4. Hamas

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BACKGROUND

Unlike several other Palestinian militant groups, Hamas appeared as a player in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict relatively recently, as it was founded only in the late 1980s. The conflict started unravelling in the late 19th century when historic Palestine became the heart of the project of the Jewish state and thus attracted waves of Jewish immigration and Jewish land purchases in Ottoman and British Mandated Palestine (1922–1948) (Sinanoglou, 2010, pp. 119–120).¹ Towards the end of the British Mandate, Palestinian Arabs were fighting with increasingly powerful Jewish gangs established by Jews who had emigrated to Palestine. The 1948 war resulted in the establishment of the State of Israel and the displacement of some 700 000 Palestinians, who ended up in various refugee camps² and locations in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, neighbouring countries and beyond (Nakhala, 2012, p. 5). As early as the 1950s these refugees, aided by Arabs, started to organise and launch attacks against Israel. The first group that appeared was the fedayeen, or the guerrillas, who launched attacks against Israel, and mostly infiltrated the borders from the Gaza Strip,³ Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon (Sayigh, 1999, p. 62; Byman, 2011, pp. 1–2).⁴ To the fedayeen, the armed struggle was the sole means for liberating Palestine (Giacaman, 2013).

Meanwhile young Palestinian activists in the diaspora coalesced into a number of political parties with varying ideologies. Several of those participated in the fedayeen attacks. This also gave birth to the renowned Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964. Less than a decade into the establishment of the PLO,⁵ the fedayeen took over the PLO. The goal of the PLO was to ‘liberate Palestine’, including the land on which Israel was established in 1948, and the eventual return of Palestinian refugees. Until 1967, this land extended from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, which corresponds to the map of Mandate Palestine. In 1974, the Arab League and the United Nations recognised the PLO under the leadership of the fedayeen factions as the ‘sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people’ (Giacaman, 2013). Devastated by the loss of more land to Israel in the 1967 war,⁶ the goals of the

PLO retreated to what was perceived to be an intermediate goal: the liberation of the land occupied by Israel in 1967, that is, the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem (Hroub, 2009). Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), two secular Palestinian factions integrated under the PLO umbrella, immediately became two of the most active groups that attacked Israel in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Emergence of Hamas

With Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967, more Palestinian political parties with armed wings emerged, this time both among the diaspora and inside the Palestinian Territories. Organisations later emerged with Islamist ideologies and no PLO membership, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ, established in 1981) and Hamas (founded in 1987) (Elnakhala, 2014) and they started to launch attacks against Israel. Hamas was founded in the Gaza Strip as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and since its establishment as a religious-nationalist liberation movement it has become increasingly influential on the ground, not only in the Gaza Strip but also in the West Bank. Hamas's rise coincided with political concessions by the Fatah-led PLO.

Around the mid-1980s, the PLO officially relinquished its long-term goal of the liberation of Palestine 'from the River to the Sea' by recognising Israel and its right to exist, and dropped the armed struggle as its primary strategy. At that time, the PLO hoped to regain the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through a settlement, and it argued for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on any piece of Palestinian land. This shift resulted in the Oslo Accords of 1993 that founded the Palestinian Authority (PA). By contrast, Hamas persisted in employing the armed struggle as its primary strategy in fighting Israel (Hroub, 2009; Milton-Edwards and Farrel, 2010).

Hamas thus appeared as an alternative to Fatah, as it preached a path in the completely opposite direction, one that resembled the earlier path of the PLO in the 1960s. Hamas opposed the agreement with Israel, emphasising the idea that the Oslo Accords served Israeli interests and compromised Palestinian rights. While the Palestinian and Israeli representatives were negotiating in the early 1990s, Hamas and the PIJ launched a series of suicide bombings, a tactic that had not previously been used by any Palestinian faction. These attacks shocked Israel's city centres and raised questions about the ability of the newly established Fatah-led Palestinian Authority to rule the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Within the first decade after the Oslo Accords, most Palestinians felt frustrated with the outcomes of peace. Palestinian daily life had become increasingly difficult and the construction of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land continued to expand, resulting in the deterioration of the political and

security situation, leading to the Second Palestinian Intifada of 2000. These conditions provided Hamas and its 'resistance project' with yet more power and influence (Hroub, 2009).

Various governments have differing views on Hamas. The United States and Israel designate it a terrorist group, while the United Kingdom and Australia designate only its armed wing, the Izz al-Dine al-Qassam Brigades, as terrorist. Numerous other countries do not designate Hamas or any other Palestinian group at all. Hamas was designated as a terrorist group by the European Union (EU) until 2014, when the European Court removed Hamas from the proscribed list. Following an appeal by the EU Commission, this European Court decision was suspended in 2017 and Hamas was once again listed as terrorist. Many Palestinians, including those who disagree with Hamas's ideology and politics, do not see Hamas as a terrorist group. In fact, various Palestinians and Arabs perceive the group as a resistance organisation battling the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This does not, however, eliminate the fact that Hamas does use terrorism as a tactic, which is also used by several other actors, including states.

HAMAS AND ITS AIMS

Liberation of Palestine

Hamas has always marketed itself among the Palestinians, and sometimes the Arabs, as an Islamist movement engaged in a liberation struggle against a foreign occupier, focusing its goals and activities within the borders of historic Palestine. This feature distinguishes Hamas from other Islamist movements, which emphasise other issues such as corrupt regimes or global jihad. Hamas, by contrast, restricts itself to fighting the Israeli occupation and protecting Palestinian rights to freedom and self-determination (Hamas, n.d.; Hroub, 2009). Hamas's political leader, Yahya Sinwar, has vowed that Hamas will continue to fight the Israeli occupation 'until the liberation of all of Palestine' (Fares, 2017). Hamas's April 2017 document, which is considered an addition to, rather than a modification of, its 1988 Charter, reiterates the 'liberation of Palestine and fighting the Zionist project'⁷ (that is, the State of Israel) as the central goal of the organisation (Orabi, 2017).

Palestinians differ on where the borders of their aspired state should be. Some leaders of Hamas's rival faction, Fatah, believe that the Palestinian state should be built on the pre-1967 borders, that is, the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Many Palestinians, however, still have yearnings for, and hopes to establish their future state, on all of historic Palestine: that is, on the land occupied by Israel in 1967, as well as today's Israel. This implies that the fulfilment of these aspirations would somehow require the disap-

pearance of present-day Israel. Hamas's documents and official statements have repeatedly stressed that Palestine extends from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, yet its April 2017 document states a willingness to accept a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders, a hitherto unprecedented statement by Hamas. In response to accusations of contradicting Hamas's original charter, its leaders emphasised that this move is an intermediary one, until the liberation of the remainder of Palestine becomes more feasible (Akil, 2017).

Welfare

Since its early days, the organisation has established social welfare programmes that provided much-needed services to Palestinian society.⁸ What made these services more valuable is the fact that they were not offered by any institution in the Palestinian society until the Palestinian Authority set foot in the Palestinian Territories in 1995. Until then, Hamas was the sole provider of social, educational, charitable and religious services. Over the long term, such services helped the organisation to win the hearts and minds of many Palestinians (Hroub, 2009; Roy, 2011).

A closer look at the role of such services reveals that this goal carries within it the elements of a strategy for yet another goal, viz. the ruling of Palestinian society and potentially establishing an Islamic Palestinian state (a concept that is discussed later in this chapter). Hamas's social, educational and other services were instrumental in garnering broad legitimacy and support which paved the way for later victories. Additionally, Hamas's institutions have helped the movement to instil its Islamic ideology, which facilitated acceptance of its Islamic project (Malka, 2007, p. 101).

Governing the Palestinians

As of 2005, Hamas displayed a clear interest in governing, through its participation in the Palestinian political process for the very first time. Consequently, the organisation has become part of the Palestinian Authority (PA), a body which it previously criticised and boycotted. In the 1990s, Hamas rejected the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, and it even tried to thwart the peace process by launching attacks inside Israel. Hamas also boycotted the PA and the elections of 1996; around a decade later it shifted its strategy by actually taking part in running the PA. Hamas first participated in local municipal elections in 2005, and after achieving a wide victory on that level it participated in the parliamentary elections in 2006, achieving a stunning victory ('Profile: Hamas Palestinian movement', 2014).

Hamas already had a solid support base due to its social and military activities, but several factors explain this victory. Many agree that Hamas's

political victory was less due to its religious and warlike agenda, and largely due to a clever campaign in which it took advantage of the collapse of the Oslo Agreement, the failure of the PA in establishing an independent state, and Fatah's corruption and bad governance. Generally, Hamas justifies the use of violence as a form of self-defence against a threat, and thus it sees 'the ability to commit violence against Israel [as] ... an important source of legitimacy'. For Palestinian voters in 2005, the time was ripe to try other alternatives, particularly due to the widespread corruption in the Fatah-led PA between 1995 and 2005 (Long, 2010). Hamas's determination is evident in its later relations with its rival faction, Fatah. Hamas turned its weapons against Fatah in 2007, and after direct clashes, finally took over the rule of the Gaza Strip ('Profile: Hamas Palestinian movement', 2014).

Hamas's rule in Gaza Strip enforced an authoritarian and Islamic regime that arrested and tortured political opponents. Sharia courts were established, demonstrations were banned and violently repressed, and the media was censored (Schanzer, 2009). This practice was not unique to Hamas. Fatah's PA had previously used similar methods and restrictions in the West Bank, as did many Arab countries, such as Egypt (Long, 2010). Overall, Hamas's entrance into politics was also associated with a change in its discourse, by adopting a softer and more political position, and this has transformed Hamas into an actor that cannot be ignored in the political arena. Meanwhile, Hamas emphasised that its participation in politics was just one aspect of its broader strategic goal of resistance to Israel, and was consistent with its commitment to the liberation of Palestine and its rejection of the Oslo Agreements, as expressed in the preamble of its national platform (Hroub, 2006, p. 6).

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Shura Council (Majlis al-Shura)

Hamas's central consultative body, the Shura⁹ Council, serves as the equivalent of a state legislature. One of the key roles of the Council is defining Hamas's overarching strategy and political aims. Council members consult amongst themselves on important decisions, as well as Hamas's general strategy and goals. They also consult with the Political Bureau on the means of fulfilling these goals and strategy. Moreover, the Shura Council oversees Hamas's activities, elects the group's Political Bureau, and has the power to disband it if the Political Bureau exceeds its mandated authority. The Council also provides normative backing and moral justification for Hamas's political conduct and major decisions. The Council has representatives from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons and Hamas's leadership abroad. The Council is rather secretive and includes respected religious

figures. Under the Council, smaller Shura committees are employed to oversee various activities, including military operations and media relations. Local sub-committees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip report back to the Shura Council and implement its decisions on the ground (Malka, 2007). Hamas members elect the Shura Council. In fact, Hamas's 2017 internal elections resulted in the election of 80 members of the Council's branch in the Gaza Strip ('Haniya takes the lean ...', 2017).

The Political Bureau

The Political Bureau is Hamas's principal decision-making body and derives its power from the backing of the Shura Council (Davis, 2016, pp. 282–283). While being overseen and guided by the Shura Council, the Political Bureau functions as the main source of political authority in Hamas. Its main responsibility is the implementation of Hamas's overall strategy, which is set up by the Shura Council. The main members of the Bureau are elected by the Shura Council every four years. Since May 2017, the former head of Hamas's government in Gaza, Esmael Haniya, has headed the Political Bureau, the organisation's executive authority. He succeeded Khaled Mashaal,¹⁰ who headed the Bureau, from 2004 until 2017. It has 15 members in the Gaza Strip alone and has several departments including finance, propaganda, foreign affairs and social welfare. It has four sections, located in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, in Israeli prisons and abroad. The Bureau is composed of representatives from the four sections, totalling 18 members, elected by the movement's Shura Council or one of its branches. The head of the Bureau is also elected every four years (Gleis and Berti, 2012; 'Haniya takes the lean ...', 2017).

Gaza Government

In February 2017, Yahya Sinwar, a founding member of the group's armed wing, won Hamas's internal elections for the role of political leader of the organisation in Gaza, replacing Esmael Haniya, Hamas's former Prime Minister. So far, the Prime Minister of Hamas's Gaza-based government has been responsible for the daily rule of the Gaza Strip since Hamas expelled the Fatah leaders from the Strip in mid-2007. In April 2014, Haniya stepped down and assumed the role of deputy leader of Hamas as part of a failed reconciliation agreement with the PLO (Rudoren and Kershner, 2014; Beaumont, 2017a). Since 2006, Hamas's Gaza government has been shunned by the international community, while it has struggled to pay the salaries of 40 000 municipal workers in the Strip (Issacharoff, 2016).

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades

Named after a Syrian fighter killed by the British in 1935, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (hereafter referred to as the Qassam Brigades) function as Hamas's military wing and were officially established in 1992. Soon after their creation, the Brigades attempted to derail the negotiations that were ongoing in 1992 between Israel and the PLO. According to the Brigades' website, however, there were efforts to establish an armed wing even before the establishment of Hamas itself. The main goals of the Brigades were 'to liberate all of Palestine from the Zionist occupation' in 1948, the fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people, the mobilisation of all of its resources, forces and capabilities, and the mobilisation of the Arab and Islamic nations to 'launch Jihad for the liberation of Palestine' ('Who we are', n.d.).

The Qassam Brigades are generally committed to a high level of secrecy regarding their structure, leadership and membership ('Izz Addin al-Qassam Brigades', 2014), and they are officially headed by Mohammad Deif, although Israeli intelligence considers Marwan Issa to be the *de facto* head. The Brigades enjoy a considerable degree of independence and according to a senior Hamas official are a separate entity 'which has its own leaders who do not take their orders from us and do not tell us of their plans in advance' (Kass and O'Neill, 1997, p. 267). Most likely, however, this is only the case at the operational level, and other Hamas senior leaders, including for example the late founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, indicated that the armed wing is not detached from the organisation's political body (Levitt, 2004). The 'About Us' section of the Brigades' official website explains the relationship as 'complementary at the organisational level and independent in the field', adding that the Brigades are an integral part of the structure of the Hamas Movement ('Who we are', n.d.).

In 2014 Hamas was estimated to have around 20 000 fighters plus another 20 000 police and security forces personnel (Saleh, 2014). The Hamas-controlled Ministry of Finance in Gaza revealed in May 2014 that some 25 000 Hamas employees in Gaza worked in the security services, the majority of these being members of the Qassam Brigades (Abu Amer, 2014). Despite the lack of clarity over the exact number of fighters, these figures were previously confirmed in December 2012 by Abu Obayda, the Brigades' official spokesperson, adding that the Brigades can actually rely on an even larger number of fighters.

Since its establishment in the early 1990s, the Brigades' arsenal and fighting tactics have significantly expanded and evolved. Early attacks by the Qassam Brigades in the late 1980s were limited to stone-throwing, stabbings, and using home-made bombs as well as Molotov cocktails. Later, the Qassam Brigades also introduced ambushes that included the planting of bombs and the use of assault rifles. In most cases, the Qassam Brigades targeted the Israeli military

forces present in the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In 1992, Israel deported 418 Palestinians who Israel identified as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) activists to south Lebanon, where the Lebanese Hezbollah was – and still is – very active. Many scholars trace the beginnings of linkages between Hamas and Hezbollah to that time (Horowitz, 2010). One year after the deportation, the Qassam Brigades, as well as the PIJ, launched their first suicide-bombing attack, a well-known tactic of Hezbollah, inside Israeli city centres.

Suicide bombings became the Qassam Brigades' main tactic of attacks until at least 2005. Some months after the Second Palestinian Intifada started in late 2000, various armed Palestinian groups, including Hamas's Qassam Brigades, increased the number of their attacks against Israel. The Qassam Brigades, however, introduced new attack tactics such as rocket and tunnel attacks, both borrowed from Hezbollah. The Qassam Brigades' first rocket attack was launched in 2001, with the necessary weapon parts being transported via the underground tunnels along the borders with Egypt. Early Qassam Brigades rockets caused barely any damage or harm, but the range and precision of these rockets evolved over time and the Qassam Brigades developed great expertise in this field (Elnakhala, 2014). In the last wide-scale military confrontation between Hamas and Israel in the summer of 2014, Hamas's rockets demonstrated a strategic threat when they hit key Israeli city centres, such as Tel Aviv, Ashdod and the outskirts of Jerusalem. While the Qassam Brigades still imports advanced rockets from abroad, most likely from Libya or Iran, it now has the necessary expertise to build its own capable and effective rockets.

In turn, the first tunnel attack by the Qassam Brigades was launched in 2001. These attacks used underground tunnels to cross the borders with Israel and conduct attacks inside Israel. They have generally been very well coordinated, requiring complex operation planning as they also involved various tactics employed simultaneously, including the launching of rockets, armed attacks, and so on. These attacks targeted Israeli military bases just outside of the Gaza Strip, and sometimes involved the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, such as the snatching of an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, in June 2006 (Elnakhala, 2014).

RECRUITMENT

The political context is a key determinant in Hamas's ability to attract new recruits, and any breakthroughs in negotiations¹¹ with Israel were always followed by a decline in Hamas's popularity and commensurately its ability to recruit new members. Alternatively, any failures in the negotiations preceded a significant rise in Hamas's support base and recruitment. This is partly due to the fact that Hamas proposes an alternative strategy – that is, the armed

struggle – to that of the PLO. Hamas's support base extends to include all sections of Palestinian society, including university professors, students, doctors, lawyers, farmers, young and old, men and women (Gleis and Berti, 2012).

During recruitment, Hamas has always emphasised the political circumstances that drive it to use force against the occupying power, Israel, meaning that a significant change in circumstances could potentially result in it relinquishing the armed struggle without affecting its own identity as an Islamist-nationalist organisation (Jefferis, 2016, p. 85). Inside the Palestinian Territories, Hamas has a large base of passive supporters who are neither fighters nor members of Hamas's political structure, but who would nevertheless vote for and support the organisation. Hamas has active members inside the Territories who are affiliated with its military or political wings, and it also has a large number of overseas supporters, both in the Palestinian diaspora and among non-Palestinians. Although the latter group is not composed of members of the organisation, it has an important role in providing legitimacy and funding (Gleis and Berti, 2012).

For Hamas, the media is a key instrument for mobilising the people, and it invests considerably in the 'resistant media', the objectives of which are sometimes perceived as the same as those of the resistance itself: that is, mobilising the masses. The ability of Hamas to sell its ideas about the resistance helps to increase the recruitment of new members and to widen its popular support. From an early stage, the movement relied on simple tools such as leaflets and graffiti murals to mobilise the masses and encourage more recruits, while mosques and educational institutions acted as centres for the dissemination of Hamas's media materials. Today, in addition to these methods, Hamas has its own information centre which keeps the organisation's website and news up to date (Abdelal, 2016, p. 174).

Those recruited usually follow a training programme, and some of them are then transferred to the military wing (Balousha, 2015). Those who show leadership promise are identified at an early age and their indoctrination is developed through peers and mentors. Alternatively, those who are capable of meeting physical and mental challenges are guided towards the appropriate parts of the organisation.

Recruitment Centres

Recruitment for Hamas is usually carried out through its web of social activities, and Hamas uses its charities, mosque classes, *dawa* centres, student unions, sporting clubs, summer camps and other Hamas-run organisations to recruit new members through its preaching department. This applies to recruitment for religious, military or even inactive roles, and Hamas's suicide bombing volunteers have been recruited through similar networks (Gleis

and Berti, 2012; Balousha, 2015). The presence of the Hamas organisation, through its welfare and religious organisations, has provided it with much credibility and this in turn has facilitated its recruitment efforts (Hroub, 2009).

That said, the process of recruitment may take place informally through familial relations or friendships that develop in the context of the above-mentioned institutions. Several Hamas attackers from Hebron in 2003 were actually members of a Hamas-affiliated football team (Regular, 2013). On university campuses, recruitment usually happens through Hamas's affiliate student group, al-Kutla al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Bloc (Bajes, 2012). The recruitment usually includes a period of indoctrination, covering historic education about Palestine and the occupation (Milton-Edwards and Farrel, 2010).

After the crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank by both the Fatah-led PA and Israel, Hamas's military infrastructure in the area was considerably weakened. In March 2017, Israel uncovered information about Hamas's attempts at contacting West Bank Palestinians who had left Palestine to study in Egypt. Mohammad Nazzal, a Palestinian student who was active in this kind of endeavour, admitted to Israeli intelligence that he had also coordinated the visits of new recruits to the Gaza Strip for training purposes, before they returned to the West Bank to conduct attacks against Israel. The goal of this cell was to rebuild Hamas's militant infrastructure in the West Bank (Lappin, 2016; Ahronheim, 2018).

TRAINING

Hamas's training activities take place both inside the besieged Gaza Strip and abroad, and according to some sources Hamas's armed wing offers annual martial arts training programmes to its recruits, held outside of Hamas's military training camps until 2014. This changed after an extended Israeli military campaign, Operation Protective Edge, targeted the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, which led to 50 days of intense fighting between Hamas and Israel.¹² The candidates are usually trained to use weapons, kidnap soldiers and infiltrate into Israel via underground tunnels, through repeated simulation drills and exercises. By graduation, they can climb ropes, conduct close-order drills, fire the Kalashnikov assault rifle, throw a grenade and provide first aid. The young graduates then pledge to defend the Gaza Strip and be ready to fight the next war against the enemy (Booth, 2015; Pileggi, 2015).

Hamas's military training camps were previously run by its political wing, but as of 2015, the Qassam Brigades have been organising camps for boys and young men in January and August, dubbed the 'Vanguards of the Liberation Camps' (Balousha, 2015). The summer session also includes sports, religious instruction and leisure time at the beach. Winter camps are more serious affairs and more martial by nature, with the trainers being actual Qassam commanders

who wear military uniforms. Hamas views these camps as instruments to boost the Palestinian resistance and to absorb the frustrations of Gaza's unemployed youth. Although Qassam officers deny that the camps are organised to supply recruits for the militia, candidates for the armed wing are chosen from the ranks of attendees. Some view these attempts as a necessary process for Hamas to maintain its fighting strength, while Israeli intelligence believes that the military wing of Hamas should not have any trouble in recruiting more troops (Booth, 2015).

Hamas operatives also receive training abroad, mostly provided by Hezbollah and Iran, although this is reserved for high-level operatives. Syria, Iran and Hezbollah have all provided significant military resources, logistical support and training to Hamas in the past few decades. Even during the imposition of a tight siege on the Gaza Strip, Hamas members still received military training abroad, by crossing the borders with Egypt through underground tunnels. Other training was achieved by bringing Hezbollah and Iranian experts into Gaza, also through the tunnels (Rabinovich, 2007; Elnakhala, 2014). There is little information about the detailed nature of this external training for Hamas operatives, but such training usually involves senior Qassam Brigades' fighters and it provides skills and knowledge about operational planning and the manufacturing of rockets and other weapons. For instance, between 2008 and 2014, hundreds of young Palestinians, mostly Hamas operatives, left the Gaza Strip and received training in Lebanon, Syria and Iran to learn how to improve their respective groups' arsenals ('Here's How Hamas ...', 2014).¹³ In Gaza, Hamas learned how to make rockets and even imported advanced rockets into Gaza, from Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, again via the tunnels (Elnakhala, 2014), and some argue that the imposition of the Gaza siege in 2007 positioned Hamas even closer to Iran and its allies (Roy, 2011).

Many scholars trace the beginnings of linkages between Hezbollah and the Palestinian armed groups, particularly Hamas, to the early 1990s when Israel deported 418 Hamas and PIJ activists to southern Lebanon (Horowitz, 2010, p. 37). An unintended consequence of these deportations was the fact that Hamas was more easily able to establish direct links with Hezbollah and to obtain training in attack tactics, especially the use of suicide bombings, tunnel operations and the launching of rockets (Elnakhala, 2014). Iran is known to be another source for Hamas's foreign training, and according to Egyptian intelligence, Iran trained as many as 3000 Hamas militants between 1991 and 1993, which was followed by a series of Hamas suicide bombings (Schanzer, 2008, p. 41).

FINANCING

Hamas relies on a variety of sources to cover its administrative and military costs. First, Hamas receives financial and other support from countries such as Iran. Second, it receives donations from individuals and organisations in various countries outside of Palestine or Israel, in the form of charity or donations. Third, it organises fundraising activities abroad ('Terrorist organizations', 2008). Fourth, Hamas has also developed its own income-generating schemes, such as the tax collected from the underground tunnels along the Rafah border (Reed, 2013). Finally, Hamas collects taxes from the residents of the Gaza Strip (Abu Amer, 2016). Hamas government's 2014 budget was \$894 million and covered four types of expenses: salaries and wages, \$509 million; operating expenses, \$114 million; transferable expenses, \$111 million; and capital expenses, \$160 million. The security and public order sector was allocated \$261 million (34 per cent) of the 2014 budget.¹⁴ Under this budget line, the Hamas government included the traditional sectors of security, police, national security, the Ministry of Local Government, the Land Authority and the religious judiciary (Shaban, 2014). Today, Hamas's financial structure and procurement strategy are based on state sponsorship and third-party donations, in addition to self-funding (Gleis and Berti, 2012).

Charities

With its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas collects zakat, or Islamic charity, to carry out its missions and goals. Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam and as a result, private and public funding of religious charitable organisation has been always strong in Muslim societies. In this respect, Hamas has developed an effective, local and global network of charitable organisations that finance its extensive welfare programmes. Hamas-affiliated charities do not officially fund the group's armed wing, however, as this is mostly done either by Iran or through the Political Bureau. Hamas claims to separate its armed wing from its social welfare activities, in an attempt to facilitate fundraising for its social activities, but the line between the two is blurred, especially given that several of its social networks are used for recruitment (Gleis and Berti, 2012).

Several Hamas charities are particularly active in countries where Hamas is designated as a terrorist organisation. Some of these charities have been designated as 'terrorist entities' after being exposed by the local authorities, such as the Canadian charity International Relief Fund for the Afflicted and Needy in Ottawa, and the Holy Land Foundation in the United States of America (USA) (Hroub, 2009; Baynes, 2011; Ward, 2014).

Donations

During the Second Palestinian Intifada, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and other countries collected and funnelled millions of dollars to Hamas and other Palestinian militant organisations for what are known as ‘martyr payments’ in the early 2000s (‘Saudi Committee ...’, n.d.). In the past few years, Hamas has been accused of diverting international humanitarian aid that was destined for the Gaza Strip, to fund the group’s military programme. For example, in May 2015, it was revealed that the Khan Younis-based Mahdiya Developmental Society was involved in selling donated medications with a value of \$3 million. In another incident from June of the same year, the head of World Vision in Gaza, Mohammad El-Halabi, was detained by the Israeli authorities due to allegations that he had steered donations to Hamas¹⁵ (Beaumont, 2016).

Gaza Tunnels

The network of tunnels under the Rafah border, linking Egypt with the Gaza Strip, was first built to connect separated families in the early 1980s. Almost immediately, involved clans started to use their tunnels to transport illegal commodities. When the Second Palestinian Intifada broke out in late 2000, Hamas began to cooperate with tunnel gangs to import military equipment and knowledge. With the further development of tunnels in the 2000s, Hamas imposed taxes on smuggled goods (Elnakhala, 2014), and as this was a lucrative business in itself, Hamas started to fund its own tunnel construction programme and to raise funds. The number of tunnels reportedly grew from a few dozen in 2005, with an annual revenue of \$30 million per year, to at least 500 by December 2008, with a revenue of around \$400 million per year (Pelham, 2012, p. 10). While there have been several attempts by Egypt and Israel to shut down the tunnels (Laub and Brazak, 2014), there is no indication that they ever completely close.

Friendly Governments

Iran has supplied Hamas with hundreds of millions of dollars, and Iranian support for the group continued through the 2000s in the form of military assistance. After Hamas’s victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, Iran provided Hamas an estimated €15–17 million a month for governing costs. This aid shrank after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, however, as Iran sided with the Assad regime while Hamas backed Syrian rebels. Ghazi Hamad, Hamas’s Deputy Foreign Minister, remarked: ‘I cannot deny that since 2006 Iran supported Hamas with money and many [other] things. But the situation is not like the past. I cannot say that everything is normal’ (Tait,

2013). After several years of disengagement, relations between the two parties seem to be revived. In addition to increased isolation, regional developments in the past few years have made it very difficult for Hamas to sustain a steady flow of funds (Abu Amer, 2018). In 2019, Iran backed Hamas by providing aid to 1700 Palestinian families who had stopped receiving salaries from the PA. Iran also has recently built homes for Palestinians, and distributed Iftar meals during Ramadan (Abu Amer, 2019a; Sadeghi, 2019).

Qatar has also invested heavily in the Gazan economy, launching a \$254 million plan to modernise Gaza in October 2012, after an Israeli military operation in Gaza, and subsequently increasing its investment to \$400 million ('Qatar funds major project ...', 2012; 'Qatar ups Gaza investment ...', 2012). When Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation agreement in April 2014, the Fatah-led PA refused to pay the salaries of Hamas civil servants in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Qatar stepped in and attempted to transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to Hamas through the Arab Bank to pay the salaries of 44 000 employees, but the United States reportedly blocked the transfer (Miller, 2014). In his first visit to Qatar as head of Hamas's political bureau, Haniya was received by the Emir of Qatar who emphasised his country's support for the Palestinian steadfastness and legitimate rights ('Qatar's emir meets Hamas leader ...', 2019).

Hamas also receives support from other countries¹⁶ such as Turkey, which reportedly planned to donate \$300 million to Gaza's Hamas government in 2011, while other reports indicate that this amount became an annual donation to Hamas (Bannoura, 2011; Bar'el, 2012). More recently Hamas has been trying to improve its ties with Russia, and Hamas representatives met with Russian officials a number of times in 2019, both in Moscow and elsewhere. Some observers explain this recent rapprochement as Hamas's wish to break free from the isolation imposed upon it by the USA and Israel. These attempts coincided with the USA's so-called 'deal of the century' which was not welcomed by Hamas or the Russians or the Palestinians. While Russia has a veto power at the United Nations, it also has ties with Israel, the PA and Egypt, three central actors in relation to Hamas. Consequently, Russia could play a key role for Hamas, partly by opposing President Trump's 'deal of the century', and also by resolving issues between the PA and Egypt (Abu Amer, 2019b).

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Social Welfare

From the outset, Hamas had a social welfare programme which it built using a network of social, educational, health, charitable and religious institutions, that helped the Palestinian poor. The organisation's social work is known to be

the core of its strategic strength, and the role of Hamas in such a network was directly experienced personally by a great number of Palestinians. As late as 2009, Hroub (2009) concluded that Hamas had managed to maintain what he considered a sound level of honesty and transparency in its welfare activities, something that stood in contrast to the visible corruption of other factions at that time, and it is unsurprising that this quickly widened Hamas's support base inside and outside Palestine, and paved the way for its political victories in 2005 and 2006.

The Armed Struggle

Hamas adopted a strategy that it calls the armed resistance to the Israeli occupation, and the persistence of its central goal, the liberation of Palestine and fighting Israel as an occupying power, means that Hamas always has a motivation to attack Israel. Hamas makes deliberate choices about what tactics to use for its attacks, designed to ensure that in the long run they will help it to achieve this overarching goal (Dutter and Seliktar, 2007, p. 431; Kydd and Walter, 2002). The Qassam Brigades lead this armed fight against Israel, and a number of factors, including available resources and specialist skills, are central to determining the organisation's selected tactics. Those tactics have evolved over time, with Hamas viewing the evolution of them as a natural development, due to the organisation being in a state of conflict with Israel. Hamas contends that after Israel's tightening of its grip on the Gaza Strip, particularly after the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in late 2000, Palestinian militants lost access to many of their military raw materials and thus they resorted to alternative methods. The late Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi said in this context, 'we are in a struggle against a superior enemy, with its advanced military technology. Consequently, we try to develop our weapons to be able to encounter this enemy as much as we could' ('The qualitative development ...', 2003).

In the First Intifada, Hamas operatives participated in stone-throwing, as well as ambushing Israeli forces. After establishing direct links with the Lebanese Hezbollah in early 1990s, Hamas employed suicide bombing in Israeli city centres. Following the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada, Hamas introduced rocket attacks. From 2005 onwards, rocket attacks had become Hamas's main attack tactic, in conjunction with a lesser number of tunnel attacks. These rockets initially targeted Israeli settlements inside the Gaza Strip, then Israeli towns outside of the Strip. They had very limited range and accuracy. The rockets then witnessed significant technical improvement. In 2014, Hamas rockets landed in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Ashkelon. In addition to the rockets, Hamas introduced tunnel operations in the mid-2000s, which tended to be well planned and highly coordinated and were frequently

employed to attack Israeli military bases outside of the Gaza Strip ('The qualitative development ...', 2003; Najjar, 2014).

The number and nature of Hamas's attacks have varied, depending on the political situation as well as the group's military capabilities. Usually periods of tensions, such as the Intifadas and the Israeli incursions inside the Palestinian Territories, are associated with a higher number of Palestinian attacks against Israel in general, and Hamas attacks in particular. For example, between the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 and March 2002, 317 attacks were launched against Israel from the West Bank alone, about 19.6 per cent (62) of which were suicide bombings, 4.7 per cent (15) were rocket attacks, and 75.7 per cent (240) were settlement and roadside attacks (Elnakhala, 2014).

The list of Hamas's military operations is extremely long, but the following examples provide a flavour of some of Hamas's most devastating attacks. On 27 March 2002, Abdel Basit Odeh from Tulkarm, a refugee from a village called Kharbash and a member of Hamas, arrived at the city of Natanya. Soon after, he changed into women's clothes and donned a wig before heading to the Park Hotel. His 10 kg belt-bomb was filled with nails, screws and ball bearings to inflict maximum damage in a confined space. As he mingled with the crowd of about 200 people in the hotel who were celebrating the Jewish Seder feast, he threw several grenades before detonating his belt-bomb, killing 30 and wounding 172 civilian Israelis (Elnakhala, 2014). Two days after this attack, Israel announced a wide ground military operation inside Palestinian city centres in the West Bank.

On 25 June 2006, in an operation reminiscent of Hezbollah's sophisticated kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers in 2000, eight Gaza gunmen dressed in Israeli army uniforms emerged at dawn from a tunnel underneath the Gaza-Israel borders and entered an Israeli military base near Kerem Shalom border crossing outside of the Gaza Strip. At the same time, rockets fired from Gaza showered the border area, to distract the Israeli border guards located in different areas. As the eight militants entered the base, they split into three assault groups. They simultaneously opened fire in different areas of the base, using hand grenades, automatic assault rifles and a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). The armed attackers made their way back into the Gaza Strip after they blew an opening in the fence, and disappeared through the tunnels. Two Israeli soldiers were killed, four were injured and one was kidnapped, subsequently identified as Corporal Gilad Shalit. The tunnel used by the attackers was around 1 km long and took approximately two months for the attackers to dig. The Qassam Brigades collaborated with other military groups, including the Palestinian Resistance Committee and the Army of Islam (Elnakhala, 2014).

Generally speaking, rocket attacks are less lethal than suicide bombings, although the lethality (as well as the range and precision) of Hamas's rockets

increased over time. None of Hamas's rockets fired between 2001 and 2003 caused any deaths or injuries. Between 2005 and 2013, Palestinian rockets fired outside of major escalations¹⁷ caused 600 Israeli casualties (that is, deaths and injuries). According to official reports, five Israelis were killed and 232 wounded by rocket-fire (by Hamas and other groups) in 2012 alone. The same year, there were 3921 insurance claims for rocket damage totalling \$14.81 million (Armstrong, 2018, pp. 116–117). Hamas's rockets have become a strategic threat to Israel, mainly due to their increased range and precision rather than their lethality. To give a specific example, on 25 March 2019, a Hamas rocket landed in an Israeli house in the village of Mishmeret, about 25 km north of Tel Aviv. The attack wounded seven Israelis, including an elderly woman and three children. According to Israeli official sources, the rocket had a range of about 120 km and was locally manufactured in the Gaza Strip (Liebermann et al., 2019). On 6 May 2019, another Hamas rocket hit a car in Ashdod, killing a 21-year-old man and wounding seven others ('Hamas rocket hits car ...', 2019).

Hamas has also introduced other tactics, such as the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, viewed by the Qassam Brigades as one of the most successful tactics because it has helped Hamas to garner several victories. As an example, Hamas exchanged one captured Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, for the release of around 1000 Palestinian prisoners in 2011, in a swap mediated by the Egyptians and the Germans. Today, four Israeli soldiers are believed to remain in captivity under the Qassam Brigades. More recently, Hamas has developed its own drones, although these have so far only been used for intelligence collection missions, not for conducting offensive attacks against Israel ('Izz Addin al-Qassam ...', 2014; Najjar, 2014; Habeeb, 2016).

The Hamas website posits that every time Israel tightens its grip by intensifying its punishment policies and policing strategies, Hamas fighters will consistently look for alternatives to continue attacking. Rocket attacks, Hamas freely admits, were an innovation that was caused by the Israeli high-tech fence around the Strip. Additionally, with the Israeli fence and the tight closure which it imposed on the Gaza Strip, Hamas and other militant groups resorted to smuggling weapons and military materials through the tunnels underneath the border with Egypt ('The qualitative development ...', 2003; Burgess and Yourish, 2014; Najjar, 2014).

Although Hamas and other Palestinian factions have adopted militancy or the armed struggle as their main tactic in dealing with Israel, several non-violent strategies have also been employed by these groups. During the recent Great March of Return, for example, non-violent popular protests along the borders with Israel were organised by Palestinians demanding the return of the refugees displaced by the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Hamas participated in the Coordination Committee of the Great Return March along

with other Palestinian factions. The March itself started on 30 March 2018, a date which marks Palestinian Land Day (Blend, 2019), and the protests continued until the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. According to several sources, Hamas was also a key player in scaling back those Marches towards the end of 2019, with claims that this scaling-back was done to fulfil a promise to Israel, as part of a truce between the two sides. As of January 2020, these Marches are to be held once a month instead of every Friday. These developments are, in fact, outcomes of Egyptian, Qatari and American mediation between Hamas and Israel ('Organisers say Gaza protests to be scaled back', 2019).

Governing

Despite its objection to the Oslo Accords that gave birth to the Palestinian Authority, Hamas has developed another strategy, one that required participation in the Palestinian political process and resulted in it gaining control of institutions built by the Accords. Within around 20 years of its establishment, Hamas had achieved major victories at local elections, for example, student unions, municipality elections, and others. Hamas decided to participate in the broader political spectrum in 2006, when it took part in the Palestinian parliamentary elections. Since winning the majority of seats, Hamas has become increasingly politicised, at the expense of its famed militarism. The organisation has continued to sell itself as an Islamist movement, however, engaged in a liberation struggle against a foreign occupier, focusing its goals and activities within the borders of historic Palestine (Hroub, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Hamas is certainly different from international terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State (IS). Hamas perceives Israel as a foreign occupier, to be resisted by all means, including military force, but Hamas clearly limits its political and military goals within the borders of historic Palestine. The group's strategy and tactics target three types of audience: Palestinian society, Israel, and the Arab and international communities. Hamas governs the Gaza Strip and the wider Palestinian society is a recipient of its social welfare services. The Arab and international communities are important for Hamas for a number of reasons. Hamas is desirous of being recognised as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, or at the very least, not being considered as a terrorist organisation. The Arab and international communities have also traditionally been potential sources of funds, from donations, international aid or charity work.

In Hamas, Palestinians found an alternative to the rather corrupt Fatah. The services provided by Hamas were completely lacking in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and similar services were not provided by the Fatah-controlled PA, which entered the Palestinian Territories in mid-1990s. Fatah institutions were much more corrupt than those of Hamas, yet some claim that Hamas's services are merely a veil that covers the funding of its military operations (Pham, 2014). Regardless of the reasons behind the establishing of such a network, these services have definitely contributed to Hamas gaining legitimacy and popular support amongst the Palestinians (Roy, 2011).

The 2006 parliamentary elections presented Hamas as a potential legitimate, democratically elected government (Davidson, 2006). Many external factors intervened, due to the group being listed as a terrorist organisation by several international actors, resulting in the boycotting of Hamas and the imposing of a siege on the Gaza Strip, particularly after the Hamas takeover in 2007. It is impossible to guess how Hamas might have performed after winning the elections had the group been recognised internationally. Hamas's rule over the Gaza Strip is now more than a decade old and various sources posit that this rule has become increasingly corrupt and oppressive. This makes the situation verge on the catastrophic when one considers other factors, for example, lack of power supplies, pollution, high unemployment rates and completely absent freedom of movement ('Hamas marks ten years ...', 2017), and as a result, Hamas's popularity has waned.

With the deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip, Hamas announced its willingness to cooperate with, and concede some authority to, the internationally recognised Fatah-led PA. A national consensus government was formed in 2014 in an attempt to achieve reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. In October 2017, a national reconciliation agreement was signed between the two sides that would achieve power-sharing, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The road to achieving real reconciliation has proved bumpy, to say the least, with various tensions arising on many key issues such as budgeting, salary payments, control over the borders funnelling foreign funds to the Gaza Strip, relations with Israel, and so on. While the reconciliation agreement is still alive at the time of writing (2020), it is largely fragile (Abu Amer, 2017; Friedman, 2019). In an attempt to ease the Gaza siege, Hamas handed control of the Gaza crossings to the Fatah-controlled PA in fulfilment of its commitments under a reconciliation agreement brokered by Egypt in October 2017 (Beaumont, 2017b).

This raises the question, then, of whether Hamas in the Gaza Strip operates as a state or as a political organisation. Although Hamas has maintained the same relations and structure as an organisation that it had before entering the Palestinian political process in 2006, the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip has the structure of a state. When Hamas took over control of the Gaza Strip, it

also took over the PA ministries that were set up to administer daily life and to provide a variety of services, such as health and education. In the end, Hamas has achieved its ruling over a specific plot of land and over a population, which constitute some of the basic features of a state. As described above, however, this quasi-state lacks international recognition, particularly by the US and other important actors, but perhaps most importantly, it has failed to fulfil its duties towards the population it governs.

NOTES

1. Following the end of World War I, the League of Nations granted the Mandate for Palestine to the United Kingdom in 1920 after the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire. The British Mandate for Palestine (and Transjordan) expired in 1948, on the day the State of Israel was created.
2. These camps, established about seven decades ago, still exist today, populated by the original refugees and their descendents (Nakhala, 2012, p. 5).
3. The Gaza Strip was under Egyptian rule from 1948 to 1967. The West Bank, on the other hand, was governed by Jordan.
4. Other Palestinian local groups were formed before, but they were less organised and coordinated than the fedayeen and similar groups. For instance, in the context of the Palestinian-Arab revolt of the 1930s, launched against the British and their support for the Jewish immigration to Palestine and Jewish land purchases, local armed groups proliferated and attacked Jewish settlements and interests. These groups were primarily men who owned rifles but had no military training (Pappé, 2006).
5. An umbrella organisation which centralised the Palestinian resistance groups. The PLO was established in 1964 but was recognised internationally as the sole legal representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO was engaged in a protracted guerrilla war against Israel until signing a peace agreement with Israel in the early 1990s.
6. The 1967 war – also known as the Six-Day War – was the second military confrontation between the Arab States and Israel after the 1948 war which also witnessed the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1967, the Arabs lost the war and Israel occupied the Palestinian West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.
7. While Hamas's 1988 Charter clearly indicates that the organisation's fight is against the Jews, the new document specifies that the struggle is directed against Israel and the Zionist movement behind it.
8. Some trace Hamas's educational and charity organisations to the 1960s, despite the fact that the organisation was not in existence at the time (Dalloul, 2019).
9. Shura here means 'advisory'.
10. Mashaal was a target of a failed assassination attempt in 1997 by Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence agency.
11. Fatah, Hamas's rival, has represented the Palestinian side in the negotiations with Israel.
12. This violence started after three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and killed by Hamas members (Crowcroft, 2014), after the killing of two Palestinian teens by the Israeli military in May 2014 (Hasan, 2018). Ostensibly aimed at locating and rescuing the teenagers, Israel launched Operation Brother's Keeper (Bellal, 2014,

- pp. 46–47) and Hamas retaliated by firing rockets, after which the violence greatly increased.
13. It is noteworthy that Hamas's relations with Iran, Syria and Hezbollah waned after taking a position against the Assad regime in Syria in 2011 and siding with the rebels. As indicated elsewhere in this chapter, relations between Hamas and Iran have started to warm up again in the past few years.
 14. Since 2014, Hamas's government budget in the Gaza Strip has become less independent as it was integrated with that of the West Bank-based PA, headed by Fatah. In fact, the budget was repeatedly a subject of debate between Hamas and Fatah since general government budget is decided in the West Bank. For instance, in 2018, the Palestinian cabinet in the West Bank approved a budget of \$5 billion that would increase to \$5.8 billion if unification with the Gaza Strip worked as planned ('Cabinet approves ...', 2018). Until today, fulfilment of unification is riddled with conflicts between the two sides on various issues, including the budget.
 15. El-Halabi is still in Israeli custody, although the court proceedings are ongoing. The Australian government, the main contributor to the concerned funds, investigated the case and so did World Vision, concluding that the Israeli allegations had no concrete evidence (Holmes, 2019).
 16. Previously, Hamas received support from the Saudis, yet the latter significantly changed their position over time regarding Hamas and the Palestinian cause at large. At the time of writing, 68 Palestinians in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were being tried at the Saudi terrorism court, simply for having ties to Hamas ('Saudi Arabia tries Palestinians ...', 2020).
 17. In other words, these numbers do not include rockets fired between 27 December 2018 and 18 January 2019, 14 and 21 November 2012, and 8 July and 26 August 2014.

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