

# ACCOUNTING FOR FUNDAMENTALISMS



## *The Dynamic Character of Movements*

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## Palestinian Islamisms: Patriotism as a Condition of Their Expansion

Jean-François Legrain

As the first assessments of Islamic activities of the 1980s and early 1990s appear, it becomes necessary to organize and analyze information regarding the Palestinian case in order to illustrate its specificity. By the end of the 1970s, Western observers of Islam had learned, finally, to talk about “the Islams” in the plural—the various forms the religion takes around the world—but some continue today to fall into the trap of speaking of “Islamism” or “Islamic fundamentalism” in the singular, as if it too were monolithic and easily categorized. In the 1990s, we are forced to acknowledge that “Islamic fundamentalism” must be rendered in the plural, not only between given countries, but, in most cases, within the same national and regional context.

In terms of general trends there is a difference, for example, between the phenomenon of “Islamization from above” (*Islamisation par le haut*), to use Gilles Kepel’s term, or “revolutionary Islamism,” to use Olivier Roy’s term, on the one hand, and the phenomenon of “Islamization from below” (*Islamisation par le bas*), or “neo-fundamentalism,” on the other.<sup>1</sup> In the first configuration, the priority is to overthrow the state through violent action (e.g., the Iranian model). In this program of action Islamization requires and is conditioned by the fall of tyrants. In the second configuration, Islamists set out to establish and organize “Islamized spaces” in society. They do so with the intent to obtain from the state (whose actual form is no longer radically contested) the acknowledgment of these spaces and their extension to the whole of society. Kepel and Roy insist on the chronological succession of the two phenomena; that is, once the Iranian Revolution was seen, by the mid-1980s, as having failed both to transform Iran fully according to an Islamic model and to export an Islamic revolution, there was disenchantment among the fundamentalist community with revolutionary Islamization. Islamic activists turned thereafter to programs of Islamization “from below,” building an Islamic society “from the ground up,” as it were. Of course

this division is an ideal type and in reality was not replicated in precisely this way. But it serves to describe a general shift in attitudes among Islamic activist groups and organizations during the 1980s.

In the Palestinian case, the two Islamisms are easily identifiable. The movements of Islamic Jihad correspond to revolutionary Islamism and seek to throw off Israeli occupation to bring about a Palestinian state. For this trend the successful struggle for liberation constitutes the condition of a real re-Islamization of Palestine. By contrast, the different movements of the Muslim Brotherhood type reflect the model of re-Islamization from below. These groups have been interested in taking advantage of their quasi-immunity, a fruit of their abstention from the liberation fight, in order to pursue an authoritarian religious resocialization within the occupied territories.

The present study identifies the ideology, the behavior, the organizational structures, and the actors of each of these waves of Palestinian political Islam by comparing them before and after the onset of the Intifada in December 1987.

#### Before the Uprising: Palestinian Islamisms in Search of Partisans

During the first ten years of the Israeli occupation (1967–76) of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Islam rarely constituted the primary principle of legitimization of the Palestinian struggle for liberation; rather, the fight was carried on almost exclusively in the name of pan-Arab or Palestinian nationalisms. The “official” Islam of the West Bank (including the administration of the *waqf* [religious endowments] and the Shari’a courts) existed under the auspices of Jordan. The Supreme Islamic Council, established in Jerusalem after the 1967 war by the Palestinian notables hostile to the occupation, aligned itself with Jordan, and limited its activities to periodic publication of communiqués denouncing violations of the integrity of the Holy Places and repressive actions of the occupying force. In the Gaza Strip, the official administration of Islam proceeded under the auspices of autonomous associations, usually headed by graduates of the Egyptian al-Azhar University. In both cases, this Islamic leadership was content to restrict its activities to religious matters.

#### *Authoritarian Re-Islamization without Political Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers*

At the end of the 1970s a movement claiming to uphold the tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood, connected to its Egyptian and Jordanian branches, and financially supported by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, began to pursue the authoritarian re-Islamization of the society. In Gaza especially, but also sporadically on the West Bank, the presence of these Muslim Brothers was felt when they conducted violent raids on “places of perdition” (bars, cinemas) and against a number of unveiled women, whom they considered a scandalous cause of public debauchery.<sup>2</sup> Despite the radical nature of their discourse on the “Jewish entity,” however, the Muslim Brotherhood did not openly confront the Israeli occupying forces during the decade that preceded the Intifada.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it limited its political activities to the struggle against the Palestinian Communist party in the name of fighting against atheism. Fatah, the main wing of

the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and Jordan were happy to encourage this Islamist attack on the “Left,” and Israel too had an interest in encouraging divisions among the Palestinians. Exceptions to this general pattern occurred in 1984, when Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, founder of the most important network of Islamic associations in the Gaza Strip, and several of his associates were arrested and convicted for having founded an armed cell aimed at the destruction of Israel (although their arms had never been used).<sup>4</sup>

Although this decision not to engage in direct resistance with the Israelis cost them political legitimacy among many Palestinians, the Muslim Brothers managed to establish a large network of pious associations (entailing study of the Qur’an and the hadith) and of social and charitable societies (e.g., medical clinics, sports clubs, kindergartens) in the Gaza Strip. There Shaykh Yasin emerged as a charismatic and influential leader. His Islamic Assembly (al-Mujamma’ al-Islami) infiltrated the majority of mosques and came to control the Islamic University through both administrators and students (regularly winning more than 75 percent of the vote). But on the West Bank, in spite of the spread of religious associations, the Brothers failed to establish a network or to find a charismatic leader. The majority of mosques escaped their control, and their only strongholds were in the universities, where they obtained roughly 40 percent of the votes in student elections.

Studying candidates slated in university elections gives a clear idea of the kind of people recruited by the Muslim Brothers.<sup>5</sup> On the West Bank, militant Islam was mostly a male phenomenon; only 3 percent of the Islamist candidates were women (as opposed to 13 percent of nationalist candidates). Although Muslim Brothers were representative of the general Muslim population in some respects, they were slightly more urban and less likely to live in refugee camps (only 2 percent as opposed to 8 percent of the general population). The Muslim Brothers were more urban than Fatah partisans, who were more likely than the general population to live in the camps, and they were more rural than the Marxist groups. The Islamist element was centered in the north, with the city of Nablus and the region of Tulkarm-Jenin as strongholds, and in the south, with Hebron and surrounding villages as strongholds. Like Fatah, but unlike the Marxist groups concentrated in the center region (Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem), the Islamists in the West Bank attracted a considerable number of students from Gaza. At the Islamic University of Gaza,<sup>6</sup> the Muslim Brothers consistently won the chairs of student councils, tallying up to 80 percent of the vote (men and women vote in different colleges). They lived in refugee camps in smaller proportions than did the general population (only 43 percent as opposed to 54 percent) and gathered mainly in the northern regions of the Gaza Strip: 74 percent of Muslim Brothers lived there compared to 52 percent of the general Muslim population. Only 4 percent of their candidates resided in the southern regions (Khan Yunis and Rafah). In contrast, Fatah was heavily represented in the south and under-represented in the north, with the numbers of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) reflecting the geographical distribution of the general population.

Such a sociological study, whose general lines are confirmed in the analysis of other samples (candidates slated at union or professional association elections), serves par-

tially to dispel, at least in the Palestinian case, the conventional wisdom that the rise of Islamic radicalism is a barometer of the economic and social frustration of the most disadvantaged people in society. Most of the Palestinian refugees, unlike other *mustad'afun* (disadvantaged people) in the Muslim world, have maintained their allegiance to the different nationalist organizations of the PLO. In general terms, then, it may be said that, despite their intense activism in academic and university circles, the Islamists did not enjoy significant influence among *politists*—politicized and activist people—before the mid-1980s because of their virtual refusal to enter the anti-Israeli resistance.

#### *Armed Islam and Political Legitimacy without the Masses: The Islamic Jihad*

It was only with the appearance of a second movement, rivaling the Muslim Brotherhood in the field of Islamic activism but fundamentally different in political behavior, that Islam became integral to the politics of the occupied territories. In the process, the Muslim Brotherhood itself was radically transformed. This second Islamist movement made jihad against Israel, in all its forms, including armed struggle, the central individual and immediate religious duty (*fard 'ayn*). The Islamic Jihad appeared publicly on the political arena in 1981, when students entered elections at the Islamic University of Gaza as *mustaqillun* (independent, but partisans of the jihad), standing against candidates from both the Muslim Brothers and the nationalist camp. The Jihad entered the military arena when an Israeli settler was stabbed and killed at Hebron by a commando unit led by Ibrahim Sirbil. The generic name "Islamic Jihad" was applied to the various groups embracing this principle, even though each had a different structure and "guide" at the helm. The movement was also diverse geographically, and its members and their activities ranged from the intellectual elite on the one hand to the military on the other.<sup>7</sup>

The new movement located its ideological roots in the Egyptian Jihad Organization, whose members had assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat; in Sayyid Qutb, the Muslim Brotherhood intellectual who was executed by the Egyptian regime in 1966; and, although the Palestinian Jihad is Sunni and resolutely Palestinian, in 'Ali Shari'ati and the Islamic Revolution of Iran. The annihilation of Israel is, for Jihad, an obligatory condition of a profound and successful Islamization of society. Anti-Israeli radicalism is the theme of its discourse: the liberation of Palestine is fundamentally a religious question which concerns the entire Islamic community; the protection of Islam from the West's repeated attacks is the main challenge of this century; and, finally, since Israel constitutes the spearhead of this aggression, it is imperative to annihilate the Western menace by destroying the "Jewish entity."

Jihad developed in reaction to what they saw as the inefficient missionary efforts undertaken by the Muslim Brothers. Averting the attention of the believer from political and militant action and the priority of liberating Palestine, the Muslim Brothers' main program was judged ultimately damaging to Islam itself.

Unlike the Muslim Brothers, Jihad is not a *mass movement* but a nebulous circle of small groups organized loosely around and by "guides" and united by a common ideology. At Gaza, it arose primarily as a result of the activity of two men: Dr. Fathi Shqaqi, a physician in Rafah, who became the organizational leader, and 'Abd al-'Aziz

'Uda, a lecturer at the Islamic University, who became the spiritual guide. Both were in touch with Jihad study circles in Egypt and both supported the Islamic Revolution in Iran.<sup>8</sup> On the West Bank, Jihad cells were organized by Ibrahim Sirbil under the religious auspices of Shaykh As'ad Bayyud al-Tamimi (a resident of Amman); these cells were regrouped in the surroundings of Jerusalem (Abu Tor) and the region of Hebron.<sup>9</sup>

Palestinian Jihad activists were recruited from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, from the religious wing of Fatah, as well as from the defunct National Liberation Forces, dismantled at the beginning of the 1970s. Many of these erstwhile NLF members rediscovered Islam while in jail, but were released in May 1985 as part of a prisoner exchange between Israel and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command of Ahmad Jibril.

Reviewing the student elections at the Islamic University of Gaza provides a limited sociological profile of the partisans of Jihad. As with the Muslim Brothers on the West Bank, the partisans of Jihad at Gaza enjoyed their highest level of popularity when they were the new force in the arena: in January 1983 they won 20 percent of the vote. Shortly thereafter they fell from this relative prominence, only to be revived with the groundswell of support just before the Intifada. As with the Muslim Brothers, the candidates of Jihad were almost exclusively men, with an over-representation of non-refugees (47 percent as opposed to 30 percent among the general population) and people living in the northern part of the Strip (77 percent as opposed to 52 percent among the general population). The Jihad candidates, then, accentuated the tendencies already observed in the Muslim Brothers.

The activism of the Jihad was an important stimulant to the Intifada, which occurred following the clashes of early October 1987 in Gaza between Jihad commandos and Israeli army forces. Some days before, the chief of the Israeli military police in the Gaza Strip had been stabbed by a Jihad activist. A series of Israeli countermeasures, including banning Shaykh 'Uda from Palestine, built such sympathy in the Palestinian population for the Jihad cause that it only required a relatively trivial incident—a collision between an Israeli truck and two Palestinian taxis carrying workers from Tel Aviv to Gaza—to lead finally to the radical questioning of the two-decades-old occupation, a process that ignited the fateful popular Palestinian resistance known as the Intifada.

#### The Intifada: The Fundamentalist Attempt to Seize Power

Virtually spontaneous when it began, the Intifada quickly organized itself through local and regional committees. In the case of PLO partisans, these committees reported to the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (the UNLU or al-Qiyada al-Wataniyya al-Muwahhida li'l-Intifada). In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the committees reported to the Movement of Islamic Resistance, commonly known by its Arabic name and acronym Hamas. The different movements of Islamic Jihad remained outside of these command structures.<sup>10</sup>

Established at the beginning of January 1988 by bringing together the four largest

nationalist organizations (the Fatah of Yassir Arafat, the PFLP of George Habache, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine of Nayef Hawatmeh, and the Palestinian Communist party), the UNLU immediately took charge of decisions concerning the appropriateness and timing of general strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of civil disobedience. This was done by the regular publication of numbered communiqués.<sup>11</sup> Its political program reaffirmed the principle that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people and demanded an international conference under United Nations auspices for creation of an independent state.

#### *The Islamic Jihad: Fighting for Its Own Survival*

Jihad became the first organized victim of massive Israeli repression. Virtually destroyed two or three months after the start of the uprising in early 1988, it reemerged at the end of 1988 in the form of periodic communiqués, symbolic monthly strikes, and the organization of a number of commando operations launched from outside of the West Bank and Gaza. It also claimed responsibility for numerous knife attacks against Israelis.

Having incited the uprising in the first place, the relatively small and fragile Jihad organization quickly found itself overwhelmed by the massive involvement of the entire population. The population included non-organized elements as well as forces structured in the different organizations of the PLO or engaged in the Muslim Brotherhood, which also decided to become involved in the Intifada after much hesitation.

Three main stages can be identified in the discourse and practice of the Jihad movement and the evolution of its relation to the PLO. During the first months of the uprising, the Jihad published periodic communiqués calling the people to mobilization; it decided to make popular unity its priority and thus de-emphasized its political differences with the PLO. The brigades of Jihad came to a common decision with them to abstain from the use of arms against Israeli positions. After two or three months of mobilizing the population by communiqués, however, Jihad suspended all publications due to the disorganization and fragmentation caused by Israeli army tactics designed to suppress the organization.<sup>12</sup>

The second phase of Jihad, in late 1988, was triggered by the meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers and the official adoption by the PLO of United Nations resolutions 181, 242, and 338 as the basis for the settlement of the Palestinian question. In response, the Jihad decided to reorganize. In its recruiting efforts it highlighted its ideological and tactical differences with the PLO, though it did not seek, in this phase, to disrupt the UNLU timetable for acts of popular mobilization.

The third phase, which commenced in the autumn of 1989 after a few months of "silent" rebuilding, saw the open display of political differences and direct competition with the UNLU in setting the timetable and agenda of popular mobilization. In this phase Jihad cells inside the occupied territories and outside, across the Lebanese, Jordanian, and Egyptian borders, began again to organize military operations.

During these phases the Jihad did not adjust effectively to its own success. It had

succeeded in inciting a popular uprising—a mass movement more or less dedicated to pursuing its immediate goal of overthrowing Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian state (although the specific character of that state remained unclear in the popular imagination)—but its own organization was not expansive enough to control or even direct a popular movement. It was, therefore, condemned to restrict itself to some occasional military operations serving the political interest of other groups such as Hamas, the PLO (as when Shaykh Tamimi agreed to participate in the Palestinian National Council in 1991), and Arab and Islamic states (Syria and Iran).

The Jihad current was also weakened by internal rivalries between the Shqaqi faction (Movement of Islamic Jihad in Palestine, whose headquarters are in South Lebanon and which is by far the most important faction) and the Tamimi faction (Movement of Islamic Jihad-Bayt al-Muqaddis, whose headquarters are in Amman). Even inside the Tamimi faction there was a subgroup led by Ibrahim Sirbil (Movement of Islamic Jihad-Kata'ib al-Aqsa) and another led by Ahmad Muhanna (Hizbullah-Filastin, whose headquarters are in South Lebanon and Syria). These internal rivalries and organizational limitations might have doomed the Islamic Jihad to relative insignificance, had not the massive deportation of Islamists by Israel in December 1992 provided a great boost to the Jihad's political credibility (about 60 of the 413 deportees were partisans of the Jihad). Following the attempted deportation, the mobilizations of Jihad became much more successful; for example, its monthly strike was much more widely observed in the occupied territories than had been the case previously.

#### *The Muslim Brothers and the Acquisition of Political Legitimacy*

The uprising challenged the Muslim Brothers by injecting a new dynamism into Palestinian society in the daily fight against the occupation. As a movement they responded in several stages, all the while maintaining a remarkable continuity in ideology.<sup>13</sup>

The first period stretches from December 1987 to February 1988, during which time the Muslim Brothers, as an organization, maintained their customary avoidance of direct engagement in the fight against Israel. Although Shaykh Yasin of the Muslim Brothers was the primary founder of Hamas, the movement published its three first communiqués (between 16 December 1987 and 11 February 1988) without mentioning its organizational links with the Muslim Brotherhood. These leaflets just called for reinforcement of the mobilization against the occupation and for the largest possible popular participation in the uprising. This delay in mentioning the Brotherhood was likely a calculated choice by the cautious Yasin. Eager to direct the unfolding of the events of the Intifada, he was nonetheless unsure that the uprising would last and form roots in the deepest strata of the Palestinian population. Thus at first he refused to reveal the structure and resources of the Brotherhood for fear of exposing it to Israeli repression.<sup>14</sup> Yasin's delay may also have been influenced by internal tensions in the Muslim Brotherhood between the partisans of a rapid and active engagement and the "old guard" defenders of traditional quietism.

The publication of the fourth communiqué, on 11 February 1988, inaugurated a new stage with the public adoption of the Movement of Islamic Resistance by the

Muslim Brothers as the "strong arm" of their association. The initials HMS (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya) also appeared at that time, transformed in the next leaflet into the acronym Hamas ("zeal"), and was thereafter used to designate the group. From the moment the connection with the Muslim Brotherhood was officially acknowledged, Hamas functioned as a solidly structured organization. In the years since then, Hamas has utilized and coordinated the very networks that were independently established several years earlier by the Muslim Brotherhood.

One of these networks, according to the Israeli charge-sheet against Shaykh Yasin in 1989, is al-Majid ("the Glorious"), the original Muslim Brotherhood apparatus of information and internal security. Created in 1986 by Yahya al-Sinwar and Khalid al-Hindi, both former presidents of the student council of the Islamic University of Gaza, al-Majid had the mission of collecting information about collaborators with the Israelis, drug traffickers, and "deviants." Under Shaykh Yasin's supervision, the al-Majid apparatus took the "appropriate measures" with respect to these *kuffar* (infidels), ranging from physical suppression to violent "warnings" such as clubbing. Al-Majid also had the mission of printing and distributing the publications of the Brotherhood, designed to inspire the religious sentiment of the population. These publications raised consciousness regarding the methods used by the Israeli security forces to entice Palestinian collaborators with hashish, wine, prostitutes, and films.

A second network, created in 1982 by Shaykh Yasin and named al-Mujahidun al-Filastiniyyun (the Palestinian Mujahidin), had originally been the military branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. By 1987, the Mujahidun was under the leadership of Salah Shahada, who was in charge of public relations at the Islamic University of Gaza. It had the mission of establishing military cells and prisoner committees, collecting information about the Israeli army, training recruits in military tactics, and organizing military operations.

This new stage, inaugurated with the official adoption of Hamas by the Muslim Brotherhood, was characterized by the publication in the communiqués of a precise timetable of mobilization for general strikes, fasting periods, and direct confrontations with the enemy. Hamas also strove to take control of organizing the uprising within the daily life of the population: it published warnings addressed to merchants and shopkeepers against exploiting the Palestinian populace caught up in the resistance movement; injunctions addressed to collaborators for a rapid repentance; and (repeating the UNLU recommendations) appeals for a return to agriculture and to the strengthening of the domestic economy. Hamas also worked to organize popular education around the mosques.

In terms of ideological content the Hamas communiqués were in direct continuity with earlier Muslim Brotherhood pronouncements and deviated little from the diatribes against passive Arab leaders and the Israeli occupiers which were formulated by the Jihad and the UNLU. Despite their fundamental political differences over the manner of solving the Palestinian question, Hamas and the PLO found themselves shoulder to shoulder in the street. This neighborly *modus vivendi* did not, however, lead to integration of the two leaderships into a single guiding structure for the Intifada. Following the example of Jihad during its own early period of popularity and

organizational growth, Hamas, in these first two years of the Intifada, avoided underlining its differences with the PLO, preferring to develop the theme of popular unity in order to increase the possibility of the general participation of an entire people in the fight against a common enemy.

At the end of this second stage, Hamas published its charter (*al-mithaq*), a forty page text divided into thirty-six articles, in which it synthesized its ideological and political positions. For the first time, the Palestinian Muslim Brothers clearly recognized that "patriotism [*wataniyya*] is an integral part of the profession of faith." As Palestine has been an Islamic waqf (endowment) since its Muslim conquest and will be until the Day of Judgment, jihad is a religious duty and the only way to victory. For Hamas, the people of Palestine have defended the soil while falling victim to Arab leaders who, in 1988 as in the 1936 revolt, were instruments of defeatism and servants of the West.

For the first time, the movement also enunciated its stand vis-à-vis the PLO. The charter sought to attenuate the disagreements: the text describes the PLO as "the closest of the closest to the Movement of the Islamic Resistance. Our fathers, mothers, and brothers are part of it; we share the same country, the same suffering, the same destiny, and the same enemy." One criticism, however, foreshadowed future rifts: Hamas strongly condemned the secularism which the PLO supposedly embraced as one of its cardinal principles.

Beginning in the summer of 1988, Hamas adopted a new strategy in the field which was designed to earn official recognition by the nationalists of its successful leadership in popular mobilization and, consequently, its possession of longed-for popular legitimacy. From this time, Hamas has positioned itself as the PLO's chief rival for supremacy in the Intifada. Numbering its leaflets, following the practice of the UNLU, Hamas gave a more important place to its daily calendar of mobilization. Furthermore, on 31 July 1988, when King Hussein of Jordan announced his decision to break administrative and legal relations with the occupied territories, Hamas seized the opportunity and immediately denied the PLO monopoly over the political heritage of Jordan.

On 2 August 1988, Hamas challenged the de facto primacy of the UNLU by publishing its own calendar of strikes and Intifada activities three days before the UNLU schedule. The UNLU responded in kind and tried to isolate the Muslim Brothers by calling its own strikes on the eve of those called by Hamas. In turn Hamas escalated the competition by expanding its field of activities, penetrating PLO strongholds throughout the West Bank (with the exception of Jerusalem). Violent conflicts between the two organizations followed at Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, and Bethlehem. Eventually the will to preserve Palestinian unity transcended the dispute. Meetings at the highest level took place inside and outside the occupied territories and led to a compromise whereby the UNLU retained priority over publication of the timetable of mobilization—but only after consulting with Hamas leadership—and both parties committed themselves to respect each other's strikes.

Despite certain tensions, this newfound unity soon expressed itself in the field, sometimes even in the form of common organized paramilitary parades. Nevertheless,

Hamas continued to point out in its communiqués the vast difference between its vision and that of the PLO—the difference between an entirely liberated Palestine, a long-standing goal of the Muslim Brotherhood, and creation of a Palestinian state under the auspices of the international community—and therefore side by side with Israel—which the PLO had recently endorsed.

The difference was also displayed in relation to the American-Palestinian dialogue initiated in 1989, which was fiercely denounced by Muslim Brothers. But Hamas's radical refusal to negotiate the Palestinian cause did not spare the movement from losing itself in the ambiguities of pragmatic political behavior. In the context of an American-Israeli-Palestinian meeting in Egypt, for example, Shaykh Yasin, speaking from his prison cell on 23 September 1989, affirmed on Israeli television that he was willing to join a Palestinian delegation in negotiating with Israel, on the condition that the scope and framework of a peace plan be clearly defined.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar, unofficial spokesman of Hamas in Gaza, asked that Hamas be allotted one-third of any Palestinian delegation that would negotiate at Cairo with the Israelis.<sup>16</sup> Although these overtures were repudiated in a later communiqué by the movement, they reveal the ambivalence in the Islamic camp regarding the most effective way to achieve leadership of the Palestinian resistance.

The Muslim Brothers finally split with the PLO over the question of refraining from direct military action, as endorsed by the UNLU. By way of contrast, Hamas organized a series of operations that included the kidnapping and execution of two Israeli soldiers in the spring of 1989.

Competition with the PLO and the quest for official recognition of Hamas' national role entered a new stage in the spring of 1990, when Hamas decided to request integration with the Palestinian National Council. In this context, Hamas's membership in the Council would allow the PLO to be recognized as a "national [*watani*] frame" which "includes all the individuals of the Palestinian people in the totality of their tendencies and leads them toward the complete and total liberation" (such a national frame must also include Hamas). Otherwise, the PLO might be seen as a "political orientation" (rejected by Hamas).<sup>17</sup> On 6 April 1990, Hamas sent a memorandum to the president of the Council<sup>18</sup> insisting that, in order to reflect accurately the changes produced by the uprising on the Palestinian stage, the National Council must reaffirm the inalienable unity of Palestine "from the sea to the river [Jordan] and from Negev to Ra's al-Naqura"; deny any legitimacy granted to the "Jewish entity"; repudiate all international resolutions (e.g., UN resolutions 181, 242, and 338) which contradict the Palestinian right on the whole of Palestine; ensure "the reaffirmation of the military option"; guarantee a representation in the council for each organization in proportion to its numbers in the field (by which standard Hamas demanded 40–50 percent representation); and, finally, abrogate "all the concessions and recognitions which contradict our right," including the 1988 resolutions of the Council.

These requests were rejected and sparked a public row with Fatah, leading to violent confrontations in the occupied territories and resulting in a number of wounded. The force of Hamas in the field and the necessity of maintaining "national

unity" led to an agreement between the protagonists, with Hamas appearing once more as the winner. This reconciliation was officially ratified on 19 September 1990 by dissemination of a common communiqué on whose thirteen points Fatah and Hamas agreed. For the first time, the PLO agreed to Hamas's integration into all the prisoners' committees, which are virtual "schools of revolution" inside the Israeli detention camps and jails.<sup>19</sup>

The Gulf War and the general situation of the occupied territories during 1990, the third year of the uprising, allowed Hamas to gain even greater power. Finding themselves beaten down and their numbers decimated by violence,<sup>20</sup> and still without political power,<sup>21</sup> the Palestinians helplessly witnessed the en masse arrival of 160,000 Soviet Jews in 1990 and the reinforcement of the settler movement designed to "Judaize" the territories. In 1990, approximately 90,000 had settled in about 150 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and 120,000 had settled in East-Jerusalem, where 150,000 Palestinians live. The "war of knives," set off in October 1990 (7 Israeli civilians were stabbed and more than 20 wounded in three months), reflected this widespread sense of despair just after the al-Aqsa Massacre (17 Palestinians killed by the army, 150 wounded on 8 October). Although in a number of cases these were isolated acts, they redounded to the notoriety of Hamas (and Islamic Jihad), which also claimed responsibility for several commando operations through the Jordanian front line.

Crushed by repression and desperately waiting for what looked like unpromising results of the diplomatic process, the Palestinian population by and large welcomed the Gulf Crisis of 1990–91, initiated by Saddam Hussein, as a detonator that would explode the increasingly unbearable status quo. The Palestinian resistance leadership found itself in the middle of two opposing tides. Both the PLO and Hamas were caught between the despair of their popular base expressed by the support given to Saddam and their long-term interests (for the PLO, this meant a diplomatic process obviously controlled by the United States; for the Muslim Brothers and Hamas, maintaining their financial and ideological ties with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia). Claiming the role of inter-Arab mediator, the executive committee of the PLO and its president Yassir Arafat refused explicitly to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and leaned to Saddam's side in the crisis. Hamas first condemned the invasion of Kuwait, but nonetheless asked for positive response to certain Iraqi demands. Later, however, Hamas took refuge in a policy of silence designed to preserve its financing as well as its capacity for popular mobilization. When the war broke out, Hamas denounced the "new crusade" against Islam.<sup>22</sup>

Immediately after the war, in early 1991, the PLO was left temporarily paralyzed and deprived of all initiative: on the international stage, the anti-Iraqi camp, comprising both the United States and Arab states, made the PLO pay for the support it had given Saddam Hussein by excluding it from the diplomatic U.S.-brokered negotiations over the Arab-Israeli conflict. Deprived of its Arab financings, the PLO was in a weaker position than Hamas. The Islamic movement had shown, by its official silence, that it knew how to preserve the financial resources it derived from the Gulf. Fortified as a result of the legitimacy acquired by its involvement in the uprising and

by the recognition of its place on the political stage by the UNLU, Hamas took advantage of the new weakness of the PLO. Hamas pursued its political activities with greater energy and resumed its traditional practices of authoritarian Islamization.

In almost all elections organized in the occupied territories after the end of the Gulf War, among associations of physicians, jurists, engineers, and the like, Hamas obtained 40–60 percent of the ballots, demonstrating the deeply rooted presence of the movement among the population. Thus Hamas proved itself capable of gathering together the “radicals,” those partisans of the destruction of Israel and the entire Islamization of Palestinian society; the ordinary religious people, most of them from traditional sectors of the society; and, finally, ex-partisans of the PLO who were disappointed that PLO political concessions had not yet produced results and were intent on signifying their impatience and/or their despair.

The diplomatic process initiated by the United States after the Gulf War restored some of the lost credibility of the PLO, whose partisans reclaimed a representative role nobody could effectively challenge.<sup>23</sup> With its capital of popular support accumulated through five years of uprising and its now clear image of patriotic involvement, however, a more confident Hamas did not hesitate to make alliances with its ex-enemies, the Popular Front and other Marxist organizations, in common opposition to the Arab-Israeli negotiations. The 1992 opening of official liaison bureaus in Jordan, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, and Iran, and the sending of mujahidin for military training<sup>24</sup> clearly indicated Hamas’s willingness to rival the PLO on the international scene in order to take its place at the end of the process. (Hamas has no doubt about the inevitability of the failure of diplomacy as a way to solve the Palestinian question.)

Israel’s deportation of hundreds of Hamas partisans in December 1992 gave the movement its first opportunity to meet officially with the highest level of PLO leadership to discuss Hamas’s role in the national struggle. (These discussions continued in 1993 in Khartoum and Tunis.) By ordering the deportation, Israel unwittingly elevated Hamas to a lofty status as the latest symbol of the deepest strata of Palestinian identity—a people everyday threatened with deportation from its land—and linked this symbol with the renewed struggle against occupation. In the aftermath of the deportation fiasco, Islam and nationalism became more intertwined in the public mind than ever before, undermining the PLO’s efforts to maintain its diplomatic and ideological hegemony. Hamas immediately capitalized on this public relations boon by organizing several military operations, winning local union elections, and enhancing its political and religious resources for popular mobilization.

### Conclusion

By 1993, the sixth year of the Intifada, profound changes had occurred in the Palestinian political arena. The new bipolarization between PLO partisans, on the one hand, and the Muslim Brothers, on the other, constituted one of the major signs of this new balance of forces.

As elsewhere in the Islamic world, the two main trends in Islamism could still be observed at work in Palestine: revolutionary Islamism or “Islamization from above,”

advocated by the movements of Islamic Jihad, and the “Islamization from below” or “neofundamentalism” preferred by the Muslim Brothers. In a qualification of Kepel’s and Roy’s theses noted at the beginning of this chapter, however, the particulars of the Palestinian situation have affected the chronological succession of these two trends of Islamism as found elsewhere and eroded the very foundation of the Islamist criticisms of society. Within the context of the Israeli occupation and the absence of an independent Palestinian state, the nationalist discourse was able to control the mobilization of the masses for a longer period of time and was therefore able to postpone the expansion of the Islamist critique. As effective participation in the struggle for national liberation was seen by the vast majority of Palestinians as constituting a necessary condition for the acquisition of political legitimacy, Palestinian Islamism had no other choice but to appropriate the foundation of the legitimacy of its national rival—patriotism. Fighting Israel was the only way for the Muslim Brothers legitimately to enter the political arena while preserving their religious preoccupations. In Palestine, pietist Islamism had to transform itself into a “revolutionary Islamism” in order to be able to pursue its course of “Islamization from below.”

In the Palestinian case, revolutionary Islamism has not been discredited, even if its objective—liberation of the whole of Palestine—has remained beyond reach. The Islamic Jihad’s contribution to the early days of the Intifada gained for Islamic movements in general a measure of glory and legitimacy, thus affording them an opportunity to share a part of their ideals with the entire society. In spite of repression the movements of Islamic Jihad have not disappeared. They have maintained a significant mobilizing capacity, although this is limited by internal and personal quarrels between groups and leaders, by their factional mode of functioning, and by their image as agents for foreign states such as Iran and Syria.

Paradoxically, “revolutionary Islamism” maintains itself in large part through the renewal of the “pietist Islamism” movements that preceded it. In Palestine, “Islamization from below” began in the early 1980s. Until the uprising, the Muslim Brothers enjoyed the freedom to create their Islamized spaces in exchange for their refusal to join the anti-Israeli struggle. One of the priorities of the late 1980s and early 1990s for the Muslim Brothers was to enlarge these spaces at the expense of the nationalist camp. Such a goal, however, could be achieved only through acquisition of political legitimacy, which in turn required participation in the struggle for national liberation.

The Muslim Brothers, then, had to adopt as a tactic the order of priorities followed by the Islamic Jihad (no real Islamization without liberation) and, in the same way, had to compete in patriotism, the foundation of the PLO’s legitimacy. In order to secure their “Islamization from below” for the long term, in other words, the Muslim Brothers, through Hamas, adopted the traits of “revolutionary Islamism” as the foundation of the national struggle, patriotism.

That the model of Islamic Jihad has functioned well in the field of politics is proven by the legitimacy acquired by Hamas. Despite the 1993 “breakthrough” in which Israel and the PLO reached an agreement for limited Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the Israeli occupation has not ended. Hamas, for the sake of Palestinian Islamism, has decided to combine the two models of Islamic revolution. Aware of the necessity to maintain the model of “Islamization from above,” it continues its



struggle against Israel. At the same time, it uses the national legitimacy acquired through this struggle to contest the PLO on the political level and to pursue and strengthen its traditional work of "Islamization from below." These efforts have only increased since Arafat's "treachery" of 13 September 1993 on the White House lawn.

## Notes

1. Gilles Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu* (The revenge of God) (Paris: Le Seuil, 1990); Olivier Roy, *L'échec de l'Islam politique* (The failure of political Islam) (Paris: Le Seuil, 1992).

2. For this period preceding the Intifada and the Muslim Brothers, see Mohammed K. Shadid, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and Gaza," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (April 1988): 658-82. Also see Ziyad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fi'l-Diffa al-Gharbiyya wa Qisa' Ghazza* (The Islamic movement in the West Bank and Gaza) (Acree: Dar al-Aswar, 1989).

3. The Muslim Brothers are in the process of rewriting the history of this period from the perspective of those participating in the liberation struggle. See *Al-Haqiqa al-Ghayba* (The masked reality), November 1987, 58 pp. (probably written by the Islamic Coalition of the Islamic University of Gaza); and *Fil-Dhikra al-Thaniyya li'l-Intifada; Hamas, Isbraqat Amal fi Sama Filastin* (On the occasion of the second anniversary of the uprising, Hamas, spark of hope in the sky of Palestine), 9 December 1989, 36 pp. (probably written by Hamas). For detailed bibliographic references, see Jean-François Legrain, "The Islamic Movement and the Intifada," in Jamal Nassar and Roger Heacock, eds., *Intifada: Palestine as the Crossroads* (New York: Praeger, 1990), pp. 175-90.

4. Shaykh Yasin was set free in May 1985, with the exchange of prisoners between Israel and the PFLP-GC (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command). Born in 1937, a refugee from the region of Ashkelon and living in Gaza, Shaykh Yasin is a former teacher. He is now almost completely paralyzed.

5. Jean-François Legrain, "Les élections

étudiantes en Cisjordanie, 1978-1987" (The student elections on the West Bank, 1978-1987), *Egypte-Monde Arabe* (CEDEJ, Cairo), no. 4 (4th term, 1990): 87-128. The sample represents 702 candidacies.

6. My study is still in process and analyzes 306 candidacies presented between 1981 and 1987.

7. For more details, see Jean-François Legrain, "Les islamistes palestiniens à l'épreuve du soulèvement" (The Islamist Palestinians tested by the uprising), *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 121 (July 1988): 5-42; Elie Rekhess, "The Iranian Impact on the Islamic Jihad Movement in the Gaza Strip" (Contribution to the colloquium The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World, Tel Aviv University, 4-6 January 1988).

8. About the Movement of Islamic Jihad in Palestine of Shqaqi and 'Uda, see the introduction to *Min Manshurat Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin, Masirat al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin* (Conduct of Islamic Jihad in Palestine as seen by the communiqués of the Movement of Islamic Jihad in Palestine) (Beirut, 1989). Some of the leaflets in this collection had been already published in *Islam wa Filastin* (Islam and Palestine), a periodical of the movement, edited in France and published in the United States. This movement is also responsible for the periodical *Al-Mujahid*, published at Beirut, since the beginning of 1990.

9. About the Movement of Islamic Jihad Bayt al-Muqaddis (Jerusalem) and Kata'ib al-Aqsa (Battalions of al-Aqsa), see Shaykh As'ad al-Tamimi, *Zawal Isra'el, hammiyya Qur'aniyya* (The disappearance of Israel, a Qur'anic ineluctability) (Amman, 1990); and Ibrahim Sirbil, *Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami wa'l-intifada* (The movement of Islamic Jihad and the uprising) (Amman: Dar al-Nisar, 1990).

10. Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising—Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990); Nassar and Heacock, *Intifada*.

11. These communiqués have been published in English, in their PFLP version, in *No Voice Is Louder Than Voice of the Uprising* (Ibal publishing, 1989). Also see Jean-François Legrain, *Les voix du soulèvement palestinien: Édition critique des communiqués du Commandement National Unifié et du Mouvement de la Résistance Islamique, 1987-1988* (The voices of the Palestinian uprising: Scientific edition of the communiqués of the Unified National Leadership and of the Movement of Islamic Resistance), trans. in collaboration with Pierre Chenard (Cairo: Centre d'études et de documentation économique, juridique et sociale [CEDEJ], 1991).

12. Since October 1987 and on several occasions afterward, large operations were launched by the army in the spheres favorable to Jihad. Starting in spring 1988, the main leaders of the Palestinian "interior" (Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Uda, Fathi Shqaqi, Ahmad Muhanna, and Sayyid Baraka) were deported, while Israel also attacked the military leaders of the "exterior" (three of them died when their car exploded at Limasso, Cyprus, in February 1988).

13. In the occupied territories, Hamas published its own version of its history, *Fil-Dhikra al-Thaniyya li'l-Intifada; Hamas*. See also the articles in *Filastin al-Muslima* (Muslim Palestine), published in Great Britain. For details on this period, see Jean-François Legrain, "Mobilisation islamiste et soulèvement palestinien, 1987-1988" (Islamist mobilization and Palestinian uprising, 1987-1988), in Gilles Kepel and Yann Richard, eds., *Intellectuels et militants de l'Islam contemporain* (Intellectuals and militants of contemporary Islam) (Paris: Le Seuil, 1990).

14. Yasin is now in jail for having founded Hamas, although this repression has brought notoriety and legitimacy to the Brotherhood.

15. *Ha'Arezt*, 24 September 1989.

16. *Jerusalem Post*, 14 December 1989.

17. Interview with an anonymous leader of Hamas, in *Filastin al-Muslima*, May 1990, pp. 8-11.

18. The PNC (Palestinian National Council) has approximately 550 members (186 representatives of the occupied territories are forbidden by Israel to participate); only 5 Islamists belong to it ('Abd al-Rahman al-Hawrani and 'Abd Allah Abu 'Izza, who also belong to the Central Council of the PLO, and Amin Agha, Ahmad Salim Najm, and Hasan Ayish).

19. The text is reproduced in *Filastin al-Muslima*, October 1990.

20. Since 9 December 1987, more than 900 died and 70,000 were arrested out of a population of 1.5 million people in the occupied territories. Simultaneously the population experienced a fall of more than 35 percent in the standard of living.

21. The Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir rejected all U.S. and Egyptian proposals for peace in the area, and on 20 June 1990 the United States broke off the dialogue it had begun with the PLO at the end of 1988.

22. For more details, see Jean-François Legrain, "Les Palestiniens de l'intérieur dans la crise du Golfe? (The Palestinians inside the occupied territories during the Gulf Crisis), in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1990* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique [CNRS], 1993); and Jean-François Legrain, "A Defining Moment: Palestinian Islamic Fundamentalism," in James Piscatori, ed., *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991).

23. Jean-François Legrain, "Après 5 années d'intifada: Les Palestiniens de l'intérieur face à la conférence de paix" (After five years of uprising, Palestinians from inside the occupied territories facing the peace conference), *Esprit*, August-September 1992, pp. 152-63.

24. *Al-Watan al-Arabi* (The Arab nation), 23 October 1992.