. Clark (2006: 539–540) argues that cooperation was limited to those issues where the IAF agrees with the HCCNOP, such as foreign policy, while it refused to countenance any discussion on issues such as the applicability of *shari'ah*. This type of tactical alliance is easy for either party to make and to break, as they are often entered for quite specific reasons, entailing little or no ideological or practical concessions (Brown 2012: 147).

However, more strategic alliances, such as power-sharing agreements, remain problematic for all parties concerned because of the potential need to make ideological concessions, and the concomitant requirement by all parties to demonstrate a commitment to coordinating actions, programmes, and strategies (Brown 2012: 147). Strategic alliances between opposition parties in non-democratic systems also run the risk of incurring the governing regime's ire because they can present a threat to the existing political status quo. Strategic alliances often mean the governing regime has less bargaining power, as the level of political asymmetry is less with a combined entity than with individual parties. Such is the perceived threat from strategic alliances that governing regimes in non-democratic systems will seek to undermine them through implementing 'divide and rule' tactics, and even raw repression (Brown 2012: 147).

Nevertheless, there are several incentives for Hamas to enter into some form of formalised power-sharing agreement with Fatah. From a normative perspective, power-sharing agreements are widely considered as effective methods for resolving rival group competition because they are thought to offer parties institutionalised insurance that they will not face future policies that are discriminatory, retributive, or otherwise harmful to their interests (Sriram 2008: 19). Additionally, governance based on power-sharing can enhance the quality of the political system, with all parties having a stake in ensuring its success (Lijphart 2008: 93).

Empirically speaking, a key incentive for power-sharing is that Palestinians view any formalised unity government agreement between Hamas and Fatah as

heralding reconciliation between the two ideological rivals, contributing to increased legitimacy for both sides. As will be illustrated throughout this chapter, both factions gain a fillip in support once an agreement is announced. This occurs because a unity agreement between the representatives of the two premier ideologies – Arab nationalism and political Islam – carries substantial symbolism for Palestinians. The after-effects of *al-naqbah*, followed by over 50 years of occupation, has exacerbated the disaggregation of Palestinian society, making Palestinians associate the prospect of political unity with achieving a stronger sense of societal cohesion. Not only would there be the political symbolism of Hamas and Fatah cooperating politically in governing the OPT, there would be the potent symbolism of Hamas and Fatah collaborating in Palestinian nation-building, and what that would mean for any future Palestinian state.

Societal cohesion is especially important to maintaining a sense of Palestinian national identity – something that is challenged daily by the occupation. As noted in Chapter 1, it took until the mid-1960s for Palestinians to revive the social networks, value systems, and cultural symbols necessary in re-establishing a sense of social cohesiveness (Sayigh 2011b: 665–667). A Hamas/Fatah coalition would be an important signifier of both increasing Palestinian social cohesion and sense of national identity. Any unity agreement would force Hamas and Fatah to de-emphasise their unique appeal and their respective visions for society in favour of a more cohesive political and social narrative (Przeworski & Sprague: 1986: 50).

Furthermore, a unity agreement would present Hamas and Fatah with the opportunity to portray a unified political voice, propelling Palestinian state-building efforts regionally and internationally. This is the display of political cohesion that Europe, in particular, is keen to witness as a precursor to a more formalised recognition of a Palestinian government. Hamas viewed European recognition of a unity government as an important buffer against continuous Israeli and US opposition to its increased presence in Palestinian politics (Caridi 2012: 246–248).

Since 2006, Hamas and Fatah have entered into unity agreements in 2007, 2011, and 2014.[2] Unfortunately, these agreements have not resulted in the sort of societal cohesion or unified political voice envisaged by the Palestinian public. In fact, they have resulted in the opposite. There appears to be oscillating centripetal and centrifugal forces between incentives and disincentives that inhibits any agreement from working, creating several problems that need to be accounted for.

First, there is the problem of how to account appropriately for the fact that Hamas and Fatah enter into these power-sharing agreements, but they fail to achieve the desired result of reconciliation, and political unity of purpose? Given that power-sharing arrangements envisage a significant long-term commitment for cross-ideological cooperation, a degree of trust must develop between the two parties. As Kelman (2005: 640) notes, 'Trust is a central ingredient for the peaceful and effective management of all relationships. . . . A violation of trust precipitates a serious crisis in a communal relationship and often marks the end of it.' Tilly (2005: 12) defines trust as 'placing valued outcomes at risk to others' malfeasance, mistakes or failures.' In this case, trust can be viewed as an attitude or a

relationship with practices attached. Tilly notes that while some trust relationships are dyadic, the majority operate with a larger network of similar relationships. These trust networks 'consist of ramified interpersonal connections, consisting of mainly strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes or failures of others' (Tilly 2005: 12).

Any power-sharing agreement would involve Hamas and Fatah placing their valued resources and goals at potential risk of adverse external influences. As explained previously, Hamas's principal goal is to gain a political voice in governing the OPT, and in the decision-making processes of Palestinian self-determination efforts. Their valued resource derives from its continued political authority in Gaza. Fatah's goal is ensuring its continued control of Palestinian politics, and of the negotiating strategy in the Peace Process. Their valued resource is their continued hegemony over Palestinian political and social institutions.

Given the intractability of the Hamas/Fatah conflict, any power-sharing agreement would involve substantial compromises from both groups. They need to comprehend and internalise the subtle differences between being the government's junior party and the complete surrender of power (O'Malley 2001: 287). Given the division of power and responsibility between the presidency and PLC, any successful agreement also should assuage both Fatah and Hamas's respective fears that the other party will not use their respective power to eliminate, or limit the other's ability to realistically contest for power in the future (Stedman 1991: 15; Hartzell 1999: 5). In view of the persistent intractability of the Hamas/Fatah relationship, exacerbated by the events immediately after the 2006 election, it is reasonable to assert that trust between the two factions is at best minimal.

The second problem arises with how to account for this mistrust, and the influence this has on the efficacy of the unity agreements to achieve their intended result? Hroub (2010: 84) argues that in the post-election period, Fatah mimicked Hamas's actions during the 1990s and became a spoiler. This resulted in a role reversal, where in the post-election era it is Hamas who is eager to buy time, and bring calm to the OPT, while Fatah seeks to undermine Hamas's government.[3] Newman and Richmond (2006: 4) contend that the act of spoiling encompasses a broad range of actions and actors. It includes activities of any actors who are opposed to peaceful settlement for whatever reason, and who use violence or other means, to disrupt the process in pursuit of their aims. Additionally, spoiling can also include actors who are geographically external to the conflict, but who support internal spoilers and spoiling tactics, and who might benefit from violent conflict, or from holding out. In this case, external spoilers could include Israel, the US, the EU, and Egypt. Aggestam (2006: 26) also notes that in intractable conflicts, internal spoiling is more prevalent because any asymmetrical relationship between various groups makes actual agreement between them problematic. Asymmetry affects the negotiation process in three ways. First, it makes the continuation of unilateral actions more likely, and the establishment of a mutually hurting stalemate less likely.[4] Second, asymmetrical relations reflect negatively on the issue of justice, especially where the stronger party seeks to dictate the terms and impose

conditions on any proposed agreement. Finally, the presence of asymmetry tends to result in an agreement becoming about recognition and legitimacy (Aggestam 2006: 26–27).

Finally, the actors involved in the negotiation process may at various times hold what Richmond terms ‘devious objectives.’ This occurs when parties recognise that a peace process has value and utility to them, even if they do not agree with the sort of compromise agreement being suggested. In this case, these actors may continue to participate in the process only to reject any proposals (Richmond 2006: 59).

Legitimising the election – Hamas and the 2007 Mecca Agreement

As discussed in Chapter 4, any semblance of conciliation between Hamas and Fatah dissipated quickly after the 2006 election. Fatah collaborated willingly with Israel and the US to restrict the new government’s efforts to establish its political authority, while Hamas was equally determined to cement its new-found political authority (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 225–226). Almost immediately after the election, Fatah began its spoiling activities, intending to increase the levels of mistrust between it and Hamas. Fatah reacted in such a manner because the election result placed at risk both its valued resource – continued hegemony over Palestinian political and social institutions, and its principal goal of retaining control over the negotiating strategy in the Peace Process. Abbas began to transfer institutional power away from the PLC to the presidency, particularly in the all-important financial and security areas. He hoped to de-legitimise Hamas by inhibiting it financially, and challenging its political authority by depriving it of the ability to monopolise the legitimate use of force in Gaza.

The US and Israel also began their own spoiling activities, with the former imposing economic sanctions, while the latter imprisoned several recently elected PLC members from Hamas. Fatah’s economic and political buttressing by the US and Israel prevented the evolving power asymmetry between Hamas and Fatah from becoming too great, and towards the end of 2006 armed confrontations between the two sets of security forces increased exponentially. Concurrently, both sides organised public rallies that only served to inflame the levels of animosity and mistrust (Tamimi 2009: 251).

In this politically fluid situation, there developed an incoherent approach from internal and external actors as to exactly what the new unity government was supposed to be. On one side, the US and Israel’s principal objective was to quarantine Hamas from Palestine politics, and hopefully precipitate the collapse of the new Hamas government through economic sanctions and political isolation. On the other side, the EU took a more circumspect approach, and despite generally complying with Quartet policy adopted a more conciliatory attitude towards the newly elected Hamas government. While EU representatives recognised that the election had caused the PA’s funding situation to alter irrevocably, EU Ambassador Otte informed Saeb Erekat that ‘Aid and funding, as well as political dialogue, need to be “redirected.”’ In this respect, the EU position was

different from the US who wants to see a Hamas government fail. By contrast, the EU encouraged Hamas to be accommodating through funding and aid. The EU appears inclined to see an Islamist government succeed and set a positive example (Palestine Papers 2006).

Hamas recognised that it needed EU support to mitigate the US/Israeli alliance, and as a way of legitimising the 2006 electoral result, and its newly acquired position in Palestinian politics. Hamas's leadership worked assiduously at ensuring that the EU were convinced of its moderate credentials and willingness to address the EU's prime concern – Hamas's recognition of Israel (Caridi 2012: 248).[5] Meanwhile, Fatah oscillated between the US/Israeli position and conditionally entering a unity government (Caridi 2012: 239–240).

While Hamas and Fatah squabbled over reaching an equitable settlement, the security situation in the OPT, particularly in Gaza, deteriorated markedly.[6] One of Hamas's key campaign pledges was the restoration of the rule of law throughout the territories. As discussed in Chapter 5, after the election, Abbas ordered his security services to boycott the Hamas government in Gaza. This act of spoiling meant that Hamas struggled initially to rid Gaza of its ongoing lawlessness, with the familial clans and Fatah loyalists challenging Hamas's attempts to establish its political authority, primarily through the monopolisation of the legitimate use of force.[7] This in turn began to influence Hamas's ability to deliver basic services, particularly the distribution of food and medical services. Palestinians feared that the routinisation of violence throughout the OPT would compromise the ability of any future government, unified or otherwise, to restore peace and security in the OPT (ICG 2007a: 9–10).[8]

With both sides deadlocked over the formation of a government, and with inter-factional violence escalating, Saudi Arabia intervened, convening a meeting between the respective leaderships in Mecca in early February 2007. On 8 February 2007, it was announced that the two factions had reached an agreement to form a unity government (See Mecca Agreement 2007). For Hamas, the reconciliation agreement promised to avoid the prospect of a civil war that would not only have cost lives and resources, but would almost certainly have seriously damaged its legitimacy among Palestinian voters. For Fatah, the reconciliation agreement promised to stave off its own collapse after the election saw its credibility and political authority erode substantially (Tamimi 2009: 257).

The basic content of the Agreement had been foreshadowed in the Prisoner's Document published in 2006 (JMCC 2006).[9] However, it took the looming disaster of a potential civil war, and the intervention of an influential third party to force the factions to the negotiating table again. Under the terms of the Agreement, Hamas was given nine out of the 24 Cabinet positions, including the prime ministership, and Fatah was given six positions including the deputy prime ministership. Five Cabinet positions, including the crucial Finance, Foreign, and Interior Ministries, went to independent candidates, while the remaining four positions went to other minor Palestinian political parties (ICG 2007a: 18–19; Tamimi 2009: 258). Importantly for Hamas, they retained control of the portfolios that they considered essential for implementing their policy platform: the prime minister, cultural,

education, and social services, while ensuring that independents controlled other senior Cabinet positions (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 279).[10]

Like the Cairo Accord before it, the Mecca Agreement was a strategic alliance that required ideological concessions on the part of Hamas and Fatah. For Fatah, the Mecca Agreement foreshadowed the end of its hegemony over Palestinian politics. As such, the Agreement provided the framework for the de-centralisation and redistribution of power in the Palestinian political system by instituting power-sharing arrangements intended to remove Fatah's hegemony. The Agreement stressed the continuing importance of Palestinian national unity, and the need to favour dialogue over violence. It also rejected unilateralism with notions of political equality and pluralism featuring prominently. Here the Agreement stressed the principle of political partnership based on effective laws in the PNA and political pluralism (Mecca Agreement 2007).

The Agreement also reiterated the commitment made by all factions in Cairo to reinvigorate and reform the PLO with the goal of extending its membership, progressively removing Fatah's domination over this vital national asset. While Fatah faced the prospect of losing control of the PLO, if Hamas was to become a member, the latter would be subjected to the same forces of political compromise as Fatah and the PLO's other constituent members. This was expected to compel Hamas to assume responsibility for any future PLO decisions (ICG 2007b: 4–5). The proposed PLO reforms outlined in the Agreement were indicative of Hamas's intention to force Fatah to share power, meaning that the ratification of any Peace Process Agreement would not just be decided by Fatah (ICG 2007b: 4). Despite Hamas's insistence on reforming the PLO, the signing of the Agreement meant that it conceded that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, something it had stridently opposed. This was another sign of Hamas's increasing acceptance of the existing Palestinian political framework, and its willingness to work with it, rather than against it (Naser-Najjab 2014: 142).

The Mecca Agreement represented a net victory for Hamas as it more strongly reflected its bargaining positions, and highlighted the weakened political authority of Fatah after the election. For Fatah, reconciliation with Hamas meant that it had lost control over one of its valued resources – hegemony over Palestinian social and political institutions, particularly the PLC and the PLO. Concomitantly, it jeopardised its diplomatic negotiations with Israel, and the PA's continuing diplomatic and financial backing. In exchange, Fatah received shared control over Gaza, representing a partial loss of control for Hamas of its valued resource (ICG 2008: 1).

Importantly, the Agreement legitimised Hamas's electoral victory and its policy programme of reforming and rebuilding the institutional capacity of the Palestinian political system. The real strength of the Agreement appeared to be that Hamas and Fatah had finally reached a strategic consensus that the optimum way of representing the Palestinian national interest lay in achieving a political settlement based in mutual trust and respect (ICG 2007b: 4). Despite the apparent loss of political authority in the OPT, Abbas remained empowered to negotiate freely with Israel over Palestinian self-determination. The Agreement actually gave Abbas a

freer hand in his international endeavours with Hamas accepting formally that he would be the sole lead negotiator. Importantly for Fatah's ongoing reputation, any subsequent diplomatic achievement would be attributed exclusively to Abbas.

Because the Mecca Agreement amounted to a strategic alliance it necessitated some ideological concessions from Hamas. This came with the Agreement's most seminal aspect, with Hamas agreeing to respect the Arab and international legitimacy resolutions and agreements signed by the PLO (Mecca Agreement 2007). Without expressly stating as much, Hamas had agreed to 'respect' UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, the once reviled Oslo Accords, and by extension, the problematic issue of Israel's existence. While Hamas had previously proposed *hudnas* with Israel, this was the first time that they had signed any Agreement that tacitly accepted that any future Palestinian state would only consist of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. After the Agreement, Meshaal reiterated Hamas's position concerning its understanding of what any prospective peace agreement with Israel would look like: that any Palestinian state should be established along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, acknowledgement of the right of return for all Palestinian refugees, the dismantling of all West Bank settlements, and the complete withdrawal of all vestiges of Israeli rule (Tamimi 2009: 261; Caridi 2012: 248).

This truncated version of any future Palestinian state was a key ideological concession from Hamas that finally brought it in line with Fatah, and more importantly, with the views of most of the Palestinian public. Crucially, it demonstrated an apparent ideological adroitness and political pragmatism by Hamas. As discussed in Chapter 4, after the 2006 election Hamas had failed to articulate its policy response to the demands for it to recognise Israel. By adopting this position, Hamas's leadership had apparently found a political solution that artfully sidestepped the ideological black hole tied to any explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist. Hamas's leadership demonstrated a willingness and ability to push through this key ideological concession to remain an integral player in Palestinian politics. More importantly, the Agreement proved to the Palestinian public that Hamas was committed to pursuing the national interest through diplomatic means. The signing of the Agreement also meant that Hamas had met two of the three stipulations set down by Israel and the Quartet: recognising Israel and respecting all previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

Hamas had utilised its newly acquired political authority to compel Fatah to relinquish its hegemony over Palestinian politics. However, Hamas had also become more appreciative of the reality that systemic change takes time. As Barghouti (cited in Caridi 2012: 240) observed,

> [Hamas] wanted to become part of the system, of the Authority and they were especially determined to see the democratization of the PLO. Indeed, in the early stages of the negotiations, they wanted the reform of the PNA to proceed in parallel with the reform of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. As the negotiations went on, Hamas accepted that these reforms should take place gradually.

The Mecca Agreement reveals Hamas's acceptance, even an adherence to, the basic processes of compromise, power-sharing, and policy incrementalism signifying a clear shift in its political behaviour.

The signing of the Mecca Agreement was a critical juncture in Palestinian political history. Since the 2006 election, Fatah and Hamas had experienced centrifugal forces that for differing reasons had threatened to shatter not just Palestinian unity, but each faction themselves. Despite the animosity between the two factions, each had come to recognise that individually they did not possess the necessary military and political strength, or support, to undertake any meaningful or decisive unilateral action. Similarly, both recognised that their core constituents firmly believed in the utility of a pluralistic political system, and a power-sharing arrangement between the two dominant factions. The benefits to be gained from establishing the first genuine Palestinian unity government far outweighed the potential costs of unilateral action and/or continued recalcitrance.

The signing of the Agreement also meant that the two premier Palestinian factions had agreed that sharing power was the only viable option for realising a sovereign Palestine. The new government would be able to articulate Palestinian issues to the world with an apparently unified political voice, particularly concerning their right to self-determination. Both factions had made concessions in their collective desire to appease the Palestinian public. On 17 March 2007, the first Palestinian unity government, containing both Hamas and Fatah members, was officially sworn in under the prime ministership of Isma'il Haniyeh (Tamimi 2009: 261).

Interestingly, there is a distinct difference between the reaction to the Agreement in the West Bank and Gaza concerning support for CR and Fatah. As can be seen in Figure 2, in the West Bank, CR receives a boost in its support largely at the expense of Fatah. However, in Figure 1, the reverse is true in Gaza. This is perhaps reflective of Palestinians blaming the incumbent power, Fatah in the West Bank, and Hamas in Gaza for the perilous situation leading up the signing of the Agreement.

More broadly though, many Palestinians seemed to greet the Agreement with relief. In the March 2007 poll, 87.6% of respondents in the OPT were satisfied with the Hamas/Fatah reconciliation and the establishment of the new unity government. Nearly 62% believed that both sides had been asked to make concessions to reach an agreement. Importantly, 69% of respondents believed that the new government would last for at least 12 months. Furthermore, most respondents in the OPT believed that key domestic issues such as law and order, the deteriorating economic conditions, the fight against corruption, freedom of the press, and general safety and security would all improve significantly now that peace between the two factions had been established. Finally, 54.4% of respondents believed that the signing of the Agreement would result in Hamas becoming more moderate and flexible in its attitude towards Israel (PCPSR 2007: Poll No. 23).

This positivity was duplicated for international issues with 67.3% of respondents believing that international financial sanctions would decrease, and 64% believing that the international political boycott would decrease. There was also

an increased expectation that the new deal would precipitate a return to the negotiating table with Israel. Nevertheless, he contentious issue of recognising Israel remained polarising with 48.3% believing that the new government should reject the Quartet's stipulation, and 47.5% believing it should accept. However, nearly half of respondents indicated that if Israel recognised the new Palestinian government, then it should then recognise Israel (PCPSR 2007: Poll No. 23).

Mecca's aftermath – external spoiling, and 'devious objectives'

Despite the many positive aspects of the Mecca Agreement, it was essentially a repeat of the Prisoner's Document (2006) and the Cairo Accord (2005). Neither party was required to make any compromises in the one area where their mistrust emanated – the role and future of the respective armed wings, Hamas's IQB and Fatah's AMB, and their accompanying security agencies. Given the centrality monopolising the legitimate use of violence, these security forces became emblematic of Hamas and Fatah's respective political authority, and any attempt to constrain and/or degrade the power of either of these two security organs was interpreted as an attack on each faction's political authority. This gave both sides the opportunity to engage in spoiling tactics. While the politically moderate members of Fatah and Hamas were attempting to cement political unity, any residual trust between Fatah's Presidential Guard and Hamas's *Tanfithya* gained from the political settlement, rapidly dissipated.[11]

In the weeks following the signing, the factional armed wings and security agencies began to accumulate arms and ammunition, and underwent a rapid militarisation (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 278–279). The more militant members of Fatah and Hamas opposed the Mecca Agreement, believing that the agreed upon concessions were too high a price to pay. What became increasingly clear was a disconnect between the more pragmatic political leadership, who favoured continued political participation and dialogue, and more militant members who advocated a zero-sum approach to resolving the situation confronting both factions (Caridi 2012: 250–251).

Despite the EU cautiously supporting the Agreement, with France indicating its intention to cooperate, it contained just enough ambiguity for the US and Israel to claim that it was insufficient to meet their demands. Principally their opposition revolved around the semantic distinction between the absolutism of 'accept' versus the flexibility of 'respect' (Douste-Blazy 2007, cited in ICG 2007a: 22). While they stipulated that any Hamas-led government needed to 'accept' all the previous Palestinian/Israeli Agreements, the Mecca Agreement stated that the new government would only 'respect' these Agreements (Mecca Agreement 2007). The US and Israel were also concerned that the Palestinian movements had reached a deal without any input from either state. Their ability to manipulate Fatah and Hamas to ensure favourable, or at least acceptable, terms appeared to have diminished. While the US and Israel accepted the premise of a unity agreement, they attempted to retain the existing political status quo through spoiling, principally by repressing

Hamas economically and politically in the hope that they could still torpedo the Mecca Agreement or, short of that, shape its implementation (ICG 2007a: 23).

Barely three months after the installation of the unity government, rumour and counter-rumour concerning a Fatah instigated coup aimed at removing Hamas from control of Gaza gathered momentum. For years prior to the 2006 election, the US and other international actors had funded the reformation and rationalisation of the PA's numerous 'security' organisations that littered the OPT. The US even appointed a security co-ordinator to provide finances, technical support, and training to the NSF and the Presidential Guard (ICG 2010: 10).[12] After the 2006 election, the US and the GoI used Mohammed Dahlan, the PA's newly appointed national security advisor, as a conduit to buttress Fatah's security forces in Gaza, with weapons, ammunition, vehicles, supplies, and general equipment entering the strip in large quantities (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 283).[13] As the security situation in Gaza disintegrated rapidly, these US trained and funded organisations were pitted against Hamas's security organisations, contributing to Hamas's suspicion that the US and Israel were behind Fatah's alleged coup attempt.

As military tensions increased rapidly, the respective political wings attempted desperately to broker a truce aimed at de-escalating the explosive tensions.[14] However, these efforts were to no avail with at least seven truces lasting little more than hours or a day before being broken. Finally, on 9 June 2007 the IQB and AMB engaged in an unrestricted conflict that lasted for five days. The ensuing schism polarised the Palestinian political system and created competing centres of power, with the Hamas controlled PLC in Gaza, and the Fatah controlled presidency in the West Bank (Berti 2013: 118). The schism demolished Palestinian political and social cohesion, and caused the Mecca Agreement to collapse (Caridi 2012: 251–258; Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010: 278–288). The political and societal ramifications of this internecine conflict and its aftermath cannot be underestimated, with one prominent Palestinian academic describing it as the most significant decision Hamas has taken since winning the election, in terms of Hamas's future, and the future of the Palestinian political system. In his view, the use of the IQB as a militia destroyed any chance of political pluralism in the domestic political process (pers. comm. 12 July 2017).

The eruption of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah was arguably exacerbated by the spoiling of the US and Israel, and the active encouragement of Fatah. Indeed, De Soto alleges that US officials favoured the internecine Palestinian fighting throughout 2006 and 2007 'because "it means that other Palestinians are resisting Hamas"' (De Soto 2007: 21). As discussed in Chapter 4, the US and Israel refused to countenance the prospect of Hamas being a member of any Palestinian government. Senior members of the Bush administration and the GoI planned to increase the financial and material support of Fatah's numerous security agencies with the aim of overthrowing Hamas's government (Rose 2008).

The 2007 schism can also be attributed to the mutual fears held by Hamas and Fatah that their respective valued resources were at risk. For Fatah, this concerned their continued hegemony over Palestinian political and social institutions that the election result and the Mecca Agreement dissolved. For Hamas, the financial and

material buttressing of Fatah's security organisations threated its newly acquired political authority in Gaza because it could not monopolise the legitimate use of violence in the territory. The mistrust that this generated was exacerbated by the external spoiling activities of the US and Israel. These activities were aimed at buttressing Fatah, thereby re-establishing an asymmetrical power advantage that would hopefully enable Fatah to overthrow Hamas's government in Gaza.

The spoiling activities by the US and Israel insulated Fatah from the hurting stalemate it found itself in, to a point where unilateral action against Hamas was again feasible. As external spoilers, the US and Israel acknowledged that they could do little to prevent the Mecca Agreement from being signed, or influence its content and objectives. However, they rejected the Agreement's inherent legitimation of Hamas's election victory, the subsequent role that it would play in governing in the OPT, and any political contributions it could make to the Peace Process negotiations. For these reasons the US and Israel remained opposed to the Mecca Agreement and exacerbated the mistrust that already existed between Hamas and Fatah. The now perilous security situation in Gaza disintegrated to such an extent that a civil war erupted between the two premier Palestinian representative factions.

On 14 June 2007, Abbas dismissed the unity government and declared a state of emergency. This provided him with the constitutional basis upon which to establish an emergency government. On 15 June, Salam Fayyad was announced as the new PM (WikiLeaks 2007d). The political and social schism saw the evolution of a new volatile status quo with a politically emboldened Hamas governing Gaza, and a politically chastened Fatah administering the West Bank. The IQB was largely responsible for ousting Fatah in 2007 and obtained a prominent position in security provision in Gaza. Given its size and level of training, it became primarily responsible for ensuring Gaza's external security. In the post-schism environment, security assumed a pre-eminent position with Sayigh (2011a: 5) noting that 'in the absence of Palestinian national reconciliation and democratic governance, the provision of law and order has fused with the need to maintain security and the struggle to ensure political survival.'

Mitigating the Spring – Hamas and the 2011 Unity Agreement

Hamas and Fatah next attempted to reach a power-sharing agreement in 2011 just as Arab Uprisings were erupting throughout the region. One of the many unintended consequences of the Uprisings was that they emboldened citizens to question authority, and the utility of previously immutable political dogmas. The Uprisings saw Hamas's political authority challenged by Gaza's youth who were disillusioned with the political performance of Hamas and Fatah, and clamouring for democratic reform. This disillusionment culminated in rallies throughout the West Bank and Gaza on 15 March 2011 (Pace 2013: 49). These rallies occurred a little over a month after the stunning resignation of Egypt's long-time leader and regional diplomatic powerhouse, Hosni Mubarak.

The Uprisings instilled in Hamas a simultaneous sense of foreboding and encouragement, particularly concerning the implications regarding the perceived rise of political Islam, and what this might mean for Hamas and its competition with Fatah. In doing so, they exposed tensions between Hamas's internal and external leaderships in their differing assessments of the short and long-term threats of the Uprisings. For the internal leadership, the greatest threat was having to make too many concessions to Fatah because of the public pressure for change. Suppressed in the West Bank, subjected to Israel's debilitating siege, ideologically challenged by Salafi-Jihadists in Gaza, and experiencing increased levels of public frustration and dissention, the internal leadership's overriding reaction was to reaffirm the cogency of Hamas's narrative of national liberation based on active resistance. For the internal leadership, the geopolitical and social fluidity caused by the Uprisings called for Hamas to adopt a 'wait-and-see' approach without exposing the movement to the fluctuating fortunes of revolutionary zeal. This tactic became germane when it appeared that regionally, the revolutionary winds of change would be to Hamas's benefit, and conversely to Fatah's detriment. Gaza's leadership reasoned that before any definitive reconciliation with Fatah was attempted, Hamas should wait to see how much these external events weakened Fatah's regional political support (ICG 2012: 26–27).

Conversely, for the external leadership, the greatest threat appeared to arise from continued political and social lethargy. Their concern came not from Hamas doing too much, but from it doing too little. In Egypt and Syria, they were witnessing first-hand the devastating effects of continued political intransigence and ideological dogmatism on the part of embattled regimes. For them the power of civil society unleashed by the Arab Uprisings meant that Hamas must react decisively. Any potential reconciliation with Fatah would demonstrate the progressive democratisation of Palestinian politics, emphasising political plurality and a commitment to the electoral process. From the external leadership's standpoint, these actions made strategic sense. Not only would they placate the Palestinian public, thereby avoiding the often-existential problems faced by other Arab regimes, but demonstrate to the international community that Hamas was a part of this apparent new wave of democratisation (ICG 2012: 28). Given the internal challenges to its authority and the damaging effects of Israel's siege, Hamas's external leadership wanted to avoid the movement becoming another casualty of the Uprisings (Caridi 2012: 315).

The geopolitical fluidity also prompted Hamas's leadership to conduct an internal review, not only on how best they could respond to what was happening in the region, but also on whether there needed to be some form of organisational restructure. Among the contentious issues debated were, under what conditions could, or should Hamas accept a Palestinian state in the OPT, how to co-exist with Israel, and under what circumstances? Should a new political party be created with greater autonomy and political distance from the movement? Should Hamas seek a majority in any future PLC elections, or a strong minority? How best to utilise its DRS, and under what circumstances could armed resistance be used to further the movement's overall objectives? And finally, should Hamas put forward a

candidate in any future presidential election? (ICG 2012: 15–16). The principal difficulty for the leadership was how to address these important questions within the restrictions of the problematic reconciliation efforts with Fatah, given that some of them touched upon some key ideological tenets and internal rivalries.

A poll conducted in the aftermath of the March rallies revealed the growing pressure on Hamas within the context of the revolutionary fervour of the Uprisings. As discussed in Chapter 5, there was a growing sense of authoritarianism about Hamas's rule in Gaza, and 54.7% of respondents believed that Hamas did not respect freedoms and imposed press censorship. Furthermore, 41.7% of respondents believed that Hamas did not respect the rule of law. Additionally, 52.3% of respondents indicated that they supported the need for similar Uprising-styled demonstrations in Gaza to change the regime, with 50.2% indicating a willingness to participate should they occur. The poll also revealed that many Palestinians did not believe that either Hamas or Fatah would take the initiative and agree to a unity government on the other faction's terms. Such was the level of exasperation felt by the public that 43% felt that the only way to end the debilitating schism was for both governments to fall (PCPSR 2011: Poll No. 39).

Hamas and Fatah were once again experiencing the centripetal forces of an intractable stalemate exacerbated by regional uncertainty, domestic challenges, and internal pressures. To relieve these pressures, Hamas made overtures to Fatah concerning the resumption of reconciliation talks immediately after the March rallies. That both factions agreed quickly to negotiate is evidence that they recognised the potential danger of stalling, or of doing nothing to achieve even a modicum of reconciliation within the current political environment (Caridi 2012: 315–316).[15]

On 4 May 2011, just six weeks after the rallies, Fatah and Hamas announced that they had signed a Unity Agreement designed to resuscitate Palestinian politics. With the balance of power between the two movements evenly poised, the Agreement contained no real surprises, with both groups simply tweaking the previously agreed upon tenets of the Cairo and Mecca Agreements. Under the terms of this version, Hamas and Fatah agreed to conduct presidential, PLC, and PNC elections by April 2012, to form an Electoral Court, an Electoral Commission, a Higher Security Committee, and to reactivate the PLC (Anon 2011: 212–214). The one notable agreed upon concession was that the interim government would be composed of independents and technocrats chosen by consensus, and not direct representatives from either faction. This would hopefully emphasise the government's non-political character, and generate some political distance between it and the movements. Both sides agreed that one of the government's most important functions was to oversee and facilitate the elections that were due to take place in a year. Overall, the Agreement was designed to establish an interim government mutually acceptable to both movements that could deal with the multitude of pressing domestic issues until fresh elections resolved the political impasse. Importantly, the advent of a technocratic government was meant to engender sufficient trust between Hamas and Fatah so that free and fair elections could be conducted (ICG 2011: 8).

Hamas hoped that the interim government would ameliorate many of its most urgent issues. First, there was the increased prospect that it would be able to make significant progress towards rebuilding Gazan infrastructure destroyed during the 2008 war (UNSCO 2012: 10–12). Second, any new government could potentially relieve Hamas of the crippling financial burden of being solely responsible for all government operations in Gaza, estimated to cost it around USD 540 million a year. Third, there was the prospect that détente with Fatah would enable Hamas to resuscitate its West Bank operations and leadership. Finally, the Agreement promised to reconstitute the PLC, an institution where Hamas held a parliamentary majority, enabling it to demonstrate its democratic credentials. Just as importantly was the prospect that, given the government's 'non-political' character, the international community might work with it, thereby conferring de facto legitimacy upon Hamas and its position in Palestinian politics (ICG 2011: 5–6).

Like the Mecca Agreement, the 2011 Agreement also promised to provide a framework within which Hamas could be integrated successfully into the PLO, making the latter truly representative of all Palestinians factions. A reconstituted PLO would also ensure the subordination of the Fatah controlled PA, reinforcing the former's position as the sole legitimate Palestinian representative body. A freshly elected PNC, in concert with a rejuvenated Executive Committee, would potentially resuscitate the dormant PLO as an active institution in Palestinian politics, especially vis-à-vis the Peace Process (ICG 2011: 9).

Unlike the 2007 Mecca Agreement the effect on the overall support of Fatah, Hamas, and CR was more measured. As Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate, the boosts in overall support for the factions was in line with current trends. However, other polling results provide greater insight into the levels of approval and relief felt by Palestinians at the veneer of collegiality between Hamas and Fatah, and the prospect of fresh elections. In the June 2011 poll, 58.6% of respondents believed that the two factions would succeed in implementing the Agreement and unifying the two territories (PCPSR 2011: Poll No's. 39 and 40). When asked what the main reason for the movements reaching an agreement, 29% indicated the fall of the Mubarak regime, with 27.4% indicating the March 2011 youth protests. Additionally, 48.9% believed that both sides benefited from the signing of the Agreement. The poll also contained mixed messages for both factions, particularly Hamas. Despite their generally favourable impression of the Agreement, respondents appeared aware of its geopolitical realities, with 54.9% believing that international sanctions were likely to return because of the Agreement. Consequently, 60.9% believed that the new government should retain the policies of the PLO concerning the Peace Process, rather than those of Hamas (PCPSR 2011 Poll No. 40).

As with the Mecca Agreement, this latest deal postponed any definitive resolution of any of the core issues of dispute between Hamas and Fatah. Both sides appeared to view elections as the panacea for Palestinian political ills. Specifically, the Agreement did not address the core reason for the continuing mistrust: the fate of the respective security forces. On this highly contentious issue, the Agreement was predictably neutral with the matter effectively placed into abeyance until after the elections. According to the Agreement, the two factions would select members

to form a Higher Security Committee with the eventual goal of forming a unified security organisation. Essentially, the Agreement reaffirmed the current status quo, with both sides eager to placate members, supporters, and benefactors that nothing would change in the near term (ICG 2011: 9–10).

Despite the veneer of collegiality, Fatah still faced the problem that a reconciliation agreement with Hamas, irrespective of any perceived advantages domestically, would be greeted with scepticism and hostility by the US and Israel. Hamas remained a designated terrorist group, and the Agreement failed to address whether the interim government would accept the Quartet's stipulations. While the Obama Administration did not oppose the agreement outright, they continued their spoiling by placing several conditions upon it. First, that Salem Fayyad remained as PM.[16] Second, that the interim government should adopt only Abbas's political programme. Third, that there be no changes to the security arrangements in the West Bank, and finally that Hamas should not play any role in the PLO until it altered its positions on Israel (ICG 2011: 19–20).

Israel too resumed its role as an external spoiler. As soon as the Agreement was announced, the GoI suspended the transfer of the tax revenue it collected on behalf of the PA. Additionally, PM Netanyahu reiterated that Israel expected any Palestinian government to accept all the Quartet's stipulations, and linked any resumption of Peace Process negotiations to Hamas's acceptance of those stipulations, or Abbas's dissolution of the Agreement (ICG 2011: 22–23).

While Abbas complied with the US's stipulations and nominated Fayyad as the interim government's PM, this provoked a backlash from Hamas because it placed Hamas's valuable resource, continued political authority in Gaza, at risk. Hamas did not view Fayyad as anywhere near a neutral candidate given his current stature and position in the West Bank PA. Hamas was concerned that as Fayyad's reputation was recognised domestically and internationally, he would be in a powerful position to dictate unilaterally how Gaza was governed. Since 2009, Fayyad had adopted a 'West Bank First' policy, and Hamas's leadership were alarmed at the prospect that Gaza, and by extension Hamas, could be subordinated to West Bank control and authority. Hamas viewed Fatah's actions as unjust, and believed they smacked of an attempt to dictate unfavourable terms that did not reflect political reality in the OPT accurately. Hamas was also of the opinion that because they had the majority in the PLC, their candidate should assume the prime ministership (Caridi 2012: 291–292). For some in Hamas's leadership, the acceptance of a Fayyad prime ministership would legitimise the West Bank PA and the circumstances of its existence, concomitantly de-legitimising Hamas's 2006 electoral victory. While Hamas remained trenchant in their opposition to Fayyad, they were willing to accept any alternative candidates Abbas might propose, but he remained insistent (ICG 2011: 11–12).

The levels of mistrust between Hamas and Fatah were inflamed further by widely differing interpretations as to the actual role of the reconstituted PLC. While the Agreement was clear on some of its stipulations concerning the function of the new government, it was vague in others. On the one hand, it clearly specified that the interim government was responsible for preparing for elections, dealing

with Gaza's reconstruction, and efforts to end the siege. On the other hand, it specified that the government was charged with supervising and addressing the prevalent issues regarding the internal Palestinian reconciliation, and the continuation of the implementation of the provisions of the Palestinian National Accord (see European Parliament 2011).

In keeping with US stipulations, Abbas insisted that because he, as president, would formerly appoint the various ministers, then the government should follow his political programme that included recognition of the Quartet's stipulations. Again, this had the potential to affect Hamas's political authority in Gaza. Consequently, Hamas insisted that the interim government was meant to be one of national consensus, and was definitely not Abbas's government. Hamas argued that any political programme should be the product of negotiation, not unilateral dictate. While Fatah officials stressed that Abbas's position was open to negotiation, such a provocative starting point did not bode well for the future success of the Agreement (ICG 2011: 15–16). The extent of external spoiling by the US and Israel, accompanied by Fatah's acquiescence, meant that the efforts to implement the Agreement quickly stalled. Both sides remaining entrenched firmly in their geographic zones of control, unwilling to accord the other too much power and influence.

Ultimately, the centrifugal forces of external spoiling proved more powerful than the centripetal forces of reconciliation. Consequently, the Agreement served primarily as a convenient mechanism for relieving the increased domestic pressure on both factions, rather than as a vehicle for resuscitating their reconciliation. It provided Hamas and Fatah with more time to assess and react to the constantly evolving regional geopolitical situation while placating Palestinians with the promise of elections, and promoting the Agreement as them listening to the Palestinian voices for change (Johannsen et al. 2011: 3). The two factions' continued intransigence and mistrust meant the Agreement was overtaken by subsequent events, principally Abbas's 2011 UN bid and the release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. With neither side able to gain significant political advantage, the proposed elections simply disappeared from the discourse, with nether side willing to risk their valued resources and outcomes.

Fighting to survive – Hamas and the 2014 Agreement

In the intervening three years, the domestic political situation confronting both movements had worsened, particularly for Hamas. As 2013 ended, Hamas was confronted with the rise of a series of protests from the newly formed Palestinian Tamarod movement. This was a replica of the Egyptian youth movement that contributed to the mass demonstrations leading to the military coup against Morsi. In a similar vein to the Egyptian chapter, the Palestinian Tamarod argued that because both the Hamas and Fatah governments did not possess any genuine legitimacy, the only way of restoring Palestinian political and social cohesion was to facilitate their overthrow (Ayyoub 2013; al-Ghoul 2013a).

Compounding the challenge of rising internal dissent, Hamas struggled with its constant inability to ameliorate the siege, the regional aftershocks of the Morsi

coup, and its dissolving relationship with Iran (Ibish 2014: 31–33). Hamas was already under significant pressure following the ousting of Morsi's government in July 2013. The new Egyptian regime, led by ex-defence minister and chief of the SCAF, Lieut. Gen. Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, was hostile towards Hamas. The enormous diplomatic and economic pressures exerted upon Hamas after Morsi's overthrow contributed to it backsliding towards authoritarianism. Shocked by Morsi's fate, and the public's apparent fickleness, Hamas arrested and interrogated anyone they suspected of belonging to Tamarod (al-Ghoul 2013b).

Since the coup, Egypt's military regime had classified Hamas as a terrorist group, destroyed many of the Rafah smuggling tunnels that Hamas needed to generate revenue, and banned all activities by Hamas in Egypt. This was part of a broader plan to rid Egypt of the influence of the MB and its affiliates (Haaretz 2014). Simultaneously, unemployment among Gazans aged between 20 and 24 now ran at an estimated 57.9%, and for those aged 25 to 29, at 44.2% (UNSCO 2014: 4). With little financial support forthcoming from potential benefactors Turkey and Qatar, and Iran yet to resume its previous level of financial benevolence, projected budgetary shortfalls of USD 699 million cast an ominous shadow over Hamas and its ability to continue to govern effectively (Abu-Amer 2014a; Abu-Amer 2014c). Consequently, the government was desperate to generate any form of additional revenue to replenish its coffers. Accordingly, Hamas officials indicated that the government was likely to approve more public service redundancies, while imposing fresh taxes on public and private institutions (Shaban 2014).

In the face of an approaching economic abyss, media reports surfaced that Hamas was considering a fundamental government restructure, with the movement withdrawing altogether from active political participation, replacing its members with businessmen, experts, and independents that did not have any affiliation with CR or Hamas (Abu-Amer 2014a). According to a Hamas official, the withdrawal option was being considered because of the fear that the enormous economic and political pressures being placed upon Hamas were adversely affecting its popularity, which some in the movement believed was in sharp decline. The hope being that the increased political distance between the movement and Gaza's government would restore a measure of Hamas's legitimacy among the Palestinian public. The report highlighted that despite its best efforts, Hamas had been affected adversely by having to govern under severe financial strain, while simultaneously confronting Israel (Abu-Amer 2014a).

However, there were some within Hamas who opposed this apparent political surrender, believing that its goals had been achieved. In support of this, Haniyeh's political advisor, Yousef Rizqa (2014, cited in Abu-Amer 2014a), stated:

> it can be said that there is no Palestinian policy without Hamas, despite the political embargo. Hamas's experience in power has produced a lot of positives for the national project, which has advanced because Hamas chose to participate in power and compete with Fatah by providing an alternative model and by promoting democracy.

Fatah was experiencing internal pressures of its own, with Abbas's leadership experiencing its first serious internal challenge. In late October 2013, media reports surfaced claiming that ostracised leader Mohammed Dahlan was considering a return to the OPT (Kuttab 2013). The key factor behind the potential challenge was that, reminiscent of Arafat, Abbas had for years failed to nominate a deputy or establish a clear succession plan. Dahlan's return was viewed as a precursor to a potential presidential run, given that Abbas had claimed that he would not contest the next presidential election (Abu-Amer 2013; al-Ghoul 2014). This political uncertainty exposed barely repressed internal rivalries, threatening to destabilise, or even fracture Fatah (Abu-Amer 2014b).

This sense of dissatisfaction with the incumbent faction is reflected in Figures 1 and 2. In the West Bank, Fatah's popularity was waning noticeably from its height at the beginning of the year. This was perhaps indicative of the hope surrounding the latest round of Peace Process negotiations, followed by the inevitable disappointment. Once again, the reverse was true in Gaza. The prospects of an agreement with Israel saw a slight increase in popularity for both CR and Hamas. When the agreement failed to materialise their support dipped, and that of Fatah's increased as political situation regained a sense of normality.

However, in the March 2014 poll, there also appeared to be a growing sense of frustration among Palestinians over the inability of Hamas and Fatah to resolve their differences, and with how this failure was detracting from the OPT's governance. Indeed, 40.8% of respondents believed that the bifurcated PA had become a burden to Palestinians, with 30.8% believing that neither government could be considered legitimate. On the question of potential unity, 42.4% of respondents believed that it was still possible, though it would take a long time. Additionally, 45.6% believed that economic conditions would deteriorate over the next three to five years. Finally, serious law and order issues were being canvassed, with respondents noting an increase in honour killings and drug use throughout the OPT (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 51).

With the conflict between Hamas and Fatah remaining intractable, and with neither faction able to resolve their problems, nor gain a unilateral victory, they again sought sanctuary in negotiation. On 23 April 2014, it was announced that Hamas and Fatah had reached another Agreement to form a unity government (Khoury & David 2014). The dire economic circumstances confronting Hamas forced it into making several key concessions, particularly concerning their valued resource of continued political authority in Gaza. The Agreement reflected the growing power asymmetry between Hamas and Fatah caused by the continuing effects of Israel's siege. Hamas agreed to withdraw unilaterally from the new government, leaving behind several technocrats to fill its positions until elections in late 2014 (al-Monitor 2014). Additionally, Hamas agreed to join the PLO with Fatah still retaining its hegemony (Kuttab 2014). As the new unity government accepted all three of the Quartet's 2006 stipulations, Hamas had in effect also accepted the preconditions, the most contentious of which being the formal recognition of Israel, an issue that the leadership attempted desperately to clarify to avoid internal turmoil.[17]

It is a measure of the scale of the economic dilemma confronting Hamas, and the impact this was having on their political authority in Gaza that they acquiesced to entering into an Agreement with such contentious ideological and political implications. Fatah's only real concession was that they agreed to forestall any decision on the future of the IQB, with Hamas providing a guarantee that the IQB would not engage in any violence against Fatah akin to 2007 (Eldar 2014a). While virtually all other governmental functions, including the Prime Ministership, were ceded to the Ramallah PA, this vital concession enabled Hamas to retain security control of Gaza, thereby allowing it to preserve a semblance of political authority (Ibish 2014: 34; Abu-Amer 2014d). Notwithstanding these concessions, Hamas's leadership attempted to depict the events in a positive light, with the deputy chairman of Hamas's Political Bureau, Mousa Abu Marzouk, stating that 'instead of there being a victor and vanquished, achieving half a victory is much better than suffering a total defeat' (Abu-Amer 2014e).

Nonetheless, the Agreement did not signal the complete capitulation of Hamas's political aspirations. Both sides agreed that PLC, PNC, and presidential elections would be scheduled within at least six months, and Hamas's leadership did not shy away from considering participating in all three (al-Monitor 2014). Indeed, Abu Marzouk (2014, cited in Abu-Amer 2014e), noted that 'Hamas is seriously studying this issue [participating in the presidential elections], and our previous experience through legislative elections and governmental positions has proven that popular legitimacy is an important factor.'

Once again, Palestinians responded positively to the reconciliation announcement, with the June 2014 poll revealing that 60.6% of respondents were confident that the new government would meet their expectations, and 53% believing that economic conditions would improve. Noting the concessions made by both sides, 44.9% of respondents believed those made by Hamas were adequate, while 42.4% believed those made by Fatah were adequate. Concerning the holding of elections, 58.6% of respondents believed that they would be held at the time stipulated in the Agreement, that is, within at least six months. Instructively, over 70% of respondents believed that Hamas should participate in presidential, as well as PLC and Local Council elections (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 52).

Despite the immiserating siege, and continued external efforts to excise Hamas from Palestinian politics, the poll results indicate clearly that the Palestinian polity wanted Hamas to remain a viable and active participant in Palestinian politics. There was a continued understanding by Palestinians of the necessity for both sides to make concessions to reconcile. Similarly, the public appeared to accept that any future elections would be the vehicle through which to resolve the continuing factional impasse.

For Abbas, it was not just the signing of the Agreement, but the actual formation of a functioning government free from any direct involvement of Hamas that provided the most important political victory. The Agreement meant that Fatah had all but regained its valued resource, continued hegemony over Palestinian political and social institutions. Bolstered by the Quartet and Israel, Fatah and Abbas had managed to survive to a point where they had regained superiority over a

politically weakened Hamas. The new unity government was sworn in officially on 2 June 2014, after weeks of often intense negotiations (Khoury, Haas & News Agencies 2014). As Figure 2 demonstrates, Fatah's support in the West Bank was declining. Perhaps Abbas was keen to use the clear political success of the Agreement to buttress support for Fatah as the political situation returned to its pre-2006 election dynamic of a Fatah-dominated PA.

Despite a sense of self-satisfaction from Fatah at its political victory, the new government clearly faced several pressing problems, namely an electoral legitimacy deficit, a deteriorating economic situation, and the continued failure to reach any agreement with Israel over Palestinian statehood (Haas 2014). However, Abbas could rightfully claim that Palestinians had met yet another of the Quartet's conditions by achieving a government devoid of any vestiges of Hamas. If this government could succeed, then it would provide a solid footing for Abbas's own state-building efforts. More importantly, an effective government could stand Fatah in good stead with the Palestinian public, potentially creating a political and personal legacy, thereby re-establishing Fatah's political and social hegemony over Palestinian politics.

Post 2014 reconciliation – dealing with hubris and external spoiling

Despite the general optimism surrounding the formation of a unity government, and Fatah's sense of victory over Hamas, again the underlying causes of mistrust remained unresolved. The new government was unity in name only. While the Agreement acknowledged the parameters of the Cairo Accord, it was only a 'reference' for implementing the current agreement (al-Monitor 2014). Under the terms of the 2014 Agreement, Abbas controlled the entire process without having to seek, or require, any formal input from Hamas. This allowed Abbas to decide unilaterally the manner and extent of the redistribution and de-centralisation of power. Abbas was aware of Gaza's dire economic situation, and he used this to place additional pressure on Hamas. He reportedly informed Hamas that until the new government could gain unfettered access to the territory and begin a transition to PA control, then it would not pay the wages of any Hamas officials, meaning that Hamas would remain financially responsible for governing the territory for the foreseeable future (Isaacharoff 2014a).

However, Fatah still faced the ongoing problem of external spoiling from Israel. As discussed in Chapter 6, the GoI remained opposed vehemently to any form of Palestinian reconciliation, and viewed the continued presence of Hamas, irrespective of the extent of its involvement in Palestinian politics, as a constant threat to its safety and security. As Chapter 6 noted, one of the many reasons that the GoI launched Operation Protective Edge was to extinguish any semblance of Palestinian political unity established by the Agreement.

An unintended consequence of the 2014 war was that Hamas's resistance tilted the balance of power back towards Hamas. Increased support after the war for Hamas was chiefly the result of the war's asymmetry, and the losses inflicted upon Palestinian civilians, political institutions, and social infrastructure by the IDF.

With the 2014 Agreement forcing Hamas to the side-lines of Palestinian politics, and with Fatah's political advantage reduced by the war, Hamas engaged in its own spoiling to redress the political imbalances inherent in the Agreement. It began by obstructing members of the new government from entering Gaza to assess damage caused by the 2014 war. According to media reports, in the war's aftermath Abbas had appointed five district governors for Gaza. However, Hamas prevented them from entering the territory (AP & Isaacharoff 2014). Abbas accused Hamas of establishing a 'shadow government' that was allegedly not only preventing the new government from governing, but crucially preventing them from collating and distributing aid, and reconstruction materials (Abu-Amer 2014f).

As with the aftermath of the 2008 war, control of reconstruction efforts was a key point of contention in each faction's struggle for legitimacy. Hamas wanted to transmute its popularity fillip gained from the war to provide a legitimacy bulwark against Fatah's unilateralism, and ensure that after the war they could regain a degree of political authority in Gaza. For Fatah, controlling Gaza's reconstruction efforts meant stymying Hamas's legitimacy fillip caused by the 2014 war, hoping that they could restore their legitimacy advantage through demonstrating benevolence and bureaucratic acumen.

To counter Fatah's unilateralism, Hamas continued their spoiling by proposing that a national committee consisting of all factions in Gaza be set up immediately to oversee reconstruction efforts and the distribution of aid (Abu-Amer 2014f). This proposal mirrored calls from Palestinians appealing for a national unity government made up of leaders and politicians from all the major political factions. Hamas attempted to exploit the authority gained from their recent resistance efforts to compel Fatah to relinquish its hegemonic grip, reversing the tenets of the 2014 Agreement. Hamas propagated a narrative that the new government should be a government of national consensus, not simply made up of Fatah representatives and other technocrats. In the September 2014 poll, 57.3% of respondents favoured the establishment of a national consensus government, with only 34.8% supporting the current arrangement. In fact, only five months after its establishment, 54.3% of respondents were dissatisfied with the new government's performance, with the majority, 35.8%, declaring that the PA and Abbas were responsible for this situation (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 53).

Fatah's frustration, combined with Hamas's intransigence, increased tensions between the two factions significantly with Abbas threatening to dissolve the unity government unless Hamas relented, and allowed it to function properly in Gaza. While in Cairo, Abbas (2014, cited in Isaacharoff 2014b) stated, 'If there is not one government, one authority empowered to carry arms, and one rule of law in the West Bank and Gaza, there'll be no partnership or discussion with Hamas.' So great was the factions' enmity and mistrust that a Fatah source based in Gaza noted, 'What reconciliation? It's all over, soon it will all blow up. The distrust between the two sides is so great that no reconciliation can happen. It's forbidden to talk to us and meet with us' (Eldar 2014b). Then on 10 September 2014, PM Hamdallah announced that the elections promised as part of the unity agreement, and due to take place by the end of the year, had been postponed. While Hamdallah

claimed that the consensus government was concentrating its reconstruction efforts, it is also clear that Fatah's electoral fortunes had waned significantly since the April signing (Winer 2014).

Hamdallah's decision was reflected in the opinion polls, with Figures 1 and 2 clearly illustrating Fatah's loss of support in the West Bank and Gaza compared to CR's gain. Furthermore, the September poll reveals that 58.1% of respondents were dissatisfied with Abbas's performance as president, with Haniyeh holding a commanding lead as preferred president, 54.6% to Abbas's 38.1%. Palestinians also overwhelmingly favoured Hamas's strategy of armed resistance, with 79.5% of respondents supporting the continuation of rocket launches until Israel agreed to lift the siege, and 57.1% agreeing that launching rockets from civilian areas was justified (PCPSR 2014: Poll No. 53).

Despite Hamas's continued popularity, the effects of governing unilaterally in such an unfavourable political environment were clearly taking a toll. In a telling admission, a Hamas official stated,

> [Hamas] is not enthusiastic about ruling again, as long as it is possible to discuss consensual alternatives with other forces. Ruling Gaza once again is not on Hamas' discussion agenda, at least for the moment. I hope that Hamas won't feel obliged to take in the poison again by forcibly returning to ruling Gaza. The consensus government and President Abbas will personally have to bear the consequences of this alternative, should it happen, as Hamas does not want it. Abbas is watching Gaza's people suffer, as though they were citizens of a neighbouring country, not his own.
>
> (Abu-Amer 2014g)

Conclusion

In the IM literature, the ability of political actors to cooperate, build alliances, and/or share power with ideological rivals are key indicators of shifts towards politically moderate behaviour. What the analysis in this chapter demonstrates is that Hamas and Fatah are subject to oscillating centripetal and centrifugal forces that influence their ability to reach any agreement to share power. If an agreement could endure, it would enable Palestinians to have a unified government to administer the OPT, and to have a cohesive political voice advocating for self-determination. However, there is a clear limit as to the extent that Hamas is willing to risk its hard-won political gains by entering into power-sharing agreements with Fatah. While Hamas and Fatah did enter into agreements in 2007, 2011, and 2014, they did so because of the centripetal forces concerning the demands for political unity and social cohesion. Unfortunately, Hamas and Fatah are also susceptible to centrifugal forces associated with mistrust, which seek to prevent the creation and permanence of any such agreement.

The core of this dilemma for Hamas and Fatah is that any power-sharing agreement symbolises more than just the establishment of a unity government. Any agreement would amount to an ideological reconciliation between Hamas and

Fatah that would legitimise the 2006 election result, regulate and formalise the limited transfer of institutional power from Fatah to Hamas, and recognise Hamas's right to participate in governing the OPT. It would therefore place the respective valued resources of both movements at the potential risk of each other's malfeasance, mistakes, or failures. In the end, neither group was willing to accept genuinely the intrinsic risks associated with an Agreement that would see political power in the OPT shared.

Ultimately, the 2007 schism marked the end of the brief era of political cooperation between Hamas and Fatah that had begun with the deaths of Yassin and Arafat in 2004. The schism meant that neither faction trusted each other to act in good faith concerning negotiations to share power in Palestinian politics. The 2011 and 2014 Agreements were predominantly reflections of the respective political situations of Hamas and Fatah, with neither side really committed to sharing power or reconciling. For Hamas they were not willing to put at risk the role of the IQB in security provision in Gaza. For Fatah they were not willing to accept the loss of their political hegemony in the OPT. These Agreements were more tactical agreements intended to mitigate the intensifying domestic pressures experienced by both sides, and to attempt to capitalise on any perceived weaknesses of the other.

The role of external actors, such as Israel and the US, also cannot be ignored. From the previous analysis, it appears that they could not accept the risk of Hamas and Fatah coming to a mutually acceptable agreement. Such an agreement would run contrary to their own political priorities associated with Israeli state-building efforts, and with maintaining the status quo concerning the Peace Process. The GoI understands having a unified political voice is a key precursor to attaining international legitimacy. Israel could not risk Palestinians presenting such a unified political voice to the international community, and advocating for a sovereign Palestine. The spoiling by Israel and the US was intended to prevent any reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah by aggravating existing levels of mistrust between these two ideological rivals. The financial and political buttressing of Fatah by the US and Israel insulated it from the hurting stalemate following its election defeat and loss of institutional power. Consequently, after each Agreement Hamas and Fatah gradually reverted to their traditional zero-sum status quo that marked the first 17 years of their relationship. With their ideological competition becoming more intractable than ever, there seems little hope for any genuine reconciliation, and the desperately needed social and political cohesion that would result.

Notes

1 Genuine factional competition in the OPT only exists between Hamas and Fatah, with these movements garnering the overwhelming majority of public support. For example, in the December 2016 PCPSR poll, Fatah's support was 29.2%, and Hamas's was 21.3%. The next best was the Independent Nationalists at 4.1%. See PCPSR (2016: Poll No. 62).

2 In October 2017, Hamas and Fatah signed another reconciliation agreement after extensive mediation by Egypt. See al-Jazeera (2017). Whether this reconciliation amounts to anything substantive remains to be seen.

3 Gunning (2009: 182–184) argues that another underlying reason for the Hamas/Fatah inter-factional violence is an overlap of clan and political affiliation giving clan vendettas a political hue and making the inter-factional violence more intractable.
4 Zartman (2000: 228) notes that a mutually hurting stalemate is associated with an impending, past, or recently avoided catastrophe.
5 In January 2007, Meshaal gave an interview to Reuters in which he accepted the two-state solution with a Palestinian state along the Green Line borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Though he declined to recognise Israel, it still amounted to a de facto acceptance of Israel's existence. See Reuters (2007).
6 In early April 2006, the IDF launched a series of artillery and missile strikes into Gaza in response to an estimated 45 Qassam rocket launches from Gaza. According to intelligence reports, members affiliated with Fatah's AMB were responsible for most of these launches. See WikiLeaks (2006a).
7 For example, on 8 April 2006, members of Fatah's PSO, controlled by Dahlan, refused to allow Haniyeh's convoy to pass by the PSO headquarters in Gaza after Haniyeh had met with Abbas. Rather than risk an escalation, Haniyeh ordered his convoy to take an alternative route. Then on 9 April 2006, PSO members refused to allow the bodyguards of Hamas's interior minister, Said Siam, to enter their headquarters in Gaza, claiming that they were armed civilians and not affiliated with any security apparatus. Siam relented and entered the headquarters unaccompanied. PSO members were also allegedly responsible for attacking and occupying a PLC building in Gaza to embarrass Hamas and cast doubt on its ability to improve the general security in Gaza. See WikiLeaks (2006b, 2006c).
8 On 17 May 2006, Siam deployed the recently formed SSF in Gaza after PSO militants killed one senior Hamas military leader and seriously wounded another in separate incidents. See WikiLeaks (2006e). In response, Abbas ordered units from the civil police, NSF, and Presidential Guard to deploy throughout Gaza. Diplomatic cables note that while neither side wanted an armed confrontation, they were not willing to back down. See WikiLeaks (2006f).
9 While Abbas fully endorsed the PD and called for its adoption as part of the National Dialogue, Hamas was far more circumspect. Primarily, this was because the leadership had not debated and approved the contents. Hamas remained cautious that the PD might commit it to recognising Israel. See WikiLeaks (2006d).
10 After lengthy negotiations between Hamas and Fatah the final make-up of the unity Cabinet was Fatah: deputy PM and four ministries; Fatah-supported independents: three ministries; Hamas: PM, eight ministries and one Minister of State; Hamas-supported independents: two ministries; Third Way Party: Finance Ministry; Independent Palestine Party: Tourism Ministry; DFLP: Social Affairs Ministry; and PPP: Ministry of Culture. See WikiLeaks (2007a).
11 In his report, De Soto noted that there was some apparent confusion among Arab states as to exactly what the Mecca negotiations were meant to achieve: an end to the violence or the achievement of a unity government. See De Soto (2007: 22).
12 In October 2006 USSC Lt. Gen. Dayton discussed with ISA Director Diskin the prospect of deploying the US-trained and Jordan-based Palestinian Badr Brigade to northern Gaza to assist Fatah in its confrontation with Hamas. While Diskin had no objections, he doubted their military effectiveness. See WikiLeaks (2006g).
13 Hamas reviles Dahlan because of his previous position as the head of the PA's security forces in Gaza prior to the 2006 election. Hamas accused Dahlan of regularly collaborating with both the US and the GoI. See Caridi (2012: 147) and Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010: 223–224).
14 On 14 May 2007, Interior Minister Hani al-Qawasmi resigned in response to the escalating violence between Hamas and Fatah militias. Al-Qawasmi described the security situation in Gaza as 'explosive' and 'insane' and decried a lack of institutional support to deal with the situation. Haniyeh subsequently announced that he would assume the

duties of Interior Minister until a replacement was announced. See WikiLeaks (2007b). Diplomatic cables also noted that between 12–16 May 2007, 43 Palestinians were killed and 110 wounded in clashes between Hamas and Fatah. See WikiLeaks (2007c).

15 In a June 2011 poll, 27.4% of respondents nominated the demonstrations as the primary reason why Fatah and Hamas reached an agreement. See PCPSR (2011: Poll No. 40).

16 Fayyad was a Palestinian with US citizenship and a professional banker who Abbas had appointed as caretaker PM in 2007 immediately after the schism. He was charged with restoring security, reviving the economy and rebuilding institutions in the West Bank. See Rubin and Colp Rubin (2003: 269) and ICG (2007b: 1).

17 This interpretation of the Agreement is contested, with Abu Mazouk, deputy chairman of Hamas's Political Bureau, stating that recognition was 'a red line that cannot be crossed' and that 'Abbas alone is responsible for his words.' See Abu-Amer (2014e).

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8 The impermanence of regional alliances

Introduction

While the previous chapter analysed Hamas's efforts to share power with Fatah, this chapter examines Hamas's efforts to forge regional alliances. As discussed in previous chapters, Israel's siege, coupled with an inability to reconcile with Fatah, had stymied Hamas's efforts to have its domestic sovereignty in Gaza legitimised. Seeking to alleviate this problem, Hamas turned to its Arab neighbours for assistance. Unfortunately, this propelled Hamas into the regional geopolitical milieu, exposing it to diplomatic forces it had not previously experienced.

Palestinians have always understood that with scant political resources available to them, they need diplomatic and financial support from neighbouring Arab states to assist in their resistance to Israeli occupation. Often this has meant that the 'Palestinian Question' has become the cause célèbre for many of these Arab regimes, and the issue of whether support is given or denied, and any conditionalities that are attached, has shaped intra-regional power dynamics. Consequently, while Hamas initially viewed the Arab Uprisings positively, it quickly found itself hostage to the oscillating fortunes of Egypt and Syria while simultaneously being drawn into the geopolitical machinations of Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. Given the commensurate need to bargain, compromise, and seek incremental policy gains, Hamas's diplomatic efforts also need to be viewed as key determinants in evaluating shifts in Hamas's political behaviour towards adopting a more moderate political stance.

The chapter begins by providing an analytical framework within which to explain Hamas's evolving diplomatic strategy. The chapter is then divided between Hamas's diplomatic relationships with the so-called Axis of Resistance consisting of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, and the more Brotherhood-friendly bloc of Qatar and Turkey. However, given the historical, political, and cultural importance of Egypt, its shifting allegiances vis-à-vis Hamas, and the more direct impact on Hamas's fortunes, it will be dealt with separately.

Hamas recognised soon after the 2006 elections that it required regional benefactors to recognise its government in Gaza, ameliorate the siege, and prevent efforts by the Quartet, Israel, and Fatah to vitiate its status in Palestinian politics. Thus, any alliances Hamas entered in this period were short term,

opportunistic, and geared towards addressing these specific issues/problems. Regional benefactors are necessary because they can act as legitimacy reservoirs to enhance and cement Hamas's political authority in Gaza by validating and supporting its political agenda (Stinchcombe 1968: 161; Holbig 2011: 171, 177). Obtaining support from key regional benefactors would also enhance Hamas's ability to influence other states to support its cause (Beetham 1991: 122–123). For Hamas, gaining recognition of its sovereign status in Gaza becomes an important facet of its state-building efforts, and ultimately its political survival (O'Leary 2001: 8).

Prior to the 2006 election, the influence of Hamas's political and ideological narrative outside of the OPT was quite limited. However, Hamas's electoral legitimation altered the traditional intra-regional power dynamics concerning the 'Palestinian Question,' with Arab regimes faced with the prospect of having to recognise the Islamist movement Hamas and its government. The adverse international reaction to Hamas's election victory meant that any recognition had potential geopolitical ramifications for many Arab regimes. Regional benefactors, competitors, and adversaries had to consider how Hamas's Islamist antecedence might affect the regional geopolitical status quo, particularly the prospects of realising a sovereign Palestine, and whether that state would be secular or religious.

The precarious post-election situation meant that in its quest to enter regional alliances, Hamas was often faced with an 'alliance dilemma' (Snyder 1984). Snyder (1984: 462) contends that political actors face primary and secondary dilemmas when they are considering entering alliances. A primary alliance dilemma occurs when actors must make the decision whether to enter alliances. Watkins and Rosegrant (1996: 49) argue that political actors can be motivated to join alliances when they have shared or compatible interests with other actors that can be achieved through cooperative actions.

Similarly, Deitelhoff and Wallbott (2012: 348) point out that political actors join alliances based on a cost/benefit analysis, where the costs of compromise in arriving at a consensus among the members are outweighed by the relative benefits, such as an increased chance of achieving a desired diplomatic outcome. Additionally, political alliances can serve to reduce uncertainty, facilitate the exchange of information, and simplify negotiations by conflating numbers and perceptions into clear-cut camps (Deitelhoff & Wallbott 2012: 348).

The decision to join an alliance can also be related to domestic interests, particularly domestic political survival. Kimball (2010: 407) notes that in these cases governments appear to outsource a degree of their national security burden to an alliance to be able to allocate more resources to domestic political requirements. A leader's political survival (and by extension this would include the government's) is contingent on achieving a balance between the provision of social services and national security (Kimball 2010: 408). Governments are aware that there is a minimum winning coalition (MWC) whose approval is required for it to maintain their political authority (Kimball 2010: 407). The greater the MWC, the more emphasis a government must place on placating

domestic concerns, and the more contingent its survival is on achieving a balance between social service provision and national security (Kimball 2010: 407–408). Israel's enervating political and economic siege, as well as myriad internal challenges to Hamas's political authority in Gaza, make its MWC relatively high. By entering alliances with regional benefactors, Hamas hopes to tap into their legitimacy reservoirs that would enable its government to manage its finite resources more efficiently (Kimball 2010: 417).

Alliances, while beneficial, also come with some inherent costs such as reduced freedom of action, and a commitment to defend the interests of others. Snyder (1984: 466) refers to this as a secondary alliance dilemma. The dilemma occurs because alliance members must make the decision about how firmly they commit themselves to supporting their alliance partners in specific circumstances, particularly when they face the prospect of being dragged into conflicts not of their choosing, or to their benefit. Because these 'particular' interests represent specific, rather than general, diplomatic goals, alliance members expect to be supported to some degree (Snyder 1984: 464). Alliance members must also consider that for every alliance formed there is likely to be a counteralliance composed of states that are intent on seeking allies to counter the former's existence and goals (Snyder 1984: 462). Thus, for every alliance Hamas enters, Fatah, as its main domestic opponent, is likely to enter counteralliances to contest Hamas's efforts to garner regional support.

Unrequited desires – Hamas's relationship with Egypt

Since Israel's creation in 1948, the relationship between Egypt, Israel, and the Palestinians has been central to the 'Palestinian Question.' Unlike Jordan and Syria, Egypt does not have any long-standing cultural or societal connections with Palestinians. As Miller (1986: 53) notes,

> Separated from the Arab east by desert and a singular pre-occupation with ending British occupation, Egypt was largely removed from the confusing and contradictory crosscurrent out of which the mandate for Palestine, and the modern states of Syria and Jordan emerged.

This geographic, demographic, and political separation contributed to Egypt's diplomatic elasticity and detachment concerning potential solutions to the 'Palestinian Question.' Egypt's involvement in the 'Palestinian Question' is driven primarily by its desire for regional power, with the plight of the Palestinians providing the cause célèbre around which successive Egyptian regimes have attempted to galvanise the Arab world. Egypt's traditional political, social, and cultural importance means that it is perceived by many in the Arab world as the leader of Arab interests, which implies taking a leading role in resolving the 'Palestinian Question' (Abu Amar 2015: 59). This has resulted in successive Egyptian regimes being able to redefine their commitment to resolving the 'Palestinian Question' according to their own geopolitical exigencies (Miller 1986: 55).

Fear and apprehension – Egypt's reaction to Hamas's election

The 2006 election result produced ripples of consternation throughout the Arab world's predominantly authoritarian regimes. Not only had the election seen the defeat of an incumbent regime for the first time, it also saw the ascension to power of a Brotherhood-styled movement in Hamas (ICG 2006: 24; Caridi 2012: 251). Consequently, the prospect of a Palestinian government dominated by Hamas was met with guardedness by many Arab states, particularly Egypt (ICG 2008: i).

The Mubarak regime favoured an independent Palestinian state controlled by Fatah, which would in turn curb the extent of Hamas's growing regional political influence. As Hroub (2009) notes, 'Egypt's delicate domestic situation [could not] withstand the emergence of a successful or partly successful Muslim Brotherhood-inspired experiment anywhere in the Arab world, and certainly not on its very doorstep.' Mubarak's regime viewed the political aspirations of Hamas as a strategic threat. In a meeting between US Gen. Petraeus and Egyptian General Intelligence Service Chief Omar Soliman in June 2009, the latter revealed that Egypt's key objectives concerning the Palestinian situation were to maintain calm in Gaza, undermine Hamas, and build popular support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (WikiLeaks 2009). Just as importantly, Hamas's close association with Hezbollah and Iran meant that its election victory placed them firmly in the milieu of the regional Cold War between the 'Axis of Resistance' and the 'Moderate Front' (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon's March 14 alliance, and Fatah) (ICG 2009: 42).

As the leader of the so-called Moderate Front, Egypt had forged a relatively close diplomatic and military relationship with the US. This meant that Egypt's foreign policy directions and objectives, and to a degree those of the 'Moderate Front,' were often congruent with those of the US. These policy objectives were: peace with Israel, unfettered access to the Suez Canal, and bilateral military cooperation. To maintain its cordial diplomatic relations with Israel, Egypt was expected to contain Hamas on its southern border and contribute to Gaza's blockade (Sharp 2011: 13–14).

The ascension of a Brotherhood president

The sense of wariness and detachment towards Palestinians felt by Egyptian governments was just as true for Morsi's new Islamist government, as it was for the authoritarian military-backed governments of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak. The latter's 30-year reign had come to an abrupt and unforeseen end on 11 February 2011 (Noueihed & Warren: 2012: 98–99). In mid-2012, Egypt held its first democratic elections in decades, with the Brotherhood's FJP gaining 45% of the parliamentary seats, and the party's leader, Mohammed Morsi, garnering 52% of the popular vote in the subsequent presidential race (Ma'oz 2012: 15). The Brotherhood's ascent to power in Egypt had the potential to redraw the geostrategic dynamic, not just of the Arab world, but also of the 'Palestinian Question.'

As discussed in the previous chapter, Hamas's internal and external leaderships differed on how best to respond to the Uprisings. The domestic leadership, cognisant of events in the OPT, favoured a cautious, 'wait-and-see' approach, assuming that the rise of political Islam could only be to their benefit. However, the external leadership, cognisant of events in Egypt and Syria, believed that Hamas should be at the forefront of the rise of political Islam. What both leaderships did agree on though was that any measurable increase in the Islamisation of the Arab world would ultimately be to the benefit of Hamas, and to the corresponding detriment of Fatah (ICG 2012a: 26–27).

Despite Hamas's optimism concerning Morsi's election victory, its leadership recognised that the new Egyptian government had far more pressing domestic issues to resolve before committing itself to any decisive political support for Hamas and its efforts to advance Palestinian statehood efforts. The Hamas leadership understood this cautious position and recognised that Morsi's government had to first shore up its own legitimacy among a wary and divided Egyptian polity. As a senior Hamas leader stated, 'We need to help Morsi help us' (2012, cited in ICG 2012a: 29).

Like his predecessors, Morsi wanted to avoid Egypt being drawn inadvertently into a diplomatic and military conflict with Israel. Here Morsi was confronted by potential primary and secondary alliance dilemmas concerning the relative costs and benefits of declaring Egypt's increased support for Hamas and becoming more involved in the 'Palestinian Question.' In a broad-ranging speech to the UNGA on 26 September 2012, President Morsi outlined his government's position on the 'Palestinian Question.' While he chastised the UN's inability to resolve the 'Palestinian Question' equitably, he declared that Egypt would remain a party to all the international agreements that it was previously a signatory to (Anon 2012: 170–171). To prevent any primary and secondary alliance dilemmas from developing, Morsi did what previous Egyptian regimes had done, he retained Egypt's position of publicly supporting Palestinian self-determination efforts, while refusing to alter the diplomatic status quo concerning Egypt's relationship with Israel.

In keeping with this position when Morsi assumed the presidency he expediently sent a reassuring letter to Israeli President Shimon Peres and cracked down on Hamas's tunnel activities in Rafah (ICG 2012c: 13). However, Morsi also reduced the travel restrictions of Gazans exiting and entering the territory significantly. Additionally, Morsi promised Haniyeh that Egypt would alleviate the effects of the Israeli siege by ensuring that Gaza was supplied with fuel and power (Claudet & Jadallah 2012). So, while Morsi could accurately claim measurable improvements in Egypt's engagement with Hamas and its situation in Gaza, these were not enough to threaten the diplomatic status quo with Israel.

For Morsi, the 'Palestinian Question' was a diplomatic issue, rather than an ideological, cultural, or nationalist issue, and it was in the diplomatic arena that he chose to operate, most notably during the 2012 Gaza war. After the outbreak of hostilities in November 2012, Morsi dispatched his PM to Gaza as an overt sign of support for the beleaguered Hamas, as well ensuring that Gaza received sorely needed medical supplies via the Rafah Crossing. Simultaneously, Morsi recalled the Egyptian Ambassador to Israel, and hosted a conference on Gaza attended by

the Turkish PM Erdoğan, Khaled Meshaal, the emir of Qatar, and the Tunisian foreign minister. Again, these actions are consistent with Morsi's strategy concerning Egypt's relationship with Hamas. While he was willing to accept a slight deterioration of diplomatic ties with Israel to support Hamas diplomatically, these actions were insufficient to alter substantively the diplomatic status quo between the two states.

Despite Hamas hoping for more substantive assistance, Morsi appeared more concerned with preventing the conflict's escalation, and Egypt being drawn inadvertently into a war with Israel. Morsi wanted to keep his diplomatic options open without being hemmed in, either by any perceived bias towards Hamas, or towards Israel and the US (ICG 2012c: 12–13). Like his predecessors, Morsi conducted a delicate balancing act between placating domestic support for Hamas's plight and the broader 'Palestinian Question,' and demonstrating to the US and Israel that Egypt would continue to ensure the security of Israel's southern border.

Troubles in the Sinai

Despite the apparent collegiality between the Morsi and Hamas governments, their relationship was not always cordial. The one area of considerable friction was the Sinai Peninsula where a significant portion of its population is of Palestinian heritage, though Egyptian-born. The peninsular is prone to episodic lawlessness, which successive Egyptian regimes have struggled to quash. These efforts are exacerbated by the 1979 peace deal with Israel that significantly restricts Egypt's military options to bring the region under Cairo's control (see Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty 1979). For Hamas and Gazans, the border with Egypt, and principally the Rafah Crossing, represents their only direct connection with the outside world. While the IDF and Egyptian security officials control the official entry point, the flourishing tunnel economy has allowed Hamas to maintain a steady influx of sorely needed supplies, as well as being able to generate desperately needed revenue by taxing the smuggling activities.[1] This makes the Sinai a region of significant geopolitical importance for Egypt and Hamas, but one where Egyptian security interests trump any desire to assist their ideological brethren.

Hamas's relationship with Morsi's government was complicated further by the fact that the Sinai's Palestinian population and Hamas were accused of having provided training to various Salafi-Jihadist and al-Qaeda affiliated groups that had attacked Egyptian targets (ICG 2007a: 2–3). These attacks elicited harsh responses from Morsi's government. When Morsi first came to power he intended opening some form of free-trade zone around Rafah to facilitate the establishment of a formalised trade route into Gaza, but was dissuaded from this course because of these security concerns (ICG 2012b: 15). Morsi's government was also concerned by Israel's furtive attempts to thrust responsibility for Gaza's economic plight onto Egypt. Morsi's government feared that Israel would close all Israeli/Gaza access points, leaving the Rafah Crossing as Gaza's sole economic lifeline. This would mean that any future humanitarian crisis and associated social destabilisation would be predominantly Egypt's responsibility. Morsi could ill afford to let any associated

Gazan destabilisation infect an already lawless and disenfranchised Sinai population (ICG 2012b: 15–17). Consequently, Egypt re-established its strict control over the Rafah Crossing, and began tightly regulating the influx of supplies and people in and out of the territory.

Sinai's increasingly tense security situation also led to the Egyptian military periodically demolishing numerous tunnels around Rafah to disrupt a burgeoning illegal arms trade. The subsequent loss of revenue and much needed supplies caused a degree of consternation among Hamas's leadership. Relations between the Egyptian military and Hamas reached a nadir in August 2012 when Egypt's military blamed Hamas for the deaths of 23 officers in Sinai in August 2012. In a tense meeting between Morsi and Haniyeh, the former is quoted as telling the latter, 'God help you if we find your fingerprints on what happened in the Sinai' (Eldar 2013c). Media reports also noted that Egypt's relations with Hamas around this time had become subsumed into the broader confrontation between the Egyptian military, headed by Gen. al-Sisi, and Morsi's government about who would decide what Egypt's security threats were and how they should be met (Bar'el 2013a). The paradoxical result of these domestic machinations was increased security cooperation between Egypt and Israel (Eldar 2013b).

Collateral damage – the coup against Morsi

Hamas's relations with Egypt worsened appreciably when Gen. al-Sisi ousted Morsi as president on 3 July 2013, replacing him with the head of the SCC until elections could be held. Almost immediately, the Egyptian military and police launched large-scale security operations arresting hundreds of MB members and leaders throughout Egypt (ICG 2013: 5–7). During the lead-up to Morsi's ousting, there were continual rumours that Hamas would send forces to help keep Morsi in power. Despite Hamas's persistent denials, these rumours generated considerable anti-Hamas vitriol from Egyptians (Kuttab 2013).

As the repression of the MB in Egypt intensified, Hamas was confronted by a secondary alliance dilemma with everything and everyone associated with the MB equally implicated and tainted, including Hamas. Media reports noted that for Egyptians, the once lauded Hamas had become partners in crime and parasites, troublemakers, and sowers of discord (Eldar 2013c). The coup's effects on Hamas cannot be understated, with former senior political advisor Ahmed Yousef (2015, cited in Abu-Amer 2015c) observing, 'The repercussions of the overthrow of President Mohammed Morsi were like an earthquake on Hamas because the movement lost a strong ally in Egypt, which has served as a backbone.' When confronted by this dilemma Hamas's reaction was to remain quiet, hoping to avoid becoming collateral damage in the struggle for power between the military and the MB. According to media reports, Hamas's leadership apparently issued strict instructions to all members to avoid commenting on the situation, hoping to prevent the Egyptian opposition from using the movement's stances and statements to their advantage (Balousha 2013a).

The ousting of Morsi was followed by a tightening of security around the Rafah Crossing by both Egypt and Hamas, with the latter hoping to reduce the possibility of provoking a clearly agitated Egyptian military. This increased security meant that the tunnel economy suffered appreciably with a significant reduction in crucial supplies like fuel and food resulting in a substantial increase in prices. This thrust the already precarious Gazan economy into further turmoil, with a leading Palestinian economist, Samir abu Mdallalah, warning of a looming humanitarian crisis if the situation continued for any length of time (Suliman 2013).

The evolution of this secondary alliance dilemma induced a level of fear in Hamas's leadership not previously seen, even during the 2008 and 2012 Wars. As such, any signs of organisational solidarity with the Egyptian MB were replaced by abject silence to al-Sisi's purge (Eldar 2013d). The Egyptian military reinforced these fears further when, in addition to destroying hundreds of tunnels around Rafah, they were suspected of preparing to establish a 250- to 300-metre buffer zone along the entirety of the territory's Egyptian border (Khoury, The Assoc. Press & Reuters 2013). Some within Hamas's leadership believed that this plan presaged an Egyptian military attack, with Hamas's media agency *al-Ra'i* publishing a report titled, 'Will the Egyptian Army Attack the Gaza Strip?' (Abu-Amer 2013b). Any establishment of a buffer zone would almost certainly ruin Hamas's tunnel economy already struggling from Egypt's military crackdown. Hamas's Deputy Economy Minister Hatem Oweida estimated that the destruction of Rafah's tunnels cost the Gazan economy approximately USD 23 million per month meaning that the government had little money to pay its burgeoning workforce, causing unemployment to increase significantly to about 43% (Bar'el 2013c).

Unfortunately for Hamas, the Egyptian moves came at the same time as they had severed ties with the Assad regime, incurring Iran's wrath, and denying it another vital revenue stream, diplomatic support, and sanctuary (Bar'el 2013b). This only served to exacerbate Hamas's secondary alliance dilemma. Just as Hamas became diplomatically estranged from Iran because of its refusal to support Assad, it became enmeshed in the Moderate Front's struggle to rid the region of the MB and its affiliated political parties.

Ridding Egypt of the MB and Hamas

As 2014 dawned, Hamas was still suffering from the effect of this secondary alliance dilemma, with the Egyptian military appearing determined to eradicate any vestige of Hamas's presence in Egypt. In early January 2014, Egyptian Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim accused Hamas of directly conducting military operations in the Sinai and of training MB members to use weapons and explosives. Media reports alleged that Egypt had cancelled the passports and visas of nearly 13,000 Palestinians living in Egypt and Gaza. Additionally, the reports noted that Egypt's goal was the toppling of the Hamas government, and replacing it with one headed by Mohammed Dahlan (Abu-Amer 2014a).[2]

As the situation between Hamas and Egypt worsened, the Egyptian military came to believe that it was necessary to topple Hamas's government in Gaza

to ensure the destruction of the MB in Egypt (Eldar 2014a). The Egyptian government conflated its overthrow of the MB with the ongoing security concerns in the Sinai. Because many of the groups responsible for attacks in the peninsula had gained sanctuary in Gaza, this meant that Hamas also represented a security threat to Egypt. While the prospect of Egypt invading Gaza to rid itself of Hamas was remote, al-Sisi apparently supported the notion of encouraging a popular uprising against Hamas, like the one that had resulted in Morsi's demise. The regime began by banning all Hamas activities in Egypt, with Egyptian security officials seizing Hamas's offices and assets (Bar'el 2014a). Egypt also began to strangle Gaza economically, hoping to produce economic and social depravation and provoking Gazans into demanding a change of government (Eldar 2014a). Contextually, it was around this time that Hamas was faced with the inception of the Tamarod movement in Gaza, and began seeking reconciliation with Fatah as a way of alleviating these intense political and social pressures.

In the week leading up the signing of the 2014 reconciliation agreement, media reports noted that Hamas was desperately seeking to repair ties with neighbouring Arab states to ameliorate the parlous diplomatic and economic circumstances the movement found itself (Abu-Amer 2014b). A senior Hamas official was quoted as saying,

> Recently the main objectives of the movement have been focused on ending the regional isolation, finding a financial safety net to ease the situation in Gaza and communicating with the European Union in a bid to remove the movement's name from the list of terrorist organisations
>
> (Abu-Amer 2014b)

However, as Hamas was now the only remaining Brotherhood movement in government in the Arab world, these tasks became increasingly complex, as Arab regimes were sceptical and derogatory about any association with the MB and its affiliates (Abu-Amer 2014b).

Egyptian duplicity during the 2014 Gaza war

In the period before Israel launched Operation Protective Edge, media reports noted that the director of Egypt's General Intelligence Service had apparently visited Tel Aviv and consulted with Israeli security officials. These reports alleged that al-Sisi had given his approval for Israel to crush Hamas. During the initial phase of the war, Egypt refused to play an active role in seeking a ceasefire, in contrast to Morsi's efforts in 2012 (Abu-Amer 2014c).[3] Making Hamas suffer at the hands of Israelis appeared to be al-Sisi's punishment for Hamas's association with the Egyptian MB. Indeed, this seems to have been a common reaction from most influential Arab regimes, with media reports noting a distinct silence from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab League during Israel's latest military offensive in Gaza (Bar'el 2014b). While Egypt temporarily reopened the Rafah Crossing to

allow a trickle of supplies in and wounded out, this did little to alleviate the plight confronting Gazans during the 50-day conflict (Sabry 2014).

It took until the second week of the war before Egypt interjected with a ceasefire proposal. Even then, it was designed principally to maintain Egypt's regional role as primary negotiator, forestalling diplomatic efforts by Turkey to broker a ceasefire, and ensuring that any ceasefire terms addressed Egyptian security concerns. Egypt's proposal was criticised by the Jordanian and Qatari media as being biased towards Israel, and calculated to see Fatah restored to ruling Gaza (Haaretz 2014; Harel 2014). Indeed, the proposed Egyptian ceasefire contained the condition that Hamas recognise Israel on its 1967 borders in its preamble. Hamas rejected the proposed agreement outright believing that it represented yet another Egyptian tactic designed to facilitate its downfall. As Abu Marzouk (2014, cited in Miller 2014b) stated,

> We believe that the [Egyptian] initiative was drafted to embarrass Hamas. For if Hamas rejects it, that will give Benjamin Netanyahu the green light to strike the Gaza Strip; whereas if Hamas accepts it, that would as though Hamas surrendered and declared its defeat.

Hamas maintained that for any ceasefire to be agreed upon then Israel would have to lift the siege and release prisoners that had previously been freed as part of the Shalit release in 2011. In return, Hamas would offer Israel a ten-year *hudna* (Levy 2014).

While al-Sisi's military government may have harboured unbridled enmity for Hamas, it understood any failure and/or reticence to negotiate an acceptable ceasefire agreement would damage their regional standing, and allow other interested states to assume a greater regional role. Hamas's rejection of Egypt's initial ceasefire offer was a signal to Egypt and other Arab states that Hamas refused to kowtow to efforts to supplant their rule in Gaza. Again, Hamas was forced to remind their Arab brethren that the Palestinians would not be used as geopolitical chattel, or as a cause célèbre, in any regional geopolitical power play. Meshaal saw fit to remind al-Sisi of Egypt's principal obligations, stating:

> The responsibility of all Arabs, and big sister Egypt first and foremost, is to stand by the Palestinian people, work to stop the savage Israeli aggression, end the siege on Gaza in a real way and help the people get rid of occupation and the settlements.
>
> (Abu-Amer 2014d)

Hamas–Egyptian relations post-2014

Even after the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel was concluded on 1 August 2014, Hamas continued its determined approach in attaining favourable terms in a long-term *hudna* with the GoI.[4] While Hamas officials were adamant that its intransigence would not herald the resumption of further hostilities, the leadership

remained determined to obtain political and economic relief for Gazans (The Times of Israel 2014a). Again, this position was as much a reflection of Hamas's relations with Egypt, as it was of its relations with Israel. A September 2014 poll revealed that while 56.2% of Palestinian respondents believed that the Rafah Crossing would be opened by Egypt after the ceasefire agreement was signed, 56.8% believed that Egypt's role in the 2014 war and the subsequent ceasefire negotiations served Israel's purposes rather than those of Palestinians (PCPSR 2012: Poll No. 53).

By 2015, Hamas was confronted with a dramatically altered geopolitical environment produced primarily by events in Egypt. Despite a brief period of détente after the 2014 war, relations between Hamas and the Egyptian military government resumed their enmity when Egypt began establishing the 5-kilometre buffer zone around its border with Gaza (Abu-Amer 2015a). An Egyptian court also ruled Hamas a terrorist organisation. This decision appeared to be part of al-Sisi's war against radical Islam with the regime seemingly making no distinction between the MB, Hamas, ISIS, or al-Qaeda (Isaacharoff 2015b). The ruling had enormous implications for Hamas as it gave the Egyptian regime the legal right to seize property and financial assets, arrest members and affiliates, and to stop all goods entering Gaza via the Rafah Crossing.

The continuing presence of a secondary alliance dilemma because of its relationship with the Egyptian MB cost Hamas dearly, and reduced it to being a regional pawn in the much broader intra-Arab struggle between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, who are vehemently anti-Brotherhood, and Turkey and Qatar, who are more sympathetic (Abu-Amer 2015b). Morsi's overthrow fundamentally altered Hamas's long-term diplomatic calculations, and placed it on the strategic defensive, as it was now bordered by two hostile states.

More recently, relations between Egypt and Hamas have experienced a superficial thaw. In October 2016, Egypt invited several business people from Gaza to a conference aimed at improving commercial activity between Gaza and Egypt, and to discuss ideas aimed at easing the movement of goods through the Rafah Crossing. Later, reports surfaced noting that Haniyeh had visited Cairo in January 2017 to meet with Egyptian intelligence officials about the security situation in the Sinai and Gaza's siege (Khoury & AP 2017).

However, these moves were primarily about Egyptian meddling in Palestinian politics, rather than a sign of a rapprochement with Hamas. First, the conference was apparently a way for Egypt to punish Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas for his refusal to reconcile with his arch rival Mohammed Dahlan, who Egypt supports (Khoury & AP 2017). It was reported that Egypt hoped that any sign of a thawing relationship with Hamas would pressure Abbas into naming Dahlan as his successor to placate Egypt (Abu-Amer 2016). Second, when Egyptian intelligence officials met with Haniyeh they reportedly demanded that Hamas agree to extradite anyone who Egypt suspected of being directly involved, or assisting, in any attacks in Sinai. Egypt also apparently ordered Hamas to cease any military activities against Israel in the name of regional stability. In return, Egypt promised Hamas that it would open the Rafah Crossings for extended

periods, and that the quota for transit visas between Gaza and Egypt would be increased (Eldar 2017).

With the ability of Hamas to continue to be able to govern Gaza under the current strictures quickly becoming untenable, any relief is critical to their political survival. However, these ultimatums place Hamas in an invidious position. Should they refuse Egypt's demands, then the status quo of the siege would remain making Hamas's political survival decidedly tenuous. However, should Hamas capitulate to Egypt's demands, many Palestinians would see this as an unforgiveable betrayal, not just of Palestinian rights, but of Hamas's long-vaunted principles, equally jeopardising their political survival.

In 2017 Hamas made further efforts to rid itself of the effects of its secondary alliance dilemma by including the surprise announcement that it had severed all organisational ties with the MB in its policy document (see Hamas 2017). Hamas appeared desperate to placate Egyptian concerns about any continuing organisational ties between it and Muslim Brothers in Egypt. While Hamas clearly shares an ideological affinity with the Brothers in Egypt, it did not want to be seen as taking orders from a movement now reviled by Egypt's military regime. Given the degree of enmity shown by the Egyptian regime towards Hamas, it saw the release of the document, with its attendant concessions, as an attempt to restart this crucial relationship.

Axis of resistance – Iran and Syria

Iran and Syria have an association that has endured for decades and goes well beyond the geopolitical. Syria is considered one of the Arab world's cultural and political powerhouses. Iran on the other hand is Persian, rather than Arab, and is keen to exert its geopolitical interests in the Arab world after the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime (Monshopouri & Dorraj 2013). Importantly though, both actors are Shi'a, in a Sunni-dominated world.

The relationship between the two states is primarily a tactical alliance with areas of cooperation and support, and areas of independence (Lawson 2007: 30). As Mohns and Bank (2012: 26) explain, 'The resistance axis is best understood as a political alliance based on common enemies. None of them, despite considerable asymmetries in their military capabilities, has been able to exert hegemony over other axis members.' Instructively, though the Syria-Iran affiliation has endured, and in many respects solidified, the relationship is not always comfortable, given that Iran is a theological state and Syria staunchly secular. The alliance is grounded on diplomatic issues such as the future of Lebanon, resisting Israeli regional ambitions, and limiting Western influence in the Middle East (Terrill 2015: 222–223). These three issues are the glue that keeps the relationship functional, despite episodic differences. Syria is Iran's only Arab ally, and the relationship serves as a conduit to the Arab world and as diplomatic support for Iran's own regional geopolitical ambitions. By contrast, Iran's association with regional groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, is primarily symbolic (Samii 2008: 51).

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 galvanised the alliance against the US's geopolitical objectives, and exacerbated and/or reinvigorated the Arab cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Hamas is highly conscious of being merely symbolic geopolitical chattel, and this situation dictates to what extent the movement associates with Axis members (Salloukh 2013: 33–34). What becomes clear is that despite some analyses conflating Hamas with the Axis, it is at best an associate member, and more accurately, a marriage of convenience.

Dealing with disappointment – Hamas's relationship with Syria

Syria has a strong historical, cultural, and ideological connection with Palestine stretching back to Ottoman rule when the *vilayet* of Syria encompassed all modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Mandatory Palestine, and Jordan. Under the Ba'athist Assad regimes, Syria has been at the forefront of Arab nationalist ideology that prioritises Arab unity and an equitable resolution to the 'Palestinian Question' (Miller 1986: 39–41). As with Egypt, Syrian involvement in the 'Palestinian Question,' while more culturally, socially, and ideologically based, remains centred on utilising the Palestinians as the regime's cause célèbre in regional power plays, primarily with Egypt (Salloukh 2013: 33).

As Hamas expanded its regional operations in the 1990s, it opened offices throughout the Arab world, with the external leadership, headed by Meshaal, operating mainly out of Amman. However, Hamas's relationship with Jordan deteriorated significantly after the death of King Hussein in 1999, to the point where Hamas was forced to close its offices there altogether, relocating to Damascus in 2001 (see Tamimi 2009: 119–147). For almost a decade, the relationship between Hamas and the Assad regime remained courteous and supportive, with Syria providing an important haven for Hamas's external leadership, especially during the Second Intifada.

Then in mid-2011, Assad's regime became embroiled in domestic political turmoil sparked by events in Tunisia and Egypt. The regime initially sought to placate its rebellious populace by gradually increasing political space for opposition movements and attempting to pay more attention to domestic concerns (ICG 2011: i). While the rebellion was slow to evolve, it soon became more pernicious and broad ranging. As the opposition forces swelled, they lured a plethora of international Salafi-Jihadist fighters. This resulted in the rebellion metamorphosing from a social, into an ideological and sectarian revolution, with the minority Alawite Assad regime pitted against the rising tide of radical and militant Sunni Islam (ICG 2012b: 1–3).

While Hamas was not implicated directly in the Islamist assault against Assad, they became collateral damage again through their failure to support his regime publicly and vociferously. Syria, and then Iran, punished Hamas financially, and deprived it of diplomatic support for maintaining a largely neutral stance in an increasingly sectarian conflict. As the rebellion expanded, Hamas was confronted by another secondary alliance dilemma. On the one hand, it was very grateful to

Assad's regime for its diplomatic and financial support when many Arab states had refused, especially after the 2006 election. On the other hand, Hamas opposed the regime's brutal suppression of its citizens, the majority of which were Sunni. There was also the added complexity of the fate of thousands of Palestinian refugees who were caught up in an expanding revolution (ICG 2012a: 5).

Hamas initially attempted to mediate, encouraging Assad to implement a raft of domestic reforms designed to address some of the rebels' concerns. As the rebellion expanded, the relationship between the Assad regime and Hamas deteriorated. The first open signs of tensions came in August 2011 when it was reported that Iran had significantly reduced its financial support for Hamas because of their less than positive support for the beleaguered Assad (SMH 2011). As an associate member of their alliance, Syria and Iran expected Hamas to side firmly with Assad and to denounce the revolutionaries. As Hamas was the only Sunni member of the Axis, it faced increased political and diplomatic pressure to declare its allegiance (ICG 2012a: 7–10). Throughout this period, Hamas remained cognisant of Palestinian public opinion in relation to these regional upheavals. In a June 2011 poll, 88% of Palestinians in the OPT were sympathetic to the Syrian rebels. This provided Hamas with a measure of political cover for adopting its neutral approach to the Syrian revolution (PCPSR 2011: Poll No. 40).

By the end of 2011, Hamas's relationship with Assad's regime had fractured completely with the external leadership reportedly scattering to neighbouring Arab capitals, and Meshaal relocating to Doha. As Hamas's Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ghazi Hamad (2013, cited in al-Ghoul 2013a) later explained, 'We supported the Syrian regime as long as it was fighting the Israeli enemy, but when it oppressed its people we decided to part ways with it, despite the fact that this is considered a big loss for Hamas.'

Hamas reacted to the presence of the secondary alliance dilemma by deciding to distance itself from the Assad regime. In a speech made by Haniyeh (2012, cited in ICG 2012a: 11) in Cairo's symbolic al-Azhar mosque on 24 February 2012 he stated, 'I salute to the heroic Syrian people, who are striving for freedom, democracy and reform.' This declaration was widely interpreted as confirming Hamas's split with the Assad regime. Indeed, so wide did the fissure become that Hamas was rumoured to have sent members of the IQB to Syria to train the rebels fighting against Assad's regime. This notable shift in allegiance may have been the consequence of Qatari support for Hamas, and of the Qatari emir's loathing of Assad's regime (Eldar 2013a). While the split with Syria may have been financially and politically costly, Hamas was willing to sever ties a long-term ally once the costs of the alliance outweighed any benefits.

Oscillating fortunes – Hamas and Iran

Hamas's relationship with Iran is an interesting one. On the one hand, they sit at either end of the Sunni/Shi'a spectrum, with all the attendant mistrust and animosity this can evoke. On the other hand, the 1979 Iranian Revolution is credited in part with providing enormous impetus to Sunni Islamist groups like Hamas,

demonstrating what can be achieved through revolution and *jihad*. For Palestinians, the Iranian Revolution also showed that the US, and by extension Israel, were not invincible (Tamimi 2009: 41–42; Gunning 2009: 32). Iran has long supported various Palestinian factions, including Hamas, in their conflict with both Israel and the US. Ramadan notes that Iran styles itself as the defender of the Palestinians, and criticises the cowardice and compromises of the Arab states (Ramadan 2012: 69). However, Iran's relationship with Hamas consists primarily of financial support for its military activities, with Hamas receiving approximately 10% of its funds from the Iranian regime (Pina 2006: 3).

It was Israel and the Quartet's reaction to Hamas's election victory that encouraged Iran to become more diplomatically supportive of Hamas and their democratic venture, declaring that the 2006 election result was a 'vote for resistance' (Zweiri 2006: 681). In the days following the election, Iran purportedly offered the Hamas-dominated PA USD 250 million should the US and Israel withdraw their financial aid (Pina 2006: 3). While Hamas gratefully accepted this proposed aid, it was also seeking support from other Arab benefactors to ensure that the new government was not completely beholden upon one source of revenue, and any conditionality this might attract (Zweiri 2006: 684). What also needs to be acknowledged was that this financial aid was driven by Iran's continuing antipathy towards Saudi Arabia rather than being inspired by Hamas's democratic intentions (ICG 2007b: 19).

Since the overthrow of Saddam in 2003, the Shi'a revival in the Arab world emboldened Iran, and it began to play much larger diplomatic role in regional politics further exacerbating an already delicate geopolitical status quo (Ramadan 2012: 69). Between 2006 and 2010, Iran provided Hamas with a vital financial lifeline through which it hoped to implement some of its policies, and importantly pay its public-sector employees. Nevertheless, these ties with Iran allowed Israel, Fatah, and international adversaries to taint Hamas, and draw it into the much larger debate concerning the Iran's role in the region, particularly concerning the fractious debates around state-sponsored terrorism and regional nuclear proliferation. When Hamas refused to support Assad in his campaign against Islamist revolutionaries, Iran attempted to enforce compliance by imposing financial sanctions of its own (SMH 2011). Iran's ire also robbed Hamas of a vital source of military aid that was desperately required to replenish its arsenal with more modern weaponry capable of reducing Hamas's capability gap vis-à-vis the IDF.

The coup against Morsi, coupled with the election of the moderate Hassan Rouhani as Iranian president in June 2013, provided Hamas with both the impetus and opportunity to reconcile with Iran. Iran denounced the coup against Morsi and refused to recognise the new Egyptian military government (Abu-Amer 2013a). Hamas officials reciprocated by congratulating President Rouhani upon his election, with officials quoted as saying, 'We hope to have close relations with Tehran because it is not in our interest to lose Iran's support . . . and we hope that Iran's financial and military support will continue since Israel constitutes a threat to Iran' (Saliman 2013). As ever though, any apparent détente must be viewed from a geopolitical perspective. With Morsi gone, and other

potential benefactors such as Turkey and Qatar unable and/or unwilling to fill the financial void, Hamas needed Iran to provide sorely needed financial and military support. Concomitantly, Iran needed Hamas because of its stature as a strong militarist Palestinian movement, and the fact that with the situation in Syria precarious, Iran could ill afford to lose any allies (Abu-Amer 2013a). By late 2013, Iran had resumed limited financial support of Hamas estimated to be around USD 23 million per month (Balousha 2013b). Nevertheless, Hamas remained wary of being overtly associated with an Iranian regime that remained for many a diplomatic pariah (Balousha 2013b).

By December 2014, relations between Hamas and Iran appeared to have improved further when senior Hamas figures, led by Hamas's Head of International Affairs Mohammed Nasr, met the Iranian parliamentary speaker, Ali Larjani. Outlining the reasoning behind Hamas's restored relationship with Tehran, Haniyeh's former senior political advisor Ahmed Youssef (2014, cited in Abu-Amer 2014g) stated,

> Hamas seeks to improve its relationship with Iran in light of the imposed siege and isolation. These require that the movement breaks through its isolation and siege and be present in the regional political scene, through its reconciliation with Iran.

An improving relationship between Hamas and Iran is also a product of Hamas's internal politics. As discussed in Chapter 5, the IQB is beginning to play a more prominent role in government policy development and direction after its senior members were elected to Hamas's Political Bureau. These more militant members in Hamas view Iranian patronage very favourably, especially given the Iranian regime's antipathy for Israel, and its continuing military and political support. They have been quite prominent within Hamas in promoting the pressing need to reconcile with Iran (Isaacharoff 2015a). However, while welcoming continuing Iranian patronage, the more moderate sections of Hamas are circumspect when it comes to aligning Hamas so directly with Iran. These members emphasise political resistance over armed resistance, and Iranian assistance is seen as being one of many, rather than the primary source, of financial, political, and military support (Isaacharoff 2015a).

These internal divisions are occurring at a time when Hamas is under enormous pressure from the military regime in Egypt, and with other Arab states unwilling and/or unable to provide substantial financial relief, accepting Iranian aid is a pragmatic solution for the movement to adopt. However, Iran has made it clear that any resumption of financial support is conditional, and there is an expectation that Hamas would reconcile with Assad, reversing its public opposition to the regime's extreme tactics (Isaacharoff 2015a).

Hamas's decision to abandon Assad appears to be a key sticking point preventing unconditional reconciliation. Iran apparently viewed Meshaal's decision to leave Damascus for Doha as a clear indication of where the movement's loyalties lie. However, with the 2014 Gaza war destroying many institutions and much of

the social infrastructure in Gaza, Iran assumed that Hamas would eventually opt for financial security over complete government collapse (Davison 2015).

Enter the 'neutral' party – Hamas and Qatar

Qatar has had a long-standing relationship with the MB when Brotherhood members began seeking sanctuary from Nasser's periodic purges in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite a burgeoning collegiality, the relationship between the Qatari regime and the MB is not ideological. The Qataris are staunchly Wahhabist, and the Brotherhood has almost no ideological influence domestically. The relationship is maintained through an understanding that the Brotherhood's reformist activities in Qatar are directed outwards. The utility of this understanding meant that from the 1960s the MB began to use Qatar as a base to expand its influence throughout the region (Roberts 2017: 54).

From a Qatari perspective their association with the MB meant that it did not have to rely on Saudi Wahhabist clerics to staff their bureaucracies, especially the education system. The Qataris feared that this would result in its political system mirroring Saudi Arabia's, thereby lessening its political and religious independence. This arrangement also meant that the Qatari regime could more readily regulate the extent of Brotherhood involvement in state practices. Diplomatically, by having the MB so closely allied with the state also allowed the Qatari regime to project a more moderate and pragmatic narrative to the region (Roberts 2017: 54). It is for these reasons that Qatar became the base for Hamas's external leadership once the movement decided to cut ties with Assad's regime and leave Damascus. The costs and benefits of this association for both Qatar and Hamas would be borne out through the Arab Uprisings and the subsequent geopolitical realignment that occurred after the ousting of Morsi in 2013. Ultimately, what this meant for Hamas was that its diplomatic relationship with Qatar was viewed regionally through the lens of Qatar's own geopolitical designs and subsequent efforts to thwart these.

One of the many unforeseen consequences of the Arab Uprisings was the geopolitical restructuring of the Arab world. Traditional regional powerhouses Egypt and Syria were thrown into revolutionary chaos and the international community remained cautious of several transitional governments throughout the region. The result was a geopolitical vacuum where previously diplomatically quiescent and/or conservative states sought to interpose to increase their own diplomatic fortunes (Salloukh 2013: 43). One of these states was Qatar, which was considered almost immune from the social unrest pulsating through the Arab world due in part to high living standards. This sense of immunity allowed the Qatari regime to construct an uncontested foreign and domestic policy suite (Noueihed & Warren 2012: 249; Antwi-Boeteng 2013: 352). Indeed, Khatib (2013: 417) explains that Qatar's regional role as mediator and provider of humanitarian aid became so prominent that many in the Arab world came to expect Qatar to play a leading role whenever a conflict erupts. However, Khatib also notes that despite the apparent altruism of Qatar's diplomatic interventions, its foreign policy is driven primarily by concerns

over its own security and internal stability, and a desire to expand its influence regionally particularly vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia (Khatib 2013: 418–419).

This meant that overt support of the MB and Hamas might well be a calculated action on behalf of the Qatari emir, with a senior Hamas leader (2012, cited in ICG 2012a: 3) noting,

> Qatar and other countries use Hamas to gain credibility inside their state. When they receive Hamas leaders or support the movement, they lessen the pressure at home. Qatar and Iran are now on opposite sides regarding Syria. But they both fund us. They need us.

It has been argued that by continuing to support the Egyptian MB, Hamas, and other 'moderate' Islamist groups, the Emirate is seeking to co-opt these moderate Islamists to construct a domestic political narrative, particularly in the context of the Arab Uprisings (Khatib 2013: 423–425). Consequently, the Emirate has played an active role in the Egyptian and Libyan revolutions, supported regime change in Syria by supplying the Syrian MB with military and financial aid, and led the Arab League initiatives efforts aimed at expelling Syria from various regional organisations. The Emirate has also apparently served as a proxy in the US efforts to contain Iranian regional influence (Salloukh 2013: 42).

When Meshaal relocated to Qatar after Hamas's relations with the Assad regime fractured, it signalled the beginning of an informal alliance between Qatar and Hamas, and the Emirate's engagement with the 'Palestinian Question.' After the 2012 Gaza war, and with Iranian financial support waning, Qatar apparently offered Hamas USD 407 million for reconstruction, with media reports noting that Qatar had become Hamas's top aid donor (al-Ghoul 2013b).

However, continued support for Hamas was thrown into doubt in June 2013 when the emir announced his abdication in favour of his second son, Tamim. There was increased concern among Hamas's leadership that this transition could mirror similar events in Jordan in 1999 that led to the movement's expulsion. These fears proved largely unfounded, with Qatar continuing to fund major reconstruction efforts in Gaza, and even acting as a conduit between Hamas and Israel. Media reports noted that Qatari officials facilitated the swapping of relevant government positions papers between the two leaderships, and relayed messages from Meshaal and Haniyeh to the GoI (Eldar 2014b).[5] With al-Sisi claiming power in Egypt, and relations with Iran still tense, Qatar assumed the role as Hamas's pre-eminent financial and diplomatic benefactor.

Qatar's diplomatic relationship with Israel soured during the 2014 Gaza war with Israeli President Shimon Peres, accusing the Emirate of becoming the world's largest funder of terror because of its continued sponsorship of Hamas. In reply, Qatar's former national security advisor, Maj. Gen. Yaakov Amidror (2014, cited in Miller 2014a), announced that 'Hamas currently has two "true friends" in the world: Qatar and Turkey. The one supporting this organisation financially, almost alone is Qatar.' Egypt also weighed into the diplomatic melee claiming that Qatar was thwarting its ceasefire efforts in favour of its own peace

initiative (Miller 2014a). Once again, Hamas became a pawn in a much larger geopolitical power struggle, this time between the resurgent Qatar and an Egyptian regime keen to maintain its diplomatic pre-eminence.

Fatah also became increasingly suspicious, and even hostile, towards increased Qatari involvement in the 'Palestinian Question' because it did not want to see Egyptian involvement curtailed. Fatah was worried that the continued financial buttressing of Hamas by Qatar would enable Hamas to retain its political authority in Gaza, thereby marginalising the power of the Ramallah PA (Melhem 2015). As a Palestinian official noted, 'Qatari involvement regarding a bilateral truce between Hamas and Israel means stepping around the PA's role, leadership, and position, and ignoring Egypt's sponsorship of the Palestinian issue with Israel' (Melhem 2015).

In the aftermath of Morsi's ousting, and al-Sisi's relentless pursuit of the MB, Qatar itself was subjected to a secondary alliance dilemma. Its continued support of the MB and Hamas began to damage the diplomatic relationships that the Emirate had, not just with Egypt, but also with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In response, Qatar shocked Hamas in 2014 by announcing that it was expelling several prominent Brotherhood luminaries who had sought refuge in the Emirate after Morsi's overthrow (Sharon 2014). Despite the claim and counterclaim about Hamas's imminent expulsion from Qatar, Meshaal still resides in Doha and the relationship between the Emirate and Hamas appears sound (Sharon 2014; Abu-Amer 2014e). Qatar continues to play an important supportive role for Hamas. In early 2017, Qatar played host to Hamas's senior leadership as elections were held for the chairmanship, prime ministership, and for membership of the Political Bureau. *Majlis shura* and Political Bureau members also held extensive meetings in Qatar to debate the contents of Hamas's new policy document released in May 2017 (al-Jazeera 2017a).

Nevertheless, Qatar's support of Brotherhood-styled movements continues to present it with secondary alliance dilemmas. On 5 June 2017, key members of the 'Moderate Front' – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, Yemen, and Egypt – announced that they had severed diplomatic contact with Qatar. This was in response to Qatar's alleged long-standing support for 'terrorism' in the region and for its relatively friendly relations with Iran (al-Jazeera 2017b). On 24 June 2017 Qatar was issued a list of 13 demands it needed to meet for diplomatic relations to be renewed. Included in these demands was the stipulation that Qatar must sever all ties with the MB (al-Jazeera 2017c). According to Saudi sources, this included Qatar cutting its ties with Hamas (al-Jazeera 2017d). Stephens argues that the root of the issue are the irreconcilable differences between the Gulf states and others as to how to interpret the events surrounding the Arab Uprisings, and more importantly, how to react to them. While Qatar had wholeheartedly supported various Brotherhood parties in their political aspirations, the members of the Moderate Front had been distinctly hostile to ostensible rise of the Brotherhood (Stephens 2017: 12).

Despite the apparent seriousness of this diplomatic crisis, the US maintains several key bases in Qatar, with Turkey also having a military base in the Emirate.

This has largely insulated the Qatari regime and provided it with the space to manoeuvre diplomatically. However, whether Qatar will sacrifice its ties with Hamas and the MB as a compromise is open to question. As one Palestinian academic opined,

> If the Emirates, the Saudis, and the Egyptians are willing to go all the way with Hamas, then Hamas will have no choice but to make the pragmatic decision of cutting its relationship with Qatar. If on the other hand these other players are not willing to go [all the way] . . . Hamas will try and sit in the middle point somewhere between all sides.
>
> (pers. comm. 12 July 2017)

If Hamas were to leave Qatar, it would mean that it would have to find yet another regional benefactor to host its external leadership, resulting in increased organisational dislocation.

Dealing with the resurgent Ottomans – Hamas and Turkey

Hamas's election in 2006 presented the Erdoğan government with the opportunity to reassert some of Turkey's historic diplomatic influence.[6] However, these moves were resisted, particularly by Egypt who, despite its waxing and waning diplomatic fortunes, greatly desired to retain its position as the premier diplomatic intermediary in the 'Palestinian Question.' Turkey's decision to become more involved in regional politics not only upset the existing regional diplomatic status quo, it also complicated Turkey's own regional relationships. In these circumstances, Turkey was no longer seen as a relatively neutral intermediary, but as an actor pursuing a distinct geopolitical agenda. As with Hamas's relationship with Qatar, its relationship with Turkey became subsumed into Turkey's broader geopolitical narrative and regional inter-state competition.

Following its election victory, Hamas indicated its willingness to emulate the governance style of Turkey's AKP government (Sayigh 2010: 3). For several reasons Hamas hoped that Turkey would prove an invaluable benefactor and mentor. First, Hamas looked upon the AKP's style of government as an exemplar, not only for themselves, but also to demonstrate to a sceptical international community that a Hamas majority government was not something to be feared. Second, Turkey was the only regional state that had sound diplomatic relations with Israel, free from the diplomatic baggage carried by the traditional regional powerhouses: Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Finally, Turkey was a member of NATO, and the Turkish government had begun a reformation programme designed to facilitate its entry into the EU (Caridi 2012: 224–225, 286–287). Not only could Turkey potentially offer a sympathetic ear and be a source of advice and counsel, but it also had the diplomatic connections to act both as a conduit to the US and EU, and as a mediator in any future conflict with either Israel and/or Fatah (Caridi 2012: 287).

Turkey made its first real diplomatic foray into post-election Palestinian politics during the 2008 Gaza war. Throughout the war, the Turkish government railed

against the excesses of the IDF assault (Caridi 2012: 287). Hamas's strained relationship with Mubarak's regime meant that it was looking for another potential regional benefactor to assist in mediation efforts. Given its cordial relations with Israel, Turkey sought to increase its regional diplomatic involvement. However, Turkey's increased activism worried Egypt who traditionally saw itself as the principal mediator, and wished to retain sole control over this process. Similarly, while Israel and Hamas had diplomatic contacts with Turkey, Fatah had always favoured conducting negotiations and mediation via their traditional Egyptian allies. This meant that Turkey's diplomatic ambitions were largely thwarted, with Cairo remaining the preferred venue for many of the mediation efforts, both between the two Palestinian factions, and between Palestinians and Israelis. Given Hamas's increasing reliance on Egypt to keep their tunnel economy viable, they were not able to force the issue (ICG 2009: 44; Caridi 2012: 287). A by-product of Turkey's diplomatic foray was heightened diplomatic tensions with Israel, who did not take favourably to overt Turkish criticisms.

Hamas, Turkey, and the Freedom Flotilla

Turkey's diplomatic ambitions resulted in it adopting a new interventionist strategy by becoming the only regional power to use its political strength to attempt to break Gaza's siege. In May 2010, the so-called Freedom Flotilla sailed from Istanbul destined for Gaza with 10,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid and 700 pro-Palestinian activists. In the early hours of 31 May 2010, Israeli Special Forces boarded the vessel and in the ensuing melee nine activists were killed (Caridi 2012: 288). In the diplomatic fallout from the raid, Turkey recalled its ambassador to Israel, with PM Erdoğan accusing Israel of state terrorism (Reuters & Haaretz 2010).

While the flotilla was stopped, Israel's strong reaction to the prospect of its siege being penetrated shone a harsh diplomatic light on its actions towards Gaza. PM Netanyahu attempted to portray Israel's reaction as designed to prevent Hamas potentially receiving Iranian weapons. The Israeli government refused to countenance the possibility of any independent aid getting into Gaza. However, in the raid's aftermath Israel received some strident criticism from the US, Britain, and the UNSC, with all parties calling on Israel to lift its siege, and to conduct a transparent investigation into the raid, and the activists' deaths (David & Haaretz 2010).

While the flotilla raid marked the nadir of Turkish/Israeli relations, it only served to strengthen those between the Turkish government and Hamas. In Gaza, the government named streets after the dead activists, and funerals were held in Gaza in absentia (Caridi 2012: 286). In Turkey, the activists' coffins were draped with the Turkish and Palestinian flags, with the Turkish president, Abdullah Gül (2010, cited in Haaretz 2010) telling mourners, 'Turkey will never forget such an attack on its ships and its people in international waters. Turkey's ties with Israel will never be the same again.' PM Erdoğan went further, addressing Israel in Hebrew, calling Hamas 'resistance fighters' and warning that 'The fate of Gaza is not different from the fate of Ankara' (Reuters, Haaretz Services & DPA 2010).

Turkey and the Arab Uprisings

In the period immediately following the Arab Uprisings, Turkey emerged as a regional balancer. Situating itself between the geopolitical models of Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shi'a Iran, Turkey attempted to establish an alternative model for political Islam in international diplomacy (Salloukh 2013: 40, 42). Many of the new Arab regimes believed that Turkey had played a constructive role in the Uprisings, and looked to emulate the Turkish government. At the time, the AKP model was attractive because of its relative success at degrading the political influence of the military, constructing a functional democracy and facilitating an impressive level of economic growth (Ayoob 2012: 91; Noueihed & Warren 2012: 276, 295).

The relationship between Hamas and Turkey strengthened as events in Egypt worsened following the coup against Morsi, with the Turkish government becoming one of Hamas's few remaining regional benefactors. However, it appears this deepening diplomatic relationship was itself the target of diplomatic intrigue. In late 2013, Israeli media reported that the Erdoğan government had pressured the Hamas leadership not to reconcile with Fatah so as not to provide the interim Egyptian government with a diplomatic victory (Khoury & Reuters 2013). However, other media reports indicated that this story might be part of an orchestrated campaign against the Turkish government given its strong support of Hamas and its strident criticism of the coup against Morsi. According to the latter report, Erdoğan was against any peace talks between Abbas and the GoI that did not include Hamas. It would appear as though the GoI was also annoyed with Meshaal's visit to Turkey in late 2013, and that his meeting with Erdoğan provided Hamas with a diplomatic fillip. According to media reports the Turkish government's regional interventions in support of Morsi, and advocating for Assad's overthrow had isolated it from not only most of the Arab Sunni states, but also Iran and Syria (Idiz 2013).

Turkey and Hamas post-Morsi

In the wake of the coup against Morsi and the 2014 Gaza war, the relationship between the Turkish government and Hamas appears to be growing closer, while the relationship between Turkey and Israel continues to be fractious. In a terse diplomatic exchange after the war, Turkish PM Erdoğan reportedly accused Israel of being more barbaric than Hitler, with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon countering by declaring that Hamas had constructed command centres in Turkey (The Times of Israel 2014b). Israel filed a complaint with NATO over Turkey's continuing support of Hamas, with media reports noting that Hamas feared the GoI would resume its assassination programme (Abu-Amer 2014f).

The fact that Turkey was apparently hosting senior Hamas leaders also drew increased attention from the US. The House Foreign Affairs Joint Subcommittees on Terrorism and the Middle East began paying closer attention to how much aid Turkey and Qatar were providing Hamas, especially as both were key regional

allies. Both committees subsequently urged the Treasury Department to take all necessary measures against both countries because of their continuing support of Hamas (Pecquet 2014). With Hamas under so much pressure from Egypt's MB purges, and its uncertain financial arrangements with Iran, Israel and the US were not going to accept Hamas being granted a diplomatic and financial lifeline from either Turkey or Qatar.

Conclusion

What the preceding analysis illustrates is the diplomatic perils the stateless Palestinians face, especially when confronted by regional geopolitical struggles for power. Despite Hamas's regional alliance building efforts being based on pragmatic diplomatic and political rationales, rather than upon ideological affinity they remain subject to the vicissitudes of regional geopolitical power plays. In response, Hamas seeks to navigate a tricky course between retaining a degree of diplomatic independence and the necessity of entering alliances with key, but diplomatically fickle, regional actors.

While the 2006 election victory made Hamas a legitimate regional political actor, it also complicated its efforts to establish any regional alliances to mitigate Israel's siege. In many cases, the efforts by Hamas to garner the support of regional benefactors created alliance dilemmas for both Hamas and its various benefactors. This often meant that Hamas found itself being used as geopolitical chattel by regional diplomatic powerhouses, intent on furthering or maintaining, their own regional status. Despite the political costs associated with these alliance dilemmas, Hamas does need these regional benefactors, not only to ameliorate the effects of the siege, but also to provide its government with a measure of diplomatic protection from efforts to excise it from Palestinian politics.

The intent of Israel's siege forced Hamas to enter predominantly short-term, opportunistic alliances that were geared towards addressing the specific issues/problems created by the siege. This, coupled with a reticence over Hamas's Islamist antecedence, ultimately prevented Hamas from developing long-term, more strategic partnerships that may have resulted in more substantive diplomatic support for its government in Gaza.

Nevertheless, this situation did not stop Hamas from crafting nuanced diplomatic positions that demonstrate a degree of diplomatic independence and pragmatism. Some of these positions have, in the short term, actually hurt the movement financially, and cost it sorely needed diplomatic and political support. This has meant that Hamas had had to become adept at reorientating its diplomatic objectives to cultivate as much diplomatic, financial, military, and social support as possible. Here it is possible to discern the scope and limits of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. While Hamas is willing to make concessions to retain an alliance, it is unwilling to capitulate completely to external pressures. Instructively, Hamas's response to these diplomatic pressures increasingly involves advocating more politically moderate solutions to placate external forces.

This is particularly the case with Hamas's fraught diplomatic relations with Egypt, where Hamas has become collateral damage in the military regime's fight against the MB. This complicates the geopolitical situation confronting Hamas as it seeks to militate against the Egyptian regime's efforts to reduce the influence of the MB in Egyptian and regional politics. However, given Egypt's economic importance to Hamas, with its border with Egypt Gaza's only international border, Hamas is forced to petition successive Egyptian regimes for support. This tilts the balance of power in Egypt's favour, enabling Egypt to use Hamas as chattel to further the regime's domestic and regional geopolitical ambitions.

Hamas's relationship with Iran and Syria has also caused intense concern for the movement. When Hamas had a supportive diplomatic relationship with Syria, it had a degree of diplomatic protection from regional geopolitical forces. Once this relationship ended acrimoniously, Hamas found itself susceptible to the after-effects of the Arab Uprising that had enhanced regional diplomatic and political asymmetry. Hamas became a pawn in the geopolitical struggle between those states supportive of the MB, and those who vehemently opposed the MB. This has involved a degree of sacrifice and diplomatic contrition on behalf of Hamas as it sought to placate both sides. Overall, Hamas's diplomatic exertions demonstrate a willingness and capacity to learn to art of diplomatic compromise to achieve broader organisational objectives, particularly its survival as the governing authority in Gaza.

Notes

1 In 2012, it was estimated that between USD 500–700 million worth of goods entered Gaza via Hamas's tunnel network, with Hamas charging a 14.5% import duty on all goods. See ICG (2012a: 34).

2 Dahlan apparently visited Cairo in November 2013 and met with al-Sisi about returning to the OPT. However, media reports noted that al-Sisi had apparently no interest in entering into the Fatah/Hamas competition other than ensuring Hamas stayed out of the Sinai. See Aronson (2013).

3 In a media briefing after the cessation of hostilities an IDF officer told journalists, 'The security situation near Gaza will be much better on the morning after. There's the potential to affect a fundamental change, which stems from the size of the blow [dealt Hamas], as well as from our ties with Egypt.' See Cohen (2014).

4 After the cessation of hostilities and IDF Officer informed journalists that Israel 'has an interest in [Hamas] having an "address" in the Gaza Strip. The Somalia scenario, in which a state deteriorates into subgroups, can happen, but we don't want it to happen.' See Cohen (2014).

5 Hamas has also used Qatari officials to pass information to the US. In 2010, the emir informed Senator John Kerry, then chairman of the US Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, that Hamas was willing to accept the 1967 border with Israel but would not publicly say so because it would lose public support. See WikiLeaks (2010).

6 In January 2006, Turkey signed an agreement with the PA and the GoI giving a Turkish consortium responsibility for reviving and managing the Erez Industrial Zone in Gaza. Turkey was also seeking financial support to build a 40- to 50-bed hospital in Gaza. It was thought that the timing of the announcement and the visit to the OPT by Turkey's foreign minister was meant to encourage Palestinian moderation prior to the election. See WikiLeaks (2004).

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Conclusion

Hamas's 2006 election victory was a seminal moment in Palestinian political history. It marked Hamas's transition from an NSAG to a legitimate political actor, something that was to alter significantly the dynamics of Hamas's involvement in Palestinian politics and the parameters within which the movement is analysed. What this study has demonstrated is that Hamas's national liberation agenda has had a decisive influence on the scope, limits, and causation of shifts in its political behaviour. These behavioural shifts have enabled Hamas to make the potentially problematic transition from opposition movement to majority government – a position it has held now for over a decade.

Despite the imposition of Israel's political and economic siege, Hamas continues to maintain its capacity and desire to govern. This raises the important question: what sustains Hamas in its determination to continue participating in politics? The answer, in part, is that it is about more than Hamas establishing its right to govern in Gaza, about more than Hamas continuing to challenge Israel's occupation of the OPT, and about more than Hamas's desire to Islamise Palestinian society. The reality is that the Palestinians, led by Hamas and Fatah, are involved in a larger struggle for independence. Hamas's raison d'être is to achieve Palestinian independence, and its entry into politics was motivated by the goal of becoming a legitimate political actor. Hamas understood that this would provide the movement with a political voice, not only in how the OPT was governed, but more importantly in the decision-making processes concerning the negotiations with Israel and the international community over a sovereign Palestine. As this study has demonstrated, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination involves a series of interconnected battles that take place in different arenas and over disparate issues. Consequently, this study makes several theoretical and empirical contributions to how Hamas is understood in the post-election era.

Hamas's dual resistance strategy

One of the most significant shifts in Hamas's political behaviour has been the development and implementation of its dual resistance strategy. The DRS provides Hamas with a flexible strategy to compete electorally while remaining faithful to its resistance ethos. The principal benefit of the DRS is that it provides Hamas with

a mechanism to transmute resistance legitimacy into political authority in Gaza. Given that the goal of Israel's siege is to precipitate the collapse of Hamas's government, in the three wars between 2008 and 2014, Hamas has had to rely on its armed resistance to ensure that it remained a viable political actor. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, Hamas continues to generate considerable symbolic and political capital by simply surviving Israel's military onslaughts. After each war Hamas was able to transmute its popularity fillip into sustaining, and occasionally even regaining, a measure of its political authority in Gaza that had been eroded by Israel's siege. Despite its role being modulated through the imposition of a DRS, Hamas's armed resistance continues to play an important role in Hamas's narrative, demonstrating that it retains the political will and military capability to resist Israel's siege and occupation using violence, regardless of the inherent asymmetry and costs incurred.

Despite the siege and its reliance on armed resistance, Hamas continues to accord its political resistance efforts greater priority, as it recognises that a successful resolution to the 'Palestinian Question' ultimately requires a political solution. Importantly, a DRS enables Hamas to incorporate some of its core tenets of resistance into its political narrative. This politicisation allows Hamas to adapt to the vicissitudes of governing Gaza while under siege without having to make any substantive ideological compromises to its raison d'être of actively resisting Israeli occupation and championing Palestinian independence. The adverse reaction to Hamas's election victory meant that its state-building agenda has been partly stymied. While Hamas has managed to increase the institutional capacity of the PA in Gaza, it has been blocked from using this to influence Palestinian self-determination efforts in the international arena. Israel, the Quartet, and Fatah refuse to countenance any change in the status quo of the Peace Process. Therefore, Hamas's political resistance efforts became geared towards ensuring its political survival. Hamas continues to focus on demonstrating to Palestinians, Israelis, and the international community that despite the economic and social privations of the siege, it retains the capacity and desire to govern Gaza and resist all efforts geared towards forcing it out of Palestinian politics.

Paradoxically, it appears that Hamas's DRS has worked too well. The legitimacy accorded to Hamas because of its election victory was not something that Israel, the Quartet, or Fatah could accept. Despite Hamas's efforts to alter the way that these actors view the import of its political participation, there seems little chance that Israel will lift its political and economic siege while Hamas remains a viable political actor. Additionally, the continued mistrust between Hamas and Fatah, which is a direct result of Hamas's resilient political viability, means that there is also little likelihood of any political reconciliation that would see the formation of a unity government where Hamas and Fatah agree to share power equitably. Ultimately, this means that Hamas will remain excluded from any negotiations concerning Palestinian statehood in the foreseeable future. While this is the aim of Israel, the US, and Fatah, it robs the Palestinians of any legitimate institution through which to push for the implementation of the two-state solution.

The by-product of Hamas's continued political viability means that PLC, PNC, and presidential elections are also unlikely to be held in the OPT in the foreseeable future. Consequently, Palestinians will remain disaggregated politically and societally, deprived of a united political voice to address the myriad problems associated with governing the OPT, and more importantly with prosecuting the Palestinian case for statehood. The problem for Hamas, and indeed for Fatah, is how long can the stalemate in the Peace Process continue before a viable Palestinian state becomes untenable?

Shifts in political moderation

This study's exploration of the shifts in Hamas's political behaviour also provides an understanding of how Hamas responds as an Islamist movement and as a government to the vagaries and vicissitudes of governing. This allows some observations to be made about the extent of Hamas's tactical and ideological moderation. It will be recalled that moderation is an imprecise term and open to many interpretations. Schwedler (2007: 59) defines it as a process of change that might be described as movement along a continuum from radical to moderate, whereby a move away from more exclusionary practices equates to an increase in moderation.

Employing this perspective, what this study has demonstrated is that the shifts in Hamas's behaviour have indeed resulted in the positive movement along the moderation/radical continuum on several issues. Nevertheless, any movement by Hamas along the continuum, and any increased flexibility with regards to its core beliefs, is certainly not linear, unidirectional, or internally consistent. In line with previous analyses (see Schwedler 2006; Tezcür 2010; Wickham 2013), this study found that the extent and limits of any shifts in Hamas's political behaviour varies considerably from issue to issue. Hamas cannot be considered a unitary political actor that is ideologically monolithic. Like all MB styled movements, Hamas entered Palestinian politics to change it. However, rather than just Hamas changing the system, the system and Hamas both changed, with some policy areas experiencing more change than others. Hamas's uneven record of moderation can also be attributed to organisational 'redlines' and domestic pressures related to its steadfast campaign for Palestinian self-determination. This is entirely consistent with what Marks refers to as 'malleable conservatism', which sees organisational survivalism, gradualism, and long-term orientated pragmatism as being strategically advantageous (Marks 2016). By adopting this line of thinking Hamas can maintain support from the at times opposing forces of conservatives and progressives in Hamas and among Palestinians in the OPT.

Tactical moderation

It is clear from the analysis presented in this study that Hamas has tactically moderated its behaviour in several areas. The view by Hamas that continued political participation remains the most effective vehicle for achieving its organisational

goals is an important facet of its tactical moderation. This decision is driven largely by Hamas wanting to have a political voice in Palestinian politics, and it views the PLC as the most effective venue of achieving this goal. Despite ten years of Israel's siege and three wars, in concert with Fatah's continued organisational opposition, Hamas remains a viable political actor that continues to govern Gaza. Even when Hamas agreed to withdraw completely from the new reconciliation government in 2014, it remained committed to participating in the proposed presidential, PLC, and PNC elections.

Policy areas such as education, the legal system, and social morality also demonstrate a tactical shift by Hamas towards adopting a more flexible policy stance. In these areas Hamas has largely remained faithful to its Manifesto, with policy implementation reflecting its campaign promises. Instructively, Hamas chose to implement a process of 'soft-Islamisation' that was intended to enhance the role that Islam played in Gazan society gradually and selectively. Not only did these efforts establish and cement Hamas's political authority in Gaza, they also formed part of its institutional capacity-building endeavours that are intrinsic to Hamas's state-building agenda. As elaborated in Chapter 5, Hamas concentrated on reforming these institutions and policy areas, and has consulted, compromised, and engaged in pragmatic policy development and implementation. Indeed, part of Hamas's political resistance strategy is its desire to demonstrate its performance-based governance legitimacy, despite the efforts of Israel, the Quartet, and Fatah to vitiate this. The various reforms and institutional capacity-building endeavours instituted by Hamas illustrates that it is determined to implement core 'good governance' measures such as policy transparency and accountability, ensuring a professional bureaucracy, and establishing the rule of law. While Hamas has also become progressively authoritarian, a good deal of the impetus for this can be attributed to the determined efforts of Israel, the Quartet, and Fatah to undermine and challenge Hamas's political authority in Gaza, and Hamas's concomitant efforts to thwart these efforts.

With no prospect of Israel lifting its siege just how more authoritarian Hamas becomes in order to stay in power in Gaza is open to conjecture. Equally, just how much this damages Hamas's popularity in Gaza is also open to conjecture. However, should Hamas decide at some stage to withdraw from politics, and revert to its previous strategy of unilateral armed resistance, then this would likely have an adverse effect on the legitimacy of Hamas as a key member of Palestinian resistance efforts. Any withdrawal would be viewed by many in Hamas and among Palestinians, as a capitulation that would only serve to accentuate the organisational privations Hamas has experienced since 2006. More significantly, it would also amount to a clear victory for Israel and Fatah.

Ideological moderation

Given that ideological moderation involves a shift towards a substantive commitment to democratic principles, including the peaceful alternation of power, ideological, and political pluralism, and citizenship rights (Wickham 2004: 206),

assessing whether Hamas has ideologically moderated its behaviour, and in what areas, is problematic. On the one hand, this is because ideological moderation is more a reflection of a movement's normative shift in behaviour that is less accurately observable. On the other hand, the Palestinian political system is far from democratic. Indeed, it has become increasingly authoritarian in response to Hamas's continued electoral viability. As discussed in Chapter 4, in the aftermath of the 2006 election, Abbas transferred considerable institutional and political power away from the PLC to the presidency to ensure the PLC remained subordinate to the presidency. There have also not been any PLC elections since 2006, despite each unity agreement stipulating that elections be held, generally within six months of their signing. Additionally, presidential elections were meant to be conducted in 2009, but have been continually postponed, with Abbas governing the West Bank by presidential decree. Given the OPT's political climate, and an accompanying lack of support from Israel and the Quartet, there appears little likelihood that elections will be held in the future.

Despite this, it does not mean that there have not been instances where Hamas has demonstrated a degree of ideological moderation. As with tactical moderation, these ideological shifts are uneven, inconsistent, and temporal, and are subject to oscillation along the moderation continuum. The fact that Hamas has remained faithful to many of its policy positions outlined in its Election Manifesto is instructive. This means that there is little reason to suspect that given the opportunity, Hamas would not begin to adopt and/or implement the more normative changes outlined in its Manifesto. These include the separation of powers, ensuring political plurality, the peaceful and unfettered alternation of power, safeguarding political liberties, and the primacy of elections (Tamimi 2009: 295). These actions are indicative of the sorts of normative shifts in political behaviour necessary for an assessment of any ideological moderation on the part of Hamas.

The important caveat to this is that what motivates Hamas in advancing these reforms is not necessarily the unconditional acceptance and embrace of the democratic ethos. Over the decades, Fatah has manipulated and altered the Palestinian political system to ensure its unfettered access to, and control of, political power in the OPT. Arguably, Hamas's quest to reform the current system stems from its desire to force Fatah to relinquish its hegemonic grip on power in Palestinian politics. If this ever occurred without external interference, the real test of Hamas's ideological moderation would be how it dealt with its new-found power, and whether it was willing to accept any institutional and constitutional limits on its exercise as found in more advanced democratic systems.

Perhaps the one area where it is possible to make firmer judgements about whether Hamas has ideologically moderated is the issue of *shari'ah*, and the occasionally contrary relationship between divine and popular sovereignty. As detailed in Chapter 4, CR's Manifesto stipulated that *shari'ah* would be the main, but not the sole, source of legislation. Hamas accepts that *shari'ah* is not a comprehensive legal doctrine, there are gaps and silences that need to be filled, and this can be done through the passing of legislation by a popularly elected legislative body (Gunning 2009: 80). During its time in government Hamas has remained relatively

consistent with this approach, despite the internal ideological challenges from the Salafi-Jihadists in Gaza.

Consequently, when Hamas assumed control of Gaza after the election, it incorporated *shari'ah* into a hybrid legal system that included reconstituted conciliation committees and the existing government administered secular judicial system. While the legal system certainly assumed an Islamic hue, Hamas seemed content to encourage an incremental approach that concentrated on institutional reform and capacity building, and promoting piety among Palestinians, rather than the strict enforcement of *shari'ah* norms. Again, reflecting the ethos of malleable conservatism, Hamas seems to have found a workable middle ground whereby divine law and legislated law are employed in tandem. Instructively, such is the nature of this symbiosis that neither source is given primacy, allowing Hamas to promote a centrist narrative that appeals to all sections of Palestinian society. Hamas remains cognisant of the public's wariness concerning any wholesale implementation of *shari'ah* and the rigid Islamisation of Gaza. The subsequent interplay between the Palestinian public and Hamas in this area provides the necessary boundaries for Hamas's operationalisation of *shari'ah* in Gaza.

Even in ideologically sensitive areas such as Hamas's opposition to the Peace Process and the formal recognition of Israel, there have been some subtle yet notable shifts in behaviour that demonstrate a growing sense of pragmatism and political learning at play. As noted by Gunning (2009: 268), Hamas's religious interpretation of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, along with continued intransigence from hardliners, makes any genuine compromise with Israel highly problematic. Nevertheless, since its decision to participate in the electoral process, Hamas has shifted the focus of its opposition to the Peace Process from using religious to using political arguments. This has meant that Hamas's opposition has become significantly less zero-sum, leaving it open to participating in negotiations with Israel over Palestinian statehood. This nuanced stance provides Hamas with space to manoeuvre politically thereby remaining faithful to its core tenets without being closed to the prospect of negotiations in the future. This stance also allows Hamas the ability to justify its objections to the Peace Process to potential international benefactors, particularly the EU. Normatively, Hamas accepts the need for the Peace Process, in that it now acknowledges that moving into politics necessitates negotiating with Israel on this issue. However, Hamas rejects negotiating with Israel under the current circumstances of power asymmetry in favour of Israel. This policy stance enables Hamas to appeal to its various internal and external constituencies without any potentially damaging ideological compromises.

Hamas has also made noticeable shifts concerning its relationship with Israel. The publishing of the 2017 policy document contained Hamas's first overt acceptance of the existence of an Israeli state, and it represents a seminal shift in Hamas's ideological narrative. While Hamas continues to refuse to accept the legitimacy of the Israeli state, it does accept the existence of the Israeli state. Consequently, while Hamas has not renounced its long-term goal of seeing the establishment of a Palestinian state from the 'river to the sea,' it is willing to work towards achieving the interim objective of a truncated Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank,

Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Again, this position indicates a level of political and ideological pragmatism reached by Hamas's leadership. Not only does this interim position reflect the majority opinion of the Palestinian public, it also brings Hamas closer to Fatah's position, narrowing the amount of criticism directed at Hamas for failing to recognise political reality. Importantly, Hamas's interim position reflects international law in that the borders of any future Palestinian state must be based on the 1949 ceasefire lines and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Paradoxically, this enables Hamas to increase the cogency of its own oppositionist narrative by criticising the extent to which Fatah must compromise in its own endeavours to implement the two-state solution without any apparent Israeli reciprocity. Finally, it provides Hamas with the ability to denounce Israel about the state of the Peace Process negotiations with their inherent power asymmetry.

Perhaps the most contentious issue concerning an assessment of whether Hamas has ideologically moderated is its continued use of violence. The implementation of a DRS means that Hamas's use of violence is intended to support its political resistance endeavours. These endeavours have as much to do with improving the governance of the OPT as they do resisting Israel's occupation. The crucial feature here is that Hamas's entry into majority government means that it can no longer be classified as a non-state actor. Therefore, Hamas's use of violence occurs from inside the political system, rather than from outside. As Chapter 6 established, Hamas's use of violence is not anti-systemic, nor is it aimed at spoiling any democratic efforts by Fatah. It is aimed at keeping Hamas a viable political actor in the face of efforts to force it out of the Palestinian political system. Nevertheless, Hamas's use of violence is limited by the expectations of the Palestinian public and the strategic decision accorded to prioritising its political resistance efforts. While Palestinians support, and perhaps expect, Hamas to resist Israeli occupation through the occasional use of violence, this does not give Hamas licence to return to the levels of gratuitous violence exhibited during the Second Intifada. The raison d'être of Hamas's DRS is the public's demand for political as well as armed resistance. The DRS framework has therefore made this conceptually appealing for future research into the role of violence and its relationship to the IM framework.

Instructively, what this study has illuminated is that Hamas appears more willing to make ideological concessions on the Islamist side of its ideological make-up, then on the national liberation side of the equation. This is an important distinction to make when considering the apparently symbiotic relationship between Islamism and violence noted in some of the literature on Hamas and other Islamist movements (see Davis 2016; Bartal 2016). It is also a reflection of Hamas's strategy of retaining its trenchant opposition to Israeli occupation, while making gradual shifts in behaviour in other key areas.

The public's role in changing Hamas's political behaviour

What this study has highlighted is the key role that the Palestinian public plays in providing the impetus for shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. This factor is one not previously explored by similar studies using the IM framework that have

tended to focus exclusively on the Islamist movements themselves (see Schwedler 2006; Ashour 2009; Tezcür 2010; Brown 2012; Wickham 2013). These previous studies investigated the shifts in behaviour of groups operating in functioning states. Here state institutions, combined with a constitution, played crucial roles in shaping the extent and character of any shifts in a movement's political behaviour because they create, administer, and control the movement's access to political space (Schwedler 2006: 12, 14; Grinberg 2010: 16–19). The institutional parameters of the democratic process, pressures of appealing to voter sentiments, and the need for coalition bargaining, act together to restrain a movement's more radical policies and inclinations (Ruparelia 2006: 318). As this study has demonstrated, the Palestinian public has largely assumed this role in terms of providing the necessary incentives and restraints concerning the character and direction of the shifts in Hamas's political behaviour. It is worth noting that when Hamas entered electoral politics, the PA's political institutions and Palestinian civil society lacked any real clout and autonomy, having been largely co-opted by Fatah in its hegemonic grip on Palestinian politics. Similarly, Palestinian Basic Law was never intended to be a neutral document, with institutional and political power skewed heavily in the president's favour.

As this study has demonstrated, there is a constant interplay between the public and Hamas that replaces the role of state institutions and a neutral constitution to encourage Hamas to shift its behaviour to include electoral participation. As such, by continually attempting to reconfigure its policies to reflect prevailing public opinion, Hamas has learnt the value of adopting this form of malleable conservatism. As detailed in Chapter 2, this process began in 2005 with the development of Hamas's DRS. The Quartet's 2003 Roadmap and the 2005 Cairo Accord then provided Hamas with the opportunity to participate in elections in the OPT.

The adoption of this malleable conservatism is reflected in CR's Election Manifesto. This document marked a clear shift in Hamas's political behaviour, and reflects its increasingly nuanced and pragmatic understanding of politics and the nature of its relationship with the Palestinian public. Hamas began shifting away from advocating long-term utopian and arguably unachievable objectives, towards focusing on shorter-term and practical political aspirations designed to ameliorate and address the current needs of Palestinians. Palestinian public opinion has played a pivotal role in driving these changes. Prior to the 2006 election, Hamas recalibrated its political narrative and its policy platform to mirror the key concerns of the Palestinian public that were highlighted by public opinion polls. These polls also showed that Palestinians wanted Hamas to transcend its ideological 'blind spots,' and expected Hamas to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards Israel and the Peace Process.

This marked the first version of Hamas's political resistance that was intended to reform the PA, build its institutional capacity to provide better governance for Palestinians, and in doing so propel their efforts to achieve statehood. Hamas's 2006 electoral campaign was directed at addressing key public concerns, specifically institutional corruption and implementing comprehensive good governance reforms in the OPT. Displaying a degree of democratic and political learning,

Hamas concentrated solely on those areas where its support was strongest, while modulating and excluding the more contentious aspects of its Islamist and national liberationist political narrative.

The extent of the public's role in influencing Hamas's governing character is exemplified by the implementation of its soft-Islamisation and soft-authoritarian policy frameworks. These were compromise stances that were calculated to ensure that Hamas's policy positions did not deviate too far from prevailing public opinion, while guaranteeing that Hamas remained firmly in control of Gaza. These frameworks were intentionally cautious, and at times capricious, rather than being ideologically driven normative dictates, indicating Hamas's survivalist instincts. Hamas's habit of issuing policy 'test balloons' to gauge public opinion on contentious issues provides an example of the policy interplay between Hamas and the public. The soft-Islamisation and soft-authoritarian frameworks were also intended to appease more socially and religiously conservative Gazans, and neutralise the influence of the competing Salafi-Jihadist narrative.

It is also important to understand that while Hamas's policies were primarily directed at Gazans, they also had to consider public opinion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. How Hamas governed in Gaza is watched keenly by all Palestinians. Therefore, the various policy inconsistencies, uncertainties, and contradictions that surround Hamas's policy-making processes should not be taken as being evidence of any ingrained aversion to implementing sound governance practices. Primarily they were in response to the particular political context that confronted Hamas after the election, and are more a sign of its gradualism and long-term pragmatism.

Hamas's time in government has also demonstrated that its deliberative decision-making processes could be problematic when having to deal expeditiously with the vicissitudes of governing. Nevertheless, Hamas's political learning and increasing policy pragmatism is illustrative of its willingness to modify and reconfigure its policy positions to best suit the political context, while still maintaining a measure of faithfulness to its core tenets. Hamas, as both a movement and a government, recognise that the public expects it to implement centrist political policies based on effective governance, and the provision of basic services.

However, the public's influence only extends so far. As illustrated in Chapter 7, despite public pressure for Hamas and Fatah to share power, any durable unity agreement has failed to materialise. While this is not entirely the fault of Hamas and Fatah, nor the public, the inherent mistrust that exists between the two movements, coupled with external spoiling means that any genuine reconciliation remains moribund. Again, the underlying cause is the symbolism attached to any reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and what that would mean for Hamas's continued role in Palestinian politics and its quest to drive Palestinian statehood efforts.

Overall, this study has revealed that Hamas is a complex political actor whose shifts in political behaviour at the tactical and ideological levels have been driven by its desire for a political voice in how the OPT is governed, and in the continually fractious Peace Process. Hamas's use of a DRS provides it with a

nuanced and flexible policy framework that enable it to seize political opportunities to create a narrative that satisfies its moderate and hard-line members simultaneously. At the micro-level, there have been several tactical shifts in the political behaviour of Hamas that have affected political life in the OPT. However, the continued intractability between Hamas and Fatah means politics in the OPT has stagnated, with neither faction able to break the deadlock militarily, or to reconcile politically.

The December 2017 polling results aptly illustrate many of these complexities, the Janus-faced state of Palestinian politics, and the inherent need for Hamas to retain its DRS. On the domestic front a clear majority of Palestinians favour Isma'il Haniyeh over Mahmoud Abbas as president. However, the majority of Palestinians would vote for Fatah over CR in any forthcoming election (see PCPSR 2017: Poll No. 66). Furthermore, 54.9% of Palestinian respondents were dissatisfied with the so-called reconciliation government, with 78% of respondents supporting the establishment of a national unity government that included Hamas. Importantly, 49% of respondents believed that any unity government should not be obligated to work in accordance with Abbas's peace policies, versus 42.9% who believe it should. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents, 44.8%, believed that if presidential elections were held in the near future then Hamas should choose a candidate from outside of the movement (see PCPSR 2017: Poll No. 66).

On the contentious issue of establishing a Palestinian state the polling results appear to reflect the growing belief among Palestinians that eventually they will have to fight to achieve independence. Consequently, when asked what methods will likely be most effective in establishing a Palestinian state, 43.6% of respondents favoured armed resistance, versus 27.3% who favoured negotiations, and 23.2% who advocated for popular non-violent resistance. In response to the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a clear majority of respondents favoured ceasing all contact with the US, submitting a complaint to the ICC, and returning to an armed intifada. In line with this view, 49.4% of respondents supported attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel, versus 45.6% who remain opposed (see PCPSR 2017: Poll No. 66).

Final thoughts

2017 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. It also marked ten years since Hamas assumed unilateral control of Gaza. These two events passed with little fanfare or open acknowledgement by the international community, particularly from the key actors Israel, the US, the EU, and the UN. Hamas's electoral participation was meant to herald the gradual democratisation of the Palestinian political system with hopes that this might have some positive affect on the Peace Process. Instead, Hamas's unexpected electoral victory ended up cementing and exacerbating the existing political and ideological divisions between it and Fatah, and created a mechanism for Israel to justify its trenchant opposition to any future Palestinian state.

The following year saw the seventieth anniversary of *al-naqbah* and the birth of the Israeli state. The event was marked by the symbolic move of the US embassy in Israel to West Jerusalem, and by six weeks of demonstrations by Gazans known as the ‘Great March of Return.’ These demonstrations resulted in the death of 113 Palestinians and the wounding of approximately 12,000 others (al-Jazeera 2018). Continued Israeli belligerence, coupled with international apathy and mistrust, not just to the plight of Palestinians but to their claims for independence are emblematic of a now well-established narrative whereby any resistance to the Israeli occupation is equated to an attack on the legitimacy and continued existence of a sovereign Israeli state.

Paradoxically, Hamas’s electoral success and continued political viability have proved deleterious to Palestinian efforts to achieve an independent state. It provide Israel with the excuse to entrench and prolong its geographical, political, and societal disaggregation of the OPT. Consequently, there now exists a separate Gaza controlled by an allegedly belligerent and ever-threatening Hamas, and a separate the West Bank controlled almost exclusively by Israel, but with its Palestinian population administered by Fatah. Jerusalem is now for all intents and purposes a united city controlled exclusively by Israel, making the prospect of East Jerusalem ever forming the capital of an independent Palestine impossible. This parlous situation is exacerbated by the perpetually intractable ideological divisions between Hamas and Fatah. With Hamas and Fatah unable and/or unwilling to reconcile, and with Israel continuing to dominate to the conflict’s political narrative, the prospects of Palestinians ever gaining independence are as remote as they have ever been. With this in mind, there will likely come a point when a political and peaceful solution to the ‘Palestinian Question’ becomes impossible. This leaves open a zero-sum military option as the only viable strategy left to Palestinians in their attempts to gain independence. How Israel and the international community deal with such an event is likely to determine the fate of Palestine and of Palestinians.

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