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HOW DOES HAMAS END: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND WHERE THE FUTURE LEADS

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Part I: A Historical Background of Hamas

Famous or Infamous?

Like many organizations that perpetrate violence, Hamas provokes deeply polarizing opinions. To the vast majority of Palestinians, Hamas symbolizes hope, charity, public welfare, strength, religious zeal, and the just cause of restoring Palestinians to their rightful land. Many Arab and non-Western nations maintain an empathetic view of Hamas, providing indirect support and tacit approval while donating tens of millions of dollars annually. To Israel and the West the name Hamas elicits images of suicide bombers, indiscriminate violence, and militant Islamic radicalism. The name itself has a double meaning. Hamas is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah, which translates "Islamic Resistance Movement," and the word Hamas also means "enthusiasm" in Arabic.

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A Conflict as Old as Time

To understand the true genesis of Hamas one must understand the history of the region and the long-standing conflict that exists between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim a religious mandate and a historical precedent for occupying the disputed Israeli-Palestinian territories. From a religious standpoint all three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam claim a common patriarch in Abraham, who settled in what is modern Hebron in the West Bank around 2000 BC. All three religions believe that the land was given to Abraham and his decedents by Divine mandate. But the divide between the Israelis and the Palestinians began with their common patriarch, Abraham, and the separate

lineage of his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, who became the forefathers of the Israelis and Palestinians respectively. The Israelis and Palestinians have accumulated thousands of years living, ruling, and fighting each other over the disputed Israeli-Palestinian territories, each possessing the land for centuries at a time.

The brutal Roman oppression of a Jewish revolt in the first century ended in the virtual destruction of Jewish civilization in Israel and the forced exile of the remaining Jews in a mass diaspora. Only towards the end of the 19th century did the first waves of Zionist Jews begin to return to Israel to settle in their ancient land, a land that the Palestinians and their Arab predecessors had called home for centuries. In total both peoples can claim over a millennium of dominate ancestral control of the Israeli-Palestinian territories with both peoples tracing lineages in the land back over four thousand years. Both peoples can also claim a Divine mandate for the disputed land from their respective holy texts. Certainly the legitimacy of the claims both peoples have upon the land are difficult to refute and the religious zeal make compromise all the more contentious.

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The Birth of Hamas

Hamas officially emerged out of the crucible of the First Palestinian Intifada, which began in response to a fateful traffic accident in the Gaza Strip on December 8, 1987. The traffic accident resulted in the death of several Palestinians at the hands of an Israeli driver inadvertently serving as the catalyst for unleashing the simmering Palestinian rage against Israeli occupation that had reached epidemic proportions by the 1980s. Less than a week later a pamphlet was circulated advocating armed resistance against the Israeli occupation and for the

first time the name Hamas was officially used signifying the birth of the newest Palestinian resistance organization.

By the time Hamas was founded in 1987, the Palestinian people were still largely refugees in their own land or scattered by the diaspora from three failed Arab wars with Israel. Beginning in the late 19th century massive waves of Jewish settlers began immigrating to Palestine drastically changing the demographic reality of the land and sowing the seeds of tension and violence that would define Israeli-Palestinian relations ever since. The UN-devised partition plan to divide the land along demographic lines and create separate Israeli and Palestinian states following the end of the British Mandate was rejected by the Arab League and the British, and undermined by violent actions by both Israelis and Palestinians. In conjunction with the official end of the British Mandate in May 1948, Israel declared itself a state and the neighboring Arab nations promptly invaded. However, Palestinian hopes to reassert control of their land were crushed with Israel's dramatic victory over the invading Arab armies. Over 700,000 Palestinians fled their homes to neighboring countries or established refugee camps in the sanctuaries of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem in what the Palestinians refer to as The Catastrophe. [1]

Less than 20 years later Palestinian faith in their Arab neighbors failed again during the 6-Day War of 1967 with Israel's stunning triumph over the invading Arab armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and culminating in the total subjugation of the remaining Palestinian enclaves. It was the utter defeat in 1967 and the two decades of oppressive Israeli military occupation that followed that solidified the "hard core" members of the Muslim Brotherhood that would go on to found Hamas in 1987.[2] Many of the founding cadre of Hamas were born into or grew up in the Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank, and they saw first-hand the failure of

Arab promises to liberate their land from the Israeli occupation. Although a relatively modern Palestinian terrorist group, Hamas still traces its roots to the Palestinian grievances stemming from the Israeli conquests of Palestinian lands in 1948 and 1967, as well as the injustices suffered under the Israeli military occupation.

The Founders

Sheik Ahmad Yassin is considered the principal founder of Hamas, its supreme authority, and its spiritual leader until his assassination in 2004 by an Israeli missile strike. Yassin was only 12 years old in 1948 when he was forced to flee his home near Ashkelon with his family and live in a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. He was heavily influenced by witnessing first-hand the failure of the Arab nations to defeat Israel and rescue the Palestinians as well as by the destitution and helplessness he grew up in. [3] He became a quadriplegic at the age of 16 as a result of a childhood accident but remained diligent in his pursuit of education. He traveled frequently to Cairo seeking acceptance into Egyptian universities where he came under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. His unjust imprisonment in 1965 for his association with the Muslim Brotherhood served to radicalize him, solidifying his disillusionment with secular, nationalist authorities and the need for Palestinians to seek their own justice and help themselves.[4] He officially joined the Muslim Brotherhood shortly after his release and embarked on a quest to return Palestinians to Islam, believing that only thru true adherence to Islam would Palestinians prevail.

In the years that followed Yassin became the leader of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) and began creating numerous social, educational, and recreational projects. Yassin founded the Ikhwan around his belief that the first priority is to commit

themselves to rehabilitating Muslim society and "preparing the generations" for the long struggle ahead.[5] Only then could the Palestinians succeed against the Israeli occupation. To realize that vision, in 1976 Yassin founded the al-Mujamma al-Islami (Islamic Center) in the Gaza Strip and greatly expanded the scope of Ikhwan activities to include establishing mosques, schools, clinics, and other social services that became extremely popular with Palestinians.[6] The Ikhwan built a substantial political support base and social network thru their ever-expanding social services and institutions that would serve Hamas well following its establishment by Yassin.

Initially the Israelis licensed Yassin's activities and deemed them non-threatening, but as the Ikhwan began acquiring weapons the Israelis responded by arresting Yassin and several other key members of the Ikhwan in 1984.[7] Yassin was released less than a year later in a negotiated prisoner exchange between Israel and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command. Again emboldened by his imprisonment, Yassin began actively planning and organizing for armed resistance and when the First Intifada spontaneously erupted in 1987 he and the Ikhwan faced a choice; embrace armed confrontation with Israel now or patiently continue to build an Islamic Palestinian society for the long struggle.[8] Not wanting to lose popular support to other Palestinian resistance groups during the uprising the Ikhwan chose to act. However, Yassin and his cohort did not want to associate their militant activities with the social endeavors of the al-Mujamma al-Islami and the Ikhwan so Yassin and the others chose to establish a new organization and named it Hamas.

The other founding members of Hamas include Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, Mahmoud al-Zahar, Ismail Haniya, Moussa Abu Marzouq, and Khaled Mashal. Abdel Aziz Al-Rantissi shared Yassin's childhood experience of being forced into a Gaza refugee camp by the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and the war that followed. He was one of the original few who

participated in the meeting on December 9, 1987 that founded Hamas and he also authored the first official communique that Hamas published a few days later. He became a close confidant of Yassin and the deputy leader of Hamas. Al-Rantissi was less charismatic and more hardline than Yassin but always maintained solidarity with him.[9] He was assassinated by an Israel missile strike in 2004 only weeks after Yassin's assassination.

Mahmoud Al-Zahar began as a moderate voice in Hamas. He was educated abroad, practiced medicine for many years, and was the co-founder of the Islamic University in Gaza, but an Israeli air strike on his home in 2003 killed his son driving him to radicalize many of his views and rhetoric. In 2006 he was appointed Foreign Minister of the newly elected Hamas government, a position he still retains. In 2008 another Israeli air strike killed another son and he is now considered a hardliner within Hamas.

Ismail Haniya was born in a Gaza refugee camp and spent his life immersed in the misery of the Palestinian refugee situation. Nevertheless he had the distinction of being one of the more moderate Hamas leaders although his rhetoric remains inflammatory. He rose to prominence as a student at the Islamic University of Gaza and became the first aide and long-time confidant to Yassin. Haniya's popularity, modesty, and relationship with Yassin helped lead Hamas' 2006 election campaign to victory and propel him to Prime Minister of the Hamas government, a position he still retains despite the collapse of the unity PA government in 2007.[10] Haniya is widely recognized as the senior Hamas leader resident within Gaza.

Moussa Abu Marzouq was also born into a Gaza refugee camp but managed to acquire an engineering degree from Egypt and a doctorate from the United States, where he obtained a green card. Following the mass wave of Israeli arrests of Hamas members in 1989, including Yassin, it was Abu Marzouq who assumed leadership from Jordan and is generally credited with

keeping Hamas together as an organization.[11] In 1992 he was elected the first Hamas Political Bureau Chief, but he was arrested in 1995 while returning to the United States to be with his family. During his imprisonment, which ended in 1997 with his extradition back to Jordan, the leadership of the Political Bureau underwent a role reversal with Khaled Mashal becoming the Chief and Abu Marzouq becoming the Deputy of the Political Bureau.[12]

Khaled Mashal was born in the West Bank but was displaced during the 6-Day War of 1967 and moved with his family to Kuwait where he attended the University of Kuwait and became leader of the Islamic Bloc, a chapter of the Ikhwan. The Persian Gulf War forced him to move to Jordan where he rose to become the Chief of the Political Bureau after Abu Marzouq's imprisonment. Israel's botched assassination attempt against Mashel in 1997 led to the negotiated release of Yassin under pressure from the US and Jordanian governments, and also elevated Mashel's status within Hamas. He is the face of Hamas outside of Palestine and as Chief of the Political Bureau he is the de facto leader of Hamas in exile following the assassinations of Yassin and al-Rantissi in 2004.

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The Charter

Within a year of its establishment Hamas published its founding charter the *Mithaq.* The *Mithaq* is one of the "most debated, cited, and condemned documents" produced by Hamas and yet it remains unaltered and as controversial as when it was published.[13] It was written by Abdel Fattah al-Dukhan, one of the older generation of the Ikhwan's leadership, in collaboration with Hamas' founder, Yassin. It is a lengthy didactic text organized into 36 articles and replete with Islamic references and militant edicts.[14] The most notorious statements in the *Mithaq* center on the claim that Palestine, including all of present-day Israel, is an Islamic *Waqf* and that it cannot

be renounced to non-Muslims. Opponents of Hamas cite the *Mithaq* to justify that Hamas is bent on destroying Israel and replacing it with an Islamic Palestinian state. Indeed, the *Mithaq* includes a quote from Imam Hassan al-Banna stating, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."[15] The *Mithaq* also states "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals, and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors."[16] The *Mithaq* goes on to opine about Free Masons and Western secret societies with Zionist ties controlling world events and conspiring against Islam and the Palestinians.

The *Mithaq* remains a notoriously divisive document, but Hamas has shown that they are not wholly bound to the *Mithaq* with regard to their ideology or their actions. Many of Hamas' senior leaders have publically stated that they would accept a temporary two-state solution based on the 1967 borders with Israel, but the statements were always carefully crafted as a "temporary" truce, or *Hudna*. There is no doubt that the ultimate goal of Hamas remains the eventual elimination of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state in its place. This foundational goal not only makes negotiations with Israel impossible, but it is the principal point of division between Hamas and the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO officially recognized the state of Israel in 1993 as part of the Oslo Accords, which put the PLO directly at odds with Hamas. Hamas is also focused on returning Palestinian society to Islam while the PLO is dominated by secular, left-wing nationalists. [17] The ideological differences are significant and have led to several conflicts culminating in the Battle of Gaza in 2007 between Hamas and the Fatah party of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Organization

Hamas is organized into two somewhat redundant leadership structures, one inside Palestine and the other in exile. The original purpose of the exile leadership was to gain external support politically and financially, to represent the Palestinian diaspora, and to constitute a redundant leadership apparatus in the event the internal leadership was incapacitated as it was in 1989.[18] The internal leadership resident within the Gaza Strip generally possesses the greater power by virtue of proximity to the people and direct exposure to the action on the ground.[19] Yassin, al-Rantissi, al-Zahar, and Haniya all spent their entire lives in Gaza and represented Hamas' internal leadership, while Abu Marzouq and Mashal spent most of their adult lives outside of Palestine representing the leadership in exile.

Not only is Hamas divided geographically by those who operate inside Gaza and those who operate in exile, but it is also divided functionally along social, political, and military wings with each wing maintaining ample distance from the next for security purposes. For the social and political wings Hamas determines much of its leadership thru elections. Local Hamas Shuras representing Hamas members in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the diaspora, and those in Israeli prisons all elect representatives to the General Consultative Council (*Majlis ash-Shoura*).[20] The General Consultative Council coordinates and oversees daily decision-making of the various Hamas activities and also elects the Political Bureau, which serves as the executive branch of Hamas. Operating in exile, the Political Bureau consists of 15 members and they are responsible for making the principal leadership decisions that guide all of Hamas' activities.

Despite operating in exile the Political Bureau retains executive authority over Hamas, including the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades of the military wing. The Political Bureau controls when military action is taken or restrained, increased or decreased, but its members do not get

involved in the specifics of the means, methods, or targets of the military actions they sanction.[21] By not getting directly involved with the details the Political Bureau avoids political culpability while also preserving the security and anonymity of the military wing. Despite the relative autonomy of the al-Qassam Brigades they have shown themselves very disciplined with subordinating themselves to the political leadership when ordered to cease military actions for political or strategic reasons.[22]

The social wing of Hamas is a significant source of its strength, not only in terms of financial and popular support, but it lends legitimacy which in large measure enabled Hamas to win public elections for governance of the Palestinian people. Hamas was established during the First Intifada to pursue militant resistance to Israeli occupation, but Hamas evolved out of the Ikhwan which had already established significant social welfare and Islamic services by 1987. Hamas leaders such as Yassin, al-Zahar, and al-Dukhan were responsible for founding Al-Salah, the largest charitable organization in Gaza, the famed Islamic Center in Gaza, the Islamic University in Gaza, and numerous other social welfare organizations. Hamas prides itself on "serving the people," a slogan that harkens back to its Muslim Brotherhood roots.[23] Hamas also established and continues to maintain countless mosques, hospitals, charities, sports associations, public committees, schools, clinics, and even the Gaza Zoo. In many ways Hamas is seen as more altruistic and better at providing public services for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip than the PLO and PA, which in great measure explains why Hamas was so successful in the 2005 municipal elections in Gaza and later the 2006 PA parliamentary elections.

First Adventures in Terrorism

The first military exploits of the newly christened Hamas were limited to haphazard shootings, ineffective roadside bombings, and eventually kidnapping and murder. The number, sophistication, and effectiveness of these initial forays into violent terrorism were dubious, although their success with kidnapping and murdering Israel soldiers quickly elevated their notoriety with Israel and led to the first of many massive roundups of Hamas leaders in 1988 and again in 1989. The second series of arrests included Yassin and completed the decimation of Hamas as a functioning organization. Had it not been for the arrival of Abu Marzouq from the United States and his ability to effectively reorganize and rehabilitate Hamas, it is possible Hamas would have faded into obscurity.[24] Abu Marzouq instituted a series of measures to create redundancy and autonomy within Hamas to enable it to remain resilient in the face of Israeli arrests. The supreme authority of Yassin was replaced with a more redundant hierarchical structure that sub-divided leadership responsibilities at lower levels and along functional lines while putting emphasis on operational security and maintaining a robust leadership structure in exile, mostly out of reach of the Israelis.

Israel orchestrated another crackdown on Palestinian militants in 1990-1991 that drove Hamas to further compartmentalize its military activates from the social and political apparatuses and establish the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades as the official military wing of Hamas. The al-Qassam Brigades quickly established their reputation killing Palestinian collaborators and eventually several Israeli settlers, soldiers, and police. In response Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin ordered the deportation of 415 Palestinian activists to Southern Lebanon, most of who belonged to Hamas. The unintended consequence was the creation of ties between Hezbollah and Hamas that would manifest in a substantially more lethal Hamas following the return of the

deportees in late 1993. Hamas reaped a wealth of knowledge from Hezbollah's struggle against Israel, including how to build car bombs and the effectiveness of suicide attacks. While in Lebanon the exiles also succeeded in drawing substantial international media attention to Hamas and the suffering of Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis.

During this time the PLO and Israel were progressing in the peace negotiations later called the Oslo Accords. This presented Hamas with an "existential problem" that threatened to isolate them from mainstream Palestinians who supported the peace talks as well as pit them against the newly established PA government which officially recognized the state of Israel, renounced terrorism, and had the backing of the international community.[25] On the broader scene, the Oslo Accords signaled the end of the First Intifada and generated great optimism amongst Palestinians that a satisfactory and lasting agreement could be reached. Feeling isolated and betrayed the leadership of Hamas embarked on a campaign of suicide bombings against Israel designed to destroy the peace process. Despite claiming restraint, during a 3½ year period between April 1994 and September 1997 Hamas conducted 27 attacks, half of which were suicide attacks, killing 170 and wounding over 1000.[26]

During this time Israel continued covert operations against Hamas as well as pressured the PA to rein in the terrorist activities of Hamas or risk scuttling the peace process. In one such covert operation in 1996 Israel assassinated the head bomb-maker for the al-Qassam Brigades, Yahya Ayyash. Hamas publicly proclaimed revenge and over the course of the next two months launched four suicide attacks killing 60 and wounding 245.[27] Israel was outraged and the international community horrified by the wanton carnage wrought against innocent Israeli citizens. With the help of Israeli intelligence services the PA conducted extensive arrests of Hamas operatives. Nevertheless, Hamas had succeeded in driving the Israeli public to vote in

the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu in late 1996 ensuring Israel's political departure from actively supporting the peace process in favor of a more hardline counter-terrorism stance.[28] Although Hamas faced greater short-term harassment from Netanyahu's government, the over-arching goal of derailing the peace process was achieved.

The Second Intifada

In 2000 the Second Intifada erupted following the collapse of the Camp David peace talks and over the course of the next five years Hamas engaged in an orgy of violence killing nearly 600 and wounding another 3000 in 45 separate attacks.[29] During this time Hamas strengthened politically at the expense of the failings of the PA who did not deliver on the peace process and whose rampant corruption severely compromised their standing with Palestinians. Hamas capitalized on the significant social programs it had maintained and grown since its formative years as a reliable, respectable alternative to the corruption and ineffectiveness that plagued the public services of the PA. With the collapse of the Camp David peace talks Palestinians became increasingly disenfranchised with the peace process and by extension the PA government. Hamas' hardline rhetoric and violent terrorism suddenly became more palatable to the average Palestinian who was disillusioned and sought vengeance for their growing grievances against Israel.

In 2003 Israeli Prime Minister Aerial Sharon announced a unilateral Israeli plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. Prior to disengaging from Gaza, Sharon wanted to ensure Hamas did not fill the power vacuum so he ordered targeted strikes that killed Hamas founder Sheik Ahmad Yassin in March 2004, his deputy Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi a few weeks later, as well as several other prominent Hamas leaders. But the assassinations only increased Palestinian solidarity with Hamas, especially in the Gaza Strip, and despite the loss of their founder and

other key leaders the organization continued to gain in popularity. When Israel did unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip in September 2005 it was celebrated as a Hamas victory against the military might of Israel and 38 years of occupation.[30] It also marked the end of the Second Intifada providing Israel the relief it sought.

A Hamas Government & The Palestinian Schism

By 2005 Hamas had determined that it was time to enter government and establish an opposition presence in the PA as a first step towards assuming the mantle of governance. No one expected Hamas to win a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections, least of all Hamas. Hamas was caught unprepared to play the role of "both the resistance and the authority."[31] They had insufficient time to rebalance their ideology and politics in order to establish a legitimate government administration, and from the very beginning the integration of Hamas into the PA was fraught with friction and conflict. The secular, leftist Fatah party had dominated the PA since its inception. Almost 20 years of strife and often open conflict between Fatah and Hamas was suddenly front-stage as they were forced to form a unity government. PA President Mahmoud Abbas, who succeeded Yasser Arafat as Chairman of the PLO and chief of Fatah, sought to strengthen the power of the executive branch and his control over the PA security forces while the newly elected Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniya formed new security elements sympathetic to Hamas setting the stage for a showdown.

In June 2006 an attack by Hamas' military wing killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped a third. Israel responded by arresting 64 senior Hamas members of the PA, all but paralyzing the Hamas-led unity government. Meanwhile the conflict between Hamas and Fatah security forces continued to escalate and the violence spilled out into the streets. In January 2007 street fighting

in Gaza City between the two factions resulted in over 80 dead. Saudi Arabia intervened and helped broker a compromise agreement between Fatah and Hamas that resulted in the establishment of a new unity PA government in March 2007. Nevertheless, the intra-Palestinian conflict continued to build in the streets culminating in a Hamas military takeover in Gaza in June 2007. 160 Palestinians were killed and 700 wounded in the brutal week-long campaign by Hamas against Fatah elements in the Gaza Strip. Hamas quickly moved to fill the bureaucratic vacuum in Gaza left by Fatah and consolidate their control over the territory. Hamas spread the narrative that it had "liberated" itself first from Israeli occupation in 2005 and then from the corruption and ineffectiveness of Fatah in 2007.[32]

The Gaza War

Hamas now possessed complete authority over the Gaza Strip, but faced a full embargo from Egypt and Israel, who together controlled all border access to the Gaza Strip. Hamas struggled with the economic strangle hold and the increasingly difficult circumstances in the Gaza Strip which was eroding some of their support base until Israel intervened again. Following its ascension to legitimate government, Hamas foreswore suicide attacks but continued to provoke Israel with rocket attacks and cross-border incursions. In November 2007 Israel estimated that over the past six months Qassam rockets were being fired out of Gaza at an average rate of one every three hours.[33] Initially Israel responded in tit-for-tat fashion with limited operations into Gaza until Israeli tolerance reached its breaking point in December 2008 and Israel launched Operation Cast Lead. The combined three-week air and ground campaign into the Gaza Strip left an estimated 1400 Palestinians dead, 5300 wounded, and another 300,000 homeless.[34] Hamas itself estimated that it lost approximately 700 members during the operation.

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Israel sought to topple the Hamas government by inflicting heavy losses and inciting a popular uprising, but the civilian casualties and collateral damage had the opposite effect, boosting Hamas' fledging standing with Palestinians. Hamas largely succeeded in surviving the three week onslaught by choosing to avoid direct confrontation and conserving fighters, weapons, and equipment while continuing their rocket campaign.[35] For Israel, Operation Cast Lead was a political defeat both domestically and internationally, casting Israel as the indiscriminate aggressor and increasing sympathy for Hamas and the plight of the Palestinians.

Hamas Today

Hamas remains in full control of the Gaza Strip as its representative government, continues to conduct violent attacks on Israel, and is still languishing under the economic embargo of Egypt and Israel. The recent Arab Spring and efforts by the United States to restart the stalled peace process led to a renewed call amongst Palestinians for reconciliation with Israel. Hamas was left out of negotiations in the most recent round of peace talks leaving only the West Bank PA government of President Abbas to represent the Palestinian position. In response Hamas condemned the ongoing peace talks as "futile" and instead called for a Third Intifada against Israel in response to continued Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Jewish visits to the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.[36] Hamas has not eschewed violence, not recognized Israel as a state, and still publically holds to the policy of ultimately replacing Israel with an Islamic Palestinian state. Hamas remains on the US State Department's list of foreign terror organizations and continues to launch attacks into Israel in response to Israeli actions and perceived affronts.

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While the number of attacks has declined since Operation Cast Lead, Hamas still launches hundreds of rockets into Israel annually and is assessed to possess not only greater stockpiles of rockets, but more deadly and longer-range rockets than ever before.[37] The majority of Hamas rockets are home-made Qassam rockets, but as recently as March 2014 Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted a major arms shipment of advanced weaponry from Iran, including M-302 surface-to-surface rockets, destined for the Gaza Strip.[38] The rhetoric and growing armory of Hamas point toward continued violence as opposed to a transition to non-violence, but for now an uneasy respite exists. The last major spike in violence was during Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012 in response escalating rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip. The IDF used a missile strike to kill Ahmed Jabari, head of Hamas' military wing, immediately followed by a week-long campaign of air strikes targeting underground rocket launchers, smuggling tunnels, and senior Hamas members.[39]

The pattern that is developing since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 is one of somewhat measured reciprocity. Hamas or Israel will decide that an affront took place or a political opportunity exists and will launch a strike, which in turn requires a reciprocal response from the other party. Often times these incidents remain an isolated one-for-one exchange, but at other points since 2007 the exchange escalates into something much larger as was the case with the Gaza War of 2008-2009 and the recent Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012.

Politically the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip have few alternatives to Hamas since Fatah's forced expulsion in 2007, and despite the lack of improvements in the Palestinians' plight Hamas still enjoys widespread public support. In reality Hamas is rapidly progressing in its goal of assimilating the population of the Gaza Strip and indoctrinating future generations for "the long struggle." Hamas controls the government, administers the schools, and controls the media.

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Possessing unprecedented control over the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip is enabling Hamas to socialize and institutionalize terrorism in ways never seen before. Hamas recently rewrote high school textbooks in Gaza to deny the history of Israel, and started sending members of the Izz al-din al-Qassam Brigades to teach high school students how to use AK-47s for an hour a week.[40] Palestinian television programs, notably children's programs, frequently glorify the terrorist exploits of Hamas to include suicide bombers. Children are often taken to militant rallies and dressed as suicide bombers for use in Hamas propaganda. Several generations of Palestinians already harbor irreconcilable hatred for Israel, but Hamas is working to ensure that the future generations will as well.

Funding

The Council on Foreign Relations estimated that Hamas' annual budget as a terrorist organization was $70 million in 2009.[41] That figure is a separate assessment of the non-government functions of Hamas and could be categorized as its terrorism budget. Since Hamas assumed government control of the Gaza Strip it has benefited from tax revenues, international aid funding, and significant donations from various charities maintaining an annual government budget of approximately $540 million. Hamas has always possessed a wide-variety of ever changing sources of funding. Individual contributions from the Palestinian diaspora and sympathetic Arabs funneled through various charities have generally remained a consistent source of funding albeit the amount varies significantly depending on the political climate. Saudi Arabia used to be the largest source of funding for Hamas until pressure from the United States curtailed much of it by 2004. For a brief time prior to 2003 Iraq under Saddam Hussein provided as much as $25,000 to families of Hamas suicide bombers in addition to the much

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smaller amounts that Hamas would provide to families.[42] Iran and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood account for a significant portion of Hamas' funding with Iran filling much of the void left by Saudi Arabia in a potential bid to gain greater influence over the organization. A significant amount of Hamas' domestic revenue was generated by taxes on the lucrative smuggling that took place between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. However, with the recent reversal in Hamas-Egyptian relations and the latter's flooding the smuggling tunnels with raw sewage, Hamas is experiencing a financial crisis which threatens to undermine its political position as the economic conditions in the Gaza Strip worsen.

Part II: How Does Hamas End

How Terrorist Groups End

In 2008 the RAND Cooperation published a report titled *How Terrorist Groups End* that provides a systematic analysis of all terrorist groups that existed between 1968 and 2006 to gain insight on how modern terrorist organizations end. They classified the principal ways terrorist groups end into five major categories: splintering, politicization, policing, military force, or victory.[43] Using objective criteria the study identified 648 terrorist groups that existed between 1968 and 2006, of which 244 remained active in 2006, 136 splintered but its members continued terrorism, and 268 ended.[44] Splintering constitutes the largest category of terrorist groups that ceased to exist. Of the 268 terrorist groups that both ended the study determined politicization and policing to be the primary ways they ended, 43% and 40% respectively.[45] Using this data there are possible inferences about the potential end of Hamas since all terrorist groups do eventually end.

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Splintering

The RAND study defined *splintering* as any time a terrorist group ceased to exist as an organization but its members continued terrorism individually or under the auspices of another group.[46] It was often the case that weaker terrorist groups would dissolve and the members would scatter to join larger, more powerful groups. In these cases terrorism did not end in that region or place so much as it simply changed names. The plethora of Palestinian terrorist groups within Gaza and the West Bank over the last century make terrorism almost a cottage industry amongst Palestinians with the lines often blurring amongst respective memberships. Hamas has cemented its place as one of the preeminent Palestinian terrorist groups of the last two decades is arguably one of the most formidable terrorist organizations currently in existence. Unlike many of its peers, the military wing of Hamas exhibits great discipline in adhering to the orders of the Hamas leadership, and Hamas has always demonstrated great solidarity in purpose and internal allegiance. Although the amount of support for Hamas amongst Palestinians and empathetic external actors has waxed and waned over the years, the organization has always retained a high level of support both politically and financially in comparison to other historical terrorist groups. The landslide victory of Hamas in the 2006 PA parliamentary elections and the subsequent establishment of a Hamas-run government in complete control of the Gaza Strip is just one obvious indicator that Hamas is firmly and legitimately established. At this point it is highly unlikely that Hamas would splinter to the point that it ceased to exist as an organization.

As a subset of splintering there is the possibility that Hamas could fracture into two separate groups, one focused more on legitimizing and politicization while the other would continue to pursue violent means. Indeed Hamas already possesses a dichotomy along these

lines. Since assuming the mantel of legitimate governance in 2006 Hamas has struggled with retaining terrorism as a necessary mechanism to achieve its goals without undermining its quest to achieve the same thru legitimate political means. Now that Hamas won the burden of governing the Gaza Strip it walks a fine line between its political obligations to provide the services of governance to a desperate and isolated people, while not being hamstrung in its freedom to use terrorism to achieve its ultimate goals of liberating Palestine from Israeli rule. Interestingly enough Hamas as a government is semi-dependent on Israel for water, fuel, electricity, and access to the outside world thru the Kerem Shalom Crossing between Gaza and Israel, and every time Hamas attacks Israel they risk losing the Kerem Shalom lifeline. For years the smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza provided a means to support the fledging Gaza economy and provide revenue to Hamas, but Egyptian ties with Hamas soured in July 2013 and Egypt destroyed most of the smuggling tunnels upon which Hamas depended.[47] The tension between the present responsibilities of governing Gaza and the larger political aspirations of liberating Palestine from Israel could potentially drive Hamas to fracture even if only to enable the unhindered pursuit of both ends without negatively impacted the other.

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Politicization

The second most common way a terrorist group ends is politicization. According to the RAND study, the narrower the scope of the goals a terrorist group seeks the more likely the terrorist group will end in some form of politicization or negotiated settlement with the government they oppose.[48] Inversely the grander the ends a terrorist group seeks or the greater the divide between the positions of the terrorist group and the government, the less likely the terrorist organization will end in politicization. In the case of Hamas, there is exceptional

pressure from the international community, external supporters, and even many Palestinians to reach a negotiated settlement with Israel and end the violence. Nevertheless, unlike the PLO, Hamas repeatedly refuses to renounce violence or its stated goal of ultimately replacing Israel with an Islamic Palestinian state. Certainly the chasm between the political position of Hamas and Israel could not be greater, and based on the data from the RAND study it is unlikely that a peaceful, political compromise is possible unless Hamas and Israel significantly reduce their expectations and conditions for peace.

Although the political rhetoric and stated goals of Hamas and Israel make politicization highly unlikely, the reality that Hamas is gradually legitimizing and being locally politicized under the mantel of government gives cause for hope that politicization is a viable end to its terrorist nature. Indeed, Hamas is acting with greater restraint and more measured violence since winning the 2006 PA parliamentary elections and entering the political process. The University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database shows that aside from one Hamas-attributed suicide bombing in February 2008, Hamas has restrained itself from using suicide attacks and spectacular bombings and now relies primarily on less effective, less lethal rocket attacks.[49]

From a political standpoint the rhetoric generally remains extreme, but there is also an increasing trend amongst senior leaders in Hamas to offer a more conciliatory goal than the complete destruction of Israel. In a 2008 interview, Mishal offered that a peaceful resolution could be achieved with the establishment of a Palestinian state with full sovereignty based on the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem, without Israeli settlements, and if Palestinians had the right of return.[50] This is not a new offer and is along the lines offered by Yassin, al-Rantissi, and others as far back as 1996; however, as Hamas has grown increasing legitimized through political involvement the potential for Israel to engage with Hamas in peace negotiations is more

plausible. However, in the same interview Mishal stated, "If anyone thinks that the conflict can be ended, and that calm, stability, and security can be achieved in the region at the expense of Palestinian rights, they are deluded." [51] Certainly there remains much more ground to cover if Hamas and Israel are to reconcile the conflict through political compromise.

Policing

The RAND study identifies policing as almost as common an end to terrorist groups as politicization, but Hamas is a unique entity in that it is both a terrorist group and the governing authority for the primary area in which it operates. In a sense Hamas is the police unto itself. Indeed Hamas provides all the functions of a police force within the jurisdiction of the Gaza Strip, and for all intents and purposes is the police. Hamas has arrested members of other terrorist groups and militants operating in the Gaza Strip if they act contrary to Hamas' wishes. As recently as March 2014 Hamas rounded up and arrested 20 members of a Salafi militant group operating in Gaza to prevent unsanctioned rocket fire that could undermine the status quo with Israel.[52] Since Hamas gained complete control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 there no longer is an institution or police force that possesses authority over Hamas. Beyond the bounds of the Gaza Strip Israel's robust security forces provide a substantial obstacle to Hamas' ability to operate, but Hamas enjoys relative autonomy within the Gaza Strip. It is important to note that Israel still maintains a network of Palestinians informants as well as extensive surveillance of Hamas within the tiny 139 square miles of the Gaza Strip.

Israel's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and relinquish control and relative autonomy to Hamas was a deliberate decision that assessed greater benefit in disengaging and isolating the Gaza Strip than continuing the costly and visible military

occupation. Essentially Israel walled off, fortified, and embargoed the Gaza Strip making it easier to isolate and prevent Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist organizations from directly engaging IDF while at the same time demonstrating Israeli "good will" by ceding land and authority back to the Palestinians. In retrospect, the political and actual costs of militarily occupying the Gaza Strip outweighed the benefits of policing Hamas and the other resident terrorist groups. So it is unlikely that Hamas will end by means of policing since Hamas is currently not subject to policing or any other higher authority, at least not within the confines of the Gaza Strip.

Military Force

RAND's study found that only 7% of terrorist groups ended due to military force as the primary means of the opposing government.[53] The 27-year history of Hamas is colored predominantly by Israeli use of military force. Eighteen of those 27 years were spent under direct Israeli military occupation. The line between policing and military force certainly blurred during the 38 years that Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, but the IDF remains one of the principal tools Israel has utilized against Hamas throughout its existence. Since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 the IDF has conducted numerous named military operations in and around the Gaza Strip. Over the past quarter-century Israel has employed the full spectrum of military operations against Hamas ranging from a 18-year military occupation, fortified containment, a month-long ground invasion, decapitation strikes, information campaigns, targeted air strikes and incursions, and covert operations. All have failed to produce the demise of Hamas. Arguably Hamas is more lethal, more capable, and better equipped than ever before. Given the resilience of Hamas there is little reason to believe that military force will

be the primary cause for the dissolution of Hamas as a terrorist group. Certainly it is not for lack of effort on the part of the IDF.

Victory

Finally, some terrorist groups end because their goals are achieved as was the case with approximately 10% of groups in the RAND study.[54] Those terrorist groups that ended because their goals were realized weren't always directly responsible for achieving those goals, in many cases the achievement of their goals was due to other factors but it still resulted in the end of the terrorist group.[55] In the case of Hamas, its stated goals are broad and represent an existential threat to Israel. The question lies in whether Hamas would accept anything short of the destruction of Israel in order to claim enough of a victory to renounce terrorism. Beyond much of the podium-thumping public rhetoric and the words of a 1988 Charter, senior leaders of Hamas have offered more reasonable terms for a peaceful resolution albeit terms that are still unacceptable to Israel.

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From a military standpoint Hamas is hopelessly over-matched by the technological and institutional supremacy of the IDF, and can never hope to obtain parity even thru irregular means. The only hope would be to drive Israel to acquiesce politically by making the current status quo untenable. There are several avenues that Hamas is pursuing beyond terrorism that includes soliciting international empathy and action to put economic and political pressure to bear on Israel, which holds the greatest promise for influencing Israel. Israel relies heavily on support from certain actors within the international community, notably the United States and the West, for political, economic, and military backing. Crippling economic investment and trade in Israel by soliciting international favor to isolate Israel is a very recent phenomenon that appears

to influence popular opinion in Israel far more heavily than terrorism. Terrorism has generally only driven Israel to step-up military force as opposed to drive them to the negotiating table.

Hamas renouncing terrorism if enough of its goals were achieved is always possible, but highly unlikely given the fundamentalist, religious mandate that defines the organization. Over the course of its almost 30-year history Hamas has grown in power; politically, socially, and militarily. There is little reason to believe Hamas will not continue to relentlessly pursue its goals and maintain the popular support of the Palestinian people. Whether that ends in a Palestinian victory or in a political compromise, this is a more likely end to Hamas as a terrorist group.

How Does Hamas End

As the RAND study itself acknowledged, rarely did any single factor determine how a terrorist group ended, but it was often an amalgamation of factors. It is unlikely that any single event or factor will result in the end of Hamas as a terrorist group but more likely a confluence of social, political, economic, and military factors. The Palestinians have endured over 60 years as interned refugees living under the dominion of Israel and as Hamas continues to sow seeds of hate in the future generations they will continue to reap a harvest of hatred. Such institutionalized and deeply rooted animosity will be difficult to overcome just as the United States struggled for over a century to overcome the endemic racism that permeated American culture even after emancipation. Nevertheless, there is hope. Many of history's greatest moments of reconciliation were preceded by bloody and violent bouts between oppressive governments and violent terrorist groups. The end of Apartheid in South Africa is just one notable example. Specific to Hamas there are several factors that could result in the end of its

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terrorist pursuits including Hamas' increasing politicization through their legitimate governance of the Gaza Strip, the rising awareness and support of the international community, and the greater influence international pressure can have on Israel to reconcile with the Palestinians as a whole. In terms of the RAND Study, politicization and potentially victory will most likely mark the end of Hamas' terrorist behavior.

Israel has proven resilient to terrorism since its modern inception in 1948, and even before. There is little reason to believe that Israel would acquiesce primarily due to terrorism. After all, Israel has been invaded by all of its neighbors on several occasions and endured all magnitude of appalling violence and terrorism during its less than 70 years as a state. But Israel does have vulnerabilities. As a democratic, capitalist society economically dependent on international trade for its viability Israel is susceptible to international pressure, especially economic pressure. Increasing efforts to garner broader international empathy and support for Palestinians, especially amongst Western countries that historically support Israel, has gotten Israel's attention more recently.

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A movement amongst European banks and large corporations to boycott Israeli banks and businesses that operate in or support West Bank settlements is potentially the beginning of a larger movement to politically and economically isolate Israel for its policies toward Palestinians. If the movement greatly expands or if countries begin to sanction Israel there is a real possibility that it would drive Israel to make greater concessions in peace negotiations with the Palestinians. Israel recognizes its dependence on Western support and if faced with total isolation it could make Israel's position untenable. Assuming Israel did make greater concessions that led to a real peace accord with Palestinians that satisfied the majority of Hamas' conditions then there is a real possibility that Hamas would indeed renounce terrorism or be

pressured to do so by both internal and external forces. Certainly there are many layers of assumptions resident with this logic progression, but at this point the quandary of Israeli-Palestinian relations is so stalemated that a dramatic change such as a policy-reversal by Western powers must be considered.

As an extension of the model of international pressure driving Israel to greater concessions, Hamas would need to deliberately restrain itself as terrorism does not lend itself to garnering international support and empathy. Even if Hamas choose to restrain itself the question remains, will the international community truly galvanize around the Palestinian cause to the point of forcing the Israelis to greater concessions or will the international community continue to talk a good game and offer only token measures that Israel can brush off. Tough talk and threats are nothing new for Israel. Israel has to believe it is in its best interest to reconcile with the Palestinians.

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Beyond a dramatic shift in international politics or an unprecedented policy reversal by Israel it is unlikely that a lasting peace settlement is imminent, but the potential for Hamas to end its terrorist activities is arguably possible even without such an agreement. As mentioned before, Hamas is eight years into its adventure with governance and the natural shift is toward politicization and legitimacy. As Hamas increasingly bears the responsibilities and privileges of pseudo-statehood, the more likely its culture and organization are to conform to the norms of a state even if the Gaza Strip remains embargoed and interned by Israel and Egypt. Hamas possesses uniformed security forces, is talking of establishing an official military academy, and operates a government responsible for the services of nearly 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Hamas Prime Minister Haniya recently stated that Hamas' priority is "ending the siege and easing the problems of citizens, especially with regard to electricity and water," indicting a

focus on civic responsibilities as opposed to lofty aspirations of destroying Israel.[56] Indeed, most of Hamas' violence is perpetrated with relatively ineffective homemade rockets that have killed less than a dozen Israelis since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. Certainly the present-day Hamas is a far-cry from the Hamas that killed 60 and wounded 245 Israelis in less than two months during its zenith of violence. Only time will tell if Hamas will unilaterally renounce terrorism and truly commit itself to the political process or whether it will remain a hybrid of terrorism, government, and social altruism until some point when a true peace is finally realized.

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