ERRATA

Page 14 line 17: ‘that’ instead of ‘which’.

Page 26 line 9: add ‘, to complicate things further,’ between ‘Gauvain refers’.

Page 26 line 11: add ‘, however,’ between ‘difficulty with’.

Page 27 line 22: delete ‘it’ between ‘analyse in’.

Page 57 line 5: ‘1947’ instead of ‘1927’.

Page 102 line 16: ‘one week’ instead of ‘two weeks’.

Page 103 line 18: ‘feels’ instead of ‘feel’.

Page 113 line 3: ‘in the introduction to this thesis’ instead of ‘chapter 1’.

Page 117 line 18: ‘even if’ instead of ‘though’.

Page 136 line 13: add ‘by’ between ‘also Yunis’.

Page 140 line 1: add ‘the’ between ‘either ruling’.

Page 237 line 16: ‘Mashʿal’ instead of ‘Mishʿal’.

Page 239 lines 15-16: ‘in that early conference in which he had said that the Brotherhood was’ instead of ‘in one of the early conferences of the movement, in which he said that the Brotherhood is’.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A doctoral thesis could hardly be anything other than a group effort. Many people have been part of this intellectual journey, and to them I owe an enormous gratitude.

First of all, I was privileged to work under the guidance of Tariq Ramadan, with his wisdom and unwavering faith in the project. His Programme Manager, Caroline Davis, has been invaluable, helping me navigate the process and displaying the sort of diligence and commitment one rarely finds. They have both been the most consistent source of support throughout.

I lived for a decade in the Middle East before I started doctoral research and I had long wanted to carry out an in-depth study of the region. However, the person who planted the idea of a DPhil in my head and instilled in me the sense that I would be able to carry it through was Mona Khalidi, at the time Assistant Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. She has been a constant source of encouragement.

My time at Columbia University sparked in me a renewed interest in academia and allowed me to engage with the Middle East through books and study. The foundations for this research were set at Rashid Khalidi's graduate seminar on the History of Palestine. Despite his many responsibilities, Professor Khalidi's door is always open to students and I have repeatedly sought his council through the years.

Though I have resigned myself to the fact that I will always be a struggling student of Arabic, this has been a journey through language. This work is based mostly on documents in Arabic, and I couldn't have done it without the inestimable support of Sarah al-Saghir, Israa Allam and Taj Kandoura. Sarah shared her expertise not only in language but also challenging my preconceived ideas about the authors I examined and their motives. Israa's profound knowledge extends beyond grammar and vocabulary and helped me analyse different rhetorical styles. Taj Kandoura stands out for the sheer depth of his Arabic as well as his humility, with which he made devilishly complicated texts seem easy. Language and religion are inextricably linked, and all of the above should be praised too for their ability to unpack references that were otherwise hidden to me. In this regard, I must also thank Najah Nadi, who illuminated for me some of the finer points of Islamic theology.

At the University of Oxford I am especially grateful to Avi Shlaim. Professor Shlaim is devoted to students, and though I am not working specifically in his field I am very fortunate to have been able to count on his help from my first lunch at St Antony's College hall when he serendipitously came and sat down next to me. His suggestions and bits of advice were precious signposts and have shaped this thesis.

Among others at the Middle East Centre, I had the pleasure of engaging with Eugene Rogan whose excitement for academia is infectious and who invariably shows genuine interest and care for students. Michael Willis very kindly read one of my chapters and provided feedback despite being on sabbatical and freshly arrived in the field in Algeria. I also benefited from Walter Armbrust's input at a critical stage of the process. At the Oriental Institute Library of the Oxford Bodleian libraries, Dinah Manisty was always

ready to provide a helping hand. No reference was too obscure. Her support was crucial and unfailing.

I feel almost embarrassed by the privilege of having studied at Oxford, enjoying its exquisite surroundings and the intellectually stimulating faculty and student body at St Antony's College, which under the steady stewardship of Margaret MacMillan has been thriving. Even with all her administrative responsibilities as Warden, Professor MacMillan shows great attention to the students and impressed in me personally a sense of confidence and ambition.

I owe a debt to Nadia Oweidat for her intellectual stimulus, her enthusiasm and most of all her friendship. The advice given to me by Idriss Jebari in the last stages of the thesis was a great help in improving the clarity of my argument, and he also walked me through the final steps of the physical process of finishing a DPhil. Tareq Baconi, Henriette Dahan Kalev, Mark Erbel, Andrew Hammond and Yasmin Moll read various parts of the text and illuminated new avenues for research. Tareq, Yasmin and Wael Abdelal were vital for turning a rut into a groove.

Others helped me, sometimes unwittingly, in a more general manner: in an informal conversation, discussing the challenges of doctoral work, perhaps providing a recommendation letter, a reference to a book or an article, an editorial tip or a key piece of logistical advice. Among them I owe special gratitude to Mona Christophersen, Dorthe Engelke, Mahmood Mamdani, Rory McCarthy, Isla Rosser Owen, Abdullah al-Saidi, Leila Seurat and Victor Willi.

The International Peace Institute in New York, where I spent my breaks, proved to be the best sort of antidote to the long hours of abstract, and too often sterile, intellectual labor. The harsh reality of international relations was sobering and extracted me for enough time to rekindle my longing for another round of quiet contemplative isolation. I am thankful to my colleagues there for their companionship. You know who you are.

My parents supported me every step of the way and I am of course deeply indebted to them. I wrote the final version of this thesis in their company in a cabin in the mountains of Spain. Their warmth and engaging banter is always a source of strength and stimulation. My partner Miriam has shown an unusual level of patience and tolerance for the frustrations that inevitably accompany the writing process. Without her I am not sure I would have been able to complete it.

My deepest gratitude goes, however, to the people who facilitated my research on the ground and my friends in Gaza. During my research, the chief editor of *al-Risala* newspaper, Wisam ʿAfifa, was open and welcoming enough to grant me full access to his archive. I am also thankful to the many people I have interviewed for their time and interest. My friends in Gaza are too many to list, but Kayed Hamad and Samir Zaqut stand out for years of comradeship. I couldn't mention Samir without referring to the rest of the team at al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, in particular Adnan al-Hajjar, Mahmud abu Rahma and Issam Yunis among many other great friends there who let me into their lives and with whom I shared times of joy as well as sadness and frustration. Tragically three of my dear friends in Gaza, also connected to the al-Mezan 'family', were brutally killed by Israeli artillery, during the course of this study in 2014: Anwar

al-Zaʿanin and the brothers Munir and Bashir al-Hajjar. To them, and the dignity and courage with which they faced life and death, I dedicate this thesis.

Throughout my time in the Middle East I spent countless hours with all sorts of people. Hundreds, probably thousands, welcomed me into their homes or shared with me a conversation over a taxi ride, a meandering walk, or a cup of tea in a cafe. Many of them were people with too much time on their hands, because they were unemployed, at times mentally disturbed and often misfits of one type or another. Unfortunately that is the Middle East of the disinherited and dispossessed that I have most often encountered. And yet they were always overwhelmingly polite and generous. I owe them most of the Arabic I know and what I have come to understand about the region.

Lastly, I was simply very lucky to have been awarded the Graduate Studentship in Contemporary Islamic Studies funded by the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Endowment Fund. Without it, this thesis would not have got off the ground.

I apologise to all those I have inevitably forgotten or been unable to mention, for there are too many who have been part of this project in one way or another.

The Internal Conversation of Hamas: Salafism and the Rise of the ʿUlamaʾ

Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Oriental Studies

By
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Trinity Term 2016

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades and particularly since '9/11', Islamism has become a major actor in international relations with the rise of a wide variety of movements. There is however still a profound ignorance as to the differences between them and their internal dynamics. The case of the Palestinian Hamas is a particularly good example because it is one of the most renowned and influential Islamist movements globally—despite the very confined geographical space it operates in. And yet, it is little understood.

This thesis is an attempt to situate Hamas in the history of Islamism and among that spectrum of Islamist organisations that exist today. It does this by tracing some of the most influential voices in the Movement and reconstructing its internal conversation around a question that is central to Islamism: the role of revelation in politics. To answer it, this thesis focuses on the use of the religious reference in Hamas. It identifies a group of Salafi ʿulamaʾ and analyses their discourse and the function that they performed in the Movement.

It argues that there are two major trends in Islamism, a modernist and a purist, and these compete over the legacy of the Salafi movement. It is the debates between them within Hamas that the argument in this thesis is structured around. Modernist Salafism is manifested in Hamas through the centrist trend, a regional movement that inherited the thought of nineteenth century Islamic reformists who tried to reconcile Islam with the Western liberal tradition. The purist Salafi trend is an offshoot of Saudi Wahhabism, and is represented in Hamas by its ʿulamaʾ. Thus far, these two trends have been presented as competing, and only rarely has the influence of purist Salafism within the Muslim Brotherhood, or an offshoot thereof like Hamas, been discussed.

This thesis is structured chronologically around a set of key moments in the history of the Movement. Although extensive and detailed interviews have been carried out, the focus is on tapping into the main debates within the organisation that are hidden from the general public and that contrast with Hamas's external discourse. For this it analyses the newspaper *al-Risala*, one of its main media organs, as well as other publications written primarily for an internal audience.

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A Note on Transliteration and Translation

For all transliterations from Arabic and Hebrew this thesis follows the recommendations of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES). All translations from Arabic, French and Hebrew are my own, except for citations from the Qurʾan, for which I have used Alan Jones's translation (Exeter: The E. J. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007). I have altered original transliteration within some quotations to make it consistent with the IJMES guidelines.

‘For it is quite conceivable, and even within the realm of practical political possibilities, that one fine day a highly organized and mechanized humanity will conclude quite democratically—namely by majority decision—that for humanity as a whole it would be better to liquidate certain parts thereof. Here, in the problems of factual reality, we are confronted with one of the oldest perplexities of political philosophy, which could remain undetected only so long as a stable Christian theology provided the framework for all political and philosophical problems, but which long ago caused Plato to say: “Not man, but a god, must be the measure of all things.”’

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973)

Introduction

Every day the spokesperson of UN Secretary General releases an email with a summary of the morning headlines from around the world. Listed by countries the Middle East takes up the top three or four slots, almost unfailingly day in, day out. For more than a decade and a half, it would be rare for a story about the Middle East not to make front-page news in any major Western newspaper on any given day. The importance attached to this region, its centrality in international geopolitics is reflected in the obsessive media coverage it receives. There are many reasons for this, but among them is certainly the intense fascination and concern that Islamic activism springing from this region provokes.[1] Many Europeans and North Americans feel threatened by Islam. This sense of threat they justify by pointing to violent attacks carried out by Muslims who claim to act in the name of religion. The attacks that took place in the US on 11 September 2001, commonly referred to as '9/11', are the paradigmatic example, though there are many others. Underlying this, there is also a sense that the threat is ideological, that Islamic activism represents a competing and incompatible vision of the world.

This has then become a metaphysical struggle between the West and Islam and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has for decades been its central symbol. 'The cause of Palestine has assumed its remarkable symbolic value for Muslims on the same model as the Christian-Jewish Holy Land, and specifically as the site where the three monotheisms engage in a conflict that is as much metaphysical as political', writes Faisal Devji in *Landscapes of Jihad*.[2] Its repercussions also ripple through the Middle East. Not only are the images of Palestinian stone throwers, the video messages of

[1] This thesis uses the term 'Islamic activism' and 'Islamism' interchangeably. A detailed definition of Islamism follows below.
[2] Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst & Co., 2005), p. 68.

would-be suicide bombers, instantly identifiable by millions of viewers across the world but their choreography is replicated multiple times over; Palestine is found in the diatribes of jihadists and emulated in their actions throughout the Islamic world. For example, writing about the Algerian riots of October 1988, Gilles Kepel describes young demonstrators calling the police 'Jews!' influenced by the images of the repression of the Palestinian intifada that they watched in state television every evening.[3]

This obsession is accompanied by a tendency to treat Muslim politics as a monolithic whole, to use labels that overlook fundamental differences between one movement and another, which in turn serves to underline the sense of opposition between Islam and the world. As Alain Gresh points out in the preface to Tariq Ramadan's *From the Sources of Muslim Renewal* the characterisation of Islam in the media is filled with clichés that gloss over the 'diverse history, pluralist culture and complex societies'. Instead 'Islam is conceived as one and indivisible' and from the scriptures a monolithic doctrine is presumed that explains all aspects of Muslim societies.[4] The tendency to see all Islamists as the same has intensified with the rise of al-Qaʿida and ISIS in the post-9/11 world. This is epitomised by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at the General Assembly of the UN in September 2014, in which he equated in one sentence Hamas, ISIS and Iran.[5] What the Israeli premier wanted to exploit was, in the words of Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori in *Muslim Politics*, the widely held and 'unreflective presumptions that Muslim relations with others are chiefly hostile, and that Muslim governance is almost inevitably arbitrary and

[3] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: Expansion et Declin de l'Islamisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), p. 257.
[4] Tariq Ramadan, *Aux Sources du Renouveau Musulman: d'al-Afghani a Hassan al-Banna, un Siecle de Reformisme Islamique* (Paris: Bayard Editions/Centurion, 1998), p. 12.
[5] Somini Sengupta and David E. Sanger, 'Netanyahu Links Hamas with ISIS, and Equates ISIS with Iran', *The New York Times* (New York, 29 September 2014) <http://www.nytimes.com/news/un-general-assembly/2014/09/29/netanyahu-links-hamas-with-isis-and-equates-isis-with-iran/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0> [accessed 12 October 2014].

authoritarian'.[6] However, comparing Hamas, ISIS and Iran is to ignore differences that are so profound as to render the comparison not meaningless but manipulative. Studying Hamas, a hugely influential Islamist movement founded in 1987 and a central player of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, this thesis intends to challenge such a simplistic understanding of Islamism.

Theoretical Framework and Research Question: The Role of the Religious Reference in Hamas

In his landmark work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said traces the attempts since the eighteenth century to attribute Islam a fixed essence as if 'the impact of colonialism, of worldly circumstances, of historical development' did not affect it.[7] In *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* Salwa Ismail writes about this in terms of attributing agency to Islam itself: 'Islam was cast as an agent, master puppeteer'.[8] She explains how contexts, whether historical or geographical, define beliefs so that the belief in God in different places and at different times 'have to be understood in relation to their material contexts' and therefore what it represents and signifies 'may not just differ from one religion to another, but from one group of practitioners to another'.[9] In a similar vein, this thesis tries to challenge attempts to essentialise Islam with regards to the particular case of Hamas.

To highlight this idea Aziz al-Azmeh refers to Islam in the plural: 'Islams'. As he claims, 'there are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it'.[10] Similarly, it may be useful to refer to the different kinds of 'Islamisms' and accompanying Islamists

[6] Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 164.
[7] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 105.
[8] Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2006), p. vii.
[9] Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*, p. 5.
[10] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islam and modernities* (London; New York: Verso, 1993), p. 1.

that exist to understand the positions of different actors and processes taking place in the Palestinian Islamic field. The author of *The Prophet's Pulpit*, Patrick Gaffney, on the other hand, criticises al-Azmeh's position as the more radical of criticisms to the essentialist tendencies in the study of religion, which he considers 'has major shortcomings'.[11] His opposition to this approach is that 'among other drawbacks, it overlooks the underlying coherence manifest in the fact that Muslims, however seemingly diverse, all share elements of a common tradition.'[12]

It is true that Islamists share certain goals, like for example the liberation of Palestine, the establishment of an Islamic state or the awakening of the *umma*. But there are significant, in some cases enormous, differences in what these mean to different Islamists and how they plan to achieve them. They also attribute to them different priorities. Most importantly though, there are certain features that are shared by some but not others. For this reason, Islamism cannot be defined by any particular goal. Instead, what the above have in common is that they are all interpreted as political activities and have an Islamic frame of reference, and those are the necessary and sufficient conditions for Islamism. As Salwa Ismail phrases it, Islamism is therefore defined by 'the activities of organisations and movements that mobilise and agitate in the political sphere while deploying signs and symbols from Islamic traditions'.[13] That is what this thesis examines in relation to Hamas, though the greater focus is on the second condition. The research question that it tries to address is: What does it mean for Islam to be Hamas's frame of reference? This question is answered through a more specific one: how does religion, and more precisely the interpretation of religious scriptures, function as a reference point for political action in Hamas? In the process

[11] Patrick Gaffney, *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (University of California Press, 1994), pp. 29–30.
[12] Gaffney, p. 30.
[13] Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*, p. 2.

this thesis also inevitably addresses the larger question of the relation between religion and politics in Hamas.

At the most basic level, this thesis investigates the way religious references serve political interests, that is, *how* Islamic texts are employed to mobilise a population, for example, Palestinians to confront Israel as well as to justify other acts in various struggles over power. This also includes paying attention to *the variety* of ways in which groups and individuals within Hamas use Islamic references and interpret the scriptures for political purposes. Indeed one of the novelties of this thesis is the systematic examination of the different interpretations of Islam not across different Islamist movements but within a single one.

Hamas is an organisation that holds a wide range of positions at any one time, some of them contradictory. Its members use religion in numerous different ways. Indeed some of them are not particularly knowledgeable about religion and make little or no reference to it in their writings. This is because, as Mishal and Sela point out in *The Palestinian Hamas*, 'even though the goals and activities of these movements are justified in Islamic terms, the religious drive does not always guide the political conduct of these movements.'[14] Others are religious scholars and derive most of their arguments from the scriptures. While focusing on the different ways that scriptures are interpreted and religious references used (or not) this thesis tries to capture these various constituencies within Hamas. This should serve as an antidote to the way that some critics, commentators and Hamas experts have focused on the Hamas Charter, a dogmatic and uncompromising document, or picked up a particular statement in order

[14] Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 9.

to generalise about the Movement as a whole.[15] While these are representative of Hamas at some level they are far from the whole story. The fact that such distinctions and tensions exists within a group of people that otherwise belong to the same movement is rarely touched on in the literature on Hamas and Islamism at large. As Jacob Høigilt indicates in *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* the existence of different Islamic groups of actors and discourses within the Islamic tendency and the relationship between them has 'not been treated systematically. As a rule, the different communities have been studied separately'.[16]

The way that this thesis unpacks such diversity is by treating Islam and Islamism as 'a discursive tradition', in the words of Talal Asad.[17] Highlighting the different discourses and analysing them in order to identify various trends inside the Movement constitutes its focus. These discourses consist of different individuals and groups within Hamas that compete with each other and also other Islamist groups over the definition and redefinition of what Islam means and how it is to be applied to political action. Different Islamists have different conceptions of, for example, what is political participation and how relations towards the 'Other' should be conducted, which goes to the heart of the definition of politics that Eickelman and Piscatori use in *Muslim Politics*, 'as competition and struggle over the meanings of symbols'.[18] Moreover, this redefinition of tradition, always to suit the arguments of the Islamic trend or a particular discursive community therein, facilitates change. In this way, Islamist movements often

[15] Issued in August 1988, the Charter has come under criticism also by members of the Movement. Tamimi deals with this at length in Azzam Tamimi, 'The Liberation Ideology of Hamas', in *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009), pp. 147–70.
[16] Jacob Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 10.
[17] O. Anjum, 'Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27.3 (2007), 656–72 (p. 559). Asad treats religion more generally as a tradition 'that consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history.' Talal Asad, 'The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam', *Qui Parle*, 17.2 (2009), 1–30 (p. 20).
[18] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 9.

appear to be dogmatic and uncompromising but they also have demonstrated a great ability to couch alterations of policy within a religious framework. As Mishal and Sela recognise, 'it is this Islamic value system that allows these movements to interpret unorthodox political moves in normative terms, thus enabling them to adjust to the rapid changes in social and political life and to redefine their strategic goals to fit the exigencies of time and place'.[19] This does not mean that Islam is a mere tool. Because it aims to some extent to allow Hamas members to speak for themselves, the concerns over faith, ethics and religion from the perspective of a believer will come through to some extent, however it is not the focus of this thesis.[20]

The locus of these different discourses, of this internal conversation, is the broader public sphere, which is therefore at the centre of this thesis. The focus on the public sphere allows me to step away from discussing Islamism through elite politics, which neglects its multidimensional aspect, its internal complexities and contradictions, the different levels at which it operates, and 'the wide variety of agents and even ideologies' that it comprehends.[21] In *Public Islam and the Common Good* Salvatore and Eickelman identify the 'Islamic public sphere' as 'the infrastructure of communication and discourse of a new intellectual class' including 'nonelite practices and interactions'.[22] Newspapers are intimately tied to the rise of a public sphere for they create a space 'between classic and vernacular discourse and between secular rulers and the masses'.[23] A newspaper—such as Hamas's *al-Risala*, which this thesis uses as its main primary source and is discussed in more detail below—is a form of technology

[19] Mishal and Sela, p. 9.
[20] The latter is the central focus of Ramadan's *Aux Sources Du Renouveau Musulman* in which he argues that the Islamist reformist thought cannot be reduced to social dynamics, see Ramadan, *Aux Sources du Renouveau Musulman: d'al-Afghani a Hassan al-Banna, un Siecle de Reformisme Islamique*, p. 26.
[21] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 8.
[22] Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman, *Public Islam and the common good* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), p. xiv.
[23] Salvatore and Eickelman, p. 58.

that pretends to represent an instrument of public debate and a carrier of public opinion, where a set of writers try to shape the public sphere by competing for the interpretation of the common good.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to analyse the way different writers in the Palestinian Islamist arena try to shape the public sphere. This offers a rich resource to identify different religious and political discourses within Hamas. Moreover, analysing the internal debates of the Movement in the public sphere allows me to present the organisation according to its internal logic and the self-understandings of its different members. Though it also involves paying attention to the external logic, that is, the intellectual heritage of the Movement, which is essential to classifying the different trends that exist within it. Unravelling the different influences and the range of positions that make up Hamas defines what sort of movement it is, distinguishing Hamas from and relating it to other movements both in history and contemporary to the events that are being analysed. To its intellectual heritage I now turn.

Salafism and the Hamas ʿUlamaʾ

This discussion is structured around a particular understanding of the Salafi movement which I use to understand the main currents driving and competing within Hamas. Salafism is a reformist movement that aims to renovate Islam. The term itself is derived from their intent to follow *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, the pious ancestors, an expression used to refer to the early generations of Muslims. It has been used since at least the fourteenth century to refer to members of a movement that attempts to undo the deviations that had corrupted Islam and to return to the true spirit found in its origins. This means focusing only on the scriptures, the Qurʾan and hadith, without the burden of centuries of scholarly interpretation by whatever religious authorities that came later obscuring its original meaning. They thus repudiated the practice of Islam based on *taqlīd*, the

consensus based on precedents that had been developed over the centuries. In its stead *ijtihād* (reasoning independent of precedent) became central to the Salafi project of renewal (*tajdīd*). It was necessary in order to escape the decadence and stagnation that they perceived Muslims were drowning in due to *taqlīd*. The central figure that pioneered these efforts was the Hanbali religious scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who granted clerics, beyond the established religious authority, the right to use their own reason to interpret the scriptures and arrive at legal decisions regardless of the opinions established within the four main schools of law.[24] His works are considered by Salafis to have corrected Islam's positions in matters of creed, in particular in his criticism of Ashʿarism, the most influential theology in his time and very widespread to this day.

Salafism is however a complex and multifaceted school of thought with various different strands. What this thesis does is identify two strains of Salafism running through Hamas, one that I shall refer to as purist and the other as modernist, and charts their course through the history of the Movement. In fact these two strands of Salafism, I argue, also represent the two main currents fuelling Islamism. In claiming this I am not alone. As Samira Haj contends in *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, the works of Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), the intellectual fathers of modernist and purist Salafism respectively, represent 'the two major strands of contemporary Islamic political thought'.[25] Let me outline the origins and main characteristics of these two trends.

In the eighteenth century, Salafism became identified with the puritanical Saudi Wahhabism, founded by Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab. This strand—referred to here as purist Salafis—has grown in influence over time and it is this type of Salafism

[24] Richard Gauvain, *Salafi Ritual Purity: in the Presence of God* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 6.
[25] Samira Haj, *Reforming Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality and Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 6.

that is conjured in most people's minds today when the term is mentioned. Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab owed a great debt to the legacy of Ibn Taymiyya, though in actual fact on the question of *ijtihād* he showed little interest in passing his own legal rulings and largely kept to the Hanbali legal school, created by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855). This has applied to official Saudi Wahhabism since.

Modernist Salafism has its origins in the nineteenth century with Muhammad ʿAbduh who also aimed to reform and revive Islam through a return to its origins, thus evoking the ethos of Salafism. Like Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, ʿAbduh was also inspired by Ibn Taymiyya, but his was a more radical break with *taqlīd*. ʿAbduh determined that each Muslim 'armed with proper education and knowledge of the religion' had 'the right to participate in making authoritative judgments regarding the good of society'.[26] Thus he turned it from a collective duty (*fard al-kifaya*) to an individual one (*fard al-ʿain*), which constituted a revolutionary change and undermined the authority of the religious scholars even further.

More recently the 'modern global Salafi' movement, an outgrowth of Wahhabism that has developed some distinct features of its own, has taken up *ijtihād* to the extent that their identity is dependent upon their departure from the established rulings of any of the legal schools.[27] This was the result of the enormous influence of Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999) on this movement and his criticism of Wahhabism's following (*taqlīd*) of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. In turn, al-Albani was influenced by the Salafi modernists of the late nineteenth century on this specific point.[28] Purist Salafism is itself therefore a complex phenomenon that has developed various versions, some of which may be clearly distinguished from Wahhabism. Hence while all forms of

[26] Haj, p. 10.
[27] Gauvain, p. 8. The expression 'modern global Salafism' is also from Gauvain, p. 5.
[28] Roel Meijer, 'Introduction', in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. by Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 9.

Wahhabism are here treated as a form of purist Salafism, the reverse is not always true. In any case, it is only rarely that I allude to this since it is not central to my argument.

From this we may conclude that the fundamental difference between modernist and purist Salafism is that while they are both scripturalists, purists are also literalists.[29] Wahhabism was about purifying Islam of unwanted accretions through a literalist approach to the scriptures. As a consequence the followers of this trend claimed to represent 'the most authentic and purist religious orientation within Sunni Islam'.[30] The obsession with religious purity, that is, its intolerance towards other practices of Islam, represents one of its central features. Violating such strictures is not taken lightly and exposes one to heresy (*kufr*). On the other hand, the modernist trend—primarily associated with ʿAbduh but also his colleague Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1939-1897) and their follower Rashid Rida (1865-1935)—was characterised by its flexibility in adapting and reconciling Islam to the Western liberal institutions and concepts that were invading the Middle East during their lives—hence the label 'modernist' is linked to a notion of Western modernity.[31] Through the use of *ijtihād*, these thinkers showed 'that Islam was in tune with the requirements of the modern age' and formulated a set of ideas that ranged from representational government to the defence of women's rights.[32]

Above I define purist Salafism exclusively in theological terms, and it is true that it has been mostly an apolitical movement. Such a quietist tendency, fostered by the Wahhabi religious establishment, is enshrined in the doctrine of *wālī al-amr*, the duty to obey the ruler, which is the key for the Saudi rulers to ensure subservience of its

[29] Meijer, p. 8.
[30] Henri Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 6.
[31] This thesis does not discuss individually or indepth the thought of these thinkers, and so I do not distinguish between Rida and his predecessors, though I am aware that the writings of the latter diverged significantly at a certain point. Instead I treat Rida and ʿAbduh as equivalent, particularly since they co-authored an exegesis of the Qurʾan, there is a very substantial overlap between the two and the latter is widely considered the keeper of the former's legacy. See Ali Rahnema, 'Introduction', in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. by Ali Rahnema (London and New York: Zed Books, 2008), pp. 1–10 (p. 3).
[32] Lauziere, p, 5.

Muslim subjects and in particular the religious establishment. However, it may also be characterised in terms of its response to the Western liberal tradition, as I do in the paragraph above in relation to modernist Salafism. In fact, as Lauziere argues, one of the defining characteristics of the development of both modernist and purist Salafism during the first half of the twentieth century is the reaction to colonialism—which is a particular type of encounter with the Western liberal tradition.[33] Their different attitudes towards the modern nation-state, a key feature of the Western liberal discourse, were especially revealing in this regard. The modernists adopted a territorial-statist nationalism: 'Although they, too, cared about the fate of other Muslims and the success of the anticolonial struggle in the rest of the *umma*, modernist Salafis tended to tailor their anticolonial and reformist message to unite specific collectives, which, in some cases, included non-Muslims.'[34] Purist Salafis on the other hand, 'often built on pan-Islamic convictions and had a marked tendency to promote *Islamic nationalism*' which 'entailed the valorization of a unique Muslim "culture" and a primordial attachment to the *umma* as a whole'.[35] This was an implicit rejection of the nation-state.

This is important to this thesis because in it I refer primarily to the purist tendency that illustrates the strictness and defiance in the legal and theological arenas described earlier also in the political sphere and it is also for this reason that I identify Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) here also as a purist Salafi. This is controversial. Qutb has been one of the most influential ideologues of Islamism, particularly its more militant versions, from the Egyptian Islamic Jihad to al-Qaʿida. But he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organisation that emanated from the thought of Rida and ʿAbduh. However, I argue that there are a number of key commonalities between Wahhabism and Qutb's ideology to warrant this identification. In fact during the last quarter of the

[33] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 100.
[34] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 101.
[35] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 100.

twentieth century in Saudi Arabia the thought of Sayyid Qutb had a particularly significant impact in turning certain elements within Wahhabism into a movement of political contestation (how this happened is discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5). The way that Gauvain, in his ethnography on Egypt, divides purist Salafism into a Qutbist and a Madkhali trend, one revolutionary and the other quietist, is another example of this.[36]

One of the most crucial common features was a reliance on Hanbali scholars.[37] Thus, departing from the modernist Salafi origins of the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb was a literalist and it was here that his thought overlapped at the most basic level with purist Salafism, and more particularly Wahhabism. There was then a whole constellation of concepts that they shared, though for Qutb these were much more politicised and part of a project of opposition to the Western liberal tradition and Arab regimes, which was one of the main driving factors of his whole belief-system and where his influence lay. With the notion of *ḥākimiyya* (God's sovereignty) and *jāhiliyya* (the idolatrous condition of the time before the coming of Islam that prevailed in certain areas after) Qutb dismissed the Arab regimes for not being governed by Islamic law and therefore guilty of *kufr*, which according to him sanctioned revolutionary violence against them. *Ḥākimiyya* also paved the way for the rejection of democracy more particularly. The purist Salafi repudiation of the nation-state—discussed above—was another vital feature that Qutb shared. In these was also implicit a Manichaean vision of the world, which coincided with the purist Salafi's obsession with purity.

Thus the shared origins, characteristics and reciprocal influence of modernist and purist Salafism are evident. The differences however are equalled marked.

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[36] Gauvain, p. 37.

[37] See John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islam* (London: Hurst & Co., 2010), p. 206, 208 and 265. Al-Azmeh also discusses the Hanbali influence in Qutb and addressing specifically his bifurcation from the 'reformist Islamic revivalism' of the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Azmeh, p. 78.

The Controversy over Modernist Salafism

The existence of these two strands, their origins and even their names are not uncontroversial. In recent years Henri Lauziere has initiated an effort to revise the history of Salafism and has stirred up a debate. He argues that there is a 'deep-seated confusion surrounding the meaning and historical origins of this concept.'[38] In particular, he questions the pedigree of modernist Salafism and argues that there has been a longstanding misconception regarding its origins. He agrees that a modernist movement for Islamic reform did exist at the end of the nineteenth century. What he objects to is the label *salafiyya* that has been applied to this movement. He points out that Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ʿAbduh—considered the fathers of modernist Salafism—never called themselves Salafis, nor was the word *salafiyya* even in use as an abstract noun during their lifetimes. Lauziere is very precise about who is to blame. He claims that this erroneous identification should be attributed to Louis Massignon and even more specifically to an article the Frenchman wrote in 1919 in which he used the term to describe a broad Islamic reform trend. According to Lauziere, they should simply be called 'Islamic modernists'.[39] This is no trivial claim. Generations of scholars and Islamic activists have referred to the movement established by ʿAbduh and al-Afghani as '*al-salafiyya*'.[40] Not only was it picked up by others European academics, most notably Henri Laoust in a famous article published in 1932, but also assumed by Islamic scholars and activists themselves, and what was fictional—according to Lauziere—became real. Lauziere describes how by the late 1930s Moroccan reformers began to use the word *salafiyya* as an abstract noun to refer to their

[38]Henri Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 2.
[39] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 11.
[40] For such use of the label 'modernist Salafism' specifically see for example: Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamic Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 21. Also Abdullah Al-Arian, *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 79.

own Islamic modernist orientation, and from that date 'onward, therefore, we can truly speak of the existence of modernist Salafism.'[41]

The Yale professor Frank Griffel has taken up the gauntlet thrown by Lauziere and a spirited debate has been published over several issues of the journal *Die Welt Des Islam*. As I explain below, in this thesis I support most of Griffel's arguments. What lies at the heart of the disagreement are two different understandings of the role of the intellectual historian. One treats concepts empirically the other uses them as analytical categories.[42] Lauziere considers that the labels 'Salafi' and '*salafiyya*' must be understood empirically, that is, according to the meaning that was given to them by the community of speakers that applied it to themselves or to others. He refers to this as 'the conceptual history of Salafism' and considers that this is essential to the proper understanding of its history. Further, he argues that the way we use the label '*salafiyya*' to describe the late nineteenth century reformists assumes that it had currency around that time: 'Although scholars have now used the term as an analytical category for nearly a hundred years, the underlying justification has always been that *salafiyya* is a legitimate and appropriate label because it is *indigenous* to the Islamic tradition. Implicit in this reasoning is that the term must have one or more indigenous meanings, which scholars should try to retrieve rather than create.'[43] In that way it is similar to a term like 'Indians' that European colonisers misused to describe the inhabitants of America after their arrival in the continent, Lauziere contends.[44]

On his part Griffel sees the role of the intellectual historian in more prescriptive terms. For him—as for me—it is irrelevant that ʿAbduh and al-Afghani didn't use the

[41] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 23.
[42] This echoes a central debates in Western philosophy dating back to Plato on the relation between names and their meaning, which turns around the question of whether a name may be reduced to its sense or its referent, to put it in Fregean terms.
[43] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 18.
[44] Henri Lauziere, 'What We Mean Versus What They Meant by "Salafi": A Reply to Frank Griffel', *Die Welt des Islams*, 56.1 (2016), 89–96 (p. 93).

term ‘Salafi’ to designate themselves and that the word ‘*salafiyya*’, used as an abstract noun, didn’t exist during their lifetimes. It is therefore similar to concepts such as ‘feminism’ or ‘socialism’ that we may use to describe movements before the words were even coined. Further, the term was not made up but grounded in specific historical references. What Massignon was doing was to use the term to describe a reformist current that was inspired by *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* because ʿAbduh made repeated references to *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ,* was explicit about his desire to recover their spirit, ‘and his followers adopted the label *salafiyya* for his movement.’[45] Then, in 1909, after the death of ʿAbduh, the intellectual inheritors of his legacy established the Salafiyya Bookstore and Press in Cairo, in which they published books by a whole range of authors, many of them in line with the modernist current. Lauziere is not convinced by this argument. He recognises that *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* was an important reference to the modernists. But according to him such a use of the designation Salafi is meaningless given how common the reference to *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* by reformists has been throughout Islamic history.[46] Griffel counters Lauziere’s claim that the broader definition of Salafi casts too wide a net, and gives a number of examples of reformist movements that did not make reference to *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* thereby establishing that its scope is in fact quite narrow.[47]

Moreover, despite blaming Massignon for the misnomer, Lauziere actually expresses significant understanding for why it happened, recognising that the term was being used in such a way as to mislead any observer, to the point that ‘it is possible that some Muslims misinterpreted Salafi labels on their own and wrongly associated them

[45] Frank Griffel, ‘What Do We Mean By “Salafī”? Connecting Muhammad ʿAbduh with Egypt’s Nur Party in Islam’s Contemporary Intellectual History’, *Die Welt des Islams*, 55 (2015), 186–220 (pp. 201–2).
[46] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, pp. 12–13.
[47] Frank Griffel, ‘What is the Task of the Intellectual (Contemporary) Historian? – A Response to Henri Lauzière’s “Reply”’, *Die Welt des Islams*, 56.2 (2016), 249–55 (pp. 251–52).

with the Islamic modernism, or balanced reform, of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh.'[48] Ultimately, what this highlights is the limitation of Lauziere's approach to the subject and in particular his incapacity to account for the clear appeal that the label had developed—among Muslims as much as foreign scholars—to describe a current that al-Afghani and ʿAbduh belonged to. Lauziere provides a fascinating explanation of the conceptualization of Salafism, but he does not explain modernist Salafism away, because the term has an explanatory power that is not fully captured by his 'conceptual history'.[49] Like Griffel, I see these labels as essentially analytical categories that identify a certain pattern. At the same time these are not just invented types but are also grounded in their use and the meanings ascribed to them by various historical references.

The appeal of Salafism—whether purist or modernist—is the spirit that it embodies, which may be broadly defined as the search for authenticity. It is also part of a drive to recover a direct connection between the individual and the divine. A movement guided by such an urge is conceivable in any religion and is comparable to that of the Reformation. Indeed 'like the Christian Protestants of the 16th century, the proponents of this new Muslim theology—today known as *lā madhhabiyya*, the "non-schoolists"—try to cut out the theological middleman who determined the terms on which ordinary believers could relate to the divine.'[50] In Christianity such middleman was the Catholic Church. In Islam it was Ashʿarite theology and the Shafiʿi, Maliki, and Hanafi schools of jurisprudence. Thus, Lauziere fails to recognise the appeal of the term and the contest that exists within Islam between purists and modernists over its

[48] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 233.
[49] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 227.
[50] Griffel, 'What Do We Mean By "Salafi"? Connecting Muhammad ʿAbduh with Egypt's Nur Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History', p. 205.

interpretation. This means that he persistently denies the existence of a concept that clearly struck a chord and caught on.

Such a conception of purist and modernist Salafism—as competing but also sharing a certain spirit—explains for example, the influence of the modernists, in particular Rida, in Nasir al-Din al-Albani, a figure that is central to the establishment of modern-day purist Salafism. As Lauziere himself recognises, al-Albani 'was more lenient toward Rida and even approved of his Qurʾanic exegesis.'[51] Rida, who developed an affinity for Wahhabism, is himself an example of the interplay between these two strands. There are other examples where Lauziere appears incapable of joining the dots and reach the obvious conclusion. He claims that the emergence of a new conception of Salafism between the 1920s and 1950s—that of modernist Salafism—is the result of an effort 'to come to terms with the confusion, or in order to take advantage of it', thus presenting it as a negative development, instead of seeing it as the normal process of the crystallisation of a concept.[52] This also leads him, for example, to deny any trace of Salafism in Hasan al-Banna, although the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, established in Egypt in 1928, was a follower of the modernist movement. At a conference in 1939 al-Banna himself described the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) as, among other things, 'a Salafiyya message'.[53] Instead, Lauziere insists on presenting the admiration of a purist Salafi for al-Banna as an outlier rather than symptomatic of a deep-rooted connection.[54] This is an important example, because in this thesis I challenge the lens through which the relation between Salafis and Muslim Brothers is often seen and that is as competing. Instead I examine the influence of Salafism in the latter, through Hamas, itself an offshoot of the Muslim

[51] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 10.
[52] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 234.
[53] For details about the Muslim Brotherhood conference see Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 14.
[54] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 228.

Brotherhood. This is a point I also make below though with more emphasis on the influence of purist Salafism in the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

Why So Purist?

Despite my disagreement with Lauziere's criticism of modernist Salafism, I endorse the labels he uses to divide the movement into a 'modernist' and a 'purist' trend as well as the major features that he attributes to them. This is because ultimately Lauziere does not dispute that modernist Salafism 'became part of the Islamic conceptual repertoire'. His only caveat is that this did not happen 'in the way that the secondary literature would have us believe.' That is to say, he only questions a particular narrative about its origins.

While the meaning and origins of modernist Salafism has been discussed at length already, the label 'purist Salafism' deserves some clarification. Purist Salafis today rarely if at all refer to themselves as 'purists'. Instead they call themselves and are referred to as simply 'Salafis'. Because of this, Griffel, among others, identifies this trend as 'Salafism' or 'contemporary Salafism'—which Lauziere also does, though less frequently—adding from time to time the adjective 'conservative'.[55] For me, however, it would not be sufficient to refer to 'contemporary Salafism' because my argument hinges on the coexistence of two types of Salafism in Hamas. It is precisely this that I consider one of the novelties of my study given that, for example, both Lauziere and Griffel believe that the modernists relinquished any claim to the *salafiyya* and it is therefore a thing of the past.[56] Griffel however also criticises the expression 'purist Salafism' for its subjective positioning. He argues that its use by Lauziere falls 'prey to the normative claims of the contemporary *salafiyya* to represent the true Salafi

[55] Griffel, 'What is the Task of the Intellectual (Contemporary) Historian? – A Response to Henri Lauzière's "Reply"', p. 253.
[56] A rare point of agreement between Griffel and Lauziere.

movement'.[57] In other words, it implies that it is purer than other versions of Salafism. It is true that the term 'purist' is subjective but so is the term 'conservative'. As I shall explain in more detail at the beginning of chapter 1, I try to avoid labels such as 'conservative', 'radical', 'extremist', and 'moderate', which are excessively subjective and therefore often misleading. Having said this I think that Lauziere's choice of the word captures the obsession with purity in the discourse, appearance and behaviour that distinguishes this kind of Salafis. The fact that Richard Gauvain's book on contemporary Salafism, *Salafi Ritual Purity*, focuses on the notion of purity is further evidence of this (though Gauvain refers to purist Salafism as simply 'modern Salafism').

There is another difficulty with Lauziere's use of the label and that is that Quintan Wiktorowicz popularised it before Lauziere and used it in a different way. Wiktorowicz divides contemporary Salafis into purists, politicos and jihadis and uses the first to designate an apolitical strand of Salafism exclusively.[58] This raises the question whether the label 'purist Salafism' may be used to encompass these different subdivisions or whether it is just one manifestation of a more general category. Again here Lauziere makes a convincing case for his label and in particular for defining a number of different manifestations of what is today commonly referred to as Salafism—among others the 'jihadi', 'political', 'scholarly' and 'quietist' tendencies—as subdivisions of something that may be called 'purist Salafism'. As he points out, scholars and commentators 'have further divided this purist conception of Salafism into distinct subcategories'. However, these are most often imposed from the outside and 'they attempt to capture differences on questions pertaining to politics and the use of

[57] Griffel, 'What is the Task of the Intellectual (Contemporary) Historian? – A Response to Henri Lauzière's "Reply"', p. 254.
[58] Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29.3 (2006), 207–39 (p. 217).

violence, which, although important, are not at the core of purist Salafism', which is 'that purist Salafis tend to evaluate the soundness of all thoughts and actions—including those pertaining to politics and the use of violence—by standards of religious purity.' That is to say, 'ultimately, it is not so much what Salafis do or say about politics and violence that matters as it is how well they can avoid or defend themselves against charges of epistemological, theological, and legal impurity.'[59] Thus, the merit of a particular political position would be measured against the scriptures, which would determine its purity or otherwise.

Salafism in Hamas

Although in this thesis I employ these two labels primarily as analytical categories to distinguish certain broad trends within Hamas, I also pay attention to the self-identification among its members with Salafism, and even the modernist and purist labels specifically. Predictably, the most common occurrence was the use of the label 'Salafi' in relation to certain members of the Hamas clergy—which I explain in detail in a section on the role of clerics below—and this was clearly meant in the purist sense. Concerning the label 'modernist Salafi', this thesis generally corroborates Lauziere's remark that 'today's "progressive" Muslims hardly ever dare to refer to themselves as Salafis'.[60] This is because this trend is closely associated with ʿAbduh who Islamists and purist Salafis criticise for having been excessively keen to reconcile Islam with the Western liberal tradition. Having said this, I do document one significant instance in which a Hamas activist explicitly traces the label Salafi to the early modernist thinkers, in particular Rashid Rida—this I analyse it in detail in chapter 6.

I also establish a direct connection between modernist Salafism and Hamas in a different way. A clear link can be made by way of the centrist movement, established in

[59] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 9.
[60] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 13.

Egypt in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the inheritors of modernist Salafism. The Egyptian thinker Muhammad ʿAmara, one of its most prominent members, was for example editor of ʿAbduh's collected works.[61] Al-Khalas Party, established by Hamas in 1996, assumed explicitly the rhetoric of this centrist movement. The centrist movement is not the only connection between Hamas and the modernist movement that I explore in this thesis. As already mentioned, Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was also a product of modernist Salafism. For this reason, while I agree that the label modernist Salafi has lost currency, I do not concur with the conclusion that Lauziere reaches from this that it 'simply faded in the postindependence era […] As a result, their modernist version of Salafism ceased to be a living concept.'[62] I therefore challenge his claim that modernist Salafism 'has become less relevant for the study of contemporary Islam'.[63] This short-sightedness is, again, a direct result of his approach to the subject. By understanding the concept empirically only, he analyses the use of the word by its agents and misses its explanatory power as an analytical category. Thus, this thesis argues that its legacy of modernist Salafism is very much alive and is found today in the centrist movement, which is key to understanding Hamas.

Tracing historically the path of purist Salafism to Hamas is slightly more intricate. While the impact of the Ikhwan in purist Salafism—Wahhabism more precisely—has been written about extensively in recent times, the reverse phenomenon is an understudied development and has certainly not been looked at in relation to Hamas.[64]

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[61] Griffel, 'What Do We Mean By "Salafi"? Connecting Muhammad ʿAbduh with Egypt's Nur Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History', p. 219.
[62] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 235.
[63] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 4.
[64] One of the best examples is Lacroix's study *Awakening Islam*, which records the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Saudi Wahhabism that gave rise to al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya—a movement of contestation of the Wahhabi religious establishment—and also Jihadi-Salafism, Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

To my knowledge the only study that has dealt with this subject at any length is one by the Egyptian researcher Husam Tammam, *The Salafisation of the Brotherhood.*[65] Tammam traces a similar historical progression that is here outlined, namely the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood experience in Saudi Arabia and the cross-pollination with Wahhabism that took place there. However, his approach is significantly different. Tammam proposes that the Salafi purist trend within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood constitutes a transformation of the movement. While he studies the influence of purist Salafism in the internal dynamics of the Brotherhood, like I do here with Hamas, his argument may be broadly framed in the theory proposed by Olivier Roy that Muslims are increasingly shunning the Brotherhood ideal of creating an Islamic state and looking instead towards a deterritorialised *umma*, defined more as an ethical project that is closer to a form of purist Salafism—though he refers to it as 'neofundamentalism'.[66] This thesis shows on the other hand how in Hamas this tendency served specific functions, including its nationalist project, and was ultimately contained.

The idea of tracing the influence of purist Salafism within Hamas is somewhat unusual. Salafis and Muslim Brothers are today presented mostly as adversaries. Al-Albani, for example, was very critical of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in particular Qutb, for meddling in politics and he distinguished it sharply from Salafism. This is in line with the repudiation of Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabi establishment of the organisation, which they consider a threat. There is also of course competition between

[65] Husam Tammam, *Tasalluf al-Ikhwan: Taʾakul al-Utruha al-Ikhwaniyya wa-Suʿud al-Salafiyya fi Jamaʿa al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, *Marasid* (Alexandria, Egypt, 2010). The study of the influence of the Brotherhood in purist Salafism has been the subject of numerous studies due in particular to the emergence of the latter as a political force in the elections in Egypt in 2012. See for example Bjørn Olav Utvik, 'The ikhwanization of the Salafis: Piety in the politics of Egypt and Kuwait', *Middle East Critique*, 23.1 (2014), 5–27.

[66] Though mostly covered in chapter 6 of his book for a specific reference to the impact on the Brotherhood see Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: the Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), p. 66.

them at a popular level all over the Muslim world. My treatment of Sayyid Qutb as a purist Salafi that I explained earlier is another example of the influence of the latter in the Muslim Brotherhood. Such a use of the label Salafi is however not so unusual. An illustrative comparison is that of Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926), probably today the most influential Sunni religious scholar globally. In *Global Mufti*, a collection of essays on him, he is described as a Muslim 'Brotherhood shaykh' and juxtaposed against Salafis, in reference to purist Salafism.[67] In *Princeton Readings in Islamic Thought*, on the other hand, Euben and Zaman treat him unambiguously as a Salafi. Nor is their use of this label a reference to modernist Salafism, as they put him in the same category with the 'Saudi religious establishment' and contrast him to 'Muslim modernists'.[68] Coincidentally, these two studies also happen to have been published in the same year, 2009. What this highlights, once again, is my interest in using these labels as analytical categories to explore the main currents within Hamas and I think that the explanatory power of these prove themselves in my thesis generally.

The Hamas ʿUlamaʾ

In investigating the influence of purist Salafism in Hamas this thesis pays particular attention to the Movement's religious scholars, who are clearly identified with the trend. This group was spearheaded by a number of Saudi-educated and Wahhabi-influenced Palestinians who became a growing force within Hamas. Indeed, this thesis identifies also for the first time—to my knowledge—a clearly delineated ʿulamaʾ class in Hamas and traces their rise within the Movement.[69] There is another reason why the discourse and influence of the ʿulamaʾ are examined in detail in this thesis, and that is because the

[67] Husam Tammam, 'Yusuf Qaradawi and the Muslim Brothers', in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 55–83 (pp. 73–74).
[68] Euben and Zaman, pp. 19–20.
[69] The word 'class' is a translation of the Arabic '*tabaqa*' that the Hamas ʿulamaʾ used to refer to themselves and not a reference to a specific scientific term in sociology or other academic discipline.

religious scholars in many ways represent the religious reference of Hamas more generally. Muslims often describe the ʿulamaʾ as '*al-marjiʿiyya al-dīniyya*', literally, 'the authoritative religious reference'. The notion of *marjiʿiyya* is an important concept in Shiʿi discourse where the title *marjaʿ al-taqlīd* is assigned to a scholar of such high distinction as to be considered a source of emulation. Such official title does not exist among Sunni Muslims though informally it has been ascribed to certain figures that were particularly influential. Muslim Brothers might refer to their founder, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), as *marjiʿiyya*, while Motaz al-Khateeb ascribes this status to Yusuf al-Qaradawi among Sunni Muslims more generally.[70] For this reason, this thesis assumes that by analysing the role and influence of religious scholars in Hamas and of their interpretation of the scriptures it is able to address the broader question about the function and importance of the religious reference in Hamas. An important part of this discussion will involve examining the authority of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas—which they derive from the religious reference—as well as religious authority in Islamism more broadly. As Abdelwahab el-Affendi indicates, understanding the nature of religious authority is 'key to grasping the modern role and function of Islamism'.[71] This is because, as this thesis assesses with reference to Hamas's ʿulamaʾ, Islamism since its origins has attempted to upset and replace the traditional structures of religious authority.

To summarise, this thesis examines the meaning of religious reference in Hamas through the competing influences of modernist and purist Salafism. In the process it pays particular attention to the discourse and the role of the Hamas ʿulamaʾ, which is key to understanding the function and importance of the religious reference in Hamas.

[70] Motaz Al-Khateeb, 'Yusuf al-Qaradawi as an Authoritative Reference (Marjiʿiyya)', in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, ed. by Bettina Graf and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
[71] El-Affendi, p. 303.

The primary sources used for this are part of the public sphere of the Movement, mostly its weekly newspaper *al-Risala*, though also other written and oral records. The overall aim is a more complex understanding of Hamas and Islamism, and one that does not necessarily involve the juxtaposition between Islamism and the West. I now look at the way this complements and corrects deficiencies in the available literature on Hamas.

Literature Review

The Palestinian Hamas has attracted significant attention in the academic literature. Hundreds of articles, theses and books analyse different aspects of the Movement. Below I provide a representative sample and how this thesis complements them in terms of the primary material used as well as the approach and focus.

Essentialising Islam

In one of the first works on the Movement, *Hamas: From Faith in God to the Path of Terrorism*, Aviva Shabi and Roni Shaked present Hamas as an international terrorist organisation. They consider as evidence the sheer presence in the US of Hamas leader Musa abu Marzuq (b. 1951) at the time in the early 1990s that the Egyptian Islamic Jihad leader ʿUmar ʿabd al-Rahman also resided in the country. Both organisations they describe indistinguishably as 'Islamists', 'extremists', 'radicals', 'terrorists' and 'fundamentalists'. As the title itself indicates, the book treats Hamas, and Islamism more generally, as a movement guided by a fixed interpretation of Islam that invariably leads to violence.[72] *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* by Matthew Levit and *Hamas Lexicon* by Guy Aviad are also examples of such an essentialist approach to Hamas, reducing the Movement to a one-dimensional

[72] See also Aviva Shabi and Roni Shaked, *Hamas: me-Emuna be-Allah le-Derekh ha-Teror* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1994), pp. 39–40.

opposition to a specific set of foes: Israel, Zionism, the Jews, the US, the West.[73] The most obvious case out of the two is Aviad's work, published by the Israeli Army though widely available in bookstores in Israel. As the name indicates this book is arranged by entries, though it is closer to a hit list or files kept by Israel's intelligence services than a dictionary. It lists mostly individual Hamas members as well as specific attacks and different armed groups within Hamas. In a style reminiscent of Shabi and Shaked, Levitt takes the official lists of terrorists compiled and publicised by the US security establishment as a starting point and works backwards from these to fill in the details of Hamas as a global terrorist organisation. *To Know Hamas* by the Israeli journalist Shlomi Eldar is significantly more nuanced than the above, providing an analysis of Hamas focused on the Movement's political pragmatism, however he also repeatedly presents it as a movement driven by revelation essentialising the role of religion in it. He reduces the behaviour of the Movement to specific verses in the scriptures and particular religious concepts and treats them as if they only had one interpretation and meant the same to all Muslims. In this respect he is heavily influenced by Emmanuel Sivan's book *Radical Islam*, a work that Shabi and Shaked also reference frequently.[74]

Among other things these works purport that Palestinian politics is defined by a set of dichotomies in which Hamas represents Islamism, and Israel and the West liberalism. This is an issue that Loren Lybarger addresses in *Identity and Religion in Palestine: The Struggle Between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories*. He argues that categories such as Islamism, nationalism, secularism and liberalism, while 'analyzable as separate spheres with distinguishable institutions, symbols, and

[73] Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Guy Aviad, *Leksikon Hamas* (Ben-Shemen: Ministry of Defence, Israel, 2014).
[74] Shlomi Eldar, *Lehakir et Hamas* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2012); Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, Enlarged (Binghamton, NY: Yale University Press, 1990).

styles of discourse, practice, and sociability, have in reality undergone significant long-term transmutations as individuals across the political continuum have crossed over milieu boundaries and selectively drawn from both types of orientation to articulate new forms of political-cultural solidarity.'[75] In a similar way this thesis rejects the juxtaposition of Hamas and Islamism against Western liberalism and the attempts to confine the Movement to simply a hostile organisation. The notion of liberalism, central to these efforts, is a heavily contested term, particularly since it is often used as a catchall term to distinguish all that is positive about the West from everything else. In contrast to this and following the argument outlined by Samira Haj, this thesis rejects the juxtaposition of Islamic tradition and liberalism, and the way that liberalism presents itself as an attempt to find rationality independent of tradition.[76] Instead, liberalism is itself treated as a tradition that is composed of a number of narratives. An example of these narratives is given by Charles Kurzman in *Liberal Islam*: 'Opposition to theocracy, support for democracy, guarantees of the rights of women and non-Muslims in Islamic countries, defense of freedom of thought and belief in the potential for human progress.'[77] One of the things I show in this thesis is how Hamas adopted some of these narratives.

Interview-based Studies

Numerous studies on Hamas have avoided the security focus and Manichean vision of the works above and have provided a more nuanced perspective of the Movement by drawing from interviews with Palestinians and members of Hamas, which the above works by Shabi and Shaked, Levitt and Aviad lack (Eldar is a unique case in that he

[75] Loren Lybarger, *Identity and Religion in Palestine: The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 6-7.
[76] Haj, p. 5.
[77] Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: a Source Book*, ed. by Charles Kurzman (New York; London: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4.

relies on information from the Israeli security and political establishment but also carried out extensive fieldwork among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip). This is for example the case for Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell's *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, Jeroen Gunning's *Hamas in Politics*, Azzam Tamimi's *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters,* Agnes Pavlowsky's *Hamas or the Mirror of Palestinian Frustrations* and to some extent Sara Roy's *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza* and Leila Seurat's *Hamas and the World*.[78]

There are good reasons for this emphasis on interviews. There has been a desire to counterbalance the Movement's Charter and other similar documents, that provide a partial representation of Hamas and its members, with interviews with leaders and activists, as is the case for example of Seurat. This is also part of a broader effort to make the study of the Middle East more sociological and less textual.[79] In-depth interviews are a good place to start to compensate for the textual tendency. However, there are some authors who have justified, mistakenly, this in terms of the absence or lack of substance in Hamas's written sources. For example, Gunning argues that 'as an activist movement, Hamas is not given to producing detailed theoretical tracts'.[80] Later he adds that as 'a grassroots movement, not given to lengthy theorizing, textual analysis has its limitation'.[81] Also Milton-Edwards and Farrell write about al-Mujammaʿ al-Islami, the main institutional apparatus of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas as if they were anti-intellectual institutions: 'There was never a strict theological

[78] Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: the Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity, 2010); Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in politics: Democracy, Religion and Violence* (London: Hurst, 2007); Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009); Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); Agnes Pavlowsky, *Hamas, ou, le Miroir des Frustrations Palestiniennes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000); Leila Seurat, *Le Hamas et le Monde (2006-2015): la Politique Etrangere du Mouvement Islamiste Palestinien* (Paris: CNRS EDITIONS, 2015).
[79] Sara Roy, p. 17.
[80] Gunning, p. 16.
[81] Gunning, p. 19.

clique that was the Muslim engine of Mujamma thought […] Many Mujamma and Hamas supporters have acknowledged that they rarely open religious tracts or attend seminaries to explore the finer points of theology'.[82] Hamas was a clandestine movement and so publishing and keeping written material put its members at risk, certainly during its early years. Despite this fact, it developed a body of literature from its very origins and it is simply incorrect to suggest that the Movement disregarded abstract thinking. It is not only these three authors that ignore the publications of Hamas. For example, most of the textual references in Tamimi's book are Western secondary literature, he quotes Islamic publications a handful of times and only twice a Hamas affiliated source, the Palestine Information Center website and the magazine *Filastin al-Muslima*. The more recent work on Hamas by Eldar, which is structured in a similar way to Tamimi in that he focuses his attention on certain episodes offering original insights into them, makes negligible reference to written material by Hamas.[83]

Interview-based research has other important limitations. Hamas is a media savvy movement and inevitably its members adapt their discourse depending on whom they are talking to. As Mishal and Sela signal, 'Hamas was able to sustain its policy not least because its spokesmen used different voices and represented different attitudes and environments that shielded the Movement from repressive measures'.[84] Their declarations are aimed at creating a specific image of the Movement and it is difficult to reach beyond it. It is especially hard to discuss any internal debates or divisions. Mahmud al-Zahar (b. 1945), one of the most senior leaders of the Movement, actually published in 2004 a 214 page-long manual on the subject called *The Basis of the Media*

[82] Milton-Edwards and Farrell, p. 48.
[83] His first appendix is a translation into Hebrew of an article mistakenly attributed to *al-Risala* by Hamas leader and *al-Risala* chief editor Ghazi Hamad. The piece was actually published in *al-Ayyam* newspaper: Ghazi Hamad, 'Irhamu Ghazza', *al-Ayyam*, 27 August 2006.
[84] Mishal and Sela, pp. 81–82.

Confrontation.[85] As the title itself suggests, the Movement recognised the media as an integral part of its struggle and took the business of winning it very seriously. He wrote on the back cover:

There is no doubt that the various media in the life of modern societies has become a central and important part in the formation of ideas and concepts. Just as the opening of every house to satellite stations of the world made the media discourse an instrument that can be utilised at the level of the opinion of an individual or group.

It would of course be naïve to claim that the weekly *al-Risala* and other internal Hamas publications used here were bias free. They were all in their own way a form of propaganda aiming to project a specific image of Hamas. However, given that the intended audience was primarily internal to the Movement, the bias was closer to its core concerns than other material produced for external consumption. They contained substantially more sincere discussions than found in interviews given to non-Hamas media. Also the sheer variety of authors, articles and points of view found in Hamas's media publications acts as a guarantee of authenticity. These are the reasons why the interview-based works miss a fundamental narrative of Hamas and a large resource of unique information.

Written sources

There are a few studies on Hamas that make extensive use of written sources. Seurat makes reference to a variety of Hamas publications to complement her interviews. Mishal and Sela refer to an impressive amount of original documents by Hamas and pertinent articles from the Arabic press. Khaled Hroub mentions a wide variety of primary written sources, a vast number of original Arabic books, journals, magazines, communiqués and newspapers on the subject, also including internal Hamas documents. Still, none make more than a handful of references to Hamas' own journals, only ever

[85] Mahmud Al-Zahar, *Usul al-Muwajaha al-Iʿlamiyya* (Gaza: Markaz al-Nur li-l-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat, 2004).

mentioning *Filastin al-Muslima* and never *al-Risala* newspaper. Also the two books authored by Mishal and Sela, and Hroub only cover the Islamic movement up to the late 1990s. This thesis covers a decade more of the Movement's history, but more than that what it offers is a methodical discussion of the internal debates and the different trends within Hamas through the systematic analysis of a Hamas journal and other publications, complemented also with interviews. Such internal discussions and disputes are rarely reflected in any of the above-mentioned literature. The most distinguishing feature of this thesis, however, is its main research question: the role of the religious reference. Not only has this aspect been largely ignored but also it has been actively sidelined, as is evident in the depiction by Milton-Edwards and Farrell, mentioned above, of a Movement uninterested in theology. The only similar attempt to study of Hamas's Islamist intellectual heritage is Andrea Nusse's *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas.*

Intellectual History

Nusse is also the only academic so far who has carried out a systematic study of a Hamas media publication, also including other written material produced by the Movement. Her sources are 'the *Mithaq* [the Hamas Charter], the journal *Filastin al-Muslima,* which could be described as the unofficial organ of *Hamas,* as well as the handbills of the movement, published on a day-to-day basis in the Territories'.[86] Hers is also a study, like this one, of the main religious and political underpinnings of Hamas.

There are however a number of problems with her approach. First, there are limitations inherent to her sources. The majority of her references are to *Filastin al-Muslima*. Established in London in 1982 as the mouthpiece of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, this monthly magazine was very much a product of

[86] Andrea Nusse, *Muslim Palestine: the Ideology of Hamas* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 4.

Palestinians in the diaspora.[87] Nusse makes much of the fact that 'the journalists [working in *Filastin al-Muslima*], mainly in Great Britain, are constantly exposed to the influences of Western society. The quality of political analysis suggests they have a good education. This level of sophistication is in contrast to the handbills of Hamas'.[88] Conversely, however, I would like to argue that these are also factors that show *Filastin al-Muslima* as removed from the reality and the debate in the Palestinian territories, which turn it into in some ways an inaccurate reflection of the Movement.

Another limitation of Nusse's study is the date of its publication. Written originally as her DPhil thesis, it was published in 1998 and analyses documents up to 1997. Hamas had existed already for more than a decade but it was still very much a clandestine organisation and there was relatively little written material to work from. In that respect *Filastin al-Muslima* was at the time very useful. There is however now a wealth of texts that need to be studied more closely. The texts, which this thesis focuses on, are just as intellectually complex and sophisticated as *Filastin al-Muslima*, while also a product of the Palestinian territories, where they were published.

Methodology: Against a Fixed Ideology

The main drawback of Nusse's work, however, is her tendency to reduce Hamas to a fixed ideology. Nusse's book is divided into two parts: the first provides the ideology of Hamas and the second its application to different historical periods. Although in the second section she provides a detailed analysis of the content of *Filastin al-Muslima* to complement the Hamas Charter in relation to different historical moments she does not overcome the sense that the Movement has a static essence and fails to provide a sense

[87] Nusse, p. 4.
[88] Nusse, pp. 4–5.

of the malleability of its ideology.[89] One detail that illustrates the failings of her approach is that she makes no distinction between one writer and another. In fact she only refers to the pages of the journal, not even mentioning the titles of the articles she has gathered her material from. This is the same approach that Emmanuel Sivan takes in *Radical Islam* when referring to Islamist journals.[90] Given her methodology, which also includes no interviews, there is no consideration for the motivations of the authors, let alone the different positions that they might represent within the Movement. Due to this absence, the value of her work is limited providing the reader little sense of the relative importance of the different ideas that she mentions. This specifically is a problem that Quentin Skinner speaks to in his seminal article on 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' and which this thesis is guided by. While discussing how the history of ideas turns into what he calls the 'mythology of doctrines' he states: 'The fact that ideas presuppose agents is very readily discounted, as the ideas get up and do battle on their own behalf.'[91]

In other literature on Hamas there is also misattribution of opinions that only represent an individual or a group within it, to the Movement as a whole. In the case of Cragin's article 'Al Qaeda Confronts Hamas' and Raphael Israeli's book *Islamikaze: Manifestation of Islamic Martyrology*, for example, this is caused by lack of access to original material in Arabic and reliance on web-based organisations that track terrorist organisations or translate statements considered anti-Semitic, or slanderously anti-

[89] She is not alone in presenting an immutable ideology. For example, Meir Hatina presents Hamas's capacity to adapt to a changing political reality without compromising its dogma by making a distinction between short-term and long-term goals, Meir Hatina, 'Hamas and the Oslo Accords: Religious Dogma in a Changing Political Reality', *Mediterranean Politics*, 4.3 (1999), 37–55.
[90] Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*.
[91] Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), pp. 3–53 (p. 11).

Israeli and anti-American.[92] In this thesis on the other hand, each article is referenced individually and in many cases detailed information on the authors' background is provided. Moreover, with reference to some key actors their writing is traced through time. Indeed, in many cases extensive interviews have been conducted in order to add depth to the analysis, to understand the motivations of the actors and to acquire additional information about their opinions and positions that are not found in their texts. As Skinner argues 'if we wish to understand a given idea, even within a given culture and at a given time, we cannot simply concentrate, […] on studying the forms of words involved. For the words denoting the idea may be used, […] with varying and quite incompatible intentions.'[93] He suggests instead the study of the context and the various situations in which the given form of words are used. It is not the occurrence of the words that denote the given idea that matter, but 'the *use* of the relevant sentence by a particular agent on a particular occasion with a particular intention (*his* intention) to make a particular *statement*.'[94]

Skinner also warns against giving a writer a coherence and an air generally of a closed system, which was not there in the first place, similarly Hamas's thought need not be coherent, and the apparent contradictions found therein might be real ones. A book that embraces and explores some contradictions within an Islamist movement is for example *Ashes of Hama: The Perilous History of Syria's Muslim Brotherhood* in which Raphael Lefevre navigates through the different conflicting trends within the organisation as well as the tension between theory and praxis which led to the 1982

[92] Raphael Israeli, *Islamikaze: Manifestations of Islamic Martyrology* (London: Frank Cass, 2003). Kim Cragin, 'Al Qaeda Confronts Hamas: Divisions in the Sunni Jihadist Movement and its Implications for U.S. Policy', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32.7 (2009), 576–90. These are the Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Institute and The Middle East Media Research Insitute (MEMRI).
[93] Skinner, pp. 26–27.
[94] Skinner, p. 37.

massacre at Hama.[95] Though this thesis attempts something closer to what Stephane Lacroix proposes in his work on Wahhabism, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia,* in which the author studies Wahhabism taking into account its full complexity and plasticity: 'Wahhabism is not, as often portrayed, an unchangeable essence but rather a "tradition" in motion, subject to interpretation and reinterpretation'.[96]

One final note is necessary here to justify the methodology of this thesis. The study of Islamic movements through their ideology and political strategies has been often criticised for ignoring the social, cultural and economic contexts that are essential to understand their development. *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective* by Michael Irving Jensen looks at the engagement of Hamas within the framework of civil society and is an example of this broader way of understanding Islamism.[97] He uses Anne Sofie Roald's definition of an Islamist as a Muslim 'who regards Islam as a body of ideas, values, beliefs and practices, encompassing all spheres of life including personal and social relations, economy and politics'.[98] Similarly, Sara Roy recommends a more sociological approach to study Islamism.[99] Given the importance of contextualising ideology, seeing it as much as a cause of actions as an effect of its environment, the discourse of the different individuals and groups here examined is set against key developments in the political sphere in Gaza and the Palestinian territories, as well as contemporary Islam and the Arab world more broadly. However, though I recognise the consequence of the social, economic and cultural

[95] Raphaël Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama: the Perilous History of Syria's Muslim Brotherhood* (London: Hurst, 2013).
[96] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, p. 4.
[97] An example from the Egyptian context is Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
[98] Anne Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia* (Lund Sweden: Dept. of History of Religion, 1994), p. 13. Cited in Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2009), p. 5.
[99] Sara Roy, p. 18.

context, this thesis cannot cover every aspect and so in analysing religious and political questions I only makes rare reference to these. At the same time, it is important to note, Islamic activism cannot be wholly reduced to a specific social milieu, but is also the product of the power of ideas themselves.[100]

Sources

This essay is based on the weekly *al-Risala*, the most important Hamas newspaper and for much of the history of the Movement its only regular publication inside Palestine. Using a digital camera and an improvised tripod, I digitalised the whole archive of the newspaper from its establishment until 2008. For the more recent issues I obtained readily available digitalised copies from its offices. This allowed me to pore over hundreds of issues and thousands of articles in the process of researching and writing while focusing on the period from 1997 till 2009. *Al-Risala* did not come out of a vacuum. Hamas started to issue 'an internal periodic publication' of 'limited distribution' called '*al-Risala*' on 13 October 1993, which was a kind of newsletter composed of a few photocopied sheets of paper. The main article was written by Musa abu Marzuq.[101] It was clearly an inspiration for the weekly newspaper. However, its more direct precursor was *al-Watan* (The Nation) newspaper, published from 1994 till 1995. *Al-Watan* was the first serious attempt by Hamas members at creating a newspaper and the first opposition paper in the Palestinian territories. *Al-Watan* was also at times critical of Hamas in ways that the Movement considered excessive, and a number of Hamas leaders argued it represented more the views of its director, ʿImad al-Faluji (b. 1963), than the Movement's.[102] Disloyalty towards the Movement was later confirmed when al-Faluji accepted a ministerial portfolio in the Palestinian Authority

[100] Euben, p. 14.
[101] Musa Abu Marzuq, 'Nahnu wa-l-Marhala', *al-Risala*, 13 October 1993.
[102] Al-Bardawil, Salah. Interview by author. Audio recording. Gaza City, 11 September 2013.

(PA) government, which led to his dismissal from Hamas and the dissolution of the paper. After *al-Watan* was shutdown some of the staff created *al-Risala,* which issued its first copy on 13 February 1997.

Al-Risala was licenced under al-Khalas Party, a political formation created by Hamas on 23 November 1995. Ghazi Hamad (b. 1964), who had served as chief editor of *al-Watan,* held that same position in a*l-Risala* and also developed its blueprint. Salah al-Bardawil (b. 1959), who later became a Member of Parliament for Hamas, served as director. It started printing four thousand copies, number which had increased to eight thousand by 1998 and nine thousand the year after.[103] The paper was rarely less than twenty pages long, though across time the length varied in particular when staff members were arrested, the offices were shut down, bombed or were otherwise unreachable due to violence taking place near the area as happened from time to time. Many influential figures, either across the Movement, at regional or local level, even grassroots activists who over the years were assassinated or died while carrying out attacks, wrote in *al-Risala* which makes their articles an invaluable historical source. Among the most prominent leaders that wrote in *al-Risala* were Ibrahim al-Maqadma (1952-2003) Ismaʿil abu Shanab (1950-2003) and ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Rantisi (1947-2004). Other core high-level collaborators of *al-Risala* included Yunis al-Astal (b. 1956), Ahmad Bahr (b. 1949) and ʿAtallah abu al-Sibah (b. 1949). Many others wrote in *al-Risala* occasionally. Then after the 2006 elections four of its permanent contributors became Parliament members and a number of others occupied senior positions in government.[104]

[103] Al-Bardawil, 11 September 2013. The higher figures are confirmed by al-Bardawil's preface to the second and third of the archived volumes of the newspaper.
[104] The deputies were Yunis al-Astal, Ahmad Bahr, Salah al-Bardawil and Samira Khalaifa (b. 1964).

However, relying solely on *al-Risala* would not have provided a well-rounded vision of Hamas. Since the year 2000 there has been a significant increase of knowledge production by Hamas. The Second Intifada gave the Movement a level of freedom that allowed it to develop its propaganda and communications activities significantly. The formation of a Palestinian government by Hamas in 2006 became another turning point in this field and ushered the creation of a media empire.[105] Members, activists and subsidiary organisations have created a substantial corpus over the years. The availability of all this new material, which for the most part has not been looked at in the academic literature, offers a rare opportunity to advance a profoundly new vision of Hamas.

The spread of the Internet and the revolution in the distribution of information that it led played a large role in the expansion of Hamas's media production. The Internet allowed the Movement to overcome the suffocating siege, fly over the checkpoints that Israel imposed on the occupied Palestinian territories and reach out to local, regional and global audiences. This was actually also part of an old tradition. As Eickelman and Piscatori underline, at least from the time of al-Afghani 'Muslim critics of the status quo also make use of the technological instruments of the modern mass culture'.[106] A number of websites received sizeable amounts of traffic and became central to Hamas's media efforts. Hamas identified this potential early on and was quick to adopt the Internet as a means of mass communication.[107] In her book *Palestine Online*, Miriyam Aouragh does not discuss Hamas but it figures prominently in her one-page 'Timeline of the Internet in Palestine'. Hamas's website is the only one belonging to a political

[105] On which Wael Abdelal has produced a detailed and fascinating study, 'From the Mosque to Satellite Broadcasting: a Historical Perspective of Hamas Media Strategy' (University of Exeter, 2012).
[106] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 121.
[107] 'Al-Risala website', 1998 <http://alresala.tripod.com/> [accessed 13 September 2016].

movement that she considers worth mentioning.[108] In the timeline's entry for 2002 she gives the first examples of popular Palestinian websites: 'Successful Palestinian public relations campaigns and websites (Electronic Intifada, Palestine Monitor); Hamas' Palestine-Info develops into prominent website'. She also underlines that in 2005 'Hamas' Palestine-Info grows in popularity, among the first with RSS feed'.[109] This growing amount of primary sources readily available on the Internet and through Internet archives has therefore been a vital source of information for this thesis. I have made extensive use of the websites of al-Khalas Party; various versions of the Palestine Information Center (PIC) website (the main Hamas Internet portal since its establishment in December 1997 which Aouragh above refers to as 'Palestine-Info'); and the Palestine Dialogue Forum (PALDF) Internet forum, created in 2001, where Hamas supporters and others discussed a wide variety of issues related to the Movement, Islam and current affairs.[110] Offering information in English, French, Urdu, Malay, Russian as well as Arabic, the PIC comprised a wealth of information on the Movement, including, press releases, interviews, analyses, news articles, *fatāwā*, an official history, obituaries, photographs among other items.

Another institution that has become key in the intellectual production of the Movement is the Islamic University in Gaza (IUG). The growing confidence of Hamas as it transformed from a clandestine movement to a governing authority had a clear impact in the increasing amount of written works the university produced about Hamas specifically. This thesis relies on material from conference proceedings held at the institution as well as the graduate work of its students. The main library of IUG has also been a valuable source of books on Hamas written in Arabic by the Movement. Other

[108] Miriyam Aouragh, *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet and the Construction of Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2011), p. 58.
[109] Aouragh, p. xx.
[110] These two dates were obtained from Abdelal.

such books and pamphlets have been gathered from bookstores in Gaza City. Individuals in Gaza have made available to me additional physical books or electronic publications, written by or about Hamas members. In addition I have collected first and second hand books and research studies in Hebrew about Hamas that have not been translated—which may also be considered primary sources since Israel is a major party to the conflict—from bookstores in Tel Aviv. I have also consulted Hamas pamphlets and publications dating back to the First Intifada (1987-1991) and mid-1990s at the Arabic Press Archives of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies of Tel Aviv University.

Though texts are essential to this thesis I have not relied on written material alone. The analysis of the articles from *al-Risala* has been accompanied with formal and lengthy interviews with many of the authors. Sometimes these have included discussions of specific articles that they authored and that are here analysed. They provide an all-important context as well as detailed information about motivations behind the articles and other clarifications. For this thesis I have conducted in-depth interviews with more than two-dozen people. Some of the figures that were most crucial to this thesis have been interviewed twice. Most of the interviewees were either Hamas members, some of them senior ranking, or individuals who wrote in *al-Risala* newspaper, and many of them were both. I have also interviewed former leaders of the Movement. I carried out the interviews and collected written material during three separate visits to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories in September 2013, January 2014 and January 2015, which lasted from two to three weeks each. In the West Bank interviews were conducted in Ramallah, Hebron and Nablus, though the focus has been the Gaza Strip, where I spent most of the time. Interviews there were carried out mostly in Gaza City though also in Jabalia town and refugee camp, Khan Yunis and

Rafah. I have also used archival audio recordings from the Hamas-affiliated al-Aqsa Radio available online.

This thesis focuses on events from the eve of the Second Intifada in 2000 until the assault on Ibn Taymiyya Mosque in 2009. However, I often refer to developments since the establishment of the Movement in 1987. Thus, for example, the first chapter discusses the establishment of al-Khalas Party in 1996 and the development of the Movement in the late 1990s. The time span covered represents a period of great transformation in the Movement and serves well to explain where Hamas is today.

Outline

Fundamental to this thesis's approach is the historicisation of Hamas's thought system, which is why it takes a chronological approach and each chapter deals with a specific set of events that illustrates a particular intellectual debate within Hamas during a given moment in history.[111] A summary of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1 - Al-Khalas Party and the Centrist Trend: This chapter discusses in detail the formation of al-Khalas Party around the 1996 parliamentary elections and how it represented the crystallisation of the centrist trend in Hamas, a tendency that leaned towards political participation in democratic elections and other Western liberal structures and concepts. It introduces centrism as a strand of political Islam and a regional movement. The chapter proposes that though considered a marginal actor in Palestinian politics and history, al-Khalas is the precursor of the Change and Reform List that Hamas formed in the elections in 2006.

Chapter 2 - Centrism and Purist Salafism on the Eve of the Second Intifada: This chapter examines the discourse of the centrist and the purist Salafi trends in Hamas in

[111] On the importance of studying the history of an idea to counter efforts to ascribe to it a fixed essense see Anwar Abdel Malek, 'Orientalism in crisis', *Diogenes*, 11.44 (1963), pp. 107–8. Cited in Said, p. 97.

the period leading up to the outbreak of the Second Intifada. It introduces some of the main exponents of these trends and their writing as they appear side by side in the pages of *al-Risala*. It studies the role these two trends play in Hamas and the way they coexist and interact. One emphasises citizenship and human rights while the other is defined by scriptural literalism and militancy.

Chapter 3 - The Duty to Command Right and Forbid Wrong: Religion, Morality and Violence: This chapter explains how morality is central to Hamas and Islamism. It shows that while Hamas condemned violence to impose moral discipline, purist Salafi sectors within the Movement encouraged it. It draws from the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine and the early days of Hamas to explain the relation between morality and the liberation of Palestine in the Movement's discourse. This chapter is informed by close analysis of an attack against the sale of alcohol that took place in the Gaza Strip in October 2000 and a heated debate on the subject in *al-Risala.* Through articles in the newspaper this chapter presents a variety of constituencies within Hamas representing the centrist and the purist Salafi trends.

Chapter 4 - The Rise of the Salafi 'Ulama': This chapter explains the reasons behind the rise of the 'ulama' in Hamas. It introduces and uses as an example a major Hamas purist Salafi religious scholar: Nizar Rayyan (1959-2009). It locates this emergence historically in 2004 after the assassination of the top, Egypt-educated leadership of the Movement. Though the origins of this group of scholars is in Saudi Arabia, where they studied. It also debates the establishment of two institutions in Gaza to assert control over religious authority: the Palestine Religious Scholars League (PRSL) and the fatwa committee of IUG. It examines what their exact influence and function was within the Movement in support of the political leadership.

Chapter 5 - The Countercoup and the Salafi Brother: This chapter focuses on the Hamas countercoup of June 2007, one of the most significant events in recent Palestinian history. The Hamas countercoup against al-Fatah also constitutes the peak of the influence of purist Salafism and the ʿulamaʾ in the Movement. The thought of Nizar Rayyan, one of the proponents of the countercoup, is discussed in order to explain the rationale behind this attack. The notion of anchoring in Islamic legal tradition, a tool with which Rayyan provided the Hamas political leadership with religious legitimacy on a whole range of issues, is described in detail. It establishes that despite his undeniable purist Salafi credentials, Rayyan was fully integrated in the modernist configuration of Hamas. This chapter is based on detailed analysis of the articles written by Nizar Rayyan in *al-Risala* as well as the papers presented at a conference in the Faculty of Usul al-Din of IUG.

Chapter 6 - 'A Solid Building': Hamas and Jihadi-Salafism: This chapter discusses the rise of the Jihadi-Salafi challenge to Hamas taking two key events as reference: the verbal scuffle between al-Qaʿida and Hamas after the 2006 elections and the struggle against Jihadi-Salafis in Gaza which ended in the Hamas assault on Ibn Taymiyya Mosque in August 2009. When treated as a struggle for religious legitimacy the profound differences between the two organisations come into sharp focus. The chapter describes the way Hamas ʿulamaʾ led the defence against the hostilities from Jihadi-Salafis by brandishing centrism. The conflict between Hamas, al-Qaʿida and Jihadi-Salafism in Gaza cannot be properly understood without recourse to Hamas's main Internet forum, PALDF, where these two groups actually engaged each other in arguments and locked horns.

Chapter 1 – Al-Khalas Party and the Centrist Trend

Hamas created al-Khalas Party (The Salvation Party) shortly before Khaled Hroub finished writing *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*. Hroub ends his book speculating about the possibility that the political formation might lead Hamas to abandon the armed struggle.[112] This chapter explains why it did not happen as it discusses the relation between politics and violence in the Movement. It examines the debate within Hamas surrounding participation in the 1996 elections and ultimately the reasons for refusing to enter the race. This also provides the key to what shaped Hamas in the 1990s under the shadow of the Oslo process (1993-2000) and its relations with the PA. It analyses in particular detail the creation of al-Khalas Party and its relation to the Hamas movement. Though the Party was established on the occasion of the vote to help the Movement survive during a time of repression, its birth had more profound roots. What has not been mentioned in any of the literature is that al-Khalas also saw itself as the flagship in Palestine of a modernist form of Islamism: the centrist movement. Thus the theoretical framework that guides the discussion in this chapter is the struggle between the endorsement by al-Khalas of Western liberal institutions and concepts in the tradition of the earlier modernists and its opposition by purist Salafism, as manifested in the thought and influence of the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb.

This chapter relies on interviews, the political programme of al-Khalas and that of the Change and Reform List (*Qa'imat al-Taghyir wa-l-Islah*), with which Hamas entered the elections in 2006. It also refers to some articles in *al-Risala*, though it leaves a full discussion of the centrist values as featured in the newspaper to the next chapter. First though, I will start by discussing the terms 'moderate' and 'extremist' as well as

[112] Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, p. 259.

certain synonyms and metonyms thereof that are generally thrown around with too much ease when talking about Islamism.

A Note on Terminology

In order to explain the role of al-Khalas Party in relation to Hamas and that of centrism in relation to Islamism, the term 'moderate', from the Arabic '*muʿtadil*', was almost invariably used by members of the Party. In fact, the term 'moderate' was so important to the modernist movement as a whole, so central to its narrative, that Lauziere stipulates in a footnote at the start of his book that he will use throughout the work the term modernist 'and the term balance (*muʿtadil* in Arabic) synonymously'.[113] This is however an adjective that is so wholly relative to the position of the speaker to make it almost meaningless on its own. It is surprising that Lauziere, who otherwise appears so careful about the use and meaning of language, is not concerned about the vacuity of the word. In political discourse everywhere, and especially one in which Islamism is discussed, almost every party assumes the adjective 'moderate' and labels their opponent, its opposite, 'radical' or 'extremist', often rendered in Arabic as '*mutaṭarrif*'. The latter in particular is a word that is persistently used to describe and dismiss Islamism of any type by its critics and opponents, though it is also used by Islamists to scorn secularists. As I explore in this chapter in more detail, in the history of modernist Salafism, moderation is also tied to centrism, which is a similarly problematic term. This term do have a history, which is vital that we trace in order to properly understand their meaning and our debate in this thesis more generally.

The definition given by the second edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* of the word *taṭarruf* provides a genealogy of the term that is illustrative of the complexities that surround it, while also indicating its direct pertinence to the debate at hand. It warns

[113] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 243.

of the dangers of its political and indiscriminate use, unless carefully defined. It explains the way that 'in the Western world, the "democratic constitutional state" usually counts as the antithesis to "extremism"'. This is relevant because that is precisely the context here in my discussion on the centrist movement, which assumes participation within the modern nation-state system, a fundamental component of the Western liberal tradition. The encyclopaedia article recognises that in the Islamic world it is used more arbitrarily and 'the existing state power, legitimised democratically only in rare cases, determines what political extremism is'. Then it specifically sets the notion of 'religious extremism' against centrism 'a concept often claimed by Muslim authors for their religion (usually with reference to Qurʾan 2:143, 2:185, and 4:28)', which it argues are even harder concepts to define. The author of the entry also points out that the term extremism found its way into academic literature after World War II and 'since the 1970s has been specifically used in Islamic and Orientalist literature for the phenomenon of militant religious-political groups.'[114] What is also crucial to underline, is that the terms 'moderate' and 'extremist' are not only highly subjective, but also contain a value judgment, that is to say, they prescribe what is right or wrong. These words are therefore highly politicised and better avoided. However, because they appear frequently in both primary and secondary literature as well as interviews, and they are important to the discourses being analysed here they will be mentioned in this thesis with reference to the definitions above or others that shall be stipulated.[115]

The allusion to centrism in the encyclopaedia article above is not casual for a similar argument can be made in relation to it. In her article on the use of the concept '*wasaṭiyya*' (centrism in Arabic) by al-Qaradawi, Bettina Graf acknowledges that

[114] Roswitha Badry, 'Tatarruf', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, 2012.
[115] For example, the word 'moderate' is used frequently in Bjørn Olav Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 14.3 (2007), 293–306.

'critical articles on the variety of meanings and the lack of conceptual clarity of the term *wasaṭiyya* do exist'. She gives two examples. The first from Fahmi Huwaidi—that I identify as himself a member of the centrist movement below—who refers to it as 'a permanently relative matter' and the second from Motaz al-Khateeb, a researcher in Islamic studies and producer of al-Qaradawi's own satellite programme in al-Jazeera channel, who 'doubts that the term has any theoretical depth in the sphere of Islamic thought apart from strategic advantage in the political field.'[116] As mentioned above, the terms 'moderate' and 'centrist' are strongly correlated and are both used as antonyms of 'extremist'. Thus, it is common for different groups of Islamists engaged in conflict to label their opponent as an extremist and themselves, and their practice of Islam, as centrist. Indeed, this has happened through much of the history of Islam. Such a cynical use of the terms is also a practice that I register in this thesis, in particular in relation to the conflict between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafis in chapter 6 though elsewhere too. But while it is useful to keep this in mind, this thesis, like the article by Graf, also traces a specific use of the concept as developed by a particular group of Islamists, who have laid unusual emphasis in the term and their relation to it. I am talking here about Yusuf al-Qaradawi in particular who has self-consciously developed a whole interpretation of Islam around it. This is analysed in detail over the rest of this chapter and the next. It is also my claim that al-Qaradawi and his intellectual companions, who together constitute the centrist movement, represent the contemporary incarnation of modernist Salafism.

A separate note should be made about the word 'radical' in relation to Islamism. Emmanuel Sivan is an example of those propounding the use of the term as a synonym of extremist and as a metonym of violent, usually denoting a type of violence that is unwarranted. For example, he makes this link when he writes: 'The radical wing

[116] Bettina Graf, 'The Concept of Wasatiyya in the Work of Yusuf al-Qaradawi', in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 218.

justifies violence in terms of their contractual theory of governance.'[117] Sivan is a major advocate of this label, with a number of other works including it in the title.[118] He uses it in the title of his book *Radical Islam* and then throughout the text. There are for example three instances of the word in the first two sentences of his first chapter. This is however not its only use. Roxanne Euben in the introduction to her book on Sayyid Qutb explains her 'solicitude towards radical religious perspectives', and uses the adjective throughout.[119] The same applies to two recent biographies of Sayyid Qutb.[120] However, their use of this term is less related to violence than to what is probably its most basic meaning: the departure from orthodoxy that his thought postulates. Nor is the term 'orthodoxy' easy to define in the context of our discussion, given that it is precisely its meaning that is contested by different trends within Islamism.[121] It is therefore up to the writer to make an informed judgment on what she or he considers is the established order. Qutb's thought has become a paradigmatic example of radicalism, according to both of the above definitions. While this thesis eschews the first use and endorses the second, it proposes another word that is sometimes used as a synonym of radical or extremist, and that is the word 'militant', which will be used here to denote a tendency to favour violent methods in support of a social or political cause.

In turn, the notion of radicalism is related to another two terms, 'revolutionary' and 'reformist'. These are also key expressions in the study of Islamism and ones that I make repeated reference to here. The connection between these words is evident for example in the title of John Esposito's book *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or*

[117] Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, p. 116.
[118] See Emmanuel Sivan, 'Sunni Radicalism in the Middle East and the Iranian Revolution', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21.1 (1989), 1–30; Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman, *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).
[119] Euben, p. 16.
[120] Calvert; James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: the Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[121] Such dialectical approach to orthodoxy is at the centre of the discussion on Islam that Talal Asad proposes, Asad, 'The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam', p. 22.

Reform.[122] Moreover, just as 'radical' and 'revolutionary' are often used interchangeably, 'moderate' and 'reformist' are also often used as metonyms. There is however a substantial amount of vagueness in their meaning and potential for manipulation in their use. Therefore, in the same way that I have done in the previous paragraphs with 'moderate', 'extremist', 'centrist' and 'radical', I would like to quickly unpack the meanings that lie behind these two words. As mentioned earlier, Salafism is a reformist movement because of the consensus among all its adepts that Islam had been perverted and the way it was understood and practiced needed to change fundamentally. Reform (*islāh*) was a key word for the early modernists, ʿAbduh, Rida and fellow wayfarers. However, it is often used today in a significantly different way. When applied to Islamists, its meaning is often, implicitly or explicitly, set against revolutionary, and it refers essentially to working peacefully to achieve change within the confines of the established system. Again, the latter is a reference to the Western liberal order of nation-states and a political organisation structured, however diligently, around parties and democratic elections. The revolutionary path on the other hand refers to attempts to subvert such a system, generally through violent means. An archetypal example of the reformist intent is the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in parliamentary elections in Egypt in 1984 and of the revolutionary behaviour is the uprising of the Brotherhood in the Syrian city of Hama in 1982.

A Muslim and a Brother in Palestine

Before I start to discuss the debate within Hamas over participation in the 1996 elections and the creation of al-Khalas Party, I will provide a short historical introduction to the establishment of the Movement and the developments thereafter that led to those discussions that are the main subject of my analysis in this chapter.

[122] *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform*, ed. by John L. Esposito (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1997).

The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya), better known by its Arabic acronym 'Hamas', is the inheritor of a long line of resistance movements against the occupation of Palestine inspired by Islam or at least with an Islamic character. Indeed Abd al-Fattah El-Awasi, in his authoritative study on *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question 1928-1927*, goes as far as to say that 'most Palestinians revolts in this century have been predominantly Islamic.'[123] Perhaps the most memorable figure is the Syrian scholar ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam, who led an armed group against the British Mandate in Palestine in the 1930s that was deeply inspired by Islamic principles. His death in November 1935 was a major catalyst for the 1936-9 Revolt against colonial rule of Palestine. Al-Qassam has played a central role in the imaginary of Hamas, which named its revered military wing after this heroic figure.[124] During the Revolt, the Mufti of Jerusalem al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni also 'became paramount leader of the Palestinian national movement in actively combating both the British and the Zionist movement.'[125]

Though these two are important historical references they were not members of the Muslim Brotherhood, from which Hamas splintered. The first Muslim Brotherhood delegation was sent to Palestine to promote the organisation in 1935. But it was during the Revolt that the Brotherhood organised a major solidarity campaign for the Palestinian struggle, including considerable fundraising, while a number of individual members also 'managed to infiltrate into Palestine and join forces with the Palestinian commandos.'[126] However, because Palestine was in a state of continuous upheaval before the Second World War it was not until 1945 that the first branch of the Muslim

[123] Abd Al-Fattah El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question, 1928-1947* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), p. 159.
[124] For a revisionist biography of al-Qassam see Mark Sanagan, 'Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Martyr: Rethinking ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam', *Welt des Islams*, 53.3–4 (2013), 315–52.
[125] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: the Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), p. 62.
[126] El-Awaisi, p. 93.

Brothers was set up in most major cities. Then after the UN General Assembly approved the partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947 and to the war that this ushered, the Muslim Brotherhood sent three battalions with volunteers from Egypt who distinguished themselves in combat.[127]

After the creation of the state of Israel and the loss of most of Palestine in that war, the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood was divided between the West Bank and Gaza, which fell under the control of Jordan and Egypt respectively. While the Jordanian organisation absorbed the West Bank affiliate, in Gaza it maintained its independence but with close links to the Egyptian hub. Thereafter the development of each branch was markedly different. The West Bank section became effectively co-opted by the Jordanian state and focused on education and party politics. In Gaza, on the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood led the military and political activism against Israel, which continued even after the revolution of the Free Officers in Egypt in 1952.

However, very soon after the coup the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt lost in the power struggles with Gamal Abdel Nasser, who led the new revolutionary military regime. The turning point arrived in 1954 when the organisation was accused of being responsible for an assassination attempt on Abdel Nasser, which led to it being declared illegal and viciously persecuted. In Gaza its core members were forced into exile. Despite a brief revival in 1956-7, during the four month long occupation of the Strip by Israel, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood was almost completely destroyed. In effect this meant that the organisation abandoned the struggle against Israel and concentrated instead on reforming society. Jean-Pierre Filiu in his article 'The Origins of Hamas' captures the position that Ahmad Yasin, later founder of Hamas, started to fill in this

[127] El-Awaisi, p. 207.

vacuum as he went about rebuilding the organisation during this time.[128] Even after the occupation of Gaza by Israel in 1967, the Brotherhood refused to join the resistance. This was in stark contrast to the position of the organisation until 1948 and even more so to the mobilisation that had taken place in the Palestinian arena with the establishment of a whole set of nationalist armed factions since the establishment of Israel. The most prominent, al-Fatah, was founded in 1959 and was led by the man who came to embody the Palestinian struggle, Yasir Arafat. Then in 1964 these were all assembled under the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), in turn taken over by al-Fatah soon after. These groups quickly became organised in Gaza and mounted forceful guerrilla attacks against Israeli occupying forces, but were repressed by 1973. In the meantime, the Palestinian Brothers were still focusing on the development of the social services. That year they created al-Mujammaʿ al-Islami (the Islamic Complex) and then in 1976 al-Jamʿiyya al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Association), two leading institutions in that field. These were not just charitable organisations but the building blocks of an increasingly complex, sophisticated and burgeoning social movement that expanded throughout Gaza. It ranged from building mosques to mobilising a generation of students and included everything in between.

Khaled Hroub argues that the refusal by the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood to join al-Fatah in direct military confrontation with Israel was a tactical decision and did not imply a change of its fundamental commitment to struggle against Israel. Rather, it chose to rebuild society according to an Islamic blueprint that would empower the *umma* to liberate Palestine.[129] Its focus was therefore in education, broadly understood. There were however wider political trends that determined these specific dynamics. The charismatic Egyptian leader Abdel Nasser had spearheaded a regional

[128] Jean-Pierre Filiu, 'The Origins of Hamas: Militant Legacy or Israeli Tool?', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 41.3 (2012), 54–70 (pp. 61–62).
[129] Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, p. 26.

movement of Arab nationalism. However, the defeat of the 1967 war against Israel dealt a mortal blow to Nasserist pan-Arabism and though it still took some years to materialise, this gave way to another transnational movement, an Islamic awakening, which peaked with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. Those events inspired some members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza to break away and engage in direct action against Israel, thus creating the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. They were also influenced by the revolutionary spirit emanating from the writings of Sayyid Qutb and the militant groups that he had already spawned in Egypt—one of which carried out the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. This spirit was also palpable in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that lasted from 1979 to 1989.

Hamas Emerges

In such a climate, it became untenable for the Palestinian Brothers to continue on the sidelines of the struggle without risking complete marginalisation. And thus in 1984 Israel arrested Ahmad Yasin and accused him of weapons possession and planning armed attacks. Then, when the spontaneous rioting started in Gaza on 8 December 1987 after an Israeli driver had run over and killed a group of Palestinian workers, Yasin convened a meeting with a group of Muslim Brotherhood leaders and decided that they would actively participate in what quickly became a widespread uprising. Such activities would no longer be organised by the Muslim Brotherhood but under the rubric of a new organisation: Hamas. The first communiqué bearing the name of the organisation in full and referring to the events taking place as an ‘intifada’ was distributed a few days later. Other than the turn towards militancy, the major change that this transformation signified was the assumption of nationalism. Whereas the

Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood focused on rebuilding the *umma* to then eventually retake Palestine, Hamas was about Palestinians recovering Palestine.

The First Intifada took primarily the form of a popular rebellion, distinguished by demonstrations, general strikes and stone throwing. There were also armed attacks. In fact Ahmad Yasin was arrested and sentenced to fifteen years in jail in May 1989 accused of being 'implicated in the kidnapping and killing of two Israeli soldiers and other violent acts against Israelis and Palestinians collaborating with them.'[130] During the intifada the support for Hamas among Palestinians grew with extraordinary speed to the point that if it did not match al-Fatah, till then by far the dominant Palestinian faction, it certainly came close. As opposed to the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, which was an exclusive organization with restricted membership, Hamas was a mass movement that very quickly could boast thousands of activists spread all over the West Bank and Gaza. And despite the intense arrest campaigns that they were subject to, in particular among its leadership, the Movement managed to continue functioning, mobilising its base and organising protests. However, as popular protests began to wane due to general fatigue, armed attacks intensified and culminated in the establishment in the early 1990s of al-Qassam Brigades.

The growth in influence of Hamas caused the PLO, controlled by al-Fatah and its leader Yasir Arafat, to fear the loss of its grip in the occupied Palestinian territories and was one of the factors that drove it to push for negotiating an overall settlement of the conflict with Israel. Already on 15 November 1988 the Palestinian National Council, the legislative branch of the PLO, had issued a declaration that expressed its commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel and not in its place. Then on 30 October 1991 negotiations formally began at a major international

[130] Ziad Abu-Amer, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 65.

conferenced launched in Madrid in which Israel recognised Palestinians as its negotiating partners. These were followed by a negotiating channel known as the Oslo process that started in secret and culminated in a signed agreement on 13 September 1993 in the White House lawn. This deal meant for the Palestinians the recognition by Israel of the PLO and the creation of interim self-government structures.

Just as the PLO was making overtures to Israel, inching towards a two-state solution, Hamas was by equal measure recalcitrantly against it. These were the irredentist positions expressed in its Charter, released in August 1988, and at every other opportunity. It was also most palpably evident in the armed attacks that continued after the end of the Intifada—which had formally ended with the Madrid talks. In 1994, after the massacre of 29 Palestinian worshippers at al-Ibrahimi Mosque, in Hebron, the violence changed qualitatively as Hamas began to launch suicide bombings inside Israel. As these escalated so did the Israeli repression, and in 1996 the Palestinian Authority, created by the Oslo accords in 1994, launched a major arrest campaign against Hamas, putting it under enormous pressure with increasing difficulties to operate.

Hamas did enjoy significant support among Palestinians during the Oslo process, which lasted until 2000, particularly as Israel was constantly trying to short-change the PLO in the negotiations and their implementation. The constant growth of Jewish settlements was the most blatant and painful indication of Israel's bad faith. However, overall the Oslo process put Hamas in a difficult position where it was forced to reckon with the optimism with which Palestinians responded to the negotiations, at least at first, and the extinction of its support. This provoked a serious discussion within the Movement as to how it should respond to the Oslo process that crystallised around the

first Palestinian legislative elections in 21 January 1996. To this internal debate and the formation by Hamas of al-Khalas Party I now turn.

To Participate or Not

The literature on Hamas has not paid much attention to al-Khalas Party. Glenn Robinson compares Hamas's student parties to al-Khalas in a way that emphasises the relevance of the former and diminishes that of the latter: 'While these student blocs were the most important mobilizing political institutions for Hamas, they were not the only ones'. He goes on to explain that al-Khalas itself always maintained that it was independent of Hamas, but groups within the Movement supported its creation in order to participate in the 1996 Palestinian legislative elections. In the end, however, Hamas declined to participate in that poll and so 'the importance of the National Islamic Salvation Party as a mobilizing structure has never really been tested'.[131] Similarly, Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela devote a few pages to al-Khalas Party in their book on Hamas and offer some details about its establishment.[132] They set it in the context of an internal debate within Hamas about participation in the 1996 vote and claim that in the end the Party gained 'little public attention or political significance and, in fact, remained a footnote in Palestinian politics'.[133] It is this last statement in particular that I want to challenge.

The Oslo Process and the 1996 Elections

The development of Hamas in the 1990s, the debate over participation in the 1996 elections and the creation of a party are inextricably tied to the Oslo process. In these historic agreements, Palestinians and Israelis, who for decades had been in conflict,

[131] Glenn E. Robinson, 'Hamas as Social Movement', in *Islamic Activism: a Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. by Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 112–42 (p. 129).
[132] Mishal and Sela, p. 144.
[133] Mishal and Sela, p. 145.

decided to arrive at a negotiated solution under the formula of land for peace. In the accord the PLO, acting as representative of the Palestinian people, recognised the State of Israel within the 1948 borders. This meant giving up 78 per cent of historic Palestine, a concession that was opposed by the rejectionist front, at the helm of which was Hamas but also included the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).[134] Hamas's role as the leader of the opposition to this process, and to the PA, which had been created by it, had serious consequences for the Movement, which experienced a regression in popularity and became politically isolated. Many Palestinians hoped that the political breakthrough would lead to an improvement in their living conditions and even a permanent solution to the conflict. Hamas was pressured to participate in the process or risk complete marginalisation.

Mishal and Sela trace the origins of the discussion in Hamas on political participation to the period between the international peace conference in Madrid in October 1991 and the signature of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, otherwise known as the Oslo accord, in Washington in September 1993. It was then that the Movement realised the possibility of the success of these negotiations and the creation of a Palestinian self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza. The change that this would usher in the political map forced a transformation also in the thinking of Hamas.[135] Given that the establishment of the PA was inevitable, the parameters of the discussion were to ensure the survival and continued growth of Hamas without compromising its principles while avoiding a clash with the PA.

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[134] There are numerous accounts of this process. For the most comprehensive compendium see Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 476–565. Also Pavlowsky's book examines how Hamas channelled the frustrations of the Palestinian population over the concessions made by the PLO regarding their nationalist aspirations.

[135] Hamad, Ghazi. Interview by author. Audio recording. Gaza City, 18 September 2013.

Mishal and Sela cite an internal Hamas bulletin circulated in April 1992 in which Hamas for the first time contemplated possible participation in elections to representative institutions in the occupied Palestinian territories.[136] A wrenching internal debate lasted until the eve of the first such vote four years later. The controversy within Hamas over political participation in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections in January 1996 was a turning point in the history of Hamas among other things because it was the first time that internal division became public. The founding statement of al-Khalas Party was dated 11 December 1995[137] however in the end the Party never announced its participation and the launch ceremony wasn't held until March 1996, that is, after the elections, which reflects the ruckus that it provoked within Hamas.[138] Besides al-Khalas, a group of young Hamas members who were planning to participate were forced to withdraw their candidacies.[139] The Hamas leadership treated it as a challenge to their authority and blocked the initiative. But there was much more behind that decision than just internal competition. Members of the nationalist movement al-Fatah, the leading Palestinian faction, claimed that the nature of the debate was religious.[140] Some analysts have also endorsed this position.[141] In what follows I will examine in detail the internal debate over election participation and establish that it was mostly pragmatic calculations that prevented Hamas from joining.

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[136] Mishal and Sela, p. 120.
[137] 'Bayan Taʾsisi', *al-Khalas Party website*, 1996 <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/crozes/crozes23.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[138] 'Bayan al-Intilaqa al-Ula', *al-Khalas Party website*, 1996 <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/crozes/crozes25.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[139] Ismaʿil Haniyya (b. 1963), Khalid al-Hindi and Saʿid al-Namruti were the names mentioned in a Hamas press release issued on 1 January 1996, which denied any formal link between their candidacy and the Movement 'Bayan/ 1 - Yanayir - 1996', *The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) website*, 1996 <http://hamas.ps/ar/post/678/%25D8%25A8%25D9%258A%25D8%25A7%25D9%2586-1-%25D9%258A%25D9%2586%25D8%25A7%25D9%258A%25D8%25B1-1996> [accessed 6 September 1996].
[140] ʿAfifa, Wisam. Interview by author. Handwritten notes. Gaza City, 31 January 2015.
[141] See Cragin, p. 584.

The Movement was divided over the decision along no easily identifiable fault lines. For example, among the founding leaders of Hamas, while Ahmad Yasin (1936-2004) was in favour, ʿAbd al-Fattah Dukhan (b. 1936) and Muhammad Taha (b. 1936) were against. Two Saudi-educated religious scholars, Ahmad Bahr and Salim Salama (b. 1951), were in favour. Two senior figures that were otherwise considered among the strongest supporters of armed action against Israel, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Rantisi and Ibrahim al-Maqadma, also disagreed over the issue. Whereas al-Rantisi rejected the idea completely, al-Maqadma was in favour.[142]

Born in Jabalia refugee camp, al-Maqadma was in fact one of the most militant leaders of the Movement. He was one of the founders of its military wing and had already helped Ahmad Yasin prepare armed attacks in the mid-1980s before the creation of Hamas.[143] He was also one of the main ideologues of Hamas. He contributed to *al-Risala* from its first year of publication and his articles reflected a deep knowledge of Islamist debates. He is best known for his book *Milestones on the Path to Liberate Palestine*, a reference to Sayyid Qutb's most famous work *Milestones*, though it actually only betrayed very general influences of Qutb's manifesto. Al-Maqadma's work was a revision of the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from the Qurʾan through the origins of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century, drawing a set of lessons from the struggle against the Jews.[144] His endorsement of Qutb's thought however was only partial. In the book and in his other writings he exhibited the same Manichaean vision of the world, in particular with reference to the Jews, but not the full theoretical edifice. For example, he did not adopt the concept of *ḥākimiyya* as

[142] Salah al-Bardawil also mentioned ʿAziz Duaik (1948), who in 2006 became Speaker of the Palestinian Parliament, as among those in favour. Al-Bardawil, Salah. Interview by author. Audio recording. Gaza City, 4 February 2015.
[143] Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, p. 46.
[144] Ibrahim Al-Maqadma, *Maʿlim fi al-Tariq li-Tahrir Filastin*, 2nd ed., 2002.

precluding democracy, which would have prevented al-Maqadma from supporting political participation.

Al-Maqadma wrote a number of articles on the issue of political participation in *al-Risala*. In his piece in December 1997, 'The Ban on Islamic Parties… Who Benefits from it?!', he argued that the Arab regimes tried to keep the Islamists out of the election process because of their potential success would be a threat to their rule.[145] He did have certain reservations, but these were only due to suspicions over the integrity of the process. Years later, in an article on 'The Islamists and the Entrance into the [Palestinian] Authority', al-Maqadma wrote that 'the Islamist movement must remain wary of attempts to push it into the maze of concessions on its principles regardless of the excuses and the justifications'. He argued that 'the means to reach the aims of the Islamic movement is not inferior to the sanctity of the ends themselves.' But by this he didn't mean the incompatibility of Islam and democracy, which he didn't question, he meant that 'the nature of these proposals that the regimes make to the Islamic movement do not really mean the provision of a role in the political life for the movement, because the roles are mostly marginal'. Thus he exhorted Hamas to 'be wary of the manner of those clamouring for governance at any price and not give them the opportunity to mislead the masses of the Movement.'[146] This was mostly a concern over whether the Parliament would have power to effect change. It was the same argument that Yasin made around the 1996 elections. Although Yasin raised funds to print copies of Qutb's commentary for distribution in Gaza, he was also far from subscribing to Qutb's understanding of the notion of *ḥākimiyya*.[147] The argument he made was that Hamas might participate 'provided that the PA Council was given

[145] Ibrahim Al-Maqadma, 'Hazr al-Ahzab al-Islamiyya... Man al-Mustafid min-hu?!', *al-Risala*, 25 December 1997, p. 13.
[146] Ibrahim Al-Maqadma, 'Al-Islamiyyun wa-Dukhul-hum fi al-Sulta', *al-Risala*, 22 August 2002, p. 7.
[147] Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, p. 36.

legislative power'. This was also to avoid that the Council 'make laws detrimental to the Islamic movement'.[148] Al-Maqadma was also worried about Hamas's inability to physically ensure the transparency of the process and therefore be forced into a marginal role in Parliament.[149] Mahmud al-Zahar voiced a similar concern.[150] Moreover, the Hamas leadership was simply unsure that the outcome would be favourable. As Sara Roy points out 'one month before the elections, polls showed Hamas with 15 per cent compared with Fatah's 40–45 per cent of the vote.'[151] In 1996 the popularity of the Movement was low. Palestinians still wanted to believe in the peace process and Hamas was weak due to a series of blows it had received from the PA and Israeli security forces.[152]

These were all practical concerns. The closest to a religious principle against the participation in the elections was that the elections constituted recognition of those Oslo accords because it would be forced to function within their framework. Mishal and Sela put it succinctly: Arafat was interested in publicising Hamas's intention to create a party to participate in the elections 'to demonstrate his success in persuading the Islamic opposition to take part in the elections, thus legitimizing the Oslo process.'[153] This explains well why in 2006, after the Second Intifada had also effectively destroyed the Oslo process and when Hamas was both more popular and stronger, it decided to participate in the elections. Palestine was Muslim land and the Oslo negotiations contemplated splitting this territory with non-Muslims. This allegedly contradicted shariʿa. However, this was not necessarily a religious argument either. There were also strong pragmatic reasons against the Oslo Accords that were endorsed by all the

[148] Mishal and Sela, p. 132.
[149] ʿAfifa, Wisam. Interview by author. Audio recording. Gaza City, 16 September 2013.
[150] Milton-Edwards and Farrell, p. 231.
[151] Sara Roy, p. 37.
[152] ʿAfifa, 16 September 2013.
[153] Mishal and Sela, p. 144.

Palestinian leftists and secularists groups—apart from al-Fatah—which also opposed them. At the same time, Hamas might have refused to participate in the elections and enter the PLC, but it didn't have any objection to creating a political party. Al-Khalas Party functioned fully, albeit outside Parliament, from 1996 till 2000.

Al-Khalas and Hamas

The timing of the launch of the Party, in March 1996 seems to reinforce the hypothesis that the main motivation was to create a legal façade in order to ensure the survival of Hamas in case the whole leadership was arrested and the Movement became paralysed. Hamas's rejection of the peace process caused the PA to wage a brutal campaign of repression against Hamas in the mid-1990s. But it was the order by Shimon Peres, then acting prime minister of Israel, to assassinate Yahya ʿAyyash, a top Hamas bomb-maker, on 5 January 1996 that tipped the balance. It provoked a series of suicide bombings that killed dozens across Israel and led to the arrest of hundreds of Hamas activists, including its senior leadership. Its infrastructure was also targeted, shutting down charity organisations.[154] The Movement had already been subjected to several repression campaigns since its establishment in 1987 but it had not experienced anything of that scale. Over the next few years until the start of the Second Intifada in September 2000, Hamas was virtually dismembered in the West Bank and Gaza. In the couple of pages that Milton-Edwards and Farrell devote to al-Khalas this is the angle from which they explain the significance of al-Khalas, placing it in the context of other armed movements in the world that create a legal façade in order to avoid extinction or simply as an additional instrument at their disposal, like the Irish republican and Basque

[154] Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, p. 106.

separatist movements.[155] This next section examines the relation between al-Khalas and Hamas, and in particular the extent to which the Party represented the Movement.

The only two academics that have studied al-Khalas in any detail simply assume that the Party and Hamas were the same organisation. In her DPhil thesis 'Islamic Political Parties as a Means of Women's Empowerment? The Case of Hamas and the Islamic Action Front' Sara Ababneh studies the latter to make conclusions about the former without further discussion.[156] The relation was however more complex. Jad Islah, who was the precursor to Ababneh's work on al-Khalas and Islamist women, claims that this led to a division of labour: 'In order to function as a political, as well as an ideological and military movement in the post-Oslo period, Hamas separated its military wing from its political organisation' with the establishment of al-Khalas.[157] But here Islah overstates the separation between the political and the military wings of the Movement, and in particular the importance of al-Khalas for Hamas that is implicit in her statement. However much weakened, Hamas still functioned politically and, most importantly, at no point was the Party taking decisions on behalf of the Movement. What al-Khalas did was to keep the spirit of the Movement alive by providing some extra room for Hamas to manoeuvre politically. Al-Khalas was able to participate openly in the debates and political processes ushered by the PA and the Oslo process, engage with media organisations, civil society institutions, as well as lead mass mobilisation activities, like political rallies. Having said this, al-Khalas was not spared

[155] Milton-Edwards and Farrell, pp. 231–32.
[156] Sara Ababneh, 'Islamic Political Parties as a Means of Women's Empowerment? The Case of Hamas and the Islamic Action front' (Oxford, 2009).
[157] Islah Jad, 'Islamist Women of Hamas: Between Feminism and Nationalism', *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Mediterranee*, 2010.

from persecution and its leaders were also routinely arrested, which is evidence of the thin line separating the Party from the Movement.[158]

Out of caution al-Khalas leaders spoke ambiguously as to the relation between the Party and the Movement. In a meeting with PA President Yasir Arafat referred to by Mishal and Sela, the Party's founders stated that they were not connected with any existing political body. However, such pretence was only superficial. Their spokesman conceded that his party and Hamas were based on the same principles though he claimed that they were structurally independent.[159] Indeed the second sentence of the 'About' (*taʿarīf bi-l-hizb*) page in the al-Khalas's website states the following about the Party: 'And it is considered to emerge from the womb of Muslim Brotherhood movement in Palestine, which is represented by the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas'.[160] In terms of principles, the Party was often said to reflect the moderate wing of the Movement, in the sense that it was readier to engage in dialogue and less inclined to violence. It is true that Ismaʿil abu Shanab, often regarded as the most moderate of the top Hamas leadership, was one of its main champions. In actual fact, however, the majority of the leaders in al-Khalas were from Hamas and it wasn't just the supposed moderates. As Mishal and Sela affirm 'the members of the Political Bureau were well-known figures with a record of activity in Hamas; indeed, some of them were in prison when the Party's founding was announced'.[161] Some of these later became renowned figures in Hamas's military apparatus: Ahmad Jaʿbari (1960-2012) became head of Hamas's military wing and led in 2006 the capture of Israeli soldier Guilad Shalit while

[158] See for example the press release on the occasion of the arrest of Nizar Rayyan (1959-2009) and Muhammad Shihab (b. 1956) in 22 November 1996 'Haula lʿtiqal al-Sulta li-l-Duktur Muhammad Shihab wa-l-Duktur Nizar Rayyan', *al-Khalas Party website*, 1996 <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/crozes/crozes29.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[159] Mishal and Sela, p. 144.
[160] 'Taʿrif bi-l-Hizb', *al-Khalas Party website* <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/define.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[161] Mishal and Sela, p. 145.

Nizar Rayyan stirred Hamas cadres to launch a bloody countercoup against al-Fatah security forces in 2007.

There were however real differences. Al-Khalas leaders were not trying to just mirror the Movement: 'The Party tried to distance itself a little and to create for itself an entity a little distinct [*mutamayyiz*], a little different, with different politics, different structure and composition', said the chief editor of *al-Risala* Ghazi Hamad, a former spokesperson for the Party and member of its Political Office. One of its goals was to ease tensions with the PA. And this meant that it was more open to dialogue than Hamas. According to Hamad

> there were personalities, leaders of the Party, that had a wide political vision on how to deal with the Authority because there was always tension between the Authority and Hamas movement, and clashes and lack of trust. We in the Party wanted to create a different situation and image, and to open a better relation with the Authority through dialogue and openness and conversation.[162]

This was most palpable in the pages of *al-Risala* in the different interviews it carried out with leaders of all political forces, including political rivals and non-Islamists, secularist and leftist factions. On May 1997 it published one with Hani al-Hasan, member of the Central Committee of al-Fatah.[163] On April 1997 it printed another with Jamil al-Majdalawi, member of the Political Office of the PFLP.[164]

Often these differences between the Party and Hamas might have seemed more about tone than content since for the most part al-Khalas defended the Movement's positions and actions, including violent attacks. Other than frequently extolling individuals in the military apparatus of Hamas,[165] its editorials consistently criticised the negotiations with Israel together with the Israeli practices against Palestinian and

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[162] Hamad, 18 September 2013.
[163] Salih Al-Naʿami and Hasan Abu Hashish, 'Hani al-Hasan ʿUdw al-Lajna al-Markaziyya li-Harakat Fatah fi Liqaʾ maʿa al-Risala', *al-Risala*, 5 June 1997, p. 8.
[164] Hasan Abu Hashish, 'Al-Risala Tuhawir Jamil al-Majdalawi ʿUdu al-Maktab al-Siyasi li-l-Jibha al-Shaʿbiyya li-Tahrir Filastin', *al-Risala*, 16 April 1997, p. 7.
[165] See for example 'Yakhshuna min Fard Hukima al-lʿdam ʿalai-hi', *al-Risala*, 10 July 1997, p. 1.

presented Palestinian violence as a natural outcome. For example after a double suicide attack in which sixteen were killed in Jerusalem on 30 July 1997, the newspaper's editorial carried the title 'This is the result!!'.[166] Also, as shall be examined in the next chapter in more detail, many of the articles were bitterly critical of the performance of the PA. Thus, though there was some evidence in *al-Risala* of openness towards the PA, there was much more denunciation. This corroborates what Sara Roy mentions when she says that during this period 'Hamas pursued a dual and seemingly contradictory policy of limited, cautious engagement with the PNA and outright opposition'.[167]

But this also misses the deep lying disparities that existed between Hamas and al-Khalas and that became more accentuated over time. The Party's very existence implied a commitment to working within the political system, despite maintaining its position against the Oslo process. As Hamad put it, 'Hamas movement used to always describe itself as a resistance movement, adopt armed resistance and refuse to engage with the political issues, whether the Oslo agreement or even the PA.' On the other hand 'the Party had greater flexibility because first of all it is a political party and not an armed party and does not embrace armed action', and was committed to working through dialogue despite believing in the principle of resistance.[168] This eventually placed Hamas and al-Khalas on a collision course that ended with the participation of al-Khalas in the PLO's Central Committee meeting in Gaza on 2 February 2000. In hindsight it appears inevitable that by participating in party politics al-Khalas would eventually decide to join the PLO umbrella nationalist organisation, despite the explicit opposition of the Movement.[169] Indeed Hamas had legitimate concerns that al-Khalas's

[166] 'Hadha Hiya al-Natija!!', *Al-Risala*, 31 July 1997, p. 3.
[167] Sara Roy, p. 37.
[168] Hamad, 18 September 2013.
[169] There are a number of articles dealing with this subject in the issue of *al-Risala* of 3 February 2000: An editorial, 'Risalat-na: al-Majlis al-Markazi... wa-l-Masʾuliyya al-Wataniyya', *al-Risala*, 3 February 2000, p. 3.; a news report, 'Al-Majlis al-Markazi Yanʿaqid bi-Hudur Fasaʾil al-

participation in the PLO would result in a divided and weakened Hamas and strengthen Arafat's position. The Hamas leadership therefore felt that the Party, which also contemplated eventually joining the PA, was not only making too many concessions but also gathering strength and threatening the Movement's hegemony. And so shortly after, Hamas replaced Yahya Musa (b. 1958) with a more loyal secretary general, Jamal Nassar.[170]

The Muslim Brotherhood, Political Participation and Centrism

To properly understand this experiment in political participation it is important to place it in the wider context of political Islam and with specific reference to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the mother organisation of Hamas.

The debate over political participation is one that is found in the Muslim Brotherhood since its establishment and that of its offshoots in different countries.[171] As Richard Mitchell indicates, 'at the sixth general conference of the Muslim Brothers, held around January 1941, it had been decided that, at the proper time, the Society would run candidates in national elections' and Hasan al-Banna intended to present himself as a candidate for parliament.[172] They then took part in the 1945 elections. But the Brotherhood was proscribed in 1954 and repressed for decades afterwards, and it was only in the mid-1980s after its members began to come out of prison that a decision was again made to join in electoral politics.[173] During the interim, the ideas of Sayyid Qutb had become very influential. These represented two competing trends within the

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Munazzama wa-Muqataʿat Hamas wa-l-Jihad', *al-Risala*, 3 February 2000, p. 2.; as well as the transcript of the speech given by the secretary general of the Party at the convention, 'Nass Kalima al-Amin al-ʿAm li-Hizb al-Khalas amama al-Majlis al-Markazi', *al-Risala*, 3 February 2000, p. 3.

[170] Musa, Yahya. Interview by author. Audio recording. Khan Yunis, 29 January 2015.

[171] Participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in party politics has been studied in detail for example in the work of Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 2013 and 'The Muslim Brotherhood and Democratic Transition in Egypt', *Middle East Law and Governance*, 3 (2011), 204–223.

[172] Mitchell, pp. 26–27.

[173] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, p. 47.

Muslim Brotherhood: One reformist, in political terms, characterised by participation in democratic elections and accommodationism towards the political order, championed by al-Banna, and the other the revolutionary approach to change society adopted by the Qutb-influenced Islamists.[174]

The experience of al-Khalas may be interpreted as an example of the 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis, comparable to that of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in election processes from the 1980s as outlined by Mona el-Ghobashy in 'The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers', in which she shows how electoral participation had a profound effect in political thought and organisation of an Islamist movement and what may at first only have been embraced cynically became ingrained. However, the differences between the two cases are also revealing. In the Egyptian case the Ikhwan's participation signified a change in its political thought and organisation 'away from the uncompromising notions of Sayyid Qutb as outlined in his tract *Maʿalim fi al-Tariq* (Signposts) and toward a cautious reinterpretation of the ideas of founder al-Banna', who embraced democratic elections.[175]

The parameters of the debate were however different within Hamas, where political participation was not such a radical departure. In Palestine some of the staunchest supporters of Qutb, like al-Maqadma, were already in favour of the elections. For the Egyptians the question was mainly whether it should partake in a system that did not uphold shariʿa and then if participation would facilitate its implementation.[176] For Hamas on the other hand this was not a priority. There simply was no real debate on the subject in the pages of *al-Risala*. As outlined above, the main arguments for Hamas

[174] This is a different type of reformism from the one outlined previously in relation to Salafism, which was directed primarily at the revival of Islam as a religious practice.
[175] Mona El-Ghobashy, 'The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37.3 (2005), 373–95 (p. 374).
[176] This is one of the central questions addressed by Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, p. 24 and 52.

were pragmatic. Given that even within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood the debates regarding the 'conception of Islamic rule remained vague' this was all the more so for Hamas leaders who had a far more immediate concern: the struggle against the Israeli occupation.[177] This is why Jeroen Gunning's rather detailed discussion of the implementation of shariʿa based on interviews with Hamas leaders for the most part conducted in the 1990s, long before they practiced governance, is somewhat misguided—though it is interesting to see the range of views they held.[178]

Having said this, a certain amount of opposition to electoral participation has already been recognised—regarding Hamas's disagreement with the Oslo process. And this may be traced to a more profound ideological resistance to political participation. Carrie Wickham highlights an anti-system ethos in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood. As she explains 'the Muslim Brotherhood in its early years was a classic case of an "anti-system" group situated outside—and against—the established political order'. First, this was connected to a criticism of partyism: 'Al-Banna condemned the factional infighting and petty strife that pitted the country's political parties and leading politicians against each other during the interwar years, arguing that such partisan conflict (*hizbiyya*, or partyism) undermined the nations unity and thereby made it more vulnerable to foreign domination'.[179] The anti-system strain of the Muslim Brotherhood was also intimately tied to the issue of Palestine. Due to the importance accorded to Jerusalem in Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood had an unequivocal attitude towards the Zionist movement and the creation of the Israeli state: It considered it an usurpation of Muslim land and promoted jihad to bring about the liberation of Palestine. The participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the war against the emerging Israeli state in

[177] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, p. 42.
[178] Gunning, pp. 55–63.
[179] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, p. 22.

1948 was a proud chapter of its history.[180] Then in the 1970s it was the peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel that drove the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood 'to openly challenge the legitimacy of the regime for the first time.'[181] These tensions between political participation and violence no doubt featured in the internal debates in Hamas. They are at least partly explained by appealing to religious arguments, but not only. The position adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1948 and the 1970s, actually coincided in many ways with that of the Arab countries—most of them secular—who participated in the war and then banned Egypt from the League of Arab States in 1979. And these were simply expressions of irredentism.

Hizb al-Wasat and the Intellectual Origins of Centrism

What is clear is that Hamas was not so drawn to the thought of Sayyid Qutb with regards to political participation and this might have been due to the fact that the struggle against the Israeli occupation made them more pragmatic in this regard. Also during the time that elapsed since the Egyptian democratic experience in the 1980s until the establishment of al-Khalas Party there had been certain debates amongst Islamists regionally that influenced Hamas and pushed it closer to the modernist tendency of the Islamist Movement, what is referred to in this thesis as the centrist faction. Out of all the different monographs on Hamas, only Nusse makes a reference to the centrist movement, though only in passing and in the most general terms:

> Hamas and other groups following an Islamic programme are truly 'centrist' (*wasaṭī*) movements. The Islamic ideology can neither be labelled as left nor right; it is neutral between East and West and contains no extremist positions. It is thus 'balanced' (*muʿtadil*) and 'independent' (*mustaqill*) and is therefore considered more representative than any political party based on a different programme.[182]

I aim here at a detailed analysis of the centrist trend and its influence in Hamas.

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[180] El-Awaisi, p. 207.
[181] Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, p. 33.
[182] Nusse, p. 68.

The most important development within the Egyptian Brotherhood to understanding the establishment of al-Khalas is the establishment of Hizb al-Wasat (the Centre Party). The formation of both groupings actually coincides in time, with al-Khalas anticipating that of al-Wasat by a couple of months, which reinforces the sense of shared intellectual origins between the two, a possible indication of even more direct links. Just like al-Khalas did to Hamas, al-Wasat may also be credited with having brought to public attention divisions within the Muslim Brotherhood, and more specifically over participation in party politics. In January 1996 a group of younger members of the Muslim Brotherhood and a few Coptic intellectuals applied to create al-Wasat. The Egyptian authorities did not license the party but persecuted its members on charges of being a front for their mother organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood. This was ironic because the leadership of the Ikhwan also opposed al-Wasat.

The initiative to create a party out of the Muslim Brotherhood did not come out of nowhere, but was part of a gradual development, including intense internal discussions that took place in the 1970s between the Muslim Brotherhood leaders who were coming out of jail—after the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970—and the Islamic student movement. During that time the Islamic student movement was an 'amorphous and non-ideological' magma, driven by a genuine desire to advance the cause of Islam more than that of any particular faction though a number of major patterns could be identified.[183] With the disappearance of the Muslim Brotherhood cadres in Abdel Nasser's jails in the 1950s and 1960s, the Islamic movement in Egypt fell under the influence of purist Salafism emanating from Saudi Arabia, fuelled by its rich coffers.[184] However, this was not the only inspiration of the student body. There were also a number of highly influential Islamist figures that had been spared the Nasserist

[183] Al-Arian, p. 221.
[184] Al-Arian, p. 133, though he describes this throughout the book. This is also confirmed by Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', p. 296.

repression because they had fallen out with the Brotherhood, like Muhammad al-Ghazali, or had simply left Egypt to avoid trouble, like al-Qaradawi.[185] They were more inclined towards the founding ethos of the Muslim Brotherhood, its founder Hasan al-Banna and his modernist intellectual forbearers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. These intellectuals and clerics influenced those students who decades later went on to establish al-Wasat Party.

There was another dynamic at work that also contributed to the creation of al-Wasat. The release from prison of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s, which president Anwar al-Sadat championed, allowed the old guard to co-opt the student movement. This had a couple of consequences. By then the veteran Brothers had already confronted the challenges from inside the organisation of 'violent contention against the state'.[186] This meant that when they came out of prison they managed to redirect students away from the jihadist trend, heavily influenced by Sayyid Qutb's uncompromising ideology, which constituted a minority but polarised the Islamist student movement. On the other hand, the old guard created an internal tension. While the elder Brothers wanted to impose their strict hierarchies and maintain an inward looking organisation, the new generation wanted to continue with the outward looking public activism that they had practiced at university.[187] This was part of the spirit of the cohort that later formed al-Wasat that was like their elders uninterested in violence, but unlike them wanted instead to effect political change through a democratic process and a party system. As Abdullah al-Arian confirms 'The formation of al-Wasat Party brought back to the surface internal debates that had been at the heart of the Muslim Brotherhood's reconstitution over two decades earlier.' These he divides into

[185] Al-Arian, p. 51.
[186] Al-Arian, p. 14.
[187] This is also confirmed by Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', p. 297.

the conservatives and the accommodationists, the difference being that the former 'approached the questions of engagement in society and confrontation with the regime far more cautiously than the accommodationists'.[188] Among these so-called accommodationists were of course the proponents of al-Wasat.

Such interest in party politics and dialogue before violent confrontation was evident also in al-Khalas. The promotion of political pluralism was a clear agenda of *al-Risala*. In April 1997 there was an article on the subject by Yusuf al-Qaradawi.[189] One year later another piece on the subject by the Egyptian intellectual Muhammad ʿImara was reproduced.[190] These two were key members of the Egyptian centrist trend. There were other examples. In an issue on March 1997 an article by the former leader of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood ʿAdnan Saʿd al-Din (1929-2010) on 'Party Pluralism: From the Foundations of the Political Work of the Contemporary Islamic Movement' was published.[191] On September 1998 one of the paper's editorials was dedicated to 'Democracy and Islam'.[192]

The centrist movement that gave birth to al-Wasat Party was also feeding off a wave of independent thinkers from Egypt called The New Islamists. As Raymond Baker points out in his monograph on the group 'they think of their intellectual school as an outgrowth of the centrist Islamic mainstream, or Wassatteya.'[193] They were former Muslim Brothers or intellectual sympathisers who had developed a reformed vision of Islam as a means of creating a new social and political reality. Al-Qaradawi, the intellectual father of the idea of *wasaṭiyya*, was the most prominent. As Bettina Graf

[188] Al-Arian, p. 228.
[189] Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, 'Taʿaddud al-Ahzab fi Zill al-Daula al-Islamiyya', *al-Risala*, 16 April 1997, p. 13.
[190] Muhammad ʿImara, 'al-Islam wa-l-Taʿddudiyya al-Hizbiyya', *al-Risala*, 12 March 1998, p. 16.
[191] ʿAdnan Saʿd al-Din, 'al-Taʿaddudiyya al-Hizbiyya', *Al-Risala*, 20 March 1997, p. 12.
[192] 'Risalat-na: Dimuqratiyya wa-Islam', *al-Risala*, 24 September 1998, p. 3.
[193] Raymond William Baker, *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 1.

indicates 'the Egyptian-born and Qatar-based scholar and committed advocate of the Islamic movement, is probably the person who coined and popularised this term to a great extent.'[194] There was also a specific historical event that stood behind these intellectual musings: the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981 by a jihadist revolutionary group profoundly inspired by Qutb's thought. And though al-Qaradawi didn't try to systematise his doctrine under the term centrism till the early 1990s, in his 1994 work *The Contemporary Ijtihad*, it was in 1982 with the publication of *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism* that he began to interpret the path of centrism.[195] The religious figure Muhammad al-Ghazali, educated in Cairo's prestigious al-Azhar University, and the Islamist intellectuals Muhammad Salim al-ʿAwa and Fahmi Huwaidi were other members of this group whose articles featured in *al-Risala*.[196] The New Islamists formulated a manifesto for the first time around the early 1980s but it wasn't published until 1991. Though testimony to the fact that the term centrism was popular among Islamists before then is that in Hamas circles it already had currency in April 1990, which is the date of the issue of *Filastin al-Muslima* that Nusse cites in her single reference to the concept mentioned earlier.[197]

Like al-Qaradawi, al-Wasat members saw in the concept a commitment to a moderate interpretation of Islam and against perceived extremism in its practice. Historically, centrism is a Qurʾanic reference and therefore a central Islamic value. Muslims are referred to as '*umma wasaṭ*' in the Qurʾan 2:143, translated as 'a moderate community'. The connotation is one of justice and equitability. The concept was also

[194] Graf, p. 213.
[195] Armando Salvatore, 'Qaradawi's Maslaha: From Ideologue of the Islamic Awakening to Sponsor of Transnational Public Islam', in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 239.
[196] For example: Muhammad Salim Al-ʿAwa, 'Min al-Mafahim al-Khatiʾa ʿand al-Harakiyyin al-Islamiyyin', *al-Risala*, 21 September 2000, p. 20; Ghassan Abu Husain, 'Al-Katib wa-l-Mufakir al-Islami Fahmi Huwaidi Yatahadath ʿan al-Haraka al-Islamiyya... al-Humum... wa-l-Afaq', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 31 July 1997), p. 9.
[197] Nusse, p. 68.

used by two giants of medieval Islamic thought, Abu Hamid ʻAl-Ghazzali (d. 1111) and Ibn Taymiyya. Al-Ghazzali presented the doctrine of the Sunnis "comme une juste mesure".'[198] It was also a key principle of Ibn Taymiyya's whole doctrine. According to Henri Laoust, his doctrine was intended to be one 'of synthesis or of conciliation—the happy mean (*wasaṭ*)—which would accord each school its rightful place', between the reason of the theologians, the hadith of the traditionalists and the free-will of the Sufis, which he aimed to harmonise into a 'conservative reformism'.[199] In turn, these two figures shaped the development of this concept by modernist Salafis, who used it as a tool to navigate and adapt Islam to the changes brought about by the modern world. Thus ʿAbduh wrote about creating a 'middle group' between the revolutionary forces, who wanted to break from the past in the name of reason and modernity, and the traditional forces.[200] Samira Haj juxtaposes in particular the notions of *taghrīb* (Europeanisation) and *taqlīd* in ʿAbduh's thought.[201] The influence of ʿAbduh is evident in al-Qaradawi who used the term to oppose those who distanced themselves from the rules of the Qurʾan to approve any innovation as well as those who held unbendingly onto tradition.

The real objective however was to adapt Islam to the modern world, linking change to the principles of Islam through reason.[202] Again ʿAbduh anchored his thought in the Islamic scholarly tradition, borrowing from the thought of Ibn Taymiyya the concept of *ijtihād*. Through *ijtihād* a traditional Islamic concept like *shūrā* was read as the equivalent of the modern political meaning of parliamentary democracy. Central to this pursuit of modernisation was a distinction between the precepts in the scriptures

[198] Graf, p. 215.
[199] Henri Laoust, 'Ibn Taymiyya', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, 2012.
[200] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 140.
[201] Haj, p. 72.
[202] Hourani, p. 139.

that are unequivocal and the questions that the Qurʾan and hadith gave no clear answer to or were silent on and in which *ijtihād* needed to be applied.[203] This is a notion that Charles Kurzman refers to as 'silent shariʿa', one of three types of liberal Islam that he enumerates, which stipulates that: 'Muslims are free to adopt liberal positions on subjects that the shariʿa leaves open to human ingenuity'.[204] And even issues on which the Qurʾan pronounced itself were open to a certain amount of interpretation taking into account the different place and time in which the scriptures were revealed. Such concept distinguished modernist Salafism from the literalism of the purist strand. Instead ʿAbduh argued that the scriptures should be interpreted according to what best suited the promotion of human welfare (*maṣlaḥa*). The notion of the objective (*maqṣad*, plural *maqāṣid*) of the Qurʾan was essential to this understanding. This ʿAbduh identified in the prologue to his commentary where he stressed that the main purpose of the Qurʾan was to benefit humanity, promote good (*maṣlaḥa*) and exclude harm in this world and the next. With these notions he made religion adaptable to contemporary problems and ridiculed the unyielding legal system erected by the established jurists and scholars.[205] For example, ʿAbduh prohibited polygamy on the grounds that it contradicted public welfare, despite being allowed by all four schools of Sunni jurisprudence. This was the intellectual framework that gave modernist Salafism its distinguishing characteristics: flexibility regarding the enforcement of rules, responsiveness to particular societal needs and opposition to blind imitation of secular Western models. Centrism inherited these and added one of its own: the renouncement of violence to promote political goals. I will refer to these concepts throughout the thesis.

[203] Hourani, p. 147.
[204] Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: a Source Book*, pp. 14–15. He presents Muhammad Salim al-ʿAwa, among the centrist thinkers mentioned above, as one of its main exponents.
[205] Haj, p. 84.

Al-Khalas wasn't influenced by these debates in Egypt alone. In fact it was probably more directly indebted to the Sudanese National Islamic Front and the Tunisian al-Nahda. The Secretary General of al-Khalas Yahya Musa and other major figures like Ghazi Hamad had studied their undergraduate degrees in Sudan and had come into contact there with the leaders of those two parties, Hasan al-Turabi (b. 1932) and Rashid al-Ghannushi (b. 1941).[206] Al-Turabi and al-Ghannushi were close collaborators, and Sudan provided refuge and even passports to Tunisian Islamists.[207] Al-Turabi was also close to Hamas and the Palestinian cause generally. He, for example, hosted Hamas and the PLO in January 1993 in Khartoum in an attempt to resolve the differences between the two.[208] The experiences of al-Nahda and the National Islamic Front had in fact also shaped al-Wasat.[209]

These two figures were pragmatic and modernist Islamists, who were, like the New Islamists, reacting to the thought of Sayyid Qutb, the most influential figure among Islamists from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s.[210] Unlike Qutb's acolytes, who discarded democracy as incompatible with Islam, al-Ghannushi and al-Turabi embraced it. Al-Ghannushi advocated democracy and pluralism.[211] He also drew inspiration from earlier modernist Islamic thinkers, 'who were clearly influenced by European liberal democratic thought',[212] and felt 'the need to restore respect for the reformist school of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' which had been discredited in some of the writings of the Muslim Brotherhood.[213] Indeed al-Ghannushi had dedicated his most

[206] Musa, 29 January 2015.
[207] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 122.
[208] Milton-Edwards and Farrell, pp. 215–16.
[209] Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', p. 301.
[210] Abdelwahab El-Affendi describes al-Turabi as both a 'pragmatic fundamentalist' and a 'fundamentalist modernist' El-Affendi, p. 311.
[211] Azzam Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. vi.
[212] Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islam*, p. 47.
[213] Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islam*, p. 43.

important book *Public Liberties in the Islamic State*, published in 1993, to al-Afghani and ʿAbduh.[214] It was Qutb in particular who had been a harsh critic of nineteenth-century modernists and the extent to which they used reason to interpret revelation and adapt it to Western liberal concepts. Indeed he explicitly repudiated such arguments as an apologia for Western dominance. Qutb on the other hand believed that 'to be truly Muslim means acknowledging the limits of reason in matters metaphysical and moral'.[215] Though al-Ghannushi did not embrace the rationalist project wholesale, because he was wary that it might lead to questioning the authority of revelation itself, he did endorse its criticisms of the current led by Qutb. Al-Ghannushi disagreed with Qutb's central concepts, in particular the two most influential ones: *ḥākimiyya* and *jāhiliyya*. The latter, which provides an exclusivist vision of the *umma*, will be explored in more detail in future chapters.

Rationalism and the project of the early modernists were also at the core of al-Turabi's intellectual framework and his plan for renewal (*tajdīd*), which was contrasted with the imitation of the past (*taqlīd*). Central to al-Turabi's thought was the idea that *ijtihād* was the responsibility of the whole community not a small intellectual elite. Indeed Michael Irving Jensen traces Hamas's view of who is qualified to carry out *ijtihād* to al-Turabi 'who offers a very broad interpretation of what ʿulamaʾ should mean in the current context' and extends it 'to those who know something well enough to relate to God'.[216] Jensen is however mistaken in making such a specific reference. The idea that *ijtihād* be broadened to include a wider public should be traced back in time to ʿAbduh, as already discussed. Moreover, though ʿAbduh's stance is clearly an influence this issue was far from settled within the ranks of Hamas. The position of the

[214] *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: a Sourcebook*, ed. by Charles Kurzman (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 26.
[215] Euben, p. 97.
[216] Jensen, p. 48.

Movement on this shall be examined in detail when this thesis looks into the role of religious scholars in the Movement in later chapters. Indeed, what this thesis shows is the push and pull within Hamas over all the major questions outlined above.

The Case of Citizenship, Human Rights and Political Expediency

While the embrace of democracy has already been discussed at length there were another two concepts related to it, citizenship and human rights, which were also key to understand the centrists project. There has been an intense debate over the compatibility of Islam, or lack thereof, with human rights and citizenship. The standard argument against is that 'from a Muslim perspective, rights are wholly owned by God, and individuals (as vicegerents of God) can enjoy them in their relationship with God [...] They can be realized insofar as obligations owed to God have been fulfilled. Hence human rights are a function of human obligations, and not their antecedent'.[217] This may lead to, for example, the idea that Muslims have precedence over non-Muslims, as indeed has happened in Islamic history with the debate over the rights of *ahl al-dhimma*. The notion of citizenship, on the other hand, pretends to overlook such difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. Given the existence of a large Christian minority, this was particularly relevant in Egypt. The way that al-Wasat incorporated citizenship into its intellectual universe was by using a corollary of the notion of silent shariʿa. It defined how religious values must guide society by distinguishing 'between what is incumbent on Muslims and what is incumbent on all citizens' and this was justified with a separation 'between those issues directly regulated by the shariʿa and the vast field of human activity that falls within the neutral category of the "permitted," or *al-masmūḥ*'.[218] Thus al-Wasat's programme identified the *umma* with all citizens,

[217] Mahmood Monshipouri, 'Islamic Thinking and the Internationalization of Human Rights', *The Muslim World*, 84.2–3 (1994), 217–39 (p. 218).
[218] Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', pp. 302–3.

regardless of religious affiliation.[219] The centrist faction was therefore specific in its criticism of the use of the term '*ahl al-dhimma*' in reference to non-Muslims, a term that was common among the older generation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Qaradawi argued that a word like '*muwaṭin*' (citizen) should be used instead.[220] In this he echoed the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, who 'incorporated many of the concepts and organizational strategies integral to the practice of modern politics. For example, in his writings and public speeches he addressed fellow Muslims as citizens whose collective project was to sustain the Egyptian nation as an integral part of the *umma*'.[221] And this was paradoxical, because al-Banna had created the Brotherhood to contest Western cultural and political hegemony.

The centrality of the concept in Western liberal thought and its accompanying secularist discourse in particular should be taken into consideration. As Talal Asad argues, the modern secular state tries to make citizenship the primary principle of identity in order to 'transcend the different identities built on class, gender, and religion, replacing conflicting perspectives by unifying experience.'[222] Later he relates the concept of citizenship, including the rights a citizen holds, as central to the eighteenth century Enlightenment project.[223] The embrace of this term by the centrist trend did not necessarily mean the adoption of the Enlightenment project but it did signify a particular openness to the Western liberal tradition springing from it. We shall see in chapter 6 how Jihadi-Salafis, a form of purist Salafism, would later accuse Hamas of being explicitly 'of the Enlightenment' (*tanwīriyyūn*) for the extent to which it used reason to interpret the scriptures and endorse the Western liberal tradition. Indeed, the

[219] Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', p. 304.
[220] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 58.
[221] Mahmood, p. 63.
[222] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 5.
[223] Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, p. 129.

nineteenth century modernist Salafis were themselves sometimes referred to as *al-salafiyya al-tanwīriyya*.[224]

At the same time, while Qutb and his followers accused the modernists of capitulation to the Western liberal tradition, other sceptics saw centrism's adoption of the discourse of democracy, as well as human rights and citizenship, as cynical and merely out of political expediency. After all, the al-Qaʿida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri (b. 1951) wrote in 1992 *Black Book: Torturing Muslims under President Hosni Mubarak* based on Amnesty International reports denouncing cases of torture in Egyptian prison.[225] Thus it is argued that during the reign of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) the reformist trend (*al-tayyār al-iṣlāḥī*) within the Muslim Brotherhood, which included al-Wasat supporters, became the leading voice of opposition to the regime and in the process of political contestation it assumed the discourse of democracy and human rights cynically. This was a similar place that al-Khalas occupied during the 1990s in their role as opposition to the PA. However, it would be a mistake to dismiss the adoption of this discourse as merely self-serving and to compare al-Zawahiri with the centrist movement. As has been shown the centrism was firmly rooted in Islamic intellectual thought, going back to modernism and beyond to al-Ghazzali and Ibn Taymiyya. They were also working from within the political system, despite being on the margins. And so the very process of invoking these concepts allowed them to internalise and assume these concepts as theirs. As Wickham argues 'in the campaign for democracy and human rights, issues that were initially of

[224] Bernard Haykel, 'On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action', in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. by Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 45.
[225] Stephane Lacroix, 'Ayman al-Zawahiri, Veteran of Jihad', in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 152.

only instrumental importance metamorphosed into matters of principle.'[226] Thus their opposition to the torture of Islamists was based on the argument that it constituted a basic violation of human rights, regardless of the identity of the perpetrators or the victim. This further supports the inclusion-moderation hypothesis mentioned earlier.

Al-Khalas's Political Programme

The programme of al-Khalas could hardly have been more explicit about its embrace of centrism. In its first two sentences it proposes an

> Islamist project that gathers from authenticity and modernity [*muʿāsara*] […] with our faith in the path of moderation, centrism and union [*shumūl*] which assembles round it all sincere Islamic efforts in a moderate community that takes as a model the saying of the Most High 'Thus We have made you a moderate community for you to be witnesses to the people [Qurʾan 2:143]'.[227]

The introduction ends with the overarching goal of 'establishing [*iqāma*] the rule of divine revelation [*al-sharʿ*] and of law and the proclamation of the values of justice, freedom and equality.' Though there are references to shariʿa elsewhere these are different from the usual call to implement (*taṭbīq*) shariʿa, mentioning instead the objectives (*maqāṣid*) and the spirit (*rūḥ*) of shariʿa, a vital piece of the modernist project. The law must comply (*multazim*) with shariʿa, though more often this is expressed in the negative, that is, some principle or other must not contradict shariʿa, again a version of the notion of silent shariʿa referred to above.

The programme was divided into five sections: 'The Starting Points', 'The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Palestinian Cause', 'National Relations', 'Social Structure' and 'International Relations'. These had numerous subsections. 'The Principles', a subsection of 'The Starting Points', were explicit in the endorsement of democracy. According to article 5, for example, 'the consultative method [*manhaj al-shūrī*] and the

[226] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, 'The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party', *Comparative Politics*, 36.2 (2004), 205–28 (p. 219).
[227] 'Al-Barnamaj al-Siyasi', *al-Khalas Party website* <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/documents/program.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].

democratic style is the best way in life and in building a state of institutions and law.' The latter was reinforced through explicit references to elections at all levels and in all fields as well as the rotation of authority.

Other articles reaffirmed the Party's commitment to human rights and religious pluralism specifically. For example, article 10 of 'The Principles' section stated that 'human rights are guaranteed regardless of race or religion, individually or collectively.' The language of citizenship, fully incorporated in the programme, reinforced this. Thus, for example, 'the party aims at the revival of the nation and the citizen' appears in the introduction to the section 'On the Cultural and Moral Arena'. Women's rights also figured prominently in the agenda of al-Khalas, as they did in al-Wasat. Both parties were emphatic about the importance of granting women full civil and political rights and in particular in allowing them to develop professional careers and to participate in political life. As is evident from the studies by Jad and Ababneh, al-Khalas considered itself a referent of Islamist feminism. On social issues, article 9 of 'the Principles' enshrined women's equality and rights:

Women are equal to men in their humanity and dignity: 'He created you from a single soul; then He made its mate from it' [Qurʾan 39:6]. She has the right to practice her role in the service of society, and has political rights under the commitment to the values and customs of Islam.

Then article 9 of 'The Aims' prescribes 'enabling women to enjoy all their rights including guaranteeing their active participation in the battle for construction and liberation'. Al-Turabi was renowned for his defence of the rights of women and their high level of participation in his party, which is probably from where al-Khalas drew its inspiration on this issue specifically.[228] This was clearly a priority and the women's section of al-Khalas was dynamic with its activities being regularly reported in *al-*

[228] Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: a Source Book*, p. 21. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 136.

Risala. For example, in July 1998 al-Khalas held its first women's conference 'Palestinian Women between Authenticity [*aṣāla*] and Modernity [*muʿāsara*]' calling to establish a mechanism to monitor women's issues from an Islamic perspective.[229]

Regarding the conflict with Israel, article 2 of 'The Principles', makes no reference to historic Palestine but states instead that 'Palestine is a single geographical unit' presumably to at least demand a link between the West Bank and Gaza. The conflict with Israel is framed in terms of 'resisting the occupation until liberation'. The notion of 'resistance' was suitably ambiguous for Hamas. Although generally a reference to armed action, without an explicit qualification it could be interpreted also as non-violent action. The struggle against Israel was also framed as a 'nationalist liberation project' in article 2 of 'The Aims', not a religious engagement. This point was emphasised in the section on 'Political Solutions' which stipulated that 'we do not gather enmity to the Jews as Jews, because our Islam orders us to respect all Semitic religions, but at the same time we reject humiliation'. The manifesto actually escapes the general Qutb-influenced Manichaean outlook typical of the Charter with its anti-Semitic overtones. In fact it was probably written specifically trying to avoid the style of the Charter. Thus the hostility towards secularism was also completely absent from al-Khalas's political programme. The Charter, for example, stated that 'secularism completely contradicts religious ideology.' On the contrary, al-Khalas underlined its respect for all factions from the whole political spectrum as long as they participated in the struggle against the occupation, an implicit recognition of the leftist parties in particular. This was a point that was highlighted by former Party members. On immorality, an obsession among purist Salafis which saw it as a consequence of secularism, the programme did include a reference to 'cleaning society from the

[229] Hasan Abu Hashish, 'Al-Muʾtamar al-Nisaʾi al-Awal bi-ʿAnwan "al-Marʾa al-Filastiniyya baina al-Asala wa-l-Muʿasara" Yadʿu ila Tadshin Munazama Nisaʾiyya Islamiyya Tarʿa Shuʾun al-Marʾa min al-Manzur al-Islami', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 30 July 1998), p. 10.

corrupting elements' including drug trafficking, betting, brothels and alcohol factories, but it specifically mentioned that the means to do this were through the revision of laws, implicitly ruling out the violence against such type of perceived immorality which had punctuated relations between Islamists and leftists in Palestine.

On socioeconomic issues, an area deeply intertwined with the moral sphere in modernist thought, article 10 of 'The Aims' spoke of an economy based on social justice and 11 related to 'establishing social welfare of the individual and society.' The notion of social justice was a solid centrist principle, as well as fully inscribed in the tradition of al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood. Members of al-Wasat were also distinguished from the previous generation in the Ikhwan by their engagement with what they identified as the central social problems of their time. As shall be explored in the next chapter this was reflected in the pages of *al-Risala*. Also, related to socioeconomic issues, the platform of al-Khalas endorsed a concept that later became the banner of the Hamas political platform in the 2006 elections as article 6 called for 'the purification of the public institutions from all types of corruption' in reaction to all the cases of nepotism and embezzlement of public funds associated with the al-Fatah-controlled PA.

Other than the political platform, the structural and procedural regulations of the Party distinguished it. Its transparency was for example a practice that was alien to the secrecy of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Al-Khalas advertised its political program and by-laws. It had a relatively complex internal structure composed of the General Conference, with 250 members; the Shura Council, with fifty; and the Political Office, with eleven to fifteen members.[230] All internal structures were elected democratically and in public. The internal by-laws stipulated a fifteen per cent quota for

[230] According to Milton-Edwards and Farrell its membership was between two and three thousand, Milton-Edwards and Farrell, p. 231.

women in the General Conference and Shura Council.[231] Yahya Musa, former secretary general of the Party, was most proud of the fact that no one could fill that position more than two terms in a row.[232] This was in stark contrast to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in which the same person could serve as general guide indefinitely, he underlined.[233]

Long-Term Impact

This was not a marginal phenomenon either. Both parties had a long-term impact in the Islamist movement in their countries. The values contained in the programme above are found throughout *al-Risala* constituting many of its core themes. The following chapter will analyse the way human rights, citizenship and social justice was discussed in the newspaper. Something similar can be seen when tracing the relationship between al-Khalas and Hamas across time. When it decided to participate in the 2006 elections, Hamas went back to the party model that al-Khalas pioneered, endorsing many of its centrist principles. The influence was also palpable in the adoption of the centrist discourse in the struggle against Jihadi-Salafism, discussed in chapter 6.

There are numerous similarities to the political platform of the party with which Hamas entered the 2006 elections, the Change and Reform List.[234] They both shared a commitment to political and religious pluralism, elections, general freedoms, human rights and citizenship. The Change and Reform List was also explicit about the separation of the three powers and the rotation of authority. It underlined repeatedly the equal rights of Christians, and at no point did it refer to them as *ahl al-dhimma*. In fact

[231] 'Al-Nizam al-Asasi', *al-Khalas Party website* <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/documents/rules.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[232] Hizb al-Khalas al-Watani Al-Islami, 'Al-Nizam al-Dakhili', in *al-Muʾtamar al-ʿAm al-Khitami li-l-Daura al-Thania: al-Barnamaj al-Siyasi* (Palestine, 1999), p. 92.
[233] Musa, 29 January 2015.
[234] 'Al-Barnamaj al-Intikhabi li-Murashshahi Qaʾima al-Taghyir wa-l-Islah', 2006, p. 16 <https://web.archive.org/web/20060104061030/http://www.elections.ps/pdf/hamas_progamme_election.pdf> [accessed 6 September 2016].

Hamas allied itself with Christian candidates for the elections, in a way reminiscent of al-Wasat's Coptic representatives.[235] There was no explicit profession of allegiance to the centrist path like the one found in al-Khalas's charter though it did invoke the 'higher objectives [*maqāṣid*] of the Islamic principles'. It called for making (*jaʿl*) shariʿa the principle source of legislation, like al-Wasat Party had done, and didn't refer to 'implementing' shariʿa.

There were also significant differences. The references to women were more to do with their role complementing men and confining them to the sphere of the family, than as equals. The platform also carefully avoided the word 'democracy'.[236] The List's platform mentioned explicitly armed resistance. However, the context in which these two programmes were published was significantly different. Not only were they issued at different historical moments, but also the coalition's charter was specifically directed at legislative elections. Al-Khalas never participated in elections. Thus, the List's programme, fourteen pages long and divided into nineteen sections, was much more extensive, covering a significantly wider number of issues. It was also a set of concrete and practical proposals linked to a particular historical moment in the conflict, while al-Khalas's programme was a declaration of principles.

Perhaps of greater consequence than the similarities and differences in the programmes is the fact that eleven of the twenty-four MPs from Gaza were members of al-Khalas while others became ministers, deputy ministers or general directors of ministries.[237] In similar terms, Utvik sees al-Wasat influence the Muslim Brotherhood

[235] Gunning, p. 156.
[236] For a detailed discussion of the political programme of the Change and Reform List see Khaled Hroub, 'A "New Hamas" Through Its Documents', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 35.4 (2006), 6–27.
[237] Among the PLC members were Ismaʿil al-Ashqar (b. 1962), Muhammad Shihab, Jamal Salih (b. 1958), Salim Salama, Salah al-Bardawil, Yahya Musa, Ahmad Bahr and Yunis al-Astal. Talib abu Shaʿr (b. 1960) served as minister of *al-Awqāf* and Religious Affairs from 2008 to 2011; ʿAtallah abu al-Sibah was appointed as minister of Culture in 2006 and of Prisoner Affairs in

members who participated in the 2000 vote in Egypt, representing the most vibrant force in the political scene emerging in the country at the time: 'The Muslim Brothers returned in unexpected strength and even seemed to be taking up some of the important issues of the Wasat'.[238] Thus al-Wasat too had a significant impact in the Muslim Brotherhood and in Egyptian politics.

Conclusion

Mishal and Sela claim that al-Khalas was a footnote in Palestinian politics.[239] However, this is because the authors of *The Palestinian Hamas* only look at the Party in the context of the 1996 elections and the failure of al-Khalas to participate. The Party was however of major importance to the history of Hamas. Its study is vital to understanding the importance of centrism within Hamas, the profound internal struggles in the Movement, and to properly locate Hamas in the broad spectrum of Islamist movements. The differences between al-Khalas and Hamas represent in some respects the Movement's internal debate over its relation with the PA and the Oslo process, and more specifically over the relation between violence and politics. The type of intervention in politics, whether from within or from without, reformist or revolutionary, are of course two approaches that are central to the history of Islamism.

However, this dichotomy fits the relation between Hamas and al-Khalas only to an extent. It is true that *al-Khalas* was firmly within the reformist centrist trend, represented by Islamists in Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan, who were predisposed to embrace Western liberal concepts and institutions. Hamas, however, did not fit the Qutbist revolutionary model. It was not in principle against political participation and did not exhibit other ideological features of purist Salafism on this issue. The reason why it

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2011; and Yusuf Farhat became general director at the Ministry of *al-Awqāf* and Religious Affairs.

[238] Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', p. 294.

[239] Mishal and Sela, p. 145.

decided not to participate was that it felt that it could not oppose the Oslo process from within. It was also coping with a legacy of military intervention in the conflict dating back to the Brotherhood in 1948. In fact, although it never completely abandoned violence—as Hroub had suggested it might shortly after the creation of al-Khalas—it eventually embraced the political process under the banner of the Change and Reform List in the 2006 elections. Therefore, rather than its mirror image, al-Khalas was the embryo of that transformation. Also, rather than just a tactical decision, the values that al-Khalas embodied were firmly rooted in Islamic thought, and in its early endorsement of centrism the Party must be seen as a pioneering political experiment.

Chapter 2 – Centrism and Purist Salafism on the Eve of the Second Intifada

This chapter takes as its central focus the outbreak of the Second Intifada on 28 September 2000. In the process it provides a first-hand close-up of the discourse of the Islamic Movement in the occupied Palestinian territories at the end of the Oslo process and on the eve of the second Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation. It analyses the modernist and the purist Salafi trends as they manifest themselves at this critical point in the history of the Movement. The chapter starts by exploring some major themes of the centrist movement, which this essay equates with modernist Salafism. However, most of the chapter will focus on presenting and discussing the discourse of purist Salafism in Hamas. This perusal is carried out through articles in *al-Risala* and in-depth interviews of the authors of those texts.

The purist Salafi trend in Hamas is composed of a group of clerics who all studied in Saudi Arabia, where they were influenced by Wahhabism, the state ideology and the main force behind purist Salafism worldwide, intellectually, financially and politically. This chapter introduces the biography and writings of one of those clerics, Yunis al-Astal, focusing on his literalist interpretation of the scriptures. Later chapters will analyse the composition and main features of the purist Salafi trend in Hamas more broadly. The chapter ends examining the complex relationship between the lay Islamist intellectuals of the centrist faction and that of the purist Salafi clergy. The main theoretical framework used for this is that of competition for religious authority between the lay Islamist intellectual—the '"new" intellectuals' in the words of Eickelman and Piscatori—who have usually not received a formal religious education,

and the clergy.[240] Normally such competition has been identified between Islamists and the state clergy. This is for example the claim made by Abdelwahab el-Affendi mentioned in the introduction when he asserts that the challenge to traditional structure of religious authority is central to the Islamist project. However, this thesis claims that such competition exists also within an Islamist movement like Hamas.

The Centrist Salafi Discourse

When the Israeli politician Ariel Sharon stepped on the Noble Sanctuary, thereby lighting the fuse that set off the Second Intifada, it was a Thursday, coinciding with the release of the weekly issue of *al-Risala*. Though for weeks the newspaper had occasionally published opinion pieces that referred to the collapse of the Oslo process and its consequences in dramatic terms, instead the issue released the very day of the events gave little sense of what was about to be unbridled. What it did provide was a cross-section of the state of affairs in the Palestinian territories during the Oslo years that led to such breakdown and the different ways Hamas interpreted those circumstances generally.

Its main headline dealt with the desperate attempts by the United States to find the formula to divide Jerusalem that the Camp David negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis failed to reach when they ended the previous 25 July: 'The United States Forcefully Urges the Two Sides to Accept "International Sovereignty" over the Sanctuary'.[241] Only in a smaller subheading, in a light blue font hovering over a box with a yellow background, it read: 'The Criminal Sharon Provokes the Palestinians with his visit to the Sanctuary'.[242] The rest of the captions reflected the weekly litany of

[240] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 72.
[241] 'Al-Wilayat al-Muttahida Tasaʿ bi-Quwa li-Iqnaʿ al-Tarafain bi-Qubul "al-Siyada al-Dauliyya" ʿala al-Haram', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 1.
[242] 'Al-Mujrim Sharun Yastafiz al-Filastiniyyin bi-Ziyarati-hi al-Yaum li-l-Haram', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 1.

grievances that defined the Oslo process.[243] On the conflict, Israel and its associates: New settlements and house demolitions in Jerusalem; US Congress threatened the PA with sanctions if it took unilateral steps (by announcing the establishment of Palestinian state); France promised Israel diplomatic support; and the partiality of US officials towards Israel. And on more internal issues: Israeli forces in cahoots with Palestinian car thieves; the lack of oversight regulating concrete production; the increase in taxes to be paid by those making a living from public transport; suspicion over the credibility of the coming elections in the lawyers' union; and home demolitions by the PA in Gaza. Thus the major targets of criticism found in the paper could be divided into three groups: the failure of the negotiations; the Israeli repression; and the inefficiency, corruption and authoritarianism of the PA.

Though the main headline of the paper was about the negotiations, much of this issue dealt with internal Palestinians affairs, from the perspective of the problems faced by Palestinians in their daily lives. This was the mood among Palestinians when the Second Intifada broke out, as well as the narrative of *al-Risala*—the only real Palestinian opposition newspaper—and more generally Hamas during the Oslo years. It is the lenses through which many of these articles treated these issues, with their reliance on the notions of human rights, citizenship and social justice that distinguished the centrist trend.

Social Justice, Human Rights and Citizenship

The existential predicament that the PA found itself in was palpable in the repression of internal opposition, and particularly Hamas. During the second half of the 1990s Hamas was the object of intense oppression to the point that the Movement was fighting for its

[243] Some of the best accounts of the failure of the Oslo process are: Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land under Siege* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999); and Graham Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine: the Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process* (London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 1999).

survival.[244] A wide-ranging campaign against Hamas was evidenced throughout the paper. There was for example a communiqué reproduced in full signed by Hamas detainees at Jericho Military Prison beginning an open-ended hunger strike.[245] Similarly the paper reported the protest organised by the Islamic bloc of al-Najah University, Nablus, against the deterioration of the health of 'one of the political detainees of the university'.[246] The activism of Hamas in prisons and universities was unmistakable in the pages of *al-Risala*, where inmates, lecturers and students often contributed articles.

The human rights discourse was integral to such denunciation. The article 'Continuous Violations against the Journalists… And the Syndicate Suffers an Acute Crisis',[247] in which the paper described the persecution of Palestinian journalists and media organisations, was based on a report from the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR)—one of the leading human rights organisation in the Gaza Strip and one which was also typically staffed by leftists. The piece accused the PA of leading a campaign during the previous months of 'closures, restrictions and unlimited censorship'. The month of June, in particular, the Palestinian police closed a series of private television and radio stations.[248] Individual journalists were arrested for incitement against the PA for reporting on the families of detainees in PA prisons, an especially sensitive subject. Numerous such incidents had been recorded since the beginning of 1999 and *al-Risala* was the most repeated target of arrests by the Palestinian police.

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[244] For more details see for example Sara Roy, p. 38.
[245] 'Bayan Sadir ʿan al-Muʿtaqalin al-Siyasiyyin fi Sijn Ariha al-ʿAskari', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 4.
[246] 'Talabat al-Najah Yuʿalliqun al-Dawam Ihtijajan ʿala Naql al-Muʿataqal li-l-Mashfa', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 6.
[247] 'Al-Intihakat Mustamirra did al-Sahafiyyin… wa-l-Niqaba Tuʿani min Azma Hadda', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 12.
[248] Nossek and Rinnawi also highlight this period as one of intense repression of any media critical of the PA. H. Nossek and K. Rinnawi, 'Censorship and Freedom of the Press Under Changing Political Regimes: Palestinian Media from Israeli Occupation to the Palestinian Authority', *International Communication Gazette*, 65.2 (2003), 183–202.

The paper published articles based on human rights reports frequently, and established a close relationship with human rights organisations, which often denounced PA abuses against Hamas members and at times even provided them legal support. What the paper exhibited might appear as a cynical and self-serving use of the human rights discourse. However, in actual fact the paper, and Hamas as a whole, went beyond publishing articles on the reports by human rights organisations and adopted the discourse as its own. This is evidenced from the earliest issues of *al-Risala*. An article published in April 1997 reported that the Palestinian security forces were suspicious of human rights organisations and started to perceive the latter as hostile, which for Hamas was clearly a sign of their good work.[249] The endorsement was more direct. At the end of that year, Ibrahim al-Maqadma, wrote about 'the silence of the West to the violation of human rights in all countries that are ruled by repression when this repression is directed at the Islamists'. Thus, he concludes the West 'doesn't give a damn about human rights' when it comes to keeping the Islamic movement from rising.[250] The adoption went also beyond the pages of *al-Risala*. Lori Allen in *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, analyses a text from 2000 by West Bank Hamas leader Jamal Mansur (1960-2001) on human rights in Islam in which he argued for compatibility between the two. Among other things, Mansur, who was assassinated by Israel on 31 July 2001, conceived of human rights and democracy as a package.[251] Such adoption of the human rights discourse certainly demonstrated openness towards Western political concepts and liberal values, a mark of the centrist tendency. Human rights claims were also framed within Hamas's nationalist discourse. The struggle with Israel was premised, at least in part, on what Hamas perceived as the

[249] ʿUmar Ahmad, 'Al-ʿAlaqa baina Ajhizat al-Amn wa-Munazamat Huquq al-Insan Akhdha bi-l-Taraju', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 3 April 1997), p. 12.
[250] Al-Maqadma, 'Hazr al-Ahzab al-Islamiyya... Man al-Mustafid min-hu?!'
[251] Lori Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 161–63.

national rights of Palestinians. The nation-state was also key to the Western liberal tradition, as already mentioned.

Al-Risala's editorial, called '*Risalat-na*' (Our Message), was also a section of the paper where the human rights discourse was well entrenched. The one on 9 March 2000 is a good example because it presented a rather involved argument. It addressed the price hike introduced by the PA on a series of staple products, which it connected to the mistakes and shortcomings of the 'peace processes' and the intermediary steps for a settlement which ignore the most basic rights and needs of the Palestinian citizens such the right to live, to earn, to move and receive the most basic services in education, health, cleanliness, water and electricity and others. These are rights that have priority more than other rights without needing to mention them. Because it is believed that the basis of the conflict is the humanity and the basic citizen rights.[252]

Though in the year 2000 the editorials addressed the conflict and the negotiations with Israel more frequently and more directly because of the crucial stage that they were at. One representative example of the type of arguments used was the article on 21 September, two weeks before the outbreak of the intifada 'The Negotiations… A Continuous War of Attrition'. It claimed that 'the Israelis play with the negotiations whether through the dates, the subjects, and the American support'. And called on the Palestinian negotiators 'to stop, evaluate the previous stage and themselves, and listen to the points of view of the Palestinian street and the associations, forces, organisations and political and popular parties that represent it and from there to look for a new beginning in order to realise the national interests', warning of a very uncertain future otherwise.[253]

The editorial on the first day of the intifada was somewhat unusual in that it dealt with the daily lives of Palestinians, a subject that constituted a central focus for the paper, though slightly less so during those months of intense negotiations. However, it

[252] 'Risalat-na: Rafʿ al-Asʿar al-Yaʾs al-Murakkab', *al-Risala*, 9 March 2000, p. 3.
[253] 'Risalat-na: Al-Mufawwadat... Harb Istinzaf Mustamirra', *al-Risala*, 21 September 2000, p. 3.

provides an excellent case study to analyse the notion of social justice in the modernist trend. It was titled 'Crises… and Crises' and was dedicated to criticising the PA and it began: 'We returned once more to the everyday life problems after we became convinced that the political and negotiations crises will not find a way out, at least not in the near future'.[254] The article went on to denounce the increase in the price of petrol and the impact this had on transport fares. It then listed several other immediate problems, which in comparison to the intifada later seem pedestrian: the rise in university fees, unpaid blood bank employees and the difficulties farmers faced in exporting their produce. The editorial presented *al-Risala*, and by extension al-Khalas and Hamas, as the defender of the citizen. In similar terms, a few months before, in June 2000, an editorial on the water shortages in Gaza called on the PA 'to give more importance to the citizens and their pressing issues'.[255]

These problems threatened the stability of society because they were part of larger issues of injustice, inequality and discrimination: 'It is in the nature of the crises to threaten the stability of society and denounce the reality of injustice and suffering and the maldistribution of the riches and respect of the citizens in obtaining a piece of bread'. What it demanded was not that 'the Authority make every citizen rich' but

> justice and equality among citizens, because the teacher who feel justice can teach with sincerity and seriousness and the student who feels the care of the state can be creative but sadly the standing policies, whether economic or political, cause a state of frustration that kills creativity and any sense of belonging due to discrimination and pressure.

The editorial assumed it represented the demands of the public and burdened the PA to 'study the issues in more detail and seriousness. It is its duty to understand the demands of the people and all its sectors […] not that it meet the crises with neglect or injustice and threats'. It also spoke about the cases of corruption:

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[254] 'Azmat… wa-Azmat', *Al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 3.
[255] 'Risalat-na: al-Miyah... Azma min Nauʿ Akhar', *al-Risala*, 22 June 2000, p. 3.

It is normal that we stress that the issue of lifting the repression on the citizens is the responsibility of the whole of society, from the institutions and the forces and the activities and the parties that today do not have an effective role in supporting the oppressed and fighting the cases of corruption and monopoly.

In this way, Hamas presented itself as alone in society in providing support to the oppressed and in the fight against corruption. Most editorials were implicitly about justice, and in some cases the term was mentioned explicitly. For example, the previous February, in defence of the rights of teachers, the editorial called on the PA to distribute its income 'equitably and justly' and then more generally for 'the public welfare which is represented in the rule of law and the establishment of justice'. However, this time it was more emphatic and the criticism of the PA more profound and systemic than usual. Though the author couldn't have known the violence that was about to explode, the article gave the sense that the boiling point had been reached.

Qutb's Social Justice

This text in fact evoked the thought of Sayyid Qutb in multiple ways. The themes of injustice and corruption are reminiscent of his rhetoric, however, there was a crucial difference. *Al-Risala* did not draw out the same conclusions that the Egyptian intellectual saw as the source in his later work: the notions of *jāhiliyya* and *kufr*. Such concepts as contained in *Milestones* (*Maʿalim fi al-Tariq*)[256] and his Qurʾanic commentary, *In the Shade of the Qurʾan* (*Fi Zilal al-Qurʾan*)[257] are blamed for being the main inspiration for the violence in Islamism. Instead, the main ideas in the article, and that also inspired the other editorials, appear to be directly taken from Sayyid Qutb's book *Social Justice in Islam* (*al-ʿAdala al-Ijtimaʿiyya fi al-Islam*).

It is vital here to distinguish this text, which belongs to his early phase, from his later writings. *Social Justice*, first published in 1949, is a book that he wrote before his

[256] First published in 1964, Euben, p. 228.
[257] Eight volumes published in the 1950s, the first in 1952, Euben, p. 228.

trip to the United States and therefore before he formally joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1951.[258] This is a period when Qutb had not yet adopted the more revolutionary positions that he developed later during his time in prison and for which he became better known. *Social Justice* is a key text in the development of the concept among Islamists. In it 'Qutb implies that the state's primary purpose should be understood in terms of social justice. […] Attentiveness to social justice is the path to Allah's pleasure and avoidance of his vengeance both for the individual and, importantly, for the community'.[259] And this influence is not just evident in the general themes of the editorial above, but also the specifics. Thus, for example, the idea that what is demanded is social justice but not that 'the Authority makes every citizen rich' was how Qutb distinguished Islamic justice which entailed equality in the social, political, and spiritual realm from economic equality in Marxism. It is not that every individual should be entitled to the same amount of wealth, but that everyone should have an opportunity to create wealth.[260] The centrality of social justice then disappeared in *Milestones* where economic equality was subsumed in his focus on the foundations of sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*): 'The shift in emphasis reflects, in part, a rejection of the accommodationist stance in the earlier text'.[261] This anti-accommodationism is found throughout the later text. For example, whereas in *Social Justice* he appeared to be keen to respond to the accusation that Islam regarded men and women as fundamentally unequal, 'Qutb betrays no such concern in his later *Signposts*'.[262]

In fact, Shahrough Akhavi argues that Qutb's 'views of social justice probably emanated from notions of distributive justice of Western provenance', which were part of the social discourse of Egypt in the late 1940s. This is because the *social* dimension

[258] Euben, p. 58.
[259] Euben, p. 80.
[260] Euben, p. 63 and 80.
[261] Euben, p. 63.
[262] Euben, p. 65.

of justice is missing from the Qurʾan and the sunna—the sayings and doings of the Prophet later established as legally binding precedents—which 'simply did not reflect within its rich tradition such a thoroughly anthropocentric concept as social justice.'[263] Instead Qutb's concern for social justice was informed by the politics of the time and 'the enthusiasm for socialism that was prevalent in many circles in the 1940s'.[264] As a scripturalist, Qutb was able to read backwards into the scriptures such concept. There was also another route of entry for the social dimension of justice in Qutb's thought, and that was through the writings of Islamic philosophers who assumed Aristotelian notions of distributive justice in portraying the ideal individual and city. These writers had been revived by Muhammad ʿAbduh, who used reason more liberally to interpret Islamic law and paved the way for other modernists to seek an Islamic concept of social justice. And in this way 'the seeds of the concept of social justice are already found in the writings of Hasan al-Banna'.[265] This is a position that is corroborated by John Calvert who argues that Qutb's *Social Justice* 'placed him squarely within the tradition of modern era Muslim reform.' And 'in contrast to the strict fundamentalism of earlier revivalists, such as Muhammad ʿabd al-Wahhab' who sought to return to an idealised past. Instead Qutb, like ʿAbdu, was still trying to accommodate 'Islam to the requirements of global modernity.'[266]

Thus, the defence of the citizen and the concept of social justice found in the article 'Crises… and Crises' characterised one of the main narratives of the paper. This article was representative of a whole approach by the publication and reflected the more accommodationist positions of Qutb and al-Banna, positions that showed influences of

[263] Shahrough Akhavi, 'The Dialiectic in Contemporary Egyptian Social Thought: The Scripturalist and Modernist Discourses of Sayyid Qutb and Hasan Hanafi', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29.3 (1997), 377–401 (p. 383).
[264] William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: a Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (Leiden; New York; Koln: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. xxxviii.
[265] Akhavi, p. 386.
[266] Calvert, p. 137.

Western ideology and that were also representative of the centrist trend. The notion of social justice underlying this text was distinctive of the centrist movement and also one that was very much part of the original spirit of the Muslim Brotherhood. In their concern for 'the burning social issues of the time' the writers of *al-Risala* were also similar to the student generation in Egypt that came to form al-Wasat party.[267]

But this unusually ideological editorial didn't stop there. 'In the face of popular determination to uproot all type of repression and oppression' and create a society that is 'more just and more committed to the equality of all citizens' it called for 'starting a campaign of continuous "struggle" [*ʿamalīya 'kifāḥiyya' mutawāṣila*]'. The reference to 'continuous struggle' may have been a call for a popular movement to improve society peacefully but it may also have been interpreted as an appeal for an uprising against the established order, both the PA and the Israeli occupation. The previous May, after serious clashes that had broken out during the anniversary of al-Nakba ('the disaster' of the 1948 war), it had been more explicit. It mentioned 'the commitment to resist the occupation in one continuous struggle' (*maʿraka wāhida mutawāṣila*) adding that 'what happened and is happening these days is equivalent to a warning letter to all the parties that the Palestinian anger will never be silent and this explosion if it happens no one will be able to stop or limit its extent and dimensions.'[268] It is intimations of violence such as these ones that are analysed next.

The Negotiations and the Conflict with Israel

On 27 September Hamas issued a press release on Sharon's planned visit to the Holy Sanctuary the next day.[269] It ended calling 'the children of our people to head tomorrow

[267] Utvik, 'Hizb al-Wasat and the Potential for Change in Egyptian Islamism', p. 297.
[268] 'Al-Asra wa-l-Nakba… Risala al-Shaʿb Did al-Muhtall', *al-Risala*, 18 May 2000, p. 3.
[269] 'Bayan haula Iʿlan al-Irhabi Sharun Iʿtizam-hu al-Tajawwul fi al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 2000

Thursday towards the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque to confront the terrorist Sharon and prevent his entrance to the mosque and the esplanade and the attempt to desecrate it, regardless of the sacrifices'. It closed with the only reference to an Islamic text in the whole handbill: 'God was master of his affair, but most of the people do not know [that]' (Qurʾan 12:21).[270] Though Hamas had clearly taken the visit seriously and was planning a response that could lead to an escalation, in the paper the references to the event were insignificant, as mentioned earlier. The press release had not made it into the paper. The only article on the subject was actually taken from *Quds Press*, a small news agency sympathetic to Hamas that the editors of *al-Risala* sometimes used to compensate for their shortage of correspondents. It described the reactions to the visit generally, but did not even quote a Hamas representative.[271] Other than this report and the editorial above, there were two opinion pieces in the issue of *al-Risala* that day that provided some sense of the volatility at that stage of the conflict. The first represented the response of the centrist trend and the latter of the religious discourse of the purist Salafi clergy in Hamas. The weekly column by Ghazi Hamad, 'The Useful Summary', titled 'The Revolving Door of Negotiations' was an opinion piece that addresses the failure of the negotiations more generally.[272]

The condemnation in this article was one level of intensity above the article he had penned two weeks before, titled 'The Imaginary Struggle' in reference to the fruitless negotiations led by the PLO.[273] That previous piece was dominated by a series of questions that reflected the deep disappointment felt by Palestinians: 'Can the

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20010709141735/http://palestine-info.org/hamas/statment/bayan217.html> [accessed 6 September 2016].

[270] This was also the verse with which Ibrahim al-Maqadma ended all his columns in *al-Risala*.

[271] 'Al-Mujrim Sharun Yastafiz al-Filastiniyyin bi-Ziyarati-hi al-Yaum li-l-Haram'.

[272] Ghazi Hamad, 'Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufid: al-Bab al-Duwar al-Tafawudi', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 5. The title is a pun on the 'revolving door' that Israelis accused Yasir Arafat of using in the arrests of Palestinian militants, which would go into prison only to be released shortly after.

[273] Ghazi Hamad, 'Al-Mukhtasar al-Mufid: al-Nidal al-Wahmi', *al-Risala*, 14 September 2000, p. 5.

Palestinian people exit the languid situation and the empty circles and the hot whirlpools?' He directed most of his criticism at the PA: 'Who is responsible for this wicked disease whose germs have started to spread in our limbs? Is it the PA through its monopolies and violations?' It ended with an unequivocal call for the PA to leave: 'You must be frank with yourselves that you have failed. You must step aside for others because the failed experiments at the expense of the peoples must not be repeated.' The article on 28 September was written in a style typical of many of the opinion pieces that appeared in the newspaper. It was much more direct and critical than the editorial. It was also heavily sarcastic, ridiculing the PA and the negotiations with Israel. Further, it explicitly concerned itself with the use of language and was yet another example of the way terms were constantly being defined and redefined in *al-Risala*. Hamad mocked the negotiations over Jerusalem and the language games around them. He took as an example the debate on the notion of 'sovereignty' over the city and al-Haram al-Sharif, the very concept over which Camp David failed: '[Israeli Prime Minister Ehud] Barak wanted the PA to agree with the "revolving door" so that they enter from the door of sovereignty [*siyāda*] to the door of guardianship [*wiṣāya*], from guardianship to administration [*wilāya*], from administration to "international sovereignty" then to "shared" and then to "up and down"'.

The article exhibited some of the key frames that were used by Hamas when attacking the negotiations with Israel, all of them pragmatic, grounded in political calculations and devoid of religious references. In fact, if anything his only cultural reference was quintessentially Western, not Islamic, when Hamad compared the negotiations to 'an incomprehensible and unreasonable interlock as if it drew the lines of the complex surrealist works of Picasso'. He concluded by stating that the

negotiations had reached their logical conclusion, a dead-end, which was the only possible outcome with Israel:

> Peace reached a point of weakness and paralysis that it does not wish to recover from and a coma that it does not want to wake up from, because the decisive point really arrived—practical and real—which highlighted how impossible is peace with Israel and how much it is dreams that we built in the air.

This was the argument that was repeated again and again by Hamas, particularly after the start of the Second Intifada. It was for example explored in the same issue of *al-Risala* in the article 'Between the Media and "Manure"', where Salih al-Naʿami, a regular columnist who also helped edit the paper, described Palestinians and Israelis as holding mutually exclusive and irreconcilable claims.[274]

Hamad then compared 'this peace' with an 'abominable old man drowning in the mud of maquillage and bright powder that only makes the old man more repugnant and horrible'. And he proposed, in somewhat inflammatory terms, that

> the doctor in these cases advise that the patient be left to die 'in peace' despite the fact that some political doctors do not pause before the demand of shooting it with a mercy bullet—if it deserved mercy!—because the bill for the treatment is huge and the Palestinian side cannot put up with it.

Thus both this opinion piece and the editorial provided examples of some form of agitation, with implicit calls for violence. Hamad also displayed a more explicit seduction for violence after the intifada started. In 'The Wrong Equation: The Stone against the Bullet', an article written in the early days of the uprising, after witnessing how the Israeli army killed Palestinian stone-throwers, he called for arming the rebellion.[275]

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[274] Salih Al-Naʿami, 'Bayn al-Iʿlam wa-l-"Samad"', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 8.
[275] Ghazi Hamad, 'Al-Muʿadala al-Khatiʾa: Hajar Muqabil Rasasa', *al-Risala*, 5 October 2000, p. 5.

The Purist Salafi Discourse

This narrative of denunciation of the PA and Israel, which was based on the rationale of political opportunity and was devoid of religious references, contrasted with a section towards the end of the paper called *al-Islamiyyat* (Islamic Affairs). Though the reasoning and the style were significantly different they both displayed anger and animosity albeit of a different intensity. In the section on Islamic affairs, the weekly column by Yunis al-Astal, *Fi Rihab Aya* (In the Vastness of a Verse), took centre stage. Al-Astal cut a somewhat unusual figure for a Hamas leader due to the fact that he was not a refugee. He came from a landed family and had combined work in the field with his studies while growing up, which gave him the large and solid frame of a farmer. He also had the rough manner and heavy accent of a local of Khan Yunis. This contrasted with the religious attire that he liked to don, preferring pure white in his gown and kaffiyeh, often with a light cape draped around his shoulders. He also wore kohl in his eyes and a short beard without a moustache. It was a slightly eccentric and overly ceremonious look. He became one of the most influential religious figures in Hamas.

Fragmented Authority

The role of an individual like al-Astal, and the Hamas religious scholars more generally, must be understood through the prism of religious authority and its fragmentation in Islam. As Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori explain, fragmentation of authority is a characteristic of the Muslim world, where ‘values and symbols revolve around people's engrained belief in a transcendent yet immediate presence’, thus ‘sacred authority entails multiple individuals and groups which hope to speak for the divine presence.’ These include, for example, religious scholars, Islamist movements, the state’s religious

bureaucracy and village *shuyūkh*.[276] The ʿulamaʾ have monopolised religious authority through history, however, this has come under threat with the increase in the number of actors in the religious arena to the point that, Eickelman and Piscatori claim, they have ultimately lost their control over sacred authority, making it possible for everyone to compete to speak for Islam.[277] The threat to the authority of the ʿulamaʾ has become particularly acute from Islamists. There are a number of factors that explain this. Increased access to education is one. Modern media has no doubt also helped different agents to project and claim authority.

Historically a point of departure may be situated in the movement for Islamic revival in the late nineteenth century, when confronted by the weakness of the Muslim world versus Western colonial powers Muslim intellectuals pointed their finger at the ʿulamaʾ for failing to guide them. Al-Afghani believed 'there could be no real reform of Islam unless the ʿulamaʾ returned to the truth of Islam'.[278] Muhammad ʿAbduh claimed the rulers had 'introduced their supporters into the ranks of the ʿulamaʾ to teach the faithful a dull stagnation in matters of belief and the acceptance of political autocracy.'[279] Later the Muslim Brotherhood echoed these criticisms, considering the religious establishment an obstacle to progress. As Richard Mitchell explains: 'The Society's basic approach to the Azhar was hostile, though Banna was restrained in his public statements. Once, when commenting on the decaying state of the Muslim world, he merely noted that "the ʿulamaʾ saw and observed and heard and did nothing"'.[280] Al-Azhar University was the Muslim world's bastion of Sunni orthodoxy. Its clerical class, that attempted to mediate the relation between the people and God, were seen to ultimately defend the interests of the elite and this generated a reassertion of the

[276] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 58.
[277] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 131.
[278] Hourani, p. 119.
[279] Hourani, pp. 150–51.
[280] Mitchell, p. 212.

individual right to interpret the scriptures. A critical break took place when ʿAbduh turned *ijtihād* from a collective to an individual duty, thereby completely bypassing the ʿulamaʾ, as mentioned in chapter 1. However, to add another level of complexity, his intention was not to do away with the ʿulamaʾ altogether, but to transform their role by creating 'a new type of ʿulamaʾ who could articulate and teach the real Islam and so provide the basis for a stable and progressive society, a "middle group" between the traditional and revolutionary forces'.[281] There is therefore a tension in Islamism between a repudiation of the traditional ʿulamaʾ and the emergence of a new type of religious scholar, which is what will now be explored and in the rest of this thesis.

This is an argument also made by Jacob Høigilt who accepts the fragmentation of authority in contemporary Islam but proposes that simultaneously another development is evolving and that is, paradoxically, the rise of the ʿulamaʾ class. He argues, that this is because the struggle to claim religious authority set off a debate about authenticity among the different agents fighting over it and over time the relevance of the ʿulamaʾ class has in some contexts increased due their 'effortless display of authority'.[282] Such fragmentation has only intensified with time and the ʿulamaʾ are as a collective gaining prominence in the Islamic field, despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the ever-increasing amount of agents.[283] Høigilt, who analysed in detail al-Qaradawi's rhetoric, claims that the most important ideological significance of his discourse is precisely that it aims at asserting the position of the ʿulamaʾ as the ultimate religious authorities in Islam, 'as a professional class in the global Islamic community'.[284] He shows how 'by emphasizing the importance of their religious assets, ʿulamaʾ who manage to stay tuned

[281] Hourani, p. 140.
[282] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 148.
[283] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 179. For the relation between modernity and fragmentation see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 1.
[284] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 55.

to the trends in society can enhance their standing and importance as religious authorities'.[285]

Al-Astal provides an example of this rise within Islamism. Though the impact of al-Qaradawi is on a global scale that surpasses the Islamist arena, this also applies to him. As Høigilt argues, he symbolises 'the culmination of a long process of convergence between mainstream ʿulamaʾ, representing Islamic orthodoxy and non-violent Islamist ideology, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and their sympathizers.'[286] In short, though these two groups are often portrayed as conflicting, there is significant overlap between the ʿulamaʾ and Islamists. This is not confined to non-violent Islamists either. Faisal Devji indicates the contradiction between the 'jihad's dismemberment of the juridical authority located for centuries in the clerical class' and 'its almost obsessive concern with getting favorable rulings from this very class'.[287] This is because Islamist movements though they see the religious establishment with disdain for their connivance with authoritarian regimes and the ruling authority in general, they seek religious legitimacy to justify their actions. Thus Patrick Gaffney in his study on Islamic preaching in contemporary Egypt reveals how such occurrence takes place among 'Egypt's violent Islamist fringe who characteristically consult with a sympathetic religious legal scholar to validate their campaigns, which may include bombings, robberies, and murders'.[288]

The comparison between al-Astal and al-Qaradawi is not merely academic. Hamas relied on al-Qaradawi's *fatāwā* more than those of any other cleric. A fatwa on

[285] Høigilt's thesis is to explain the mechanics, in linguistic terms, of how they enhance their standing and importance as religious authorities. Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 153.
[286] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 179.
[287] Devji, p. 112.
[288] Gaffney, p. 41.

female participation in suicide attacks featured prominently in Hamas's website.[289] His opinions were constantly cited in *al-Risala*. His *fatāwā* were also referred to in the writings of other Hamas clerics.[290] Thus, the relation between al-Qaradawi and al-Astal was hierarchical, with the former serving in some ways as a model for al-Astal. Though they also represented during the period before Hamas won the 2006 elections that we are examining now two very different types of clerics. As we shall now see, al-Astal's 'preacher as warrior' contrasted with al-Qaradawi's 'scholar-preacher'. These profiles also corresponded with the purist and the modernist Salafi respectively.

Talking Politics from the Hamas Pulpit

Reminiscent of al-Qaradawi's own religious broadcast in al-Jazeera channel, al-Astal presented a television programme called *Fi Zilal Aya* (In the Shadow of a Verse) in the Hamas affiliated al-Aqsa Satellite Channel, which was created in 2006.[291] The name was a clear reference to Sayyid Qutb's *tafsīr*, *Fi Zilal al-Qurʾan*. However, al-Astal's media appearances started with *al-Risala*, in December 1997. In his weekly column he applied verses from the Qurʾan to current affairs in a way similar to a sermon, transferring the authority of the mosque to the printed page.[292] As Gaffney points out: 'Seen from the perspective of the pulpit, a mosque represents a forum for the development and the transformation of power relationships'.[293] Similarly al-Astal's articles were about projecting authority. This was not just because his articles had a similar form to a sermon, but also because among other audiences al-Astal was writing

[289] 'Al-Fatawa wa-l-Taʾsil al-Sharʿi', *The Palestinian Information Center* <https://web.archive.org/web/20020601201748/http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/fatawa/index.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[290] There are various references in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009).
[291] Abdelal, p. 167.
[292] Eickelman and Piscatori discuss in a similar way cassettes that transmit sermons and 'echo the authority of the mosque', Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 126.
[293] Gaffney, p. 23.

for other preachers who he expected read his article to draw inspiration for their own sermons: 'Some of the new preachers, the newly graduated preachers, sometimes read my article and take its ideas and make it the subject of the sermon. The article is published on Thursday so there is a chance to read the article, and to organise it, and to preach with it', he said.[294]

Al-Astal's columns were unique in that he derived in them specific policy recommendations from his interpretation of the Qurʾan. This was in contrast to for example Ahmad Bahr, another Saudi-educated religious scholar whose writings were featured regularly in *al-Risala*. In fact the two columns appeared side by side in the same section of the paper. Bahr's articles were usually in the style of a religious lesson but rather removed from events around him.[295] For example, the piece 'The Emigrants Are the First Group to Enter Heaven', was a straight forward narration of the hijra, marking its calendar anniversary, in which he drew from different verses and traditions and derived a simple message applicable to Hamas members as much as to Muslims generally: 'And from the most important lessons is the stance of the emigrants who left their houses and possessions for the sake of a principle that they carry and defend and die for it.' During the Second Intifada he wrote articles that were closer to developments on the ground but still at a safe distance from the details. For example, at the end of 2003 and beginning of 2004, in the midst of the Second Intifada, he wrote a series of articles on 'The Role of Muslim Women in Battle', which consisted of a set of principles extracted from different stories in the Islamic tradition.[296] Al-Astal on the other hand tied verses from the Qurʾan to specific developments and events that often had only occurred the week before. For example, on 29 June 2000, he wrote about the

[294] Al-Astal, Yunis. Interview by author. Audio recording. Khan Yunis, 22 September 2013.
[295] Bahr, Ahmad. Interview by author. Audio recording. Gaza City, 5 February 2015.
[296] Ahmad Bahr, 'Daur al-Marʾa al-Muslima fi al-Maʿraka', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 1 January 2004), p. 15.

water shortage in Gaza.[297] Another fundamental difference was that Bahr wrote about the sunna, while al-Astal focused on *tafsīr*. Therefore al-Astal's articles provide a rare record of what were almost weekly sermons with which it is possible to analyse the relation between religion and politics in Hamas at the level of everyday decision-making.

Discussing political developments in the pulpit of his column al-Astal extended the authority he held in interpreting the scriptures to the political arena, giving a particular form of legitimacy to his judgments on the latter.[298] This was however not uncommon. Eickelman and Piscatori highlight 'the role of Islamist sermons and religious "lessons" in spreading alternative and highly popular interpretations of current events'. Nor was the use of religious scriptures and Islamic history in politics more generally confined to al-Astal or to Hamas. It was part of a contest over legitimacy in which other actors participated, including the PA. Eldar, for example, describes in detail the debate within the Israeli security agencies over the interpretation of a comparison Arafat made in a speech in Johannesburg in 1994 between the Oslo accord and the ten-year truce that the Prophet Muhammad made with the Meccans in 628 at Hudaibiyya.[299] Though more regularly al-Astal competed against the PA's officially appointed clerics. But al-Astal had an advantage over these because they needed to toe the line, though it also meant that he was repeatedly accused of incitement and arrested by the PA.

The relation between religion and politics in al-Astal's worldview was however particular to Islamists. On the one hand he repeated the premise by which religion turns

[297] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Azmat al-Miyah Tudhakkir al-Kafara al-Fajara bi-Sinin Allah', *al-Risala*, 29 June 2000, p. 24.
[298] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 126.
[299] Eldar, pp. 74–75. Eldar and the Israelis he refers to actually misinterpreted the meaning of the reference to the truce as an indication of Arafat's intention to violate the Oslo agreement. In Islamic tradition it was presented as an apparent defeat for Muslims but in fact political savvy by the Prophet, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), pp. 41–42.

into an ideology and which therefore underpins Islamism: the all-encompassing nature of Islam.[300] The ideology of Hamas is only Islam, but not the narrow conception of Islam that political leaders or Western thinkers have, he argued. Islam is a way of life that starts with the rules of personal hygiene and ends with the Islamic caliphate: 'Thus, we, in the early morning, when we rise, we recite a prayer on waking up, on entering the toilet, on exiting, on performing ablutions, this is the beginning of Islam. But Islam includes everything big and small. God said "and [we] have sent down to you the Scripture as an explanation of everything" [Qurʾan 16:89]. And he said "we have neglected nothing in the record" [Qurʾan 6:38]'.[301] According to this oft-repeated narrative there is no distinction between religion and politics, let alone the submission of religion to politics.

Based on this conception of Islam he presented Hamas as a pyramid on which he stood atop. His reasoning may be encapsulated in the following syllogism: If Islam is the only ideology of Hamas, if religion is above politics—because Islam comprehends all things, including politics—and if he and the ʿulamaʾ faction were the highest religious authority in Hamas, then they were the highest authority in Hamas. He made this clear as he spoke about Hamas's thought system. He explained that the Movement had a homogenous central narrative and anyone of its leaders would have provided a very similar account, however, he underlined, the difference between one leader and another lay in their ability to connect politics to the Qurʾan. In relation to Mahmud al-Zahar, a medical doctor and appointed Foreign Minister of the Hamas government in 2006, and Ismaʿil Haniyya, an Arabic graduate who became Prime Minister in that same government, he stated: 'I for example have the capacity to connect politics with

[300] William Shepherd has defined this as 'Islamic totalism' William E. Shepard, 'Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19.3 (1987), 307–35 (p. 308). See also Gaffney, p. 35.
[301] Al-Astal, 22 September 2013.

the Qurʾan. Al-Zahar has this capacity in about three quarters in relation to me, Haniyya might have fifty per cent of this capacity in comparison to me.'[302] Though their capacity, he argued, is still way above the average among leaders in the Islamic world due to a thorough religious education from a young age. Such an argument, is strikingly similar to the one offered by Euben and Zaman to define how Islamists have often conceived the relation between religion and politics, amalgamating the two: 'that the ruler should be able to offer absolute interpretations of God's law or that the realm of politics and statecraft should become synonymous with Islam itself'.[303]

However, al-Astal went on to give a statement that appeared to contradict his previous argument. He added that his role was to find the religious justification for what the political leaders of Hamas decided, therefore subsuming his position as a religious figure to the political class: 'I don't hide from you that I used to read those [Hamas leaders] and I would capture ideas from them to make them the subject of my following article but establishing their foundation in the [religious] texts and the inspiration'. Ironically, this actually confirmed the criticism of many ʿulamaʾ who disapproved of the argument provided in the previous paragraph and dismissed such it as 'nothing less than making religious norms subservient to political goals'.[304] This was key and defined the relation between the ʿulamaʾ and the political leaders of Hamas as we shall see in future chapters.

The role of religion in support of politics is also illustrated in the way that Ghazi Hamad, as chief editor of the paper, frequently censored al-Astal's articles (as will be examined in more detail in the next chapter). Hamad edited heavily al-Astal's articles, taking out whole sentence and paragraphs. At times even Hamad decided not to publish a whole article, and in its place a note would be printed saying that the author excused

[302] Al-Astal, 22 September 2013.
[303] Euben and Zaman, p. 11.
[304] Euben and Zaman, p. 12.

himself that week: 'Sometimes they erase some expressions and ideas, other times they do not produce the article. One week I wrote two articles and neither was published. The administration decided that because of their severity [*qaswa*] they were not in harmony with the politics of the paper'.[305] These conflicting positions resulted in a struggle between religious and popular authority, which is played out in the history of Hamas and is being traced in these pages.

Al-Astal's Purist Salafism

The factor that has determined the monopoly of religious authority through history by the ʿulamaʾ has been their sway over religious knowledge. As Patrick Gaffney argues 'the one notion that probably summarises the predominant ideal associated with Islamic authority would be the concept of *ʿilm*, or knowledge'.[306] Gaffney describes the preacher as he whose task is 'to preserve, to codify, to interpret, and to transmit the verbal charisma of the prophet. The knowledge embodied by the *ʿālim* refers therefore to an objective closed literary heritage recognized as *ʿilm*, identified as the traditional Islamic sciences'.[307] It was al-Astal's constant references to Islamic literature in his articles that established his intimate relation with it, and blurred the difference in the minds of his readers between the authority of those texts and his own. All the references in al-Astal's column were to the Qurʾan and the sunna, or to religious thinkers, old and new. These references, through which he showed his learning, constituted explicit links to the religious establishment and the institutional authority of the ʿulamaʾ. He presented himself as the interpreter of those texts for the lay public, the mediator

[305] Al-Astal, 22 September 2013.
[306] Gaffney, p. 34.
[307] Gaffney, p. 39.

between them and religious truth. Al-Astal's claim to authority, like al-Qaradawi's, 'was indeed premised upon his mediating function'.[308]

However, though al-Astal tried to claim the authority of the traditional religious scholar, he was a rather different type of *ʿalīm*.[309] In his first article in *al-Risala*, a relatively short piece simply called *Fi Rihab Aya* (In the Expanse of a Verse), there were references to *Tafsir al-Manar*, by Rashid Rida (and Muhammad ʿAbduh)*; al-Zilal*, by Sayyid Qutb; *al-Asas fi al-Tafsir*, by Saʿid Hawwa (1935-1989); *Tafsir al-Maraghi* by Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi (d. 1945); and *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*.[310] With the exception of the last, which was a renowned classical Qurʾanic exegesis, these *tafāsīr* were all modern. The authors all died in the twentieth century, though even among these there were sharp differences. Rida and al-Maraghi were Islamic modernists of the early twentieth century, while Qutb and Hawwa consecrated Islamists of the purist Salafi trend as well as leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood, of the second half of the century.[311] It is in fact the latter two that al-Astal quoted most frequently.[312] Both *tafāsīr* were written while their authors spent time in prison, Qutb in Egypt in the 1960s and Hawwa in Syria the 1970s, and the bitterness of that experience was the filter through which they interpreted the scriptures. Though Hawwa, regarded as 'the foremost ideologue of the Muslim Brethren movement in Ba'thist Syria',[313] introduced some original concepts his commentary was heavily indebted to Qutb's, whom he quoted extensively. Their content and structure was very particular. In contrast to classical commentaries, they were less concerned with meaning than with relevance and

[308] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 54.
[309] For a discussion on this see Zaman, pp. 7–11.
[310] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Fi Rihab Aya', *al-Risala*, 11 December 1997, p. 16.
[311] Al-Qurtubi (d. 1273) was an eminent Maliki scholar and exegete.
[312] For example, the following week 18 December, he referred to *al-Zilal*, but the week after that, on 25 December, again to *al-Asas fi al-Tafsir*.
[313] Itzchak Weismann, 'Saʿid Hawwa: the Making of a Radical Muslim Thinker in Modern Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29.4 (1993), 601–23 (p. 619).

guidance. 'Their aim is to educate, to derive easily digestible and practicable rules from the Qurʾanic text, instead of examining and discussing the text in a detached, scholarly way.'[314] This was the source of their popularity. They were attempting to make the Qurʾanic message directly relevant to believers. For example, in an article comparing various modern commentaries Johanna Pink argues that Hawwa's main objective was to transfer 'the Qurʾanic message to a modern context, using a distinctly political vocabulary'.[315] This was also valid for Qutb's exegesis—as well as al-Astal's columns.

Qutb's commentary—and by extension Hawwa's—exhibited basic characteristics of Salafism, such as the omission of the tradition of Sunni scholarship and linguistic analysis. Hawwa also reflected this tendency in his effort to explain the inner logic of the Qurʾan's structure, which also distinguishes it markedly from classical commentaries, making it difficult to consult individual verses and more appropriately read from beginning to end. This had to do with a desire to omit differences of opinion in the interpretation of verses and avoid interpretations that deviated from its literal meaning. In this way they were similar to more standard purist Salafi commentaries that only referred to very classical scholars, in particular Ibn Taymiyya and Qayyim al-Jawziyya, if at all.[316] This was actually a characteristic of the commentary by ʿAbduh and Rida, who were also concerned with interpreting the Qurʾan according to its literal meaning.

However, there were other more specific points of doctrine where Hawwa's and Qutb's thought overlapped with Wahhabism and turned sharply away from the modernists. Hawwa incorporated two concepts by Ibn Taymiyya—*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* and *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*—which were also central to Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab's doctrine.

[314] Johanna Pink, 'Tradition and Ideology in Contemporary Sunnite Qurʾanic Exegesis: Qurʾanic Commentaries from the Arab World, Turkey and Indonesia and their Interpretation of Q 5:51', *Die Welt des Islams*, 50.1 (2010), 3–59 (p. 58).
[315] Pink, p. 17.
[316] Pink, p. 19.

The influence of Wahhabism in Hawwa surely appealed to al-Astal's Saudi training too.[317] From Qutb's thought Pink points to the disassociation from Christians and Jews and building a dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', which also contrasted with classical commentaries, she argues. By way of illustration, Pink discusses Qutb's use of the noun *walāʾ* in Qurʾan 5:51, which he understood exclusively as an injunction against giving one's allegiance to anyone but the believers. 'The use of the term *walāʾ*, with relation to Qurʾan 5:51, clearly indicates a Salafī orientation and constitutes a break with tradition', she claims.[318] She further associates this interpretation of the term to the formula *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾa* (loyalty and rejection), a fundamental Wahhabi position[319] that is also central to modern Jihadi-Salafi discourse.[320] Thus, for him 'it was an eternal truth, "a truth rooted in the nature of things", that Christians and Jews will be the enemies of the Muslim community in any place at any time.'[321] This included equating Jews and Christians with *kuffār*, which the Qurʾan itself does—though it treats them inconsistently also referring to them positively on numerous occasions.[322] However, the emphasis was on the Jews, a point that Calvert confirms: 'Qutb's representations of Jews do stand out from those of other non-Muslim peoples for the textual support the Jews receive in the Qurʾan and the Islamic tradition.'[323] Also Qutb made the continuity between the historical example and the present explicit: 'Comparing the "perfidy" of the

[317] Though Hawwa differed on Wahhabi dogma in major ways regarding Sufism, which was part of his intellectual heritage.
[318] Pink, p. 41.
[319] Meijer, p. 10.
[320] *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 167–69.
[321] Pink, p. 48.
[322] For example, in relation to Qurʾan 5:86 Qutb wrote: 'The Qur'an describes them as unbelievers as long as they adopt this attitude. The description applies to the Jews and Christians who are joined with the idolaters in being unbelievers as long as they continue to deny that what God revealed to His Messenger as the truth, and as long as they continue to refuse to accept Islam which is the only religion acceptable to God.' Sayyid Qutb, 'Surah 5', in *In the Shade of the Qurʾan*, p. 188 <https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_4_surah_5.pdf> [accessed 6 September 2016]. For an example from the Qurʾan see 5:64.
[323] Calvert, p. 167.

Jews of Medina with the modern Israelis, he writes with reference to Qurʾan 2:31-39: "The war the Jews began to wage against Islam and Muslims in those early days has raged onto the present. The form and appearance may have changed, but the nature and means remain the same."'[324]

This is an aspect of Qutb's commentary that was a strong influence in al-Astal's appraisal of the Jews. Al-Astal frequently referred to the Israelis as infidels. In an article on 13 April 2000 marking ʿAshuraʾ he made this in the context of one of his most persistent themes, that to believe in God was to have faith in that He makes His people victorious over their enemy however strong, and in particular the Jews, which in al-Astal's writings were synonymous with Israel: 'And God is with the patient who pray to God their Lord to fill us with patience, and make our step strong, and make us victorious over the unbelieving people [*al-qaum al-kāfirīn*]'.[325] The context in which he made this remarks further highlights his Qutbist leanings, because the Sunni tradition celebrates ʿAshuraʾ as marking the separation of the waters in the flight of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt. Instead he uses the occasion to rail against the Jews.[326] Another example is al-Astal's article on 6 April 2000 on the occasion of the Muslim New Year.[327] Though he started, logically, with the expulsion of the Prophet from Mecca by the Quraish he soon moved to the Jews: 'And there is no one who violates more an agreement than the Jews, they violate their agreement every time and they don't fear.' Further down he made the modern day link more explicit: 'And like this is the issue with the Jews who have expelled us from Palestine, and pursued us in the diaspora killing and throwing us out, one time by themselves and another by the agents

[324] Calvert, p. 269.
[325] Yunis Al-Astal, ''Ashuraʾ Bushra al-Tamkin wa-Halak al-Taghin', *al-Risala*, 13 April 2000, p. 20.
[326] These events are recorded in Qurʾan 26:61-63 with which he started the article.
[327] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Hijra Ighraʾ bi-Qital al-Aʿdaʾ wa-Qatʿ al-Mawadda wa-l-Walaʾ', *al-Risala*, 6 April 2000, p. 20.

and collaborators.' In this article he also made a reference to the Christians, 'this means that the loyalty to the Jews and the Nazarenes is one of the greatest sins and biggest crimes because they united to expel us from our houses'. He also used a characteristically Wahhabi concept—though also one found in Qutb's writings—equating such loyalty with polytheism (*shirk*): 'And if what that holds was the fear from them, the fear that the material forces would be in their favour, this is a type of polytheism, it is more right that you fear God.'

However, it must be noted that this was also a description that he used with reference to any enemy, and not just the Jews. For example, an article in November 1999 exalting the Chechen rebels al-Astal ended with the following: 'O God protect our brothers the fighters from weakness and feebleness, and distance them from alcohol and casinos, and purify them from adultery and chalets, and grant them good intentions, and moral rectitude and support us and them from the unbelievers [*al-qaum al-kāfirīn*]'.[328] The fact is that Jews figure more prominently in the Islamic scriptures than other non-Muslim groups for historical reasons; the struggle of the Prophet and his followers with Jewish tribes is central to the origins of Islam. Then, with the occupation of Muslims lands and humiliation of its inhabitants by Jews it was too tempting to see the continuation of an age-old religious conflict. Being the victim of said occupation and reading Qutb's famously eloquent prose, this was a conclusion that was even easier for al-Astal to reach.

There were also other distinctly Qutbist features that al-Astal's thought displayed. In the November 1999 article cited above he endorsed the concept of *ḥākimiyya*:

> And what the regimes and the leaders practice today through the legislative councils which consist of raised fingers to approve what the ruler [*hākim*] wants, this if there remained any shame left, the leaders would again justify their behaviour according to

[328] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Jihad al-Shishan Huwa al-Mizan wa-l-Burhan', *Al-Risala*, 11 November 1999, p. 20.

the will of the people and the parliamentary blessing. [But] we believe that sovereignty [*ḥākimiyya*] is to God alone, for he has the creation and the authority and if we disagreed on something then its judgment is with God. And he made for us shariʿa from his decree and ordered us to follow it'.[329]

This was however a rare reference. Also Qutb's notion of *jāhiliyya* was not part of his lexicon.

Victory Belongs to God and His Prophets, and Their Opponents Are Destined to Defeat

In his columns, which were amongst the longest articles in the paper, al-Astal started with a verse, explaining its historical context, teasing out its meaning, word for word, at times referring to different interpretations, and then devoted the last paragraphs to its modern-day application. The article on 28 September 2000 contained major themes of the religious discourse of Hamas and Islamists in general, that constituted the staple of al-Astal's articles throughout the Second Intifada and basic messages from Hamas to Palestinians concerning the struggle against Israel: Victory comes after defeat by the hand of God against the repudiated Jews; the Palestinians cannot succeed without God but they must not sit still either; they must be good Muslims; they must not lean towards the material world but must prepare for the struggle; and they must also not ally themselves with the enemy, like the PA is accused of doing through the much maligned 'security coordination', by which the Palestinian security forces exchanged information and cooperated with their Israeli counterparts in order to pursue Palestinian militants.

Al-Astal's article in issue 175 of *al-Risala*, published on the day the Second Intifada exploded, carried Qurʾan 59:2 as title:

[It is] He who has driven those of the people of the Scripture who have disbelieved from their dwellings for the first rounding up. You did not think that they would leave, and they thought that their strongholds would defend them against God. But God reached them from a place they did not reckon on and cast terror into their hearts, and they

[329] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Sirr al-Asrar fi lʿtiqal al-Akhyar', *al-Risala*, 15 June 2000, p. 24.

destroyed their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers. Reflect those of you who have eyes.[330]

The piece stood in contrast to the tone and content of the rest of the paper, both because of the religious references, which were absent elsewhere, but also because of its bellicosity. The article by Ghazi Hamad, analysed above, is the only one that came close in terms of subject matter, hinting at a possible conflagration, but is almost tame in comparison. It follows an article the previous week that was perhaps even more incendiary: 'Rights Are Obtained Fighting, not by Begging for a State and Money'.[331]

According to Islamic tradition, sura 59 (The Rounding Up) refers to the story of the Jewish tribe of Banu al-Nadhir, which had plotted to kill the Prophet Muhammad.[332] Their subsequent expulsion from Medina, then still known as Yathrib, is referred to in verses 2-17. The events took place in September 625, six months after the famous Muslim rout of the Battle of Uhud—which in turn happened one year after the proverbial victory at Badr in March 624—and thus representing a narrative of victory after defeat. Sura 59 is an illustration, with reference to events in classical times, of the idea sown in the previous sura, and particularly verse 58:22, that in the final order of things 'victory belongs to God and his prophets, and that their opponents are destined to defeat'.[333] Which is also similar to the message contained in the verse quoted in the Hamas leaflet above on Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. This concept is one of the supra-narratives of Hamas and in fact the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole. In his book *Inside the Brotherhood*, Hazem Kandil argues that this feature, which he identifies as

[330] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Hashr 2', *al-Risala*, 28 September 2000, p. 20.
[331] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Huquq Tanal bi-l-Qital, la bi-Istijdaʾ al-Daula wa-l-Mal', *al-Risala*, 21 September 2000, p. 20.
[332] Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qurʾan: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, 2nd. ed. (London: SCM Press, 2003), p. 42.
[333] Neal Robinson, p. 274.

'religious determinism', is the central piece of the internal discourse of the Muslim Brothers and underpins the relationship they believe they have with the divine.[334]

It is also part of a narrative of breaking with the Jews, which may be traced in time to 623 and in the Qurʾan to 2:124-187 and as outlined above another common theme in the articles by al-Astal, as well as a central storyline of the Qurʾan.[335] Al-Astal often compared Israel to the Khabir Qainaqaʿ, Bani al-Nadhir and Bani Quraidha, the three pre-Islamic Jewish tribes that were defeated by Muslims. This is for obvious reasons a frequent practice among religious figures in Hamas. For example, during the First Intifada shaykh Ibrahim al-Quqa, a deported Hamas leader quoted by Ziad Abu Amer, did the same.[336]

In the article first al-Astal underlined God's omnipotence and he was the one who intervened on behalf of the early Muslims against the Jews. This was a reference to Israel and the inability of Palestinians to be victorious without God's help. Al-Astal proceeded to point out that this was not a one-off event, but that the Jews would be thus treated repeatedly because they corrupt the land. The Muslims were thus wrong to fear the might of the Jews because God defeated them despite their strength. Such narrative appears also, for example, in an article in April 1999:

> The amazing development of weapons may add to the meaning of the bouts of suffering that comes from above or below, since all that the planes fire in terms of bombs and missiles, all that he sows on the land in terms of mines and explosives, comes into the saying 'suffering from above and below your legs'. And if our enemy may overcome us in the first round we are able—with the help of God—to overcome him in the second round.[337]

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[334] Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood* (Cambridge, England: Polity, 2014), p. 85.
[335] Neal Robinson, p. 274.
[336] Abu-Amer, p. 61.
[337] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Anʿam 65', *al-Risala*, 11 March 1999, p. 20. He went on to mention the example of Hizbullah in South Lebanon, and then Somalia, Vietnam and the Jihadi movement in Saudi Arabia.

It is also the message of the article he published after Ariel Sharon's electoral victory, on 6 February 2001, 'Victory with Religion is Seven Years'.[338]

However, all this was conditioned on Palestinians being good Muslims, both pious and moral, which is another fixture in the Islamist discourse (discussed in more detail in the next chapter):

> But that is conditional on us confirming to God that we are the people appointed as regents [*ahl al-istikhlāf*] on the Earth, worthy of strengthening the religion that embraced us, worthy of exchanging our fear for safety. That means that we pray, and we give charity, and we do the good and condemn the vice, even that we change the vice with our hands and our tongues after our hearts, this is what is expressed with the victory of God, that is to say to raise his word on earth.

This he concluded with Qurʾan 47:7: 'The most high said: "O you who believe, if you help God, He will help you and make your feet firm."' Finally, in the last lines of the article he warned against leaning towards the material world, and competing with the Jews in terms of material strength, which the Palestinians will never reach, instead on having faith in God:

> If the Muslims are from among us, and from among us the unjust and the ones who were victorious over our affairs they desire to make it [Islam] seem deviant: because they are happy with the life of the world and are satisfied with it. The meaning is that God will leave us to fight our enemy with our material strength, and then victory will be for he who is stronger, and more accumulation, and we cannot aspire to that.

There was also an implicit reference to the PA in this last paragraph, though more explicit in the form of Ibn Ubayy—who allied himself with the Jewish tribe of Banu al-Nadhir against Muhammad—which was a clear allusion to the negotiations it carried out with Israel: 'Even if another fifty years after al-Nakba passed, it is better than if some of the *umma* decided to play the role of Ibn Ubayy, so their people would be transferred to hell'. However, God's intervention does not mean that his intended audience should sit idly:

[338] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Intisar bi-l-Din Sabʿ Sinin', *al-Risala*, 15 February 2001, p. 20.

The fear that our lord sent in the hearts of Banu al-Nadhir does not come down from God unless we make every effort to prepare what we could in terms of strength and tie the horses, to terrorise the enemy of God and our enemy with the sincerity of intentions to desire what pleases God and the next world and that it be our objective to destroy the corruption of Banu Israel.

The warning against leaning towards this world was one of his favourite themes. In his article on 5 April 2001, 'Confronting the Evils with the Belief in Heaven and Hell', he developed it, for example, with the notion of the afterlife, which was used to argue for sacrificing one's life:

The enemy may do with us whatever he wants, however when the life of this world ends, we take into account that for him is hell that he does not die in it and does not live but we are certain that God will make us victorious even if after a while.[339]

In the aftermath of 9/11 he used it to blame the US, and their pursuit of earthly goals that were worthless and immoral, for those attacks:

And every action that does not contribute to heaven is a game, because it is being occupied with what is not [even] equal to the wing of a fly. And what is the life of the world if not play, and fornication and pleasure and showing off among you and the multiplication of money and children.[340]

'Preacher as Warrior'

As these article exemplified, one of the fundamental ways in which al-Astal differed from the traditional religious scholar-preacher is that the latter was characterised by 'political quietism and subservience to state policies'.[341] Al-Astal's profile was more that of the 'preacher as warrior'.[342] This is an archetype that according to Gaffney symbolises religio-political hegemony and successful military leadership in an echo of the figure of the Prophet Muhammad himself.[343] This was palpable in the style,

[339] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Muwajaha al-Ashrar bi-ʿAqida al-Janna wa-l-Nar', *Al-Risala*, 5 April 2000, p. 20.
[340] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Man Yazraʿ al-Shauk la Yahsid al-ʿInab', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 20 September 2001), p. 20.
[341] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 55.
[342] Gaffney, p. 40.
[343] Gaffney, p. 41.

vocabulary, grammar and syntax of his writing, as well as the construction and logic of his argument.

The rhetoric of al-Astal's during the first part of his articles was similar to that of al-Qaradawi as described by Høigilt. In the main body of the text, in which he introduced a verse and proceeded to interpret it in detail, providing the textual and historical context in which the *āya* was revealed to the Prophet, al-Astal's tone was detached and restrained, similar to that of a scholar, whose authority he was claiming, keeping his distance from the reader, who he didn't address directly. Though he assumed more the form than the content of a scholar. Thus he made frequent references to the scriptures and other authoritative works but there were no discussions where different points of view were reflected. At most al-Astal referred to two different opinions from classical Islamic tradition as to when a verse was revealed to the Prophet and the exact event that it made reference to. This was however intentional; form and style mattered to him more than the actual content. What he was trying to do was to impress and define rather than to teach and explain.

The difference between al-Qaradawi and al-Astal came in the last third of the article, where he applied the verse to current times. The language changed, becoming simpler and more direct, and reduced to assertions and exhortations. In particular he began to directly address the reader through the first person plural. He frequently used rhetorical questions, occasionally exclamation marks and towards the very end of the article he sometimes gave orders to the reader using the second person plural in the vocative voice. Thus, his overall strategy was to first establish his authority so that by the time the text reached its conclusion, where the lessons from the Qurʾan were rather abruptly applied to current events, the reader should have felt little hesitation in accepting the author's interpretation. The similarity between these two men was

therefore stylistic, and then only partially, because this is where their paths parted. While Høigilt concludes that the content of al-Qaradawi's discourse was more that of the 'preacher as scholar' typical of the centrist trend, al-Astal's on the other hand was ultimately that of a preacher as warrior.[344] Gaffney's description of the preacher as warrior is surprisingly accurate in relation to al-Astal and his version of purist Salafism. First regarding his constant references to the early Islamic battles: 'This domain of preaching associated with the "holy warrior" has its idealized contemporary counterpart in the figure of the *mujāhid*, deriving from the noun jihad. Such a preacher views himself in the tradition of the first militant disciples of the Prophet through whom formidable opponents were defeated and an Islamic empire was created.' And second in relations to the social and political dimensions of his writing: 'But this call to immediate engagement and confrontation is not restricted to combat on the battlefield. It includes concerted effort to overcome social and political corruption and in that sense it has the character of a moral crusade as well as a potential for revolution.'[345]

Another difference developed over time. Høigilt's describes the way al-Qaradawi assumed authority and indicated to the reader to leave the interpreting to him: 'The reader is offered references to classical authorities that are taken at face value as eternal proofs of the correctness of al-Qaradawi's own views'.[346] This also applied to al-Astal but only partially. Other than the Qurʾan and hadith, the religious Islamic literature, in particular *tafāsīr*, that he referenced were mostly modern. And then these were only frequent in the beginning of his writing career. When he was trying to establish his legitimacy every article had at least one reference to *al-Zilal* or *al-Asas*, however they decreased over time. In 1999 he made only two references to *al-Asas* and *al-Zilal* and one to al-Qurtubi. Eventually they ceased completely. This development was a point

[344] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 54.
[345] Gaffney, p. 41.
[346] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 143.

that al-Astal emphasised in conversation. There were three reasons for this. First, according to him, the scholarly references were not directed at his usual readership, the Hamas constituency. Rather he quoted such commentaries in order to give his texts a scholarly veneer that would gloss over their controversial political content in the eyes of the PA censors.[347] Al-Astal assumed that the PA censors were unaware of the serious political implications of those commentaries and he used them to give his articles the 'veneer of a purely theological discussion' (*sibgha dīniyya*). Because during the Oslo process 'I came out of the prisons and I started to work under a repression of the freedoms, so that if my writing was conspicuously political it could lead to my return to prison and the closure of the paper, which happened more than once. So we were careful that the articles have a religious character, and the political signs were hidden, due to the repression of the freedoms', he explained. Indeed this coheres with the fact that during the Second Intifada, as Hamas became bolder and the PA weaker, such 'documentation'—in his words—decreased and eventually disappeared. Second, with this he was also trying to claim that he was enough of an authority to be able to interpret the Qurʾan on his own while at the same time transferring the authority of the scriptures, unmediated by the exegeses of others, onto himself. Third, such need to emphasise a direct encounter with the scriptures was a clear sign of his Salafism. Further evidence of this is his reliance primarily on those *tafāsīr*—*Zilal* and *al-Asas*—that were written in such style, as a raw reaction to the scriptures (in the words of al-Astal, '*fassaru al-Qurʾan bi-l-tajarrud*') and when he stopped referring to those he cited solely Qurʾan and hadith.

[347] Al-Astal, 22 September 2013. He didn't always elude the censors as was recorded, for example, in the issue of 5 November 1998: 'We apologise to the readers of the corner of Yunis al-Astal due to his arrest'. His detention by the Palestinian security forces continued for over four months and he was only able to resume writing on 11 March 1999.

This desire to identify the authority of the Qurʾan with his own writing is palpable in the very style in which he wrote. The rhetorical devices he used were the standard ones of classical rhetoric (*ʿilm al-balāgha*): rhyme, alliteration and repetition of near-synonyms. For example, the capacity to make the titles of his articles rhyme caused the admiration of his editor. However, what was most distinctive about his writing was the vocabulary and grammatical structures he used and with which he tried to imitate Qurʾanic Arabic, very frequently paraphrasing verses, as well as hadith, without explicitly referencing them. The grammar and syntax of the sentences is at times so complex and the vocabulary so archaic, that by his own admission most readers were unable to understand their meaning. He would for example consistently choose the most obscure broken plural of a word, such as the plural *judur* instead of the much more common *judrān* for the word *jidār*.[348] The point was not to convince but to bedazzle and also to present his writings as the unequivocal truth like the word of God, a characteristic of the purist Salafi trend that shall be explored in more detail later.

Conclusion

Hamas was not a homogenous movement. The different factions found in Hamas and the complexity and internal coherence of their arguments demonstrate that the Movement defied any reduction to irrational violence. The centrist trend, in particular, showed that Hamas had a concern for social justice, while also embracing Western liberal concepts such as citizenship and human rights. This is a discourse that was grounded in political opportunity calculations and was devoid of religious references. It included influences from Sayyid Qutb's early texts as well as al-Banna's, which were accommodationist and even betrayed leftist influences.

[348] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Wujub al-Musaraʿa fi Tatwiq al-Khatar al-Dakhili li-Lladhina Yusariʿun fi Muzahara al-ʿAdu al-Khariji', *al-Risala*, 7 June 2007, p. 18.

The articles by al-Astal and Hamad examined in this chapter indicated that this sort of bellicose discourse existed at the end of the Oslo era, and that it was not just a response to the uprising that the rhetoric of Hamas became more inflammatory. Hamad's article to an extent corroborated this. It illustrated that the centrist faction was also tempted by violence in the conflict with Israel, certainly at this stage of the negotiations in which most Palestinians saw the glass not half-full, but empty.

There were of course differences in the intensity with which they called for violence. The combativeness of al-Astal's article on 28 September 2000 appears to be more fitting to the following stage in Palestinian history, the Second Intifada, though it was also consistent with arguments that he had adopted throughout the Oslo process. But there were more fundamental disparities. While al-Astal boasted a superior Islamic intellectual capital, Hamad, who had a degree in veterinary medicine and a Master's in political science, did not make any reference to the scriptures in his articles but represented the positions of the Movement with pragmatic, political opportunity arguments. In fact, the two narratives were in some ways mirror images of each other. Their source of legitimacy was not only different but the opposite: One divine and the other popular. This was evident even in the way they structured their articles. Al-Astal was prescriptive; he started with the authoritative texts and applied them to contemporary events. Hamad was descriptive, focusing on developments on the ground before reaching an overarching conclusion. This was also the case with the editorials discussed earlier which represented the centrist trend and which concerned themselves with the perspective of the citizen. Similarly, in relation to the conflict, the arguments and objectives were different. Al-Astal placed it in the context of an eternal struggle between Jews and Muslims, seeking the victory of Islam. Hamad and the centrists emphasised the failure of the negotiations and were after a more immediate goal, 'the

removal of the occupation, the establishment of its Palestinian state, the end of the occupation and the return of all its rights', as mentioned in al-Khalas's political programme.[349]

There was also a hierarchical relation by which the purist Salafi trend represented the Hamas clergy, the religious authority that the rest of the Movement looked up to for guidance on all matters. Further, the editors of *al-Risala* and the centrist trend used the texts by al-Astal and other clerics to extend their religious authority to the rest of the paper and prove its religious credentials, just as Hamas as a whole used clerics to enhance its religious legitimacy. Such texts appealed in particular to the core Hamas members. As Ghazi Hamad said in relation to Nizar Rayyan, another Hamas religious scholar who wrote in *al-Risala*: 'His writings were strong and solid like those of Yunis al-Astal so this made the newspaper spread even within Hamas circles.'[350] Such perception of Hamas as wholly defined by religion was proposed also Yunis al-Astal himself.

However, al-Astal's position was also contradictory and at times he recognised the separation of religion and politics. Al-Astal's articles in *al-Risala* were separated from the rest of the paper in a section on 'Islamic Affairs', thus compartmentalising it from the political discussion of the rest of the paper. This is a distinction that he himself acknowledged, at least part of the time: 'I personally to this day do not consider myself political but I am a preacher and I belong to the religious scholars [*mashyakha*], member of PRSL more than political membership or even membership to Hamas movement'.[351] In fact, he went further and hinted to the subservience the clergy to the lay Hamas leaders, that is, of religion to politics, in the way that he looked for scriptural

[349] 'Al-Barnamaj al-Siyasi - al-Fasl al-Thani - al-Siraʿ al-ʿArabi al-Israʾili wa-l-Qadaya al-Filastiniyya', *al-Khalas Party website* <http://alkhalas.tripod.com/documents/program/chapter2.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[350] Hamad, 18 September 2013.
[351] Al-Astal, 22 September 2013.

justifications. This was also illustrated by the simple fact that the chief editor of the paper was Hamad and not al-Astal, and therefore the latter served the interests of the former. Hamad edited and censored al-Astal. Further, in his role as 'preacher as warrior', religion is presented as an instrument for mobilisation behind political decisions. Al-Astal's historical comparisons were as dramatic as early Islamic history had been, but clearly many people, including within Hamas, would not have found them on their own more pertinent than more pragmatic political calculations.

This relationship between the clergy and the lay Islamist leadership did not mean that the purist discourse simply served the centrist trend. At times they complemented each other while at others they competed. This ambiguity is representative of Hamas as a whole and the struggle that existed between the two sources of legitimacy, popular and religious. The boundaries were shifting and blurring also in accordance to developments on the ground. This is again reflected in the section on 'Islamic Affairs', which disappeared during the Second Intifada. The articles by al-Astal and other clerics were seen as more central to the struggle of the Movement at that moment and became part of the opinion pages, sharing space with those by political leaders of the Movement. The next chapter in fact illustrates how al-Astal adopted positions that directly contradicted the centrist trend. Though eventually, the last chapter will show how al-Astal assumed the centrist trend as his own, and therefore, on the whole the clergy served the interests of the political leadership—the result of collapsing the division between religion and politics.

Chapter 3 – The Duty to Command Right and Forbid Wrong: Religion, Morality and Violence

On Friday October 13, 2000, two weeks into the Second Intifada, a mob attacked and burnt a series of alcohol outlets in Gaza City. Hamas was accused of responsibility. Inside the pages of *al-Risala* there was a heated debate on the subject. The articles in the newspaper showed the variety of positions that different sectors of the Movement adopted on moral questions and particularly whether they constituted a justification for violence. The timing of this attack, in the midst of the violence with Israel, also illustrated a tension between a conservative societal tendency and the fight against Israel: which took priority? Was there a causal relation between two? This chapter examines these debates and looks at the intersection between moral reform, liberation and violence in the Movement. More broadly, it treats morality as a field that is at the core of what Islamism means and of what makes it politically relevant.

Since the birth of Islam a sense of moral decay has spurred projects of reform and renewal. For that same reason, moral reform is central to Islamism too. In a definition of Islamist fundamentalism Roxanne Euben argues that it coheres around 'a commitment to Islam as an identity, a revolutionary ideology, and a framework for moral reform'.[352] Questions of morality, for example, were at the heart of Qutb's political thought.[353] The Hamas Charter was also heavily moralistic in tone. Article 28, for example, accused Zionists and Free Masons of aiming to 'demolish societies, to destroy values, to violate consciences, to defeat virtues, and to annihilate Islam. It supports the drug and alcohol trade of all kinds in order to facilitate its control and expansion'. In contrast to this

[352] Euben, p. 53.
[353] Euben, p. 51.

Mishal and Sela argue that Hamas 'and other Islamic movements in the Arab world escaped a binary perception regarding their relations with their ideological rivals and political opponents. They took care not to depict their social and political reality as a cluster of mutually exclusive, diametrically opposed categories, characterized by "either-or" relations'.[354] Hroub, on the other hand appears to disagree with Mishal and Sela when he claims, in relation to Hamas's moral puritanism, that its heavily religious societal outlook is one of the weakest aspects of the Movement. Despite the fact that 'Hamas's often-declared position is that it will never impose any religious practice on the Palestinians' against their will, there are a series of cases, as well as more general trends, that may reflect 'indirect practices or influences that contradict these official declarations', Hroub claims.[355] The tension between these different positions is analysed in detail in this chapter with reference to the discussion among Hamas members around a set of actual events.

This discussion revolves around primarily one specific moral principle that is central to the Islamic tradition, to 'command right and forbid wrong' (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wal-nahi ʿan al-munkar*). The principle is evoked in the Qurʾan in eight separate verses, though Qurʾan 3:104 is the paradigmatic one: 'Let there be [one] community from you, summoning [people] to good and enjoining what is reputable and forbidding what is disreputable.' According to Michael Cook's monograph on the history of this principle, the duty to stop other people from doing wrong is intelligible in any culture, but few seek to answer it in as rigorous a way as classical Islamic scholars.[356] What Cook sets out to do in his book is to show how much it varied from one milieu to another through time and place. He delimits the two extremes that it can take, in its

[354] Mishal and Sela, p. 9.
[355] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: a Beginner's Guide* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p. 73.
[356] Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

application by either ruling authority or its subjects: 'At one edge of this territory, a thin line separates forbidding wrong from culpable subversion. At the other edge, the frontier between forbidding wrong and the invasion of privacy is no thicker.' These 'represent significant ways in which the virtuous performance of the duty can degenerate into vice, and they are accordingly major foci of the scholastic thought'.[357] There is thus a whole debate on the place of rulers in forbidding wrong, or with the officially appointed censor (*muḥtasib*) and his administrative role (*ḥisba*). There is also on the other hand an intense discussion on whether the individual has a duty to rise against an unjust ruler. Cook for example refers to a Prophetic tradition attested in canonical collections that states: 'The finest form of holy war (*jihād*) is speaking out (*kalimat ḥaqq*) in the presence of an unjust ruler (*sulṭān jā'ir*)'.[358]

This means that the duty can easily be turned into a mechanism of social control or of contestation of authority and therefore its interpretation is intensely political. What this chapter is interested in, therefore, is how this particular duty, as well as morality in general, is brandished for political purposes among Islamist movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[359] More specifically, this chapter explores how it is used to challenge the authority of the PA and the two different interpretations of the duty within Hamas, one modernist and one purist. With its emphasis on moral purity, the duty to command right and forbid wrong is a distinctly Wahhabi principle, however as this chapter argues it is also central to modernist Salafism.[360] Chapter 6 also explores this in the context of Salafis and Jihadi-Salafis contesting the authority of Hamas, that is, the reverse of the situation in this chapter.

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[357] Cook, pp. 11-12.
[358] Cook, p. 6.
[359] For more details on this argument see chapter 3 'Religious "Orthodoxy" as Public Morality: The State, Islamism and Cultural Politics in Egypt' of Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*.
[360] For its importance in Wahhabism see Meijer, pp. 11–12.

The Palestinian Brotherhood and Hamas: Morality and Liberation

The relative importance of imposing Islamic social mores versus the struggle against Israel was the defining question for the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, the precursor of Hamas. Though the Brethren participated in the first Arab-Jewish war in 1948 shortly thereafter the Palestinian branch of the organisation decided to completely leave aside the violent struggle against Israel and focus on the transformation of society. The Muslim Brotherhood concluded that 'Palestine had been lost in large measure as God's punishment for turning away from Islam'. Therefore, 'the logical first step in its recovery was for Palestinians to return to Islam, and only after that could Israel be confronted effectively'.[361]

This focus on spiritual and social reform runs deep in the history of political Islam though there were also very pragmatic reasons for this decision. First, it was caused by the persecution by the Egyptian authorities of the Brotherhood, which extended to the Gaza Strip, a territory under their control from 1948 until 1967. And second it was the belief that they lacked the material means to defeat Israel. However, with time this policy began to cause heated internal debates as well as desertions, because while the nationalist movements were fighting Israel, the Brothers spent their time preaching and were perceived to be avoiding a direct confrontation with Israel, which affected, understandably, their nationalist credentials.[362] However, with the defeat of Arab nationalism in the Arab-Israel war of 1967 and the consequent and steady rise of Islamism regionally—also known as 'the Islamic awakening'—the Palestinian Brotherhood felt emboldened to join the struggle against the occupation. A more immediate trigger was the formation of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in 1981 and the popularity they gained with their armed attacks in the mid-1980s. The Brothers feared

[361] Glenn E. Robinson, p. 121.
[362] Glenn E. Robinson, p. 121.

for the complete loss of their credibility and so with the outbreak in December 1987 of the First Intifada they decided 'put aside the ideological imperative to purify society before any confrontation' and to establish Hamas.[363]

The importance of moral questions from the Palestinian Brotherhood to Hamas, is a journey of continuity but also of rupture. The creation of al-Mujammaʿ al-Islami association in 1973 was a turning point in the institutionalisation of the Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip and as a way to breathe new life into Palestinian Muslim society. By means of an ambitious social support programme it encouraged society to return to Muslims values. At the same time, 'on a wider scale, an intensive effort was undertaken to eradicate "immoral" behavior, such as the dissemination of pornographic material, the drinking of alcohol, prostitution, drug abuse, and joint activities of young men and young women.'[364] This moral vision was not only imposed through a social support programme. The Palestinian Brothers did not hesitate to use violence in order to enforce it and by the mid-1980s such acts were widespread in both Gaza and the West Bank.[365] Thus Mishal and Sela argue that 'although so far abstaining from the armed struggle against Israel, al-Mujammaʿ did not rule out violence as a means to impose the "true path" for the Palestinian Muslim community.' Therefore, they conclude, 'violence was built into the movement's worldview from its very inception.'[366] Violence was not confined to what they considered to be immoral acts, but it included more broadly their secular leftist political rivals. In January 1980, for example, Muslim Brothers set fire to Palestinian Red Crescent office, an institution that was a stalwart of the Palestinian left. Then, in 1983 there were clashes between al-Mujammaʿ and PLO members over control

[363] Glenn E. Robinson, p. 123.
[364] Mishal and Sela, p. 20.
[365] Mishal and Sela, p. 26.
[366] Mishal and Sela, pp. 22–23.

of IUG, 'and such clashes became routine in the following years'.[367] These aggressions did not stop when the Palestinian Brethren was transformed into Hamas but continued in the university campus through the mid-1990s.[368]

The elision that Mishal and Sela make between violence against immorality, political rivals and later Israel, which carried over from the Muslim Brotherhood into Hamas, is however questionable. These were different forms of violence and not part of a violent Hamas DNA that Mishal and Sela propose. It is true that Hamas maintained a concern over morality and social reform. As leader of Hamas, Ahmad Yasin still believed that 'the Palestinians lost Palestine for not being sufficiently Muslim'.[369] The Movement continued to criticise its political rivals, like al-Fatah and the PFLP, on moral grounds, in particular because of their 'secularism', as is reflected in the Charter, and this at times led to violence. But the argument made by Mishal and Sela does not reflect the switch of priorities that Hamas had made by which fighting the occupation took precedence over imposing a certain moral order and the impact this had in the use of violence in the internal arena. Al-Majd, a 'security organisation' considered a forerunner of Hamas itself, provides an example. It was established in 1986 within Al-Mujammaʿ al-Islami to persecute Palestinian informants working for Israel as well as moral corruption.[370] However, with the establishment of Hamas after the outbreak of the First Intifada in late 1987, al-Majd was disbanded and the Hamas military wing created, turning violence outwards, at the Israeli occupation.[371] Internal violence against presumed collaborators persisted, but this was an extension of the fight against Israel.

[367] Mishal and Sela, p. 23.
[368] Mishal and Sela, p. 24.
[369] Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Histoire de Gaza* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), pp. 172–73.
[370] Hroub claims it was established in 1983, Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, p. 40.
[371] Mishal and Sela, p. 156.

Violence against perceived immorality reoccurred but in a more spontaneous and disorganised manner.

To understand this change it is useful to refer back to the distinction between revolutionary and reformist tendencies of Islamic thought in the twentieth century, the former a top-down and the latter a bottom-up formula for change. Thus, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood is considered to fall in the second category due to its focus on reform, though from time to time it was also tempted by violence, whether against Israel in 1948 or internally in Egypt to bring about an Islamic order. Then the Palestinian Brotherhood, influenced also by a revolutionary trend that drew inspiration from the thought of the Islamist ideologue Qutb, decided to make a radical break and to focus on the liberation of Palestine by military means with the creation of Hamas.[372] It is worth remembering that the Brotherhood had participated in the war against Zionism in 1948, and had not needed Qutb's writings to inspire them then. But later Qutb became a major figure in the Islamic awakening from which Hamas emerged. However, there is a crucial difference. Qutb's inspiration is only in terms of the revolutionary means while the actual ends are significantly different. Qutb's attention fixed on the corruption of Muslim societies, in particular the Egyptian regime. For Hamas on the other hand violence became focused on the struggle for liberation against the external enemy, Israel. This distinction however was not clear-cut, and there remained in Hamas a tendency to link the struggle against the occupation with questions of morality and corruption internal to Palestinian society, and to even use violence to confront it.

This chapter will now probe the struggle between the modernists and purists, reformists and revolutionaries, over the place of morality in the Movement by focusing on a particular incident, the arson attacks mentioned above.

[372] Tamimi mentions superficially the influence of Sayyid Qutb in the thought of Palestinians who went on to create Hamas, Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, p. 26.

The Second Intifada

The outbreak of the Second Intifada was a protest against the Oslo process, and since Palestinian President Yasir Arafat and the PA embodied those failed negotiations in the eyes of the Palestinians, the uprising was a revolt also against them. The rebellion proved that by the year 2000 the PA was out of sync with the people, who were closer to the political vision of Hamas in its opposition to the Oslo process.[373] The Movement exploited this sentiment pitting itself on the side of the masses and against the PA's hegemonic rule.[374]

During the Second Intifada *al-Risala* was instrumental in spearheading the propaganda campaign against the PA and in constructing the image of Hamas as the leading faction. Eldar claims that on the eve of the Second Intifada Hamas members was subdued and afraid that if they spoke against the PA they would be arrested.[375] However, a superficial look at the front pages of *al-Risala* shows that they were voicing robust criticism before the uprising, and it only intensified after the outbreak of the violence. The paper was constantly criticising the negotiations with Israel and accusing the PA of making excessive concessions. The headline of the first issue in the year 2000 decried the PA following the Israeli redeployment plans, 'The PA Agrees to the Second Redeployment According to the Israeli Maps!'[376] The main article of its newspaper on the 19 October 2000, a few weeks into the Second Intifada, targeted the Sharm el-Sheikh summit—a last ditch attempt to salvage Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations: 'Sharm al-Shaykh Summit: A Crushing Blow to the Intifada and the Sacrifices of the

[373]Khalidi, p. 152.
[374] Eldar, p. 73.
[375] Eldar, p. 85.
[376] 'Al-Sulta Tuwafiq ʿala lʿadat al-Intishar al-Thaniyya hasaba al-Kharaʾit al-Israʾiliyya!', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 6 January 20011), p. 1.

Martyrs' was the front-page headline.[377] One subtitle read: 'The (Palestinian) Authority abandoned all its conditions and the Zionist enemy left innocent of the crimes and massacres it committed'. Another article, also on the front page, denounced: 'The (Palestinian) Authority arrests again a number of those it had released from prison.'[378]

In the two weeks since Ariel Sharon had visited al-Haram al-Sharif on 28 September 2000, at least ninety Palestinians had been killed and more than two thousands wounded. On 12 October, the Israeli army had used combat helicopters to fire missiles against Palestinians in Gaza. Due to the intensity of the violence the Palestinians realised that these confrontations were of a different calibre from anything that most of them had ever seen. *Al-Risala* carried a number of articles arguing that the Israeli security forces had spent years preparing for a showdown with the Palestinians, a widespread revolt similar to the First Intifada. This time however the stakes were higher, in particular because in the interval the PA had established its own lightly armed security forces and some of the Palestinian opposition factions had become increasingly militarised. Also Hizbullah's success in driving Israel out of southern Lebanon in May 2000—a frequent reference in the pages of *al-Risala*—had given the Palestinians a false sense of their own capacities. Hamas, in particular, was repeatedly calling for the PA to stop restraining armed groups and for new ones to be created. For example, on the issue published on 12 October, al-Khalas Party called for training and arming ordinary Palestinians.[379] This turned out to be their undoing; by using extreme force the Israeli

[377] 'Qimmat Sharm al-Shaykh: Darba Qasima li-l-Intifada wa-Tadhiyat al-Shuhadaʾ', *al-Risala*, 19 October 2000, p. 1.
[378] 'Al-Sulta Tuʿid al-Iʿtiqal ʿAdad min Alladhina Afraj ʿan-hum min al-Sujun fi al-Ahdath al-Akhira', *al-Risala*, 19 October 2000, p. 1.
[379] 'Al-Khalas Yadʿu li-l-Tadrib wa-Taslih al-Muwatinun', *Al-Risala* (Gaza, 12 October 2000), p. 3.

security forces encouraged Palestinians to respond in kind and turned the protests into an armed conflict, to their greater advantage.[380]

Hamas: 'In Light of the Acts of Burning'

It was not just against the Oslo process and the PA's involvement in it that the intifada was directed. There was also much pent up anger towards the PLO returnee regime that the Palestinian president had imposed in the Palestinian territories since his arrival in Gaza in 1994. And so, on the second Friday of hostilities, 13 October, Palestinians turned against them. That day the High Committee of the Nationalist and Islamic Forces, an ad hoc organisation grouping all Palestinian factions created at the beginning of the intifada, had planned a demonstration in the Gaza Strip to protest against Israel's violence. But what was meant to be a show of Palestinian unity turned into a series of arson attacks against a number of houses and public establishments where alcohol was sold and prostitution reputedly practiced. As reported by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights the day after: 'Yesterday afternoon Palestinian crowds and national and Islamic political forces went out to demonstrate peacefully throughout the Gaza Strip to express their anger at the occupation forces' actions and crimes against Palestinian civilians. One of these protests that started in Gaza City deviated from its path and aim and some of the participants, a minority, attacked al-Tahuna Hotel and Restaurant and set fire to it. They also attacked two houses and one store and set fire to them, with disregard for the sanctity of the houses or the rights of the citizens and their lives.'[381] Al-Tahuna Hotel was renowned for being the hangout of PA official and PLO returnees (*ʿāʾidun*) who wanted to continue practicing the sort of lifestyle, perceived by much of the population as libertine and nepotistic, that some of them had adopted during decades

[380] This is one of the main arguments of Raviv Drucker and Ofer Shelah, *Boomerang: Kishalon ha-Manhigut ba-Intifada ha-Shnia* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005).
[381] *Al-Markaz al-Filastini li-Huquq al-Insan Yunaddid bi-l-lʿtidaʾ ʿala Mumtalakat Khassa* (Gaza, 14 October 2000) <http://pchrgaza.org/ar/?p=9296>.

in exile and that contrasted with that in the Palestinian territories, and particularly that of those suffering the squalor of the refugee camps. All the targets of the attacks were in al-Rimal, a wealthy neighbourhood by local standards built on sand dunes in the southwest of Gaza City.

This was an extraordinary event, such aggressions were rare, but what made it particularly significant was the timing, the fact that it coincided with the very beginning of the Second Intifada, as Palestinians were trying to digest the scale of the violence that Israel had unleashed against them. It was also unusual in that these events were discussed so openly and that such a variety of opinions were expressed on it in the pages of *al-Risala*. In the October 19 issue there was first an explanation of the official position that Hamas took, of denial and condemnation. Then an opinion piece explained the official position of the Movement. A third article justified the violence. But before that, two articles were published on the previous issue, on October 12, the day prior to the attacks, which provided a sense of the atmosphere around the time of the events that encouraged such acts, and even further, that may have represented a direct causal relation between the printed text and the actions on the ground.

The burnings are a set of events that represent a link between two essential areas of the Islamic movement, the moral societal and the nationalist cause, which struck a chord among many Palestinians and it was not infrequent for one to say that the death and destruction caused by Israel was the result of the fact that they had not been good Muslims, just like the Palestinian Brotherhood had done decades before. The explanation of these events however cannot be reduced to religion and morality alone, but includes also other factors, among them grievances against the PA, described above, as well as a class struggle. In fact, something remarkably similar had happened during the beginning of the First Intifada when ‘the frenzy was not directed against the Israelis

alone. From al-Bourej, Nuseirat and Ma'azi, thousands descended on the fields of the area's landed residents, trampling and looting their crops. Jebalya rang with cries of "First the Jews, then Rimal!"'[382]

These events also illustrated the miserable relation between Hamas and the PA from the very beginning of the intifada with the burnings turning immediately into a focus of tension between the two. The PA accused Hamas of being responsible for the aggressions—al-Fatah had issued a leaflet to that effect. In turn Hamas leader Mahmud al-Zahar denied any 'relation between Hamas and the burning'.[383] Al-Zahar argued that Hamas had not organised the demonstration that ended in acts of arson and vandalism but that it was 'a general demonstration in which all citizens, sectors and factions participated in response to an invitation by the High Committee of the National and Islamic Forces'. He went on to accuse the PA of intentionally blaming Hamas despite evidence to the contrary. According to him 'the attempt to blame Hamas in the current climate is a deviation from the national front by means of repeated declarations on this issue despite the fact that they know that Hamas has no relation to it'. In particular, al-Zahar stated that 'the street considers' that the PA was using the arson attacks as an excuse to carry out an arrest campaign against Hamas. 'To accuse Hamas of being responsible is intentional', he said. And added that 'the media attack that some members of the PA are launching has special explanations'. This special explanation was revealed in another article, in the same issue of *Al-Risala*, in which al-Zahar linked the arrests to the Sharm al-Sheikh summit that had just taken place, and where US President Bill Clinton had tried to broker a ceasefire between Arafat and Ehud Barak.

[382] Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising - Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 101.
[383] Wisam ʿAfifa, ''Ala Dauʾ Ahdath al-Harq wa-l-Takhrib li-Funduq al-Tahuna wa-Baʿd al-Mahallat: al-Sulta Tahmil al-Masʾuliyya wa-Hamas Tanfi ʿAlaqat-ha bi-l-Ahdath wa-Tastankir-ha', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 19 October 2000).

Hamas was incensed, as was much of the population, by the fact that the summit had placed equal levels of blame for the violence on Palestinians and Israelis.

Hamas found it easy to deny responsibility for the arson attacks but it struggled to actually condemn them. This difficulty is reflected in the articles in *al-Risala* as well as the press release issued by Hamas the day after the events that was titled: 'Comment on the accusations by some that Hamas stands behind the burning of tourist places like shops selling alcohol and trafficking with drugs. A high official of Hamas expressed the following'.[384] It stated: 'there is no relation, near or far, between Hamas and these acts, despite the fact that Hamas denounces the existence of places of corruption and destruction of the generation on Palestinian land'. It reiterated that the only battle of Palestinians is with the occupation and there should be no distractions from it with a 'lateral issue'. In the last paragraph it accused 'a Fatah movement official and a leader of the security forces of the Authority' of trying to discredit Hamas for 'narrow partisan interests'. Thus, Hamas's attitude was one of condemnation of the attacks but also of the 'places of corruption', however, the violence, it stated, was reserved for the Israeli occupation.

The Preacher: 'In the Vastness of the Verse: The Definite Reasons for the Numerous Predicaments'

Around these events Yunis al-Astal published two articles in which he addressed the burnings focusing on the issue of moral corruption. Being essentially sermons, the columns by Yunis al-Astal in *al-Risala* were often moralistic. They were also intensely political. The day before the arson attacks, on 12 October, al-Astal published his column titled 'With the Booty Behind Them, They Were Taken by the Sword, And it Was a Day', a reference to the Battle of Uhud. It dealt with one of his favourite

[384] *Taudih Sihafi haula Ittihamat al-Baʿd li-Harakat Hamas*, 14 October 2000.

themes—already discussed in the previous chapter—also an important Qurʾanic narrative, the condemnation of those who 'lean towards the world', that is to say people who take excessive enjoyment in the earthly pleasures without considering the Day of Reckoning.[385] In this case, he used it to explain the Palestinian suffering in the Second Intifada. While enumerating the sins committed by Palestinians that explained such distress he focused on the charge of immorality, making a reference to the events that were to happen the next day as if they had happened already: 'And those who burned bars and the houses of entertainment and prostitution became a fifth column, although the Shamlakh family [a large Gaza clan] surprised those who weep for the martyrs, who are the ones that burned those nests.' Such surprisingly accurate description is hard to explain away as simply a coincidence. At the very least it indicates uneasiness in Gaza over the existence of these establishments at the time that dozens were dying and hundreds being wounded in clashes with Israel. There was however a printing error that could be interpreted as proof of an actual causal connection between the piece and the events the following day. The article that was printed on 12 October was actually only the second half of the original piece penned by al-Astal. The essay was then reprinted in full the week after, on 19 October, with a different title 'The Certain Reasons for the Numerous Grievances'.[386] A note was also added to the bottom of the page, below the text, explaining that there had been a technical mistake. The section of the text published appeared integrally but for one edition: The sentence quoted above was missing. This omission, clearly intended to tone down the text, as well as the content of the article as a whole, warrants speculation about the article possibly having provoked people to carry out the burnings.

[385] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Bi-l-Ghanaʾim min Waraʾahim, fa-Aʿmal fi-him al-Asyaf, wa-Kan Yauman', *al-Risala*, 12 October 2000, p. 20.
[386] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Asbab al-Akida li-l-Masaʾib al-ʿAdida', *al-Risala*, 19 October 2000, p. 20.

Regardless of this potentially incriminating fact, the sentence condemned such perceived immorality and identified those who fight Israel with those that burn alcohol outlets, as if they were commensurate acts of jihad. He then denounced the 'spread of immorality which disappeared in the First Intifada, then it returned to spoil society' in a clear reference to the return of the exiled leaders of the PLO and the establishment of the PA in the mid-1990s. And he singled out the media coverage of those who 'dance on our wounds'—in reference no doubt to the programmes shown in the official PA television channels showing dancing troupes—and of summer camps and international delegations. This led one to 'realise to what extent there has been a violation of the sanctity of God, and the situation has become muddied by prostitutes, not to mention the many, innumerable colours of normalisation' with Israel.

The main proposition of the article was that although the Jews, the Americans and those who helped them, whether Arabs or Westerners, were responsible for the difficulties the Palestinians faced, the real problem was within the Palestinians themselves: 'To them and all those who throw them a rope a great punishment is due. But we must also take care of ourselves because God does not change his blessing on a people unless they change what is in themselves', he wrote, paraphrasing Qurʾan 8:53. The article revolved around verse 165 of sura 3 (The Family of al-ʿImran) and the battles of Uhud and Badr to which according to Islamic tradition the verse makes reference: 'When a disaster befell you, when you had already inflicted the same twice over, did you say, "How is this?" Say, "It is from yourselves. God has power over everything."' The argument was that at Uhud, unlike Badr, the companions of the Prophet suffered heavy losses because they disobeyed the Prophet when the archers came down to collect the spoils of battle after they thought that the enemy had left, instead of waiting for Muhammad to tell them when they could move, as they had been

originally instructed: 'So that it was not Quraish that defeated them from the beginning, they defeated themselves. God took away our victory to punish us for the change of intentions among us'. The meaning of this lesson was explained in terms of the relation between this world and the next: 'Indeed the real reason of the partial defeat was that the souls of the forty [who disobeyed the Prophet, left their position and were then killed] tended towards this earth and the abstraction towards forgiveness and heaven weakened'.

In order to emphasise the link between the moral sphere and the struggle against Israel, he referred to the prominent Syrian Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Saʿid Hawwa and his commentary, *al-Asas fi al-Tafsir*: 'And he is a good observer of the relation between the actions of God, comparing the near and the far wisdom.' Effectively here al-Astal was also saying that Hamas was not responsible for the destruction that befell Palestinians but that Palestinians themselves were. Though there is no explicit reference in this text to al-Astal's support for the application of the duty to command right and forbid wrong 'with the hand', i.e. through violence, he had already mentioned it in the article quoted last chapter published on 28 September 2000, in which he claimed that victory over Israel was dependent on Palestinians being good Muslims, and that includes 'even that we change the vice with our hands and our tongues after our hearts'.[387] What he did use was a metaphor in order to bring out more clearly one of the fundamental lessons of the article: 'It is no wonder that society is like the passengers of a boat, if one makes a hole the lot are drowned, because division (*fitna*) does not only affect the oppressors among them'. This was a reference to a well-known Prophetic tradition about a group of people in a boat who live or die depending on how they respond to a group that makes a hole in its bottom. It is also a key metaphor in the

[387] Al-Astal, 'Al-Hashr 2'.

modern interpretation of the duty to command right and forbid wrong.[388] The image of the boat was used to emphasise that the community is a single body and a wrongdoer does not only harm to himself, but to everyone else. In establishing a shared destiny between the community and the individual the image of the boat was key because taken to its conclusion it was a call for the whole of society to change. That the whole is dependent on its parts and that therefore the group comes before the individual, is a theme that is central to Islamism from its origins and an important leitmotif across Islamist movements. This was also a way to enforce discipline across society. It wasn't just al-Astal who used this notion. Yusuf Ali Farhat, a former al-Khalas leader and Hamas cleric, in his article in *al-Risala* on December 7, 2000 entitled 'Let us confront the siege with the weapon of solidarity' cited another renowned hadith that had the same meaning: 'If a limb complained the rest of the body would suffer from fever and insomnia'.[389] It is of course not only an Islamic principle. The emphasis on unity is one that crossed party lines during the Second Intifada. Breaking a united front was an accusation that Hamas and the PA hurled against each other. What Islamist movements added to it was the moral dimension linked to a divine reward or punishment.

The Militant: 'The Islamists… Would there be a revolution against corruption?'

Next to al-Astal's article on 12 October 2000, there was another article dealing with the subject of moral corruption, 'The Islamists… Would there Be a Revolution against Corruption?' by ʿImad abu Rizq (1975-2002), born in Block A of al-Shabura, the largest refugee camp in Rafah city, in the southern tip of the Gaza Strip.[390] Written in

[388] Michael Cook discusses this exact same metaphor being used in the book *Fusul al-Islamiyya*, by Ali al-Tantawi published in Damascus in 1960, Cook, p. 514.
[389] Yusuf Farhat, 'Fal-Nuwajih al-Hisar bi-Silah al-Takaful', *al-Risala*, 7 December 2000, p. 20.
[390] ʿImad Abu Rizq, 'al-Islamiyyun... Hal min Thaura ʿala al-Fasad?', *al-Risala* (Rafah, 20 October 2000), p. 20.

even more fiery terms, Abu Rizq, who earned his living as a calligrapher, described in all sort of detail the moral corruption in Palestinian society and called for a revolution against it in which the *umma* was ready to sacrifice all to resurrect society. The article by al-Astal quoted above focused on the moral sphere, linking it to the struggle against the occupation. Without directly calling for violence against moral corruption, it ridiculed those who criticised it. Abu Rizq however was less ambiguous in his condemnation of society and the need for change. The piece was a tirade against moral corruption:

> The Islamist preacher looks at the situation in our society and he sees what has afflicted this society in terms of corruption in the social fabric and he touches the numerous moral and social illnesses like the absence of value, the fall of the self, the dissolution of principles, the boasting of sins, the prohibited.

Abu Rizq highlighted Gaza beaches—together with the summer camps, the beaches were a common symbol of moral corruption in Gaza—and the consumption of alcohol as a focus of this vice, the general deviation from the way of God: 'So the festivals of temptation and sin enclose the beaches of Gaza and the bottles of alcohol stagger every morning and fill the streets'. He also underlined the 'frivolous mixing' of the sexes in the universities and the national institutions. After building his case he introduced the notion of *jāhiliyya*:

> In reality friends we see everyday things that the soul of every free, proud, jealous and generous Muslim shudders. All this is the result of the distancing of this society from the way of God. Deviation from that which is right, divine guidance and righteousness, the return of the prohibited society to the *jāhiliyya*. *Jāhiliyya* of ideas, morals, negligence of the belief in the truth.

His conclusion was that the *umma* must be ready to sacrifice everything in order to resurrect society, and in order to reach this end the choices were stark, it was either 'God or destruction'. In the finale he called again for a revolution against corruption and quoted one of the Qurʾanic verses from which the principle to command right and forbid wrong has been derived:

We are in need of an exhaustive program of revival to which the sincere preachers are in solidarity with, and stop the bon vivants of sin, spreaders of vice, in reality we need a revolution against corruption. 'And the believers, male and female, are friends to one another. They enjoin what is recognised as reputable and forbid what is recognized as disreputable [Qurʾan 9:71].'

The text throughout evoked the writings of Qutb in its terminology as well as Weltanschauung, bringing to mind the apocalyptic tone that Qutb's *Milestones* evokes from its opening line: 'Humanity is standing at the edge of the void'.[391] In response the author called for a revolution, not reform, with quite explicit references to violence. The reference to *jāhiliyya* was straight out of Qutb's rulebook. Compare the passage above to this one from *Milestones*: 'We are also in a *jāhiliyya* today, like the *jāhiliyya* that was contemporary with Islam, or more oppressive. Everything around us is *jāhiliyya*… People's ideas and beliefs, habits and customs, the resources of their culture, arts and literature, rules and laws is *jāhiliyya*.[392] *Jāhiliyya* for Qutb was primarily a moral threat: 'This moral threat is far from abstract: in the Islamic world at least, military defeats, political disunity, corruption, and genuine poverty are the concrete results.'[393] Moreover, Qutb insisted that it is the extent of moral corruption that lends the struggle its urgency. Though the language reveals a strong influence from Qutb, this is not a blanket acceptance of his philosophy. At one point in the article he paid lip service to some of the reformist themes of the Muslim Brotherhood, calling for 'a complete reformist nationalist program, a program that doesn't forget women who are an important element of the work of destruction and construction', paraphrasing, it appears, the political platform of al-Khalas. Nationalism, like atheism and secularism, was antithetical to Qutb's thought, since Islam was a universal religion and man's

[391] Sayyid Qutb, *Maʿalim fi al-Tariq* (Beirut & Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1979), p. 3.
[392] Qutb, *Maʿalim fi al-Tariq*, pp. 17–18.
[393] Euben, p. 72-73.

allegiance was to God alone.[394] The reference to women also indicated a different approach to that found in *Milestones*, which confined them to the family sphere. On the other hand, the complete absence of a word linking this corruption to the struggle against Israel is remarkable because Abu Rizq a year later, on 9 January 2002, died together with his friend and neighbour Muhammad abu Jamus, an athletics champion, carrying out an attack against the Israeli military base of Kerem Shalom, on the border between Gaza and Israel, in which they killed four Israeli soldiers before being themselves slayed, becoming Palestinian heroes.[395]

The Modernist: 'An Attempt at a Close Examination'

In the same issue of *al-Risala* of 19 October 2000 there was an article that stood in contrast to those by al-Astal and Abu Rizq and was more in tune with the official Hamas condemnation of the attacks. 'The Burning Acts: An Attempt at a Close Examination' was an opinion piece by Nihad al-Shaykh Khalil,[396] a lecturer of History at the IUG and author of *The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the Gaza Strip (1967-1987)*.[397] Khalil, who was unequivocal in his rejection and that of Hamas to the attacks, is presented here as representing the modernist interpretation of the duty, in contrast to the articles above by al-Astal and Abu Rizq who are examples of the approach of purist Salafism. The consumption of alcohol is forbidden 'but that does not mean they should be burned'. This was the position of the 'Islamic movements' in Gaza, he claimed: 'I know that the Islamic movements in the Gaza Strip do not believe in the use of force to

[394] Ibrahim Abu-Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 161–62.
[395] 'Fi al-Dhikra al-Sanawiyya al-Ula li-Istishhad al-Qassami ʿImad abu Rizq, Batal ʿAmaliyya (Kirim Shalum) Sharqi Rafah', *The Palestinian Information Center* <https://web.archive.org/web/20110211032910/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/feda/emada.htm> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[396] Nihad al-Shaykh Khalil, 'Aʿmal al-Harq: Muhawala li-l-Tamaʿun', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 19 October 2000), p. 13.
[397] Nihad al-Shaykh Khalil, *Harakat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi Qitaʿ Ghazza (1967-1987)* (Gaza: Markaz al-Taʾarikh wa-l-Tauthiq al-Filastini, 2011).

command right and forbid wrong despite historical attempts to stick this accusation onto them but I expressed every time that they are innocent of these accusations'. More generally he expressed his opposition and that of the Movement to 'any violent means to achieve political or ideological objectives'.

Despite his condemnation of the attacks, Khalil did believe in the existence of a fundamental conflict in society, between secularists and the 'Islamic movement' representing two opposing visions of the world. So how did he propose to resolve this tension? His suggestion was to reform society, because not only was the attempt to stick on Hamas the accusation of violence wrong, but it was actually the accusers who were guilty of violence and who provoked the attacks. He explained this by attempting a radical redefinition of violence as a concept broader than direct physical aggression and turning it into any act of discrimination by the PA. It included political detentions; preventing people from obtaining jobs because of their political affiliation; ignoring other political opinions in official Palestinian media; the opulence of a new sector of society, i.e. the returnees, with their cars and houses and other excessive expenses that they had not earned with the sweat of their foreheads, and the family or personal feuds that the PA did nothing to stop. In this way he linked such violence with social injustice, in other words the result of a social order founded on inequality. This emphasis on social (in)justice we have seen in the previous chapter was a key feature of the centrist trend. Here it assumed a moral as well as an economic dimension, as was found in al-Khalas's political platform discussed in chapter 1. When making a reference to the targets of the arson attacks as 'tourist places'—the term also used in the press release quoted above—the secularist lifestyle was grouped together with the foreign, the imported. The economic system, he argued, was based on foreign input, like donor money and tourism. This in turn led him to a further proposal on how to deal with these

vices: by building an alternative economy. This was in contrast to al-Astal who only understood the problem in moral and religious terms, between those who sought earthly pleasures and those who were striving in the direction of heavenly rewards.

What Khalil did share with al-Astal was the connection between the West and moral corruption, found in all the articles explored in this chapter. Eickelman and Piscatori claim that this is in fact a theme that is shared by many Islamist movements and often a prelude to criticising local elites for having adopted disreputable Western habits.[398] Such assessment couldn't be more accurate regarding the events being analysed here. It is also an argument that encapsulates one of the themes central to the moral discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood: lack of authenticity. As Salwa Ismail points out confirming this connection between immorality and Western lifestyle, 'concerns regarding morality have long been present in Islamist discourses of the modern period. Hasan al-Banna, the founder and first Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, voiced much dissatisfaction over the importation of the Western lifestyle into Egyptian society.'[399] The criticism of immorality and Western influence were also intimately connected to notions that were deeply embedded in the Brotherhood's economic theory, coinciding thus with the argument made above by Khalil: foreign exploitation, and economic and social injustice. In their early writings, 'the economic image of Egypt comprised two main factors: (1) the maldistribution of wealth and land—i.e. Egyptian capitalism and what were deemed to be its evil consequences for the economy and people of Egypt; and (2) foreign economic exploitation—deriving from the imperialist but also from his internal counterpart among the "domestic imperialists", the foreigner in Egypt'.[400] Further, al-Banna, like Khalil, was explicit

[398] Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 89.
[399] Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*, p. 63.
[400] Mitchell, pp. 220–21.

about the relation between morality, the economy and the need to create an alternative system. It is worth quoting Richard Mitchell in full because the similarities are striking:

> Banna, perhaps more than his followers, was single-minded about the 'moral' dimensions of economic behaviour, an approach admittedly inspired by the Muslim view of the indivisibility of man's morality. It was in this framework also that the concept of 'social justice' was applied: economics without reference to 'social justice and the principles of morality' violated the fundamental teachings of God. This moralistic approach was matched by other constants in Banna's economic thinking. His concern with 'unity' in the nation led to a strong affirmation of Islam's revulsion from 'economic class conflict'. And the problem of 'foreign economic control' in Egypt led him to emphasize the 'duty' of Muslims to build a strong 'national economy'. These points were the essentials of the 'Islamic economic system' as discerned by Banna and elaborated upon by his followers, who placed them in a more coherent if still vague relationship with one another and with other economic issues.[401]

These arguments were for Hamas not just theory. As Benoît Challand observes, the Palestinian Islamic movement in the social sector had built a veritable model of an alternative economic system, erected conscientiously on principles of voluntarism, popular participation and self-help.[402] This Tamimi corroborates: 'The Palestinian Islamists may be viewed as pioneers in the way they transformed their intellectual and ideological discourse into practical programs providing services to the public through voluntary institutions.'[403]

There were a number of other ways in which Khalil argued against violence. First he expressed understanding for the secularists' fear and suspicion of the religious camp, interpreting Islamic history as consecutive acts of punishment and hatred threatening the secular way of life, though he thought it was exaggerated, thus attempting to recast the history of the duty to command right and forbid wrong. Then he qualified the underlying injustice of the PA and its corrupting influence on society, in order to avoid the sort of damning analysis of society that Abu Rizq proposed: 'I think that we are not

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[401] Mitchell, p. 250.
[402] For a snapshot of this see Benoît Challand, 'A Nahda of Charitable Organizations? Health Service Provision and the Politics of Aid in Palestine', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40.2 (2008), 227–47.
[403] Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, p. 37.

these types of societies which the Prophet criticised'. Finally he recommended that the way of dealing with 'these issues against Islamic law is wisdom and good advice like God ordered', in reference to what is referred to as the 'good admonition' derived from Qurʾan 16:125.

He offered a pragmatic compromise, which is that as long as Hamas was allied with the secularists it must accept their way of life: 'As long as the Islamic forces form political coalition with some secular forces (like the Popular Front [for the Liberation of Palestine] and others) the public of the Islamic movement must accept the way of life that these groups chose.' This was a profession of pluralism, albeit one that could be terminated, it was implied, if this coalition ended. Khalil's position was in contrast to that of al-Astal, who argued that the fate of all Palestinian was threatened by the immorality of the few, and even more so to Abu Rizq. Hamas's relation with other political movements, and particularly the leftists, is used by Hroub to illustrate Hamas's pragmatism.[404] Thus, although Khalil and Hamas avoided a confrontational attitude, the Movement as a whole did hold on to a binary vision and there was a heated internal debate on how to handle it, thus nuancing Mishal and Sela's statement quoted above that Hamas escaped such Manichaean perception towards relations with its political and ideological rivals.

The Modernist Reinterpretation of the Duty to Command Right and Forbid Wrong

As can be gleaned from the articles discussed in this chapter, the duty to command right and forbid wrong is at the very core of the Islamist project. In particular the piece by al-Astal with its emphasis on the morality of the community illustrated an essential feature

[404] See the section "Hamas and Political Pluralism" in Khaled Hroub, 'Theory and Practice', in *Hamas: Political Thought And Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), pp. 209–51 (pp. 209–15).

connecting this duty with the origins of political Islam, including modernist Salafism. The communal dimension is a characteristic specific to the modern incarnation of the duty to command right and forbid wrong that can be traced back to Rashid Rida's *tafsir*. As Roes Crollius notes, Rida's interpretation of the principle was one that contradicted the majority view among classical exegetes, including al-Ghazzali, who claimed that it was a collective duty (*fard al-kifaya*) to be left to those who have made a special study of religion and its prescriptions. Rida argued it was instead an obligation for every individual Muslim (*fard al-ʿain*). Moreover, Rida linked *daʿwa* to the principle to command right and forbid wrong, so that 'every single member of the Muslim community is obliged to propagate and defend his religion in the manner indicated in this verse', Roes Crollius states.[405] According to Saba Mahmood, this innovation was then taken up by the Brotherhood under the leadership of Hasan al-Banna and paved the way for the contemporary Islamist movement.[406]

Though Cook does not mention this change specifically from a collective to an individual duty, its features are implicit in the two essential characteristics of the modern practice of the value that he does highlight: its proactivity and organisation. The old conception of the principle was a duty to command right and forbid wrong in other Muslims when one encountered it, i.e. *fard al-kifaya*. The new understanding is a 'systematic and organised propagation of Islamic values'.[407] This change Cook also identifies in Rida's commentary, more particularly in verse 104 of al-ʿImran, the locus classicus of the duty already cited above.[408] Paradoxically, this again takes the form of the organisation of a subgroup of the community, perhaps an association or perhaps the government itself, who are to perform the duty, though not the ʿulamaʾ, Cook claims.

[405] Ary A. Roes Crollius, 'Mission and Morality', *Studia Missionalia*, 27 (1978), 257–84 (p. 277).
[406] Mahmood, p. 62.
[407] Cook, p. 515.
[408] Cook, p. 516.

Thus, the absence of a role for the scholars has also been a feature of the modern Islamic thinkers studied by Cook with regards to the principle coincides with the Salafi criticism of the ʿulamaʾ.[409] However, this thesis argues that despite their best efforts to sideline the ʿulamaʾ on paper, the organisation of the duty has in actual fact fallen back into their robed laps. That the scholars and preachers performed this function was not only evidenced in the articles by al-Astal generally but also in Abu Rizq who explicitly invoked the 'Islamic preacher' watching over society.

Reformists and Revolutionaries

These articles also illustrate the tension between the two main interpretations of the duty, the reformist and the revolutionary. The duty, together with *takfīr* (declaring someone an unbeliever), has often been invoked to justify violence.[410] Inspired by Qutb's moralism the performance of the duty 'with the hand' has naturally appealed to revolutionary Islamists, like the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, or that became revolutionary over time, like Jamaʿat al-Muslimun, referred to by outsiders as Takfir wa-l-Hijra (Excommunication and Withdrawal).[411] Al-Astal's articles cited in this chapter again exhibited traits of Qutb's thought, including explicit reference to the notion of *fitna*, which 'permeates the entire text' of Qutb's commentary.[412] Also the communal vision of society, though a central Islamist concept more generally, is particularly prominent in Qutb's writings.[413] However, on the actual application of the duty to command right and forbid wrong al-Astal's references to Hawwa in his article are more appropriate. This is because despite his heavy moralism, the principle as such did not feature prominently in Qutb's thought. In fact according to Cook he seemed almost to deny its existence.

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[409] Cook, p. 518.
[410] Salwa Ismail, 'The Paradox of Islamist Politics', *Middle East Report*, 2001, 34 (p. 36).
[411] Al-Arian, p. 83.
[412] Abu-Rabiʿ, p. 183.
[413] Abu-Rabiʿ, p. 152.

Hawwa however, who shared Qutb's militancy, did define the practice of the principle as jihad within the Islamic world. For Hawwa, Muslims living in a corrupt Islamic state should organise the execution of the duty through violence, though avoiding clashing with the state, which fits flush with al-Astal's intentions as manifested in his article.[414]

On the other hand, Rida rejected such interpretation. In *Tafsir al-Manar* he disagreed with the interpretation that 'the reasons for the excellence of the Muslim community consists in the fact that the Muslims fight in order to propagate their religion', this is because 'ordering equity and forbidding iniquity does not mean converting others by force, but rather guiding and instructing.'[415] Such nonviolent stance has developed into accommodationism, defined as the reservation of the use of violence to those in authority. Whereas this was rare in traditional Islam, it became more common in modern writings and according to Cook 'seems to owe its prominence to Hasan al-Banna'.[416] In fact he considers such view 'a flagrant divergence from the mainstream of traditional Islamic doctrine and an unmistakable assertion of political quietism.'[417] Indeed, there was a heated debate on the means used for the implementation of moral reform in Egypt within the Brotherhood before the Second World War. While one group believed in the use of violence, al-Banna preferred the 'good admonition', referred to by Khalil in his article. This had actually led to dissent and secession from the Brotherhood: 'Between 1937 and 1939 individual members had left the Society because of their dissatisfaction with Banna's attitude on this matter'.[418] The position of restricting violence to the state has of course also been that of the state

[414] Cook, p. 517.
[415] Roes Crollius, p. 281.
[416] Cook, p. 523.
[417] Cook, p. 524.
[418] Mitchell, p. 18.

ʿulamaʾ, like the Mufti of Egypt Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, who argues that the use of violence by individuals would lead to anarchy.[419]

Cook is emphatic, however, in that the accommodationist position has been strongly contested, at times described as heresy, and not only by militants, given that the use of violence is solidly grounded in traditional Islamic doctrine. Yet the vast ground he attempts to cover might have impeded him from giving more credit to this trend. In his chapter on 'Modern Islamic Developments' he highlights that ʿAbduh and Rida like most modern writers followed al-Ghazzali's interpretation of the principle, which includes the use of violence. He only mentions in an offhanded manner, in the conclusion of the book, that the stringency of the performance of the duty by Muslims—i.e. the use of violence—'was not well received by' Rida also.[420] Further, his assertion that al-Banna endorsed the 'accommodationist reaction' to the principle is preceded by the expression 'perhaps surprisingly'. And of course there is no attempt to examine the link between the positions of ʿAbduh, Rida and al-Banna, or to explore the roots of these accommodationist positions in any other way. His mind is set on showing the influence of al-Ghazzali's *formalism* to the point that he expresses also surprise at al-Ghazzali's influence in Hawwa rather than Ibn Taymiyya 'the favourite authority of fundamentalists'.[421] However, his overzealousness to trace the influence of al-Ghazzali, or to limit the influence of Ibn Taymiyya to 'fundamentalists' might have proven unrewarding. In fact, the positions of ʿAbduh and Rida appear to be much closer *in essence* to those of Ibn Taymiyya, one of their most important sources of inspiration.[422] Cook himself explains earlier in the book that the positions of al-Ghazzali and Ibn

[419] This is a position that is then taken up by al-Astal after Hamas enters government years later, as shall be discussed in chapter 6.
[420] Cook, p. 582.
[421] Cook, p. 508.
[422] Itzchak Weismann, 'Saʿid Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Baʿthist Syria', *Studia Islamica*, 85.1 (1997), 131–54 (p. 142).

Taymiyya regarding the principle are in stark opposition, with al-Ghazzali's deontology forcefully against the utilitarianism of Ibn Taymiyya.[423] Indeed he mentions with reference to Ibn Taymiyya that 'the utilitarian idiom of costs and benefits, with its brushing aside of moral absolutes, is a strikingly pervasive feature of his political thought'. And on this basis a case can be made for comparing the utilitarianism of ʿAbduh and Rida, rooted in the concept of *maṣlaḥa*—discussed in chapter 1—with that of Ibn Taymiyya. Indeed Rida endorsed the interpretation of *maṣlaḥa* of Najm al-Din al-Tufi (d. 1316), a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya and fellow Hanbali.[424] Further, although Ibn Taymiyya also allowed for violence to be used in the practice of the duty, he saw it primarily as being performed by those in authority and 'the emphasis is on civility (*rifq*)', which was closer to al-Banna's accommodationism.[425] This would provide a more nuanced view of Islamism, as well as, incidentally, Ibn Taymiyya, who has been associated with purist Salafism and Jihadi-Salafism in particular. As Shiraz Maher points out 'Ibn Taymiyya's legacy is far from settled', and while some use his writings to justify the application of *takfīr* onto those who fail to apply a strict version of shariʿa, for example, others argue such interpretation of his thought is unwarranted.[426]

A useful example of what such cost-benefit analysis effectively meant is found in a visit that Ibn Taymiyya made to the enemy Mongol camp in which he found them inebriated. When his companion suggested that they should reprobate them, Ibn Taymiyya disagreed on the grounds that fighting sober Mongols would be worse.[427]

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[423] Cook, p. 435.
[424] Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: the Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad ʿAbduh and Rashid Rida* (Berkeley and Los Angeles; London: University of California Press; Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 207. Though Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine was less sweeping than that of al-Tufi, Kerr concurs that al-Ghazzali's doctrine of *maṣlaḥa* was much more conservative than that of Ibn Taymiyya, Kerr, p. 97.
[425] Cook, pp. 153 and 155.
[426] Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2016), p. 85.
[427] Cook, pp. 154-155.

Hamas made a similar cost-benefit analysis when it argued in its press release for the precedence of the struggle for liberation on the grounds that violence for the sake of social reform was a distraction. This was also in Khalil's analysis in which the alliance with the leftist parties came before the regeneration of society along an Islamic template. Al-Astal on the other hand did the opposite, making liberation dependent on morality, while Abu Rizq connected it to the reawakening of the *umma* more generally.

Conclusion

There are a number of common themes in the articles analysed in this chapter: They all saw alcohol as a corrupting agent of Palestinian society. There was also strong criticism of the PA and secularism. The West more generally was seen as a corrupting influence and Khalil and al-Astal agreed on the need to break the dependency on foreign donors. However, there were also fundamental differences. What this chapter has illustrated is that Hamas encompassed a wide spectrum of positions, both reformist and revolutionary, accommodationist and violent. These different voices were influenced by and competed for the legacy of different parts of Islamic intellectual history and represented the centrist and purist Salafi traditions. The official Hamas condemnation of the arson attacks which Khalil echoed was thus not reflected in the writings of al-Astal or Abu Rizq. On the contrary, the latter were a form of incitement and may have actually been responsible for provoking these. This is not Hamas speaking in two voices, but the internal conversation of Hamas. Al-Astal was not giving his opinion as a spokesperson or a policymaker of Hamas, but as a preacher, a religious authority with weighty but restricted influence. The agreement in the positions of the preacher and the resistance fighter is worth underlining, because it indicates a special relation between the clergy and the military wing, in particular the importance of the former in the indoctrination of the latter, that repeated itself and shall be explored in more detail in

chapter 5. And although al-Astal and Abu Rizq incited to violence, the organisation tried to focus on alternative ways to influence society such as those outlined by Khalil. The use of violence to impose its societal values has been feature of Hamas, but not one that was systemic and defined the organisation. What was clear was that there was a particularly heated internal debate on the subject, because the concern of the modernist and the purist trend over the moral sphere overlapped in ways that were not easy to disentangle. Moreover, the links between morality and the struggle with Israel were deep-rooted in Hamas and it added a degree of complexity to this internal struggle.

This chapter has also shown the important role that the Hamas religious scholars played in this arena. From the perspective of the ʿulamaʾ the moral conflict, often directed by them, reaffirmed their religious authority. As Ismail specifies, 'in matters concerning morality, a chain of discursive authority runs from the Text, the Tradition through medieval jurists to contemporary preachers, and commentators'.[428] That this was the case was illustrated by al-Astal's insistence on morality. This prominence of the ʿulamaʾ was so despite the original intention of the modernist movement to turn the principle from a collective to an individual duty and is brought about by the need to organise and systematise its propagation. At the same time, this chapter provides an instructive case study of the limitations of the authority of the religious scholars in Hamas. Al-Astal was an influential figure, but not the ultimate decision maker of the Movement. The internal censorship of al-Astal's articles was an example of the relation of power between the religious scholars and the political leadership of Hamas, where the former had a specific function and an area of expertise that granted them their independence and freedom but which was also constrained by conflicting political

[428] Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*, p. 78.

considerations. It is the role of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas more generally that I aim to define in more detail over the next chapters.

Chapter 4 – The Rise of the Salafi ʿUlamaʾ

The history of Islamism has been identified with the rise of the 'lay intellectual'. These were individuals who did not receive a formal religious education but that led Islamist movements and still gained legitimacy as religious leaders. Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb were paradigmatic examples. This chapter argues that while the role of the lay intellectual in Islamism is important, that of the ʿulamaʾ has been underrated. It focuses on this clerical class in Hamas and explains how it has increased in importance over the years. Chapter 2 explained this through the notion of fragmentation of religious authority and the figure of Yunis al-Astal, whose writings have been analysed in detail. While it continues to use al-Astal as an example, this chapter examines the role of the religious scholars more generally and the institutions through which they projected their influence. It starts by discussing the existence of *iftāʾ* committees associated to Hamas and how the ʿulamaʾ channelled their influence through them. It then explains how the assassination of the top leadership of Hamas in 2003 and 2004 gave way to the rise of the clergy. It traces the origins of this group further back historically, connecting a generation of Palestinians who went to study in Saudi Arabia to Hamas. The role of IUG, where all of these scholars came back to teach, is also surveyed. This chapter argues that their Saudi training left an ideological imprint in them that created the Salafi tendency within Hamas, one of the maximum exponents of which is Nizar Rayyan. Rayyan was the most prominent figure to emerge out of that wave of assassinations and it is also his case that is discussed in detail in this chapter and the next. The chapter ends examining the key role of the ʿulamaʾ in the 2006 elections, both in promoting participation as well as in their own involvement as candidates.

In the literature on Hamas there is no meticulous discussion of the 'ulama' in the Movement, establishing their role and influence in decision-making to the degree that is offered here. Nor has the influence of Salafism within Hamas been previously discussed. The two major monographs on Hamas by Khaled Hroub and Jeroen Gunning don't mention the term. Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell use it briefly, and even apply it to Nizar Rayyan, but as a synonym of 'radicalism'.[429] In the academic literature on Palestine, Salafism has only been dealt with in reference to rival organisations to Hamas. Both Hroub and Milton-Edwards have coincidentally published two articles on the Salafi phenomenon in Gaza, but have ignored it within the ranks of Hamas. Milton-Edwards focuses on the Jihadi-Salafi groups that have since the end of the Second Intifada become increasingly visible in the Gaza Strip but does not contemplate any overlap with Hamas.[430] Hroub is even clearer about seeing them as two completely different entities. He traces the influence of Saudi Salafism and Wahhabism in Palestine to a movement of students that started in the 1970s, though to him this is independent of the parallel flow of Palestinian Brothers, which he does not refer to at all.[431] He does acknowledge the Salafi influence in the IUG but as something extraordinary and in the past, contrary to the evidence presented in this chapter. Moreover, the claims made here about the existence of a Salafi trend in Hamas run counter to Roel Meijer's statement that the 'Salafi movement was unable to ensconce itself within the dominant struggle for national liberation'[432] and that 'in the West Bank and Gaza Salafism has not been able to make any inroads on the dominant position of

[429] Milton-Edwards and Farrell, pp. 129–30.
[430] Beverley Milton-Edwards, 'Islamist Versus Islamist: Rising Challenge in Gaza', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26.2 (2014).
[431] Khaled Hroub, 'Salafi Formations in Palestine and the Limits of a De-Palestinised Milieu', *Holy Land Studies*, 7.2 (2008), 157–81 (p. 158).
[432] Meijer, p. 23.

Hamas.'[433] And though it does not necessarily contradict 'the rule of thumb' that 'where nationalist causes are dominant, such as in Palestine […] the Brotherhood will be dominant, whereas Salafism, for its deterritorialised, deculturised, and apolitical character will be prevalent in an environment where these issues are non-existent',[434] it should make the writer pause before making such sweeping declaration. In *Salafi Ritual Purity* Richard Gauvain makes a similar point to mine when he mourns the absence of analysis of Salafism's adaptation 'in prosaic surroundings, and among ordinary individuals', though he doesn't identify the potential contradiction I outlined above.[435]

Lajnat al-Ifta'

The role of the 'ulama' in Hamas is not only relevant because of the way it appears to contradict the anti-clerical origins of Islamism but also because among certain observers their influence takes the form of an accusation hurled against Islamist movements. In such cases the religious scholars are seen as the ultimate interpreters of revelation and the holders of the religious reference, and this is presented as the influence of the irrational.[436] Within the sphere of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict the Israeli elites actively promote the idea that primarily revelation guides Hamas. Issam Aburaya and Hisham Abu-Raiya propose an argument similar to mine with regards to the attitude of the Israeli establishment towards Muslims more generally in their article 'On the Connection between Islamic Sacred Texts and Muslims' Political Conduct: The Israeli

[433] Meijer, p. 29.
[434] Meijer, p. 21.
[435] Gauvain, p. 13.
[436] Though I inevitably touch on the topic repeatedly, in this thesis I do not attempt a detailed discussion of the relation between reason and revelation in Islamism. For the history of this dichotomy born out of the eighteenth century Enlightenment; whether Islamism is rational, nonrational or irrational; and how Islamism represents a critique of the post-Enlightenment rationalism see the outstanding works by Roxanne Euben and Samira Haj that I make repeated references to in this thesis.

Dominant Elites' Conception'.[437] I have already explained how Shabi and Shaked stipulate that the behaviour of Hamas, in particular its violence, can be directly linked to the belief in Islam, which is therefore assumed as irrational. Eldar occasionally falls into this trap, explaining at least part of the behaviour of Hamas by reference to a fixed religious essence.

The second group of people who proposed the idea of an organisation driven by divine inspiration is the Palestinian nationalist movement al-Fatah. The idea is contained, for example, in an article published by the Hamas newspaper *al-Risala* on December 2012: '"Hamas Mufti" Is a Fatah Lie to Assassinate al-Astal!'[438] In this article Yunis al-Astal said: 'Hamas mufti is a lie that was created by Fatah movement through al-Shabab Radio that belongs to it, in order to justify my assassination during the period of the security chaos' which started in Gaza in 2004 and ended after Hamas won the general elections in 2006. He continued: 'After my appearance in the PLC [after the elections] al-Shabab Radio started to attribute to me fabricated *fatāwā* on killing and assassination and it distributed them in a big way, and reported them in the official Palestinian television'. This was an accusation against al-Astal that has been repeated since, but more generally it was part of a series of allegations, implicit or explicit, made by critics of Hamas, which claimed that the Islamic Movement was directed primarily by its religious scholars.

In order to address these claims—that Hamas was guided by the ʿulamaʾ, revelation and the irrational—this thesis looks at the actual role of religion and religious experts in the Movement. This chapter argues that Hamas's clerical class, and religion

[437] Issam Aburaya and Hisham Abu-Raiya, 'On the Connection between Islamic Sacred Texts and Muslims' Political Conduct: The Israeli Dominant Elites' Conception', *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 5 (2012), 101–15.
[438] Ahmad 'Iwad Al-Kumi, '"Mufti Hamas" Ukdhuba Fatah li-Ightiyal al-Astal!', *al-Risala*, 20 December 2012 <http://alresalah.ps/ar/index.php?act=post&id=64969> [accessed 6 September 2016].

more broadly, actually served politics and not the other way round. Or as Gunning contends, despite tensions between the two, ultimately Hamas placed 'representative authority above religious authority'.[439] In the process this chapter will address whether al-Astal was in actual fact the mufti of Hamas and more importantly what his actual role was. Let us start by situating the Hamas religious scholars in the Islamic world.

Meir Hatina claims that despite demarcating 'Islam as the legitimate standard bearer of the struggle against Israel', the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, 'failed to produce prestigious ʿulamaʾ of their own, as had emerged in Egypt, Jordan or Saudi Arabia'.[440] Indeed global religious authorities, in particular Yusuf al-Qaradawi, were the main reference for many issues, whether major strategic decisions as well as day-to-day conduct.[441] However, this did not mean that Hamas religious scholars were irrelevant. In many ways they recognised al-Qaradawi's authority and followed certain guidelines that he set, but Hamas's ʿulamaʾ had complete organisational independence and dealt with issues of more immediate concern, which resulted at times in disagreements. One such discrepancy, for example, was on the response to 9/11 attacks which al-Qaradawi condemned, while al-Astal, for example, saw them as evidence of divine justice.[442] Nizar Rayyan had differences with al-Qaradawi,[443] but he also followed certain of his rulings. For example, for years Rayyan boycotted Israeli

[439] Gunning, p. 72.
[440] Meir Hatina, 'The ʿUlamaʾ and the Cult of Death in Palestine', *Israel Affairs*, 12.1 (2006), 29–51 (p. 36).
[441] Tawtah, Muhammad, Interview by author. Handwritten notes. Ramallah, 27 January 2015.
[442] Se for example: Al-Astal, 'Man Yazraʿ al-Shauk la Yahsid al-ʿInab'; Yunis Al-Astal, 'Wahn al-Iman Yathmur Istihjan Isqat al-Tayaran', *al-Risala*, 6 March 2003, p. 15. For al-Qaradawi's response see 'Al-Qaradawi: Muhakama Bin Ladin fi al-Suʿudiyya Au Misr', *al-Risala*, 20 September 2001, p. 7.
[443] Ibrahim Ahmad Al-Kurd, 'Maktabat Ustadh Duktur Nizar Rayyan al-ʿAmira wa-Athar-ha ʿala Talabat al-ʿIlm', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 317–49 (p. 326).

products until al-Qaradawi issued a dispensation for Palestinians.[444] Also, Hamas didn't only refer to al-Qaradawi. There were other global ʿulamaʾ and the Hamas religious scholars were able to choose from among their opinions—as part of the fragmentation of authority in Islam that has been referred to earlier. The variety of religious authorities was apparent in Hamas's website where a number of international clerics were referred to.[445]

So what was the institutional role of the Hamas ʿulamaʾ? As an Islamist movement, the Hamas political leadership was torn between dependency and distrust for religious scholars. On the one hand, Hamas claimed it used religion to guide its behaviour and the religious scholars served to legitimise this. Thus the Hamas ʿulamaʾ were often referred to as simply 'the religious reference' (*al-marjiʿiyya al-dīniyya*). On the other hand, the ʿulamaʾ class in Hamas were kept at a distance from decision-making and were found mostly in the second and third ranks of the leadership, not its executive organ, the Political Office.[446] Their rise, the role they played and the degree of influence they exercised is what this chapter examines. First, this section examines the institutional framework in which the ʿulamaʾ operated within Hamas: *al-iftāʾ* committees.

Like most information about the internal structures of the Movement, the existence and exact workings of a committee for the deliverance of formal legal opinions (referred to as *lajnat al-iftāʾ* or *al-lajna al-sharʿiyya*) composed of religious scholars associated with Hamas is difficult to establish. A number of Hamas leaders and sympathisers agreed on the formal existence of such committee(s) at one point or

[444] Yahya Nafi' Al-Fara, 'Al-Daur al-Siyasi li-l-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 541–64 (p. 551).
[445] 'Al-Fatawa wa-l-Taʾsil al-Sharʿi'.
[446] Abu ʿAmir, ʿAdnan. Interview by author. Audio recording. Gaza City, 2 February 2015.

another in the Movement's history.[447] According to Salah al-Bardawil, the former director of *al-Risala* who later became MP and spokesperson of the Hamas parliamentary coalition, 'Hamas has a *shūrā* council [*majlis*], and the *shūrā* council had a number of committees [*lijān*], one of those committees is the Islamic law committee [*lajna sharʿiyya*]. There are also political, judiciary and legal committees'.[448] However, he proceeded to minimise the influence of the Islamic law committee. Al-Bardawil, like other Hamas leaders, emphasised that all Hamas leaders had enough religious knowledge to make decisions, and they didn't strictly need the opinion of a group of religious scholars: 'Hamas movement considers that every leader and member of the *shūrā* council is a religious reference because he has a religious upbringing and is not in need of a religious committee'. The members of the political institutions all have religious backgrounds 'and every person knows the limits of what is halal or haram'. He indicated that *al-iftāʾ* committee had some bearing on issues with a moral or religious dimension, however, most decisions were perfectly clear to the Hamas leadership, who looked for the political advantage (*al-maṣlaḥa al-siyasiyya*) at any particular time taking into consideration certain red lines (*muḥaramat*). These include moral issues, for example related to the killing of a person. Then there were issues such as accepting Israel's control over Jerusalem, which had a religious dimension but was mostly political, he claimed. Thus, the recommendation of the committee would hold no more weight than that of any of them, he argued, which begs the questions of why have an Islamic law committee at all.[449] Al-Bardawil was overstating his case since clearly

[447] Sinwar, Zakariyaʾ. Interview by author. Handwritten notes. Gaza City, 4 February 2015. Abu ʿAmir, 2 February 2015.
[448] According to ʿIsa al-Nashshar, the *shūrā* council in the Gaza Strip in 2015 contained about sixty members, double the number it had at the establishment of the Movement. The original Political Office in Gaza was composed of the seven members that were at the founding meeting. By 2015 they had increased to thirteen, seven representing each of the regions of Gaza as in the beginning and the rest elected by the *shūrā* council, al-Nashshar, ʿIsa. Interview by author. Audio recording. Rafah, 1 February 2015.
[449] Al-Bardawil, 4 February 2015.

Hamas resorted to religious scholars for their opinion on certain questions, whether important political decisions or more technical ones. The Palestinian analyst and former *al-Risala* correspondent ʿAdnan Abu ʿAmir gave an example of the latter that granted more relevance to the opinion of the ʿulamaʾ, that of a Palestinian collaborator who is apprehended and confesses his treachery during interrogation.[450] His case would be raised to the Islamic law committee, which then recommended a fitting punishment to the political leadership. Their input was therefore purely advisory, that is, non-binding (*salāḥiyyat ghair mulzima*) for the political leadership.[451] On this both al-Bardawil and Abu ʿAmir appeared to agree.

Even further, despite the confirmation of al-Bardawil and others, it remained unclear whether there was one single official *iftāʾ* committee. The fact is that Hamas consulted different ʿulamaʾ and religious organisations in the Palestinian territories for their legal opinion. According to ʿIsa al-Nashshar, a founder of Hamas, 'there are religious personalities that are considered a reference [*marjiʿiyya*]. The basic reference is the Qurʾan, but who issues *fatāwā* on it, or talks about it? The ʿulamaʾ. We have ʿulamaʾ that studied shariʿa, *fiqh*. They are considered references. The Movement does not designate someone specifically'. To serve as a Hamas *ʿālim* all that was needed was a high degree of knowledge about Islam and affinity towards the Brotherhood, he said. Al-Nashshar mentioned an older generation of prominent religious figures in Gaza such as Muhammad Dib Qusa (1932-2008) and ʿAbd al-Karim al-Kahlut (1935-2014) as well as a younger group of Hamas affiliated ʿulamaʾ distributed throughout the Strip: ʿAtallah abu Sibah, Marwan abu Raʾs (b. 1958), Mahir al-Huli (b. 1964), Yunis al-

[450] Abu ʿAmir (b. 1974) had a doctorate in Political History from the University of Damascus and held various teaching and administrative positions at a number of Palestinian universities.
[451] Abu ʿAmir, 2 February 2015.

Astal, and Ahmad abu Halabiyya (b. 1952).[452] To this list Abu ʿAmir added Salim Salama and Salih al-Riqab (b. 1953).[453]

Except for al-Kahlut, all of these figures happened also to be leading members of the committees for the deliverance of formal legal opinions of the Palestine Religious Scholars League (*Rabita ʿUlamaʾ Filastin*) (est. 1992) and IUG (est. 1986). These filled a vacuum and immediately became the de facto religious authority in Gaza because the religious institutions in that strip of land had been neglected since the war in 1948 and particularly under the Israeli occupation of Gaza in 1967, to the extent that until the establishment of the PA in 1994 Gaza had no official mufti.[454] Then after 1994 al-Kahlut, who incidentally was visually impaired, was appointed as such, however he had been teaching at IUG since its establishment and was very close to the members of the *iftāʾ* committee, the Hamas leadership and Ismaʿil Haniyya himself, who he had taught during his student days. Otherwise the PA's official religious institutions were considered to simply serve the interests of the governing authority and for this lacked real legitimacy.[455] All of this greatly facilitated Hamas's status as the ultimate religious reference in Gaza. The takeover of the official institutions after Hamas acceded to government in 2006 was confirmed by Abu Raʾs, then head of the League, when he listed 'the fatwa references in Palestine' as 'the *iftāʾ* committee of PRSL, the mufti of Gaza, the mufti of Palestine that belongs to the Palestinian government and the *iftāʾ* committee of IUG'.[456]

[452] Al-Nashshar, 1 February 2015.
[453] Abu ʿAmir, 2 February 2015.
[454] Ismaʿil ʿAli Abdullah Labd, 'Al-Iftaʾ fi Qitaʿ Ghazza wa-Daur al-Shaykh Qusa fi-hi' (Islamic Univeristy - Gaza, 2010), p. 60. This Master's thesis supervised by Mahir al-Huli covered in some detail the history and relations between these institutions and those belonging to the PA.
[455] Labd, p. 64.
[456] Shaimaʾ Marzuq, 'Taʿaddud al-Fatawa... Taʿudd ʿala Takhassus al-ʿUlamaʾ am Ikhtilaf fi al-Araʾ?', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 15 March 2007), p. 10.

The special importance of the League is to be highlighted. Though the IUG *iftāʾ* committee was established first, PRSL eventually became the more important institution, with a wider reach beyond the university. It also had particular influence in the rise of the Hamas ʿulamaʾ specifically. Contrasting the cases of Egypt and Morocco, Gaffney highlights the potential influence of such organisations in mobilising and giving agency to the religious scholars in a country. In Egypt the ʿulamaʾ were 'professional preachers, teachers, and government functionaries trained at the Azhar and following careers in various institutions or under Ministries such as Justice, Religious Endowments, or Education, where their religious credentials are prerequisites for their posts.' However, 'such men lack the support of formal mechanisms that would solidify them and coordinate their common interests. Egypt, for instance, has nothing parallel to the formidable League of Moroccan Ulama which exercises great influence in that country', Gaffney wrote.[457]

Both the *iftāʾ* committee of IUG and PRSL are therefore to be seen as attempts by the ʿulamaʾ, and al-Astal in particular, to claim monopoly over sacred authority and ownership of the religious discourse, particularly after the creation of the PA's official religious institutions. Al-Astal, who at different points in his career was president of both IUG's fatwa committee and of PRSL, provided an example. It was his involvement in these two fatwa committees that enhanced his authority and projected his career. That there was such conflict with the PA is evidenced in a struggle between the Ministry of *al-Awqāf* and Hamas over control of the mosques. In the third article he published in *al-Risala*, on 25 December 1997, he addressed an order by the PA—publicised two weeks before in the paper—prohibiting anyone who was not an employee of the Ministry of

[457] Gaffney, p. 39.

al-Awqāf from giving a class or a sermon in its mosques or using its loudspeakers.[458] Al-Astal responded with an article on Qurʾan 10:87: 'We revealed to Moses and his brother, "Makes some houses lodgings for your people in Egypt; and make your houses places to turn to, and perform prayer and give good tidings to the believers."' He interpreted this verse using Saʿid Hawwa's *tafsīr*, which said that confronted by hardship and repression 'the *daʿwa* must not stop and must continue even inside the houses.'[459] In actual fact the PA wasn't much competition, among other things because many Hamas sympathisers worked for the Ministry, some of who even wrote in *al-Risala*.[460] This gave Hamas an advantage allowing it to claim the religious discourse for itself, and through the pages of *al-Risala* to, for example, provide a scriptural justification for success or failure, whether military or political, which was less readily available to the PA. Such control over the religious field Gilles Kepel mentions in relation to Islamists in Algeria where there was not a powerful religious establishment to rival them, unlike Egypt or Iran.[461] Thus the Hamas ʿulamaʾ had a double advantage. First, because they enjoyed the support of a professional association, like the religious scholars in Morocco and unlike those in Egypt. And second because they operated in a country without a solid official religious establishment, like there was in Egypt or Iran, to rival its hegemony over the field.

Still, the influence of these committees in Hamas should not be overstated. First, confirming what Abu ʿAmir mentioned, they seemed to have dealt with mostly technical issues. Another example is given in an article in *al-Risala* on 19 March 1998 on the subject of child rape in which both the opinions of ʿAbd al-Karim Kahlut, the

[458] 'Taʿmim li-l-Awqaf Yamnaʿ ai Fard min ʿAtaʾ Dars fi al-Masajid', *al-Risala*, 11 December 1997, p. 3.
[459] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Fi Rihab Aya', *al-Risala*, 25 December 1997, p. 16.
[460] Muhammad Ismaʿil Al-Faqih, 'al-Marʾa al-Muslima wa-l-Tahaddiyat al-Muʿasira', *Al-Risala*, 5 April 2001, p. 20. The author is presented as an employee of the *al-Awqāf* Ministry.
[461] Kepel, *Jihad: Expansion et Declin de l'Islamisme*, p. 278.

blind mufti of Gaza, and the *Lajnat al-Iftaʾ* of the IUG were quoted.[462] And second, the existence of a fairly decentralised structure, by which the Movement received counsel from multiple sources, confirms that their role was advisory and the political leadership maintained its independence in decision-making, giving it flexibility to choose the interpretation of the scriptures that most suited its interests. Thus, al-Nashshar emphasised that the opinions of ʿulamaʾ who were considered references were themselves contested. 'The word reference [*marjiʿiyya*] does not mean for us that it is uncontested. We have a proverb, "everything you take from it or not, except the Prophet". Any person that is considered a reference, we listen to him but when he enters into the particulars maybe we don't take it if it is not completely firm from the Qurʾan and sunna', he stated.

Al-Nashshar explained in more detail how this functioned at the level of decision-making. At an individual level Ahmad Yasin, as leader of Hamas, would seek the opinion (*raʾi*) of one or another on a particular subject and sometimes he would seek the opinion of more than one shaykh on a specific issue. He would analyse the reasoning of each and himself chose the one he thought most appropriate. At an institutional level, the *shūrā* council would discuss different opinions and then take a vote. 'Maybe I respect an idea by [Rashid] al-Ghannushi and I like it, someone else can be convinced by [someone else] but in the end there is a consensus. Even if there is a difference of opinion this does not mean there is a break and everyone goes their way, in the end there is an agreement', because once the *shūrā* council takes a vote, everyone's commitment is guaranteed by invoking the disciplinary principle of 'listen and obey' (*samʿ wa-ṭāʿa*) said al-Nashshar. This was an example of the flexibility of the modernist thinking. ʿAbduh expressed a similar approach to the different legal schools arguing

[462] Iʿtidal Qanita, 'Man Yahmi Atfal-na... Min Khatar al-Ightisab?', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 19 March 1998), p. 17.

'that in any particular case a judge could choose that interpretation of the law, whether it came from his own legal code or not, which best fitted the circumstances'.[463] Also, incidentally, it reflected that unlike purist Salafism, modernism did not endorse a blanket rejection of the scholastic tradition. Similarly al-Qaradawi, who was also a Salafi in his independent approach to the scriptures, criticised the 'irreverence toward the riches of the legal tradition'.[464] Zakariyaʾ al-Sinwar (b.1965), History lecturer at IUG, took this to its ultimate conclusion when he argued that the existence of four different legal schools was not a sign of the division and rigidity of Islam but quite the contrary, its flexibility.[465] Implicit in all these opinions was also the recognition of different valid interpretations of the scriptures.

All this meant that there was a dialogue between the political leadership and the religious class and certain ʿulamaʾ might have voiced concern about a particular issue, but in the end when a political decision was taken they abided by it. The *shūrā* principle was key in giving legitimacy (*sharʿiyya*) to whatever decision the political leadership took. And this also meant that the *shūrā* outweighed the fatwa. The fact that one single official institution or individual that issued a recommendation did not exist further guaranteed the subservience of the religious class to the political class. Of course, a particularly persuasive religious scholar might be able to exercise more influence than others, as shall be examined later with regards to Nizar Rayyan. But what this chapter argues is that despite this dialectical relationship between religion and politics, it was religion that served politics. It shows how Hamas used religion in order to justify its decisions, and this was mostly the role that the Hamas ʿulamaʾ played, to look for justifications in the scriptures to decisions taken by the Movement. The justification of a

[463] Hourani, p. 152.
[464] Euben and Zaman, p. 20.
[465] Sinwar, 4 February 2015.

political decision by the ʿulamaʾ served among other things to promote and market it among the Movement's base, and in particular its military wing.

The way that Hamas was able to co-opt most of the religious class was in fact remarkable. The Palestinian analyst ʿAdnan abu ʿAmir claimed that in the history of the Movement the religious class never in fact overruled the political leadership. In all key political decisions and turning points—the elections, the Gaza countercoup in 2007, the wars with Israel, relations with the Arab states, the siege of Gaza—the clerics in Hamas ultimately gave their stamp of religious approval, to provide the political leadership with the support of its rank and file. One poignant example is the historical closeness between Hamas and Iran, despite the opposition from most of the ʿulamaʾ on religious and more particularly sectarian grounds, and even during particularly sensitive periods, like the war in Syria that started in 2011 in which Iran helped the regime fight Sunni insurgents.[466]

To go back to al-Astal, he did in fact provide Hamas with religious legal opinions and was part of a formal committee that provided such advice. However, this made him *a* Hamas mufti and not *the* mufti of Hamas because such position never existed in the first place. Ordinary Palestinians also sometimes referred to him as 'the imam of Hamas', a position that did not exist either but which indicated that he was a particularly influential religious figure within the Movement. Neither of these functions meant that he dictated the policy of the Movement. His role was to answer specific queries from the political leadership of the Movement, whether a certain decision could be justified by the scriptures or if it went against the principles of Islam. Some such would be closer to the core political positions of the Movement and others related to more technical and everyday issues. Further, he would not be the only religious

[466] Abu ʿAmir, 2 February 2015.

authority consulted. More broadly, the very existence of a group of ʿulamaʾ separate from the political leadership is significant as it established the distinction between the two spheres, comparable to the executive and the legislative branches of government. In fact this form of governance very much resembled the classical Islamic constitutional order, in which the ruler issued his own regulations, preserving 'the theoretical idea that these were indirectly authorised by the shariʿa', and hence by its interpreters, the scholars themselves.[467] This distinction will become more clearly delineated when I contrast Hamas with al-Qaʿida in chapter 6.

Raising a Generation of Religious Scholars

Al-Astal filled multiple roles in Gaza and in Hamas. *Al-iftāʾ* committees were institutions that provided a platform to make a name for himself. His media contributions propelled his popularity further, and eventually he was elected to the PLC in 2006. But it was his association with the IUG that set him on course to end up as the influential religious figure that he became. A teaching position at IUG was condition sine qua non to enter the Hamas religious elite, and though al-Astal never rose above a basic lectureship at the IUG, he served for a time as faculty dean. Evidence that this granted him status as a religious reference and moral authority is found in the pages of *al-Risala*, where he is quoted, for example, in an article in November 1998 about a popular entertainment magazine aimed at Palestinian adolescents. Al-Astal is presented as dean of the Shariʿa faculty at the IUG and his expression of disapproval ('whoever buys or purchases it sins') is used as a pull quote.[468]

However, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, al-Astal was an unusual type of Islamist. His specialised religious training marked him out from the

[467] Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 50.
[468] Iʿtidal Qanita, 'Fusta??!!', *al-Risala*, 22 November 1998, p. 10.

standard profile of modern Islamic activists, who have more often obtained their university degrees in a professional field rather than religion. This is a widespread trope in the literature on Islamism and is tied to the break with the ʿulamaʾ described earlier.[469] Hamas was no different. The first generation of its leaders were not ʿulamaʾ but doctors, engineers, chemists, teachers who had received professional degrees in Egypt. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Rantisi and Mahmud al-Zahar were medical doctors, Ibrahim al-Maqadma was a dentist and Ismaʿil abu Shanab an engineer. They however had studied Islam thoroughly before becoming members of the Muslim Brotherhood, in study circles and alone. They accumulated copious knowledge to the point that they became respected religious figures unto themselves and could perform a number of religious functions. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Rantisi, for example gave a religious lecture every Friday before the sermon in the biggest mosque of Khan Yunis, in al-Amal quarter, and at times he delivered the homily itself.

So how did this creation of a separate religious class come about? After the 1967 war, Ahmad Yasin set about rebuilding the Brotherhood in Gaza. He became interested in establishing a group of religious scholars to help revive Islam in Gaza that would become a religious reference for the Movement. Yasin, then leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza, encouraged and provided for young Palestinians to travel abroad to study the religious sciences, shariʿa and *usūl al-dīn*, particularly in Saudi Arabia.[470] This switch from Egypt to Saudi Arabia was determined by the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations that began in 1977 and which affected relations between Egypt and the Palestinians. There was also a more specific catalyser: the assassination of the Egyptian Minister of Culture Yusuf al-Sibaʿi by a Palestinian militant group in 1978. One of the most palpable consequences was that the Egyptian authorities rescinded the privilege

[469] See: Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, p. 3. Eickelman and Piscatori, p. 72.
[470] Khalil, *Harakat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi Qitaʿ Ghazza (1967-1987)*, p. 61.

granting Palestinians free university education and from then on were unable to attend al-Azhar University.[471] Thus on 6 November of that same year the IUG was established.[472] There were however few qualified staff in Gaza with degrees in the Islamic sciences which made it doubly necessary for Palestinians to receive specialised training.

The 1970s and 1980s were also the years of the Gulf oil boom, which made large numbers of people move there to find work. Though they didn't only arrive there for this. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 caused Saudi Arabia to proactively try to counter Shiʿi influence in the region by opening up its universities and granting scholarships to foreign students.[473] This included the distribution of religious publications, financing charity organisation and building mosques throughout the Middle East and beyond. Saudi Arabia was in this way exporting a pan-Islamic ideology rooted in its Wahhabi version of Islam.[474] This was also a honeymoon period in the relations between Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood. Escaping from repression in their countries, Brotherhood exiles had started settling in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s, and as Olivier Roy explains 'a kind of joint venture was established between the Saudis and Arab Muslim Brothers, by which the Brotherhood agreed not to operate in Saudi Arabia itself, but served as a relay for contacts with foreign Islamist movements'.[475] Though something deeper had also happened. Merging elements from

[471] Labd, p. 35.
[472] For further details on the establishment of IUG see Jensen, p. 97-98.
[473] ʿAtallah Abu al-Sibah had a more meandering career. He completed his undergraduate degree in 1981 at the IUG, where he later became assistant professor of Shariʿa. He studied his PhD between Jordan and Sudan, which he completed in 1995, and did not go through the Saudi system.
[474] Al-Azmeh, p. 32.
[475] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, p. 117.

the two thought systems a new movement with its own ideology was formed: al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Awakening).[476]

In this way a generation of religious scholars with degrees in Islamic studies (*dirāsāt al-sharʿiyya*) from Saudi Arabia was created that filled the ranks of IUG, especially the faculties of Shariʿa and Usul al-Din, and became expertly equipped to carry out *daʿwa*. As they came back this group of ʿulamaʾ started to have weight within the movement and became a reference (*marjiʿiyya*), so that they were sought for their legal opinion and they eventually formed the ʿulamaʾ class and the Salafi trend within Hamas. Al-Astal, who was part of an older generation, made his way to Saudi Arabia independently and started to study there before the closure of Egypt, graduating in 1979. Also it wasn't just Saudi Arabia that they studied in. Some attended university in Jordan or Sudan. In the case of Nizar Rayyan, considered one of the staunchest Salafi ʿulamaʾ of Hamas and also a contributor to *al-Risala*, he studied in all three countries. But many of them went through Saudi Arabia. They remained at the IUG decades later and also filling leadership positions in Hamas. Moreover, they trained a new generation of Hamas leaders and activists, as well as a second generation of religious experts, who due to the increasing isolation of Gaza since the 1990s graduated from universities based in the Strip in increasing numbers. Indeed it was a brief window of opportunity to study in Saudi Arabia, since relations with the Palestinians soured after Yasir Arafat decided to side with Saddam Hussein with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The details of the influence of the Saudi experience, and in particular al-Sahwa, in the Hamas ʿulamaʾ at the doctrinal level and in the Movement as a whole shall be addressed over the rest of this chapter and the next, with reference to Yunis al-Astal, though more specifically Nizar Rayyan.

[476] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, p. 34.

The Life and Martyrdom of the ʿAlim Mujahid Doctor

Confirming the existence of an ʿulamaʾ class in Hamas and its Salafi tendencies, Baraʾ, one of Rayyan's surviving sons, is quoted saying: 'it is known that my father was a staunch Salafi, just like most Hamas ʿulamaʾ'.[477] Shaykh Rayyan, born in Jabalia refugee camp in 1959, was probably the most influential of all Hamas ʿulamaʾ in the history of the Movement. Among his colleagues at IUG he was considered to be one of its most distinguished scholar. He was also possibly the only *ʿālim* who has been part of the Political Office of Hamas, its chief decision-making organ. On 1 January 2009 the Israeli army fired two missiles at his multi-storey home in Jabalia refugee camp, pulverising it and killing him together with eleven of his children and four wives. He was fifty years old.

The influence of Salafism in Rayyan can be traced to his undergraduate studies in Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a convulsive period in the Kingdom's history. However, it wasn't just straight Salafism that impacted Rayyan, but the confluence of movements and ideologies that he met in Saudi Arabia and that came to be known as al-Sahwa insurrection. This particular encounter impacted directly Rayyan's studies. Rayyan graduated in 1982 from the Faculty of Usul al-Din of the Islamic University al-Imam Muhammad bin Saud, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he studied under and was heavily influenced by senior Saudi clerics and major Muslim Brotherhood figures, in particular ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Barrak and ʿAbd al-Fattah abu Ghudda.[478] Abu Ghudda had been the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. Al-Barrak became prominent in the 1980s and 1990s for his support of al-Sahwa

[477] Al-Fara, p. 553.
[478] 'Sirat al-Shaykh al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan (Abu Bilal)', *Rabita al-ʿUlamaʾ al-Suriyyin website* <http://www.islamsyria.com/portal/cvs/show/180> [accessed 6 September 2016].

movement against the official Saudi religious institutions.[479] Al-Barrak, who Rayyan established a lasting friendship with, considered Rayyan 'among the best students in intelligence and motivation'.[480]

Another cleric that was teaching around this time in Saudi Arabia and was probably a bigger influence on Rayyan, was a fellow Palestinian: ʿAbdullah ʿAzzam (1941-1989). With his mixture of Muslim Brotherhood credentials and Wahhabi influences, he was an archetypal product of al-Sahwa. After receiving his doctorate from al-Azhar University, bastion of Ashʿarite doctrine and rival of the Wahhabi establishment, he moved to Saudi Arabia where he taught at King ʿAbd al-ʿAziz University and more importantly became 'the leading proponent of Arab jihad in Afghanistan'. ʿAzzam was also one of the earliest political influences of Usama bin Ladin, who he came into contact with while studying at university in Saudi Arabia before heading off to Afghanistan to establish al-Qaʿida.[481] Rayyan established a friendship with ʿAzzam and when he was trying to decide what to study for his Master's degree, it was ʿAzzam who recommended him to specialise in hadith, the quintessential purist Salafi discipline. The subject of his Master's thesis, which he completed in 1990 at the Jordanian University, was 'Ahadith on Martyrdom and the Martyr: Collection, Categorisation and Extraction and a Study on What is Related to the Martyr' (*Ahadith al-Shahada wa-l-Shahid: Jamʿ wa-Tasnif wa-Takhrij wa-Dirasa li-Ma Yataʿalaqa bi-l-Shahid*).[482] He then studied his PhD in Sudan on 'The Future of Islam' (*Mustaqbal al-*

[479] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, p. 170.
[480] ʿAbd al-Wahhab ʿIsam Zaidan and ʿAbd al-Hamid Jamal Al-Farani, 'Al-Mafahim al-Jihadiyya ʿand al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan min khilal Kutubi-hi al-Manhajiyya wa-l-Riwayat al-Shafahiyya', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 599–636 (p. 606).
[481] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, p. 47.
[482] ʿAbd al-Rahman Yusuf Ahmad Al-Jamal and ʿAbd al-Raʾuf Radwan, Haifaʾ Ibrahim, 'Al-Rayyan Shahidan', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi*

Islam), which dealt with the future of Islam from verses in the Qurʾan and the sunna. ʿAzzam reappeared in his PhD thesis when Rayyan repeated a story he had heard from the elder Palestinian on the wonders (*karamāt*) that occur to the mujahidin.[483] Such wonders were central to ʿAzzam's propaganda for jihad in Afghanistan and part of his intellectual cosmology: 'In1982 he began publishing a series of motivating articles in the magazine *Al-Mujtamaʿ*, widely read in Saudi Arabia, in which he recounted the divine favours accorded to the martyrs (*karamat al-shuhadaʾ*) of the Afghan jihad and called on young Arabs to "join the caravan"'.[484] ʿAzzam's personality, his energy and enthusiasm for the cause of Islam, made him into a role model for Rayyan.

There was however another Palestinian that Rayyan looked up to for his vim and vigour—despite being paraplegic—and that was Ahmad Yasin. It was Yasin who had sent Rayyan to Saudi Arabia, as part of his lifelong commitment to raise a new generation of Palestinians, and it was to Yasin that Rayyan ultimately owed allegiance:

> Shaykh Yasin was near the hearts and the souls and cared about raising the generation. He used to raise with actions more than words and sayings. He used to extract from any situation an educational lesson, and he was able to influence the life of many youths who were ascending the ladder of manhood, and among them Rayyan, and Yasin was for him the leader of leaders.[485]

There was a strong jihadist bent to Rayyan's biography, and this was clearly a result of his stay in Saudi Arabia, the intellectual climate there, including the discussions on the Afghan jihad against the Soviets and his contact with ʿAzzam in particular. However, though Rayyan was clearly influenced by ʿAzzam, in the end his commitment was to Palestine. Indeed ʿAzzam himself was very much in favour of jihad

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Khidmat al-Islam (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 43–78 (p. 63).

[483] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 565–98 (pp. 570–71).

[484] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, p. 110.

[485] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 606.

in Palestine, and there is no profound contradiction in Rayyan's ultimate choice.[486]

Though somewhat later, written in the late 1980s, early 1990s, and already living in Jordan, the Palestinian nature of his jihadist tendencies is clear in his Master's thesis:

> 'I ask God most high, that he grant me martyrdom in the future, not from the rear, but sincerely and submissively, on my rich and dear country Palestine, and that he compensate Muslims with victory and sovereignty indeed he is the lord and yes the respondent. So I say: O lord here I wrote… and here I did… By God, I believe.'[487]

This was not a desire for martyrdom that was detached from a fight in a particular place, but an explicit endorsement of the military struggle against the Israeli occupation. This was reflected in another quote from the same work: 'there must not be a single Palestinian house which lacks weapons to fight in the path of God. Every Palestinian must know how to use a weapon'.[488]

Much has been written about the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly its Qutbist revolutionary strand, on Wahhabism to spawn a new generation of Islamist movements and the role of the Afghan jihad and ʿAbdullah ʿAzzam, in particular, in the creation of the Jihadi-Salafi al-Qaʿida. This thesis, however, deals with the reverse, the impact of these ideologies in Hamas. Further, since the unravelling of al-Sahwa and the uprooting of the Muslim Brotherhood from Saudi Arabia in the mid-1990s, Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood are most often presented as bitter foes, not only due to political rivalries, but also doctrinal incompatibilities. However, the person of Rayyan undermines this juxtaposition and illustrates, rather, their interplay, within Hamas in the context of Palestine.

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[486] Thomas Hegghammer, 'Abdullah Azzam, the Imam of Jihad', in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 99.

[487] Waʿil Muhi al-Din Al-Zard, 'Fikr al-Shahada ʿand al-Ustadh al-Duktur al-Shahid: Nizar Rayyan min khilal Risalati-hi al-Majistir wa-hiya bi-ʿAnwan "Ahadith al-Shahada wa-l-Shahid"', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 499–539 (p. 521).

[488] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', p. 583.

Back in Palestine

In 1984, soon after his return to Gaza, Rayyan started to teach at the IUG and a year later he started preaching in al-Khulafa Mosque, in Jabalia refugee camp. These were two key agents of the First Intifada that started on 8 December 1987.[489] Jabalia was where the uprising started and IUG where students were mobilised from the very early days. According to his brother ʿAbd al-Latif, who lectured on Hadith at al-Aqsa University, Rayyan was among those leading the demonstration, emanating from al-Khulafa Mosque, which set off the First Intifada.[490] However, despite isolated claims that Rayyan was involved in armed action from the early days, it is hard to substantiate any sort of activism that went beyond participating in demonstrations and incitement to rebellion while preaching, though he did spend time in an Israeli prison around this period.

Nor was he among the founding members of Hamas, although he knew them and was close to them. In any case, his involvement in the First Intifada was very limited simply because he left soon after it started and spent most of it abroad, first in Jordan studying for his Master's degree, which he completed in 1990, and then in Sudan where he finished his doctoral thesis in 1994. Having said this Rayyan's Master's thesis represented for Hamas quite an early endorsement of an ideology of martyrdom and of military action. Ahmad Yasin, the founder of Hamas, was accumulating weapons and planning armed attacks at least as early as 1984, however the First Intifada was largely an unarmed popular uprising. Hamas's first suicide attacks took place in 1993 inside the occupied Palestinian territories, and they started to become more systematic from 1994,

[489] See for example Schiff and Ya'ari's *Intifada*, describing the cries of 'Jihad!' during the first day of the riots in Jabalia, on 8 December 1987 as well as the 'students of IUG were milling around the streets of Gaza city, calling on people to come out and demonstrate', Schiff and Ya'ari, pp. 18–19.
[490] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', p. 572.

when they also began to occur within the borders of Israel. Islamic Jihad made its first attempt at a suicide attack in Jerusalem with a car packed with explosives á la Hizbullah as early as August 1987.[491] However Rayyan was not getting his inspiration from Hizbullah but rather the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets (1979-1989).

Since he arrived from Sudan until the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000, the PA and Israel put enormous pressure on the organisation and almost completely dismembered it. Hamas was fighting for its survival, with most of its top leadership in prison and Rayyan spent this period mostly focusing on *tablīgh wa-da'wa*, distributing the Qur'an and teaching in mosques, activities that had occupied him since leaving Saudi Arabia in the 1980s.[492] He was the director of the northern branch of Dar al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna, the largest in the Gaza Strip, and one of the founders of the organisation, together with its general director, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jamal.[493] This was one of the two main Palestinian Salafi organisations that Hroub identifies in Gaza, though he mentions nothing about it beyond the fact that it was established in Khan Yunis in 1975.[494] They were of the quietist and apolitical type of purist Salafism that the Wahhabi Saudi establishment had promoted for decades. Otherwise, Rayyan also spent much of his time at IUG researching and continued preaching in al-Khulafa Mosque. Though there was also some evidence of political activism in his life. He became a founding member of al-Khalas Party and spent time in a PA prison.

Thus, by the end of the millennium Rayyan had built for himself a reputation in the north of the Gaza Strip, where he preached and headed the regional branch of Dar al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna, and at IUG, where he was a highly regarded academic. An

[491] Schiff and Ya'ari, p. 69.
[492] Aviad, p. 311.
[493] Sulaiman, Bashir. Interview by author. Audio recording. Jabalia town, 5 February 2015.
[494] Khaled Hroub, 'Salafi Formations in Palestine', in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. by Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

element that linked those activities was his personal and famous library, housed in the basement of his home but for public use. With his library, Rayyan exercised influence, reinforced his authority as an intellectual and a religious reference and also created a constituency. He had also participated in formal political activity, al-Khalas Party, which was a formation that was active and represented throughout the Palestinian territories. And so despite the juxtaposition that Hroub makes between Hamas and quietist Salafi organisations in Gaza, claiming that Salafism was completely apolitical in Palestine, Rayyan combined his activism as a quietist Salafi with that in Hamas.

The Second Intifada: Giving Way to the ʿUlamaʾ

It was with the outbreak of the Second Intifada that the religious and academic expertise, which he had been developing over more than two decades, properly merged with political and military activism and turned him into a major figure in Hamas and Gaza. His religious knowledge and intellectual capacity formed one of the basic pillars of the high regard he was widely held in and that helped him assume a leadership role in Hamas. The basis of this was his academic career, which he made great progress in even as the uprising was raging. He was appointed associate professor in 2001 before becoming a full professor in 2004.[495] As al-Astal explained:

> This understanding made him a stronger person in society so that people believe in his great academic superiority. For that reason some ʿulamaʾ expressed that Rayyan resembled the old ʿulamaʾ. In relation to his generation, to us his colleagues, he was very much ahead. So perhaps for that reason he had such influence among the people who feel that he has depth in awareness and understanding.

With the start of the uprising, however, his major preoccupation became to support the resistance. He was active at IUG in this field, encouraging the activities of the student council in which he participated delivering stirring sermons (*khiṭābāt hamāsiyya*). He was popular among the students and was close to many of them. While

[495] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya'.

his preaching became increasingly bellicose, he also became involved in military activities actually taking part in the fighting, whether shooting rockets against Israel near the border, trying to contain Israeli incursions in the streets of Gaza, or in preparation for those efforts. ʿAbd al-Latif highlighted the participation of his brother in jihad, whether in the battlefield itself or in preparations for those efforts. He described a battle against an Israeli incursion into the Zaitun neighbourhood of Gaza in which he participated wearing a mask, as an 'unknown soldier'. A couple of sources actually refers to him as either a member or a commander of al-Qassam Brigades.[496] He found suitable candidates for attacks and suicide operations and helped finance these, and also played an important role in the psychological and ideological training of the militants. His contribution to armed action can be traced to at least 1 October 2001, when he sent his eldest son, Bilal, on a suicide mission against a Jewish settlement in the north of the Gaza Strip. His increased activism coincided with a rise up Hamas's ranks: He was voted a member of the Political Office of Hamas for two consecutive periods from 2002 till 2007. It is also unlikely that any other Hamas religious scholar was so personally involved in military activity. He was certainly unique in the Movement for combining leadership in all these different fields.

The violence of the Second Intifada created a set of circumstances that facilitated the rise of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas. As opposed to the First, the Second Intifada became an armed confrontation very early on. One of the characteristics of the Israeli military strategy during that conflict was the assassination of leaders of the Palestinian factions, in such a way that between 2003 and 2004 Israel eliminated almost the whole top leadership of Hamas in the Palestinian territories. Its founder, Ahmad Yasin, and his successor al-Rantisi, were killed in March and April 2004. It followed the killing of

[496] Al-Jamal and Radwan, Haifaʾ Ibrahim, p. 64; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, p. 294.

another two of its top leaders in 2003, al-Maqadma and Abu Shanab. Salah Shahada, who led the military wing, had been killed the previous year, in July 2002, in circumstances very similar to those of Nizar Rayyan, surrounded by his family, who also perished. The West Bank leader Jamal Mansur had already been killed in Nablus in July 2001. It is this vacuum of power left by the disappearance of the Egyptian educated leadership allowed the religious scholars to play a more prominent role in the Movement, I argue.

When Rayyan was martyred in 2009, he was reportedly the highest-ranking Hamas figure eliminated by Israel since the deaths of Yasin and Rantisi.[497] Some media outlets also mentioned that he was the most senior religious figure in Hamas since the assassination of Ahmad Yasin in 2004.[498] Others gave it another turn of the screw and said that he had actually been Yasin's successor. Rayyan was a very senior leader and a highly regarded religious authority within Hamas, however, behind these assertions there is again an attempt to attribute to religious figures—and revelation more broadly—a level of agency in Hamas that wasn't there. The underlying syllogism in those last media statements is as follows: given that Yasin was the 'spiritual leader' of Hamas and that Rayyan was the highest-ranking religious figure in Hamas after Yasin's death, therefore, Rayyan was the successor of Yasin as spiritual leader of Hamas. However, there was no such official position in Hamas; Yasin was the leader of Hamas, and not the spiritual leader. Hamas members themselves scoffed at the notion of Yasin having been a spiritual leader, which some considered an idea borrowed from the figure

[497] Khaled Abu Toameh, 'No Tears for Hamas Leader in Ramallah', *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 January 2009 <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/No-tears-for-Hamas-leader-in-Ramallah> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[498] 'Profile: Nizar Rayyan', *al Jazeera Media Network*, 2 January 2009 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2009/01/20091218131371179.html> [accessed 6 September 2016].

of the Pope in the Catholic Church.[499] As discussed above, Hamas has no religious leadership per se. If anything Rayyan was the highest-ranking member of the Hamas leadership with a religious background. This, however, still begs the question about the exact influence of a religious figure in the political leadership of Hamas. Though incorrect in strict terms, it is not completely misguided to consider Rayyan the successor of Yasin, because Rayyan's visibility increased significantly immediately after the assassination of the Hamas founder in April 2004. Thus Yasin's death signalled the rise of the ʿulamaʾ class in Hamas, which Rayyan represented. At least part of the reason for this was that a figure like that of Yasin, who received no formal religious education but was seen to be a model Muslim, the embodiment of the principles of Islam through his words an actions was necessary in order to keep the ʿulamaʾ in check. Only Yasin's religious charisma could challenge the monopoly over the religious field that the ʿulamaʾ claimed ownership over.[500]

It is thus no coincidence that the first article by Nizar Rayyan in *al-Risala* on 5 May 2004 'My Shaykh Ahmad Yasin',[501] which represents his emergence in this public sphere, is a eulogy to the Hamas founder who had been killed the previous 22 March. Rayyan and Yasin represented different types of religious figures. One was a highly educated religious expert the other had received no formal religious training. However Rayyan was a great admirer of Yasin, who he had known and followed for many years. Attending Yasin's counsel sessions Rayyan had developed a personal bond with the older man. Rayyan considered Yasin the embodiment of the principles of Islam and therefore a model for emulation to the extent that he would use his life to illustrate the

[499] Bahr, 5 February 2015.
[500] The term 'charisma' owes its scholarly use to the works of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), especially his work *On Law in Economy and Society* (1921). Weber distinguishes between charismatic, traditional and legal authority. Gunning discusses this in some detail, Gunning, pp. 96–97.
[501] Nizar Rayyan, 'Shaykhi Ahmad Yasin', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 5 May 2004).

sunna, confirming his possession of what Gaffney refers to as 'Prophetic charisma'.[502] This was similar, though at a more humble level, to the way in which Hasan al-Banna was considered by some a *mujtahid muṭlaq*, 'a legal scholar capable of arriving at independent legal decisions based on (what he felt to be) his superior understanding of the corpus of hadith material.'[503] In the article Rayyan repeated his admiration for Yasin's determination and his organisational and pedagogical skills in educating a generation according to the principles of Islam that would liberate Palestine. With his next piece, on 17 June, Rayyan began a weekly series in which he signed off as 'member of the political leadership of Hamas'. This was unique in *al-Risala* and Hamas more generally; membership to Hamas was secret, especially to its highest decision-making organ. It was almost as if he was taunting the Israeli military. Though more importantly, it showed the impact that the death of Yasin had, in the emancipation of the ʿulamaʾ. This change of guard was reflected in the opinion section of *al-Risala* more generally where suddenly the only articles published were penned by religious scholars.[504]

The ʿUlamaʾ and the Elections

In an interview with *al-Risala* while in hiding shortly after the assassination of Yasin and al-Rantisi, Mahmud al-Zahar, the sole surviving first-rank leader from the Egypt-educated generation, claimed that 'No Change Has Taken Place in the Political Position of the Movement after the Assassination Campaign'.[505] However, there is little doubt that a feeling of weakness, due to the loss of the Hamas leadership, was also a major factor that motivated the transformation of the Movement into a political party in the

[502] Gaffney, p. 164.
[503] Gauvain, p. 6.
[504] See for example the articles by al-Astal, Bahr, Rayyan and Abu al-Sibah in pages 14 and 15 of the issue of *al-Risala* of 30 September 2004.
[505] Fatima Nassar, 'Al-Duktur Mahmud al-Zahar: Lam Yahduth ai Taghyyir fi al-Mawqif al-Siyasi li-l-Haraka baʿda Hamlat al-Ightiyalat', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 10 June 2004), p. 8.

2006 elections. In that same issue of *al-Risala* in which al-Zahar is quoted there were already articles commenting on potential municipal and legislative votes. One week later Ghazi Hamad debated '"Political Participation": Will the Factions Succeed in Translating it From a Slogan into Reality?'.[506] While Rami Khiris asked 'Are the Local Elections Aimed at Achieving an Internal Reform or a Response to External Directives?'.[507] There was also another article on municipal elections and one on a quota for women. In *The Green Revolution*, a monograph on Hamas and the 2006 poll, Michael Milstein presents the argument that Hamas was forced to become pragmatic due to the crisis it found itself in: 'From the depth of the crisis the Movement was forced to form a pragmatic and innovative approach, which did not only rescue it from the depression it was in but that even granted it a position of power and unprecedented achievements'. He cites the signature of the Cairo Agreement with the PA in March 2005, which included a temporary ceasefire (*tahdiʾa*) with Israel, and more importantly, Hamas's renewed interest in participating in institutional politics.

Nevertheless, the connection between the elections and the disappearance of the Hamas leadership specifically should not be overstated. Explicit calls for the celebration of legislative elections preceded also the death of Yasin and al-Rantisi. On 18 March 2004, days before the assassination of Yasin, there was an article by reporter Khalil Mabruk on 'Consensus among the People and the Factions on the Failure of the Legislative Council and the Necessity to Conduct Elections as Soon as Possible'. The piece was based on an interview with Muhammad Ghazal (b. 1957), a civil engineering professor of al-Najah University in Nablus who was presented as member of the political leadership and spokesperson of the Movement in the West Bank. He argued

[506] Ghazi Hamad, '"Al-Sharaka al-Siyasiyya": Hal Tanjah al-Fasaʾil wa-l-Sulta fi Tarjamat-ha min Shiʿar ila Waqiʿ?', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 17 June 2004), p. 3.
[507] Rami Khiris, 'Al-Intikhabat al-Mahaliyya Hal Hiya li-Tahqiq Islah Dakhili am Istijaba li-Imlaʾat Kharijiyya?', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 17 June 2004), p. 4.

that the PLC had failed to serve the Palestinian people and that its mandate had expired, leaving 'a big vacuum and many questions for which there is no one responsible to answer'. He cited as an example corruption cases that the legislative chamber was failing to investigate, though clearly the political void was much larger. Forty months after the start of the intifada had introduced a new reality on the Palestinian street which demanded a new political vision 'that cannot be achieved without elections to assess the size and influence and activity of the different Palestinian forces working on the arena', he claimed, in implicit reference to the growing popularity of Hamas.[508] Thus it was clearly a combination of factors that pushed Hamas to decide to participate in the elections, including a desire to cash in on the enormous gains that the Movement had made during the uprising with a massive rise in popularity.

This was a period of time in which Hamas had also claimed one particularly momentous victory. Ariel Sharon announced in December 2003 Israel's decision to withdraw its Jewish settlements and military bases from Gaza, that would then take place in the summer of 2005. Hamas presented this as a direct result of its military activity during the Second Intifada. The fact that Israel refused to coordinate its redeployment from Gaza with the PA handed this historic victory to Hamas on a silver plate. Indeed this was in line with a previous policy. Sharon, blinded by his hatred for Arafat, branded the PA as the enemy and went about its destruction systematically since he assumed power at the beginning of the Second Intifada. Eldar explores in detail the way that Hamas exploited the withdrawal to its advantage by drawing a connection between the pullout and Hamas's military actions: 'In this way, with one decision Sharon eliminated the Hamas leadership, and with one decision he restored the

[508] Khalil Mabruk, 'Ijmaʿ Shaʿbi wa-Fasaʾili ʿala Fashl al-Majlis wa-Darura Ijraʾ al-Intikhabat fi Asraʿ Waqt Mumkin', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 18 March 2004), p. 6.

Movement that was on the verge of collapse', wrote Eldar.[509] The Hamas ʿulamaʾ played a role in this, framing Israel's pullout in religious terms. Rayyan's article on 17 June 2004 titled 'Just Imagine if the Jews Exited from Ashqelon as They Are Leaving from Gaza Now?' responded to the approval of the withdrawal plan by the Israeli government that month. Rayyan framed the departure by Israel from the Gaza Strip as a triumph not only for the Hamas resistance fighters but also for Islam, thus placing it within a long historical narrative going back to the days of the Prophet. The piece was a harangue against Israel in which Rayyan conjured the image of the departure of the Jews from the whole of historic Palestine.[510]

Al-Risala newspaper was also a key propaganda tool of Hamas for the municipal elections, which Hamas decided to participate in to test its capacities before the 2006 legislative poll.[511] For years *al-Risala* had been attacking the PA and al-Fatah, distinguishing itself in particular for revealing numerous corruption scandals. Then in the lead up to the elections they devoted their pages to giving coverage to Hamas's election campaign, running profiles of all the candidates, acting as their mouthpiece and distributing their electoral programme. The religious justifications for the participation in the vote were most prominent, with frequent references to ʿulamaʾ who sanctioned Hamas's participation and encouraged its followers to vote. Milstein claims that during this period 'the Movement made sure to base the strategic changes, and particularly its readiness to participate in the Parliamentary elections, through religious justifications, including hadith', and verses from classical Islamic scholars, specially Ibn Taymiyya, as well as modern figures like Hasan al-Banna, Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz bin Baz, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Hasan al-Hudaibi, Mustafa Mashhur, Faisal Maulaui,

[509] Eldar, p. 126-127.
[510] Nizar Rayyan, 'Kaifa bi-kum idha Kharaja al-Yahud min al-Mijdal kama Yakhrujuna min Ghazza Al-Ana?', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 17 June 2004).
[511] Municipal elections were held in four rounds: December 2004-January 2005; May 2005; September 2005, and December 2005.

Umar al-Tilmisani and Muhammad abu Faris. They emphasised in particular the participation in elections of other Islamist movements elsewhere in the Arab world.[512] On 30 September 2004, a month before the first round of municipal elections, *al-Risala* launched 'The Elections and the People: A Special Supplement on the Palestinian Elections'.[513] The use of the ʿulamaʾ to goad people to participate in the elections was nothing but brazen. On the first page of the supplement the main article was titled with a declaration from the mufti of Gaza, ʿAbd al-Karim al-Kahlut: 'The Parliament is the Reason for the Hopelessness of our People and the Despair after it Emptied our Blood'. The second title of the article, quoted shaykh Subhi al-Yazji, then president of the PRSL, proclaiming that 'Restraining from Registering for the Elections Enters into the Realm of "False Testimony"'.[514] The piece carried the subtitle 'Is Frustration an Excuse for Restraining from Registering for the Elections?' The fourth page included the article 'Dr. Radwan: Not Registering for the Elections May Be Considered… Concealment of the Oath'.[515]

Beyond the role they played legitimising the vote, the 2006 elections were a key moment in the consolidation of the ʿulamaʾ class in Hamas since a number of them became candidates and were elected to the Palestinian parliament, and afterwards became ministers or were appointed to other high level positions in subsequent Hamas governments. Also around a third of Hamas' legislators who won a seat in parliament in 2006 had university degrees in Islamic studies.[516] Hamas used the clergy as candidates because they were already well known in their local communities as figures of

[512] Michael Milstein, *Ha-Mahpekha ha-Yaroka* (Tel Aviv: Merkaz Moshe Dayan le-Limudei ha-Mizrakh ha-Tikhon ve-Africa, Universitat Tel Aviv, 2007), p. 117.
[513] 'Al-Intikhabat wa-l-Nas: Mulahaq Khass bi-l-Intikhabat al-Filastiniyya', *al-Risala*, 30 September 2004, p. 1.
[514] 'Al-Intikhabat Wa-l-Nas: Mufti Ghazza: al-Tashriʿi Sabab li-Shaʿabna al-Yaʾs wa-l-Qunut Baʿad an Imtass Dimaʾ-na. Al-Shaykh al-Yazji: al-Imtinaʿ ʿan al-Tasjil Yadkhul fi Daʾira 'Shahadat al-Zur', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 30 September 2004), p. 1.
[515] Al-Intikhabat Wa-l-Nas, 'Dr. Radwan: ʿAdam al-Tasjil fi al-Intikhabat Qad Yuʿatabar... Kitman li-l-Shahada', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 30 September 2004), p. 4.
[516] Gunning, p. 163.

authority, perceived by many as respectable and moral.[517] Gunning affirms that religious knowledge, piety and charitable activity, or occupying an official position in a religious institution all played a role in determining an electoral candidate's chances of success. In a similar case, with reference to the Salafi success in the Egyptian elections in 2012, Gauvain also highlights the importance of being perceived as defending the values of 'religiosity, honesty, moral integrity'.[518] This would also apply to Hamas generally and the ʿulamaʾ more particularly. In addition, the parliament, where legislation is passed, was the locus par excellence of those who are experts in shariʿa who strive to bring about the Islamisation of society, so they had a natural interest in participating. Other than al-Astal the most prominent professors in the departments of religious sciences in IUG who had studied in Saudi Arabia and later became MPs were Ahmad abu Halabiyya, Marwan abu Raʾs and Salim Salama. Abu Raʾs also headed the PRSL and Salama was a member of its board of directors. Others had studied in Saudi Arabia and taught at the IUG, but not religious sciences. Ahmad Bahr, for example, taught in the Arabic department. Then later other such ʿulamaʾ were appointed to government. Salih al-Riqab, professor of Dogma and Contemporary Ideologies (*ʿAqida wa-l-Madhahib al-Muʿasira*) in the Faculty of Usul al-Din, became Minister of *al-Awqāf* in 2011.[519] Mazin Haniyya (b. 1960) who had a strikingly similar educational and professional profile to Rayyan having studied his BA, Master's and PhD also in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Sudan respectively, was named Minister of Justice in the

[517] This should not be overstated. A study quoted by Gunning lists twelve out of the seventy-four Hamas parliamentarians as having affiliations with mosques, four as imams, one as being involved in a religious court, and three as members of zakat committees. Gunning, p. 162. This would however need to be independently verified and examined in more detail, taking into account both formal and informal affiliations, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.
[518] Gauvain, p. 263.
[519] 'Al-Riqab Yatasallam Mahamm Mansib-hu al-Jadid Wazir al-Awqaf', *Sama News*, 13 March 2011 <http://www.samanews.com/ar/index.php?act=post&id=90422> [accessed 6 September 2016].

Hamas government in 2012, after serving as shariʿa adviser to the Prime Minister from 2007.[520] He was also a professor at the Faculty of Shariʿa and Law at IUG.[521]

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the influence and rise of a purist Salafi ʿulamaʾ class within Hamas, which is distinct from the quietist Salafi organisations that existed in the Gaza Strip. However, it has challenged the idea that these religious scholars, and religious authority more generally, led Hamas. Hamas's *lajnat al-iftāʾ* was made up of a group of individuals and organisations that acted as advisers to the Movement in support of the political leadership. The ʿulamaʾ were essential at key moments in supporting decisions made by the political leadership, including the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the participation of the Movement in the elections. In fact their role was similar to that of the religious scholars in classical times that served 'to legitimize the regime of administrative regulations created by the ruler'.[522] They were not necessarily a rubber stamp, as they maintained influence in decision-making 'through their legitimisation function'. But what was most significant, beyond the finer points of the relation between the two loci of authority, is the separation of powers that was established.[523]

The more immediate historical origins of the ʿulamaʾ class can be traced to the students that travelled to Saudi Arabia to learn the religious sciences in the 1970s and the 1980s. A number of key factors catalysed their rise within Hamas. First, the death of the Egypt educated top leadership and in particular Ahmad Yasin created a vacuum. Then the participation in the elections consolidated their position. The rise of the

[520] 'Wuzaraʾ al-Hukuma al-Filastiniyya al-Jadida fi Sutur', *al-Risala*, 2 September 2012 <http://alresalah.ps/ar/post/58389/contact/%25D8%25A7%25D8%25AA%25D8%25B5%25D9%2584-%25D8%25A8%25D9%2586%25D8%25A7> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[521] 'Al-Sira al-Dhatiyya - Mazin Ismaʿil Misbah Haniyya', *Islamic University in Gaza website* <http://site.iugaza.edu.ps/mhania/cv/> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[522] Feldman, p. 50.
[523] Feldman, p. 51.

ʿulamaʾ, their function and influence, has been examined with reference to Nizar Rayyan, from his education in Saudi Arabia to his participation in the violence in the Second Intifada. The influence of Saudi Salafism in Hamas's religious scholars is more precisely that of al-Sahwa insurrection, which created a specific brand of purist Salafism. It is this that is examined in the next chapter, which turns to Rayyan's writings and ideology and explores in detail his exact role in violence and in decision-making in the Movement more generally.

Chapter 5 – The Countercoup and the Salafi Brother

The chapter starts by exploring some of the features of Rayyan's ideology that establish the contours of the various conflicts that defined him. As was evident from his writings, Rayyan was highly critical of the state ʿulamaʾ. He on the other hand saw himself as an *ʿālim murābiṭ*. More specifically Rayyan's intellectual universe featured a set of concepts that were central to purist Salafism: *jāhiliyya*, *kufr* and *zanādiqat al-ʿalmāniyya* (secular heretics). Rayyan employed these to lay the ground for the justification of violence and in particular a major historical event in Gaza and recent Palestinian history, the June 2007 countercoup. Rayyan and al-Astal were responsible for some of the most incendiary rhetoric, including *takfīr*, against al-Fatah leading up to those bloody events. These incidents are also used as examples of the support that Rayyan provided to the political leadership through a specific mechanism: *taʾṣīl sharʿī*. Such 'anchoring in Islamic legal tradition' is also key to understanding the role of the religious reference in his writings and speeches. The last part of the chapter is devoted to analysing in some detail the tension within Rayyan between his purist Salafi positions and the flexibility of their application in support of what at the end of the day was Hamas, a movement with a strong modernist heritage. In this regard the contradiction in his positions on a wide range of key debates are discussed.

This chapter makes extensive use of the proceedings of a conference that took place in 2009 at the IUG in memory of Nizar Rayyan. The conference Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhudhu fi Khidmat al-Islam was organised by the Faculty of Usul al-Din of IUG and took place on 20 and 21 October 2009. The internal audience to which these were directed means that they offer information that would otherwise be difficult to gather even through personal

interviews. This does not mean that the testimonies are an objective reflection of Rayyan. As Meir Hatina warns, 'secondary source material that memorializes martyrs […] should be examined with caution. It tends to divulge the writer's world view more than the martyr's.'[524] Thus the authors used such texts to serve their interests. These papers have been examined with this caveat in mind and the possible motivations of the writers are also referred to below.

ʿAlim Murabit: The Figure of the Religious Scholar in Rayyan's Thought

In his writing Rayyan presented himself as a specific type of *ʿālim*, defining what he thought the role of the religious scholar should be. His ascetic scholar was juxtaposed against the state ʿulamaʾ. In the article 'The Fatawa of the Day of the Bloody Jihad', published on 16 September 2004, Rayyan criticised the state ʿulamaʾ for their subservience to the authorities and the interests of Israel and their hostility towards Hamas.[525] Their moral corruption, including issuing *fatāwā* to advance their personal interests, contrasted with the moral ideal of the Palestinians' sacrifice. The role of the ʿulamaʾ in the struggle for Palestine was to support the armed resistance, he argued.

He wrote the article 'after participating in a television debate with a group of shaykhs of that time who sold their religion for a very low price of a few dirhams'. Whereas Rayyan 'was in his religion an ascetic' (*zāhid*), the others 'are called by the people ʿulamaʾ of the sultan or the bad', wrote Waʾil al-Zard, the editor of a compilation of Rayyan's writings and assistant professor of Hadith at the University College of Professional and Applied Sciences in Gaza.[526] In the piece Rayyan launched

[524] Meir Hatina, *Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Piety, Power and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 8.
[525] Nizar Rayyan, 'Al-Fatawa Yaum al-Jihad al-Dimaʾ', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 16 September 2004).
[526] Nizar Rayyan, *Al-Maqalat al-Rayyaniyya*, ed. by Waʾil Muhi al-Din Al-Zard (Gaza: Shabaka Masjidna al-Daʾwiyya, 2010) <www.masjedna.ps>.

into a diatribe against a mufti who in a television show about the deliverance of religious rulings (*iftāʾ*) and the concept of jihad among Islamist movements admonished Palestinians for having caused since the First Intifada the shedding of blood, unprovoked and with no real impact, among the Jews. Rayyan went on to directly criticise al-Azhar University and Dar al-Iftaʾ: 'That is al-Iftaʾ, that is the religion that is wanted for the people to embrace, a religion that does not budge for the *umma* and its burning issues, towards Palestine when its innocence and virtue is raped, and its mosque of al-Aqsa is desecrated.' These were together with the Ministry of Religious Endowments the main official religious institutions in Egypt. Dar al-Iftaʾ was particularly important because al-Azhar tried, vainly, to restrict to it the issuance of *fatāwā* globally.[527] He argued that Sayyid Qutb's article 'American Islam' should be renamed 'Israeli Islam' in reference to the state ʿulamaʾ, that is an Islam that made excuses for the state of Israel and presented Palestinians as the major culprits of the conflict, issuing *fatāwā* stating that 'hunger strikes in the prisons are a heretical innovation [*bidaʿ*], suicide operations the path of God to hell.' He ended describing the 'ʿulamaʾ *al-sulṭān*' as those whose job was 'making people sleep happily, and for the mufti to deliver his *fatāwā* according to the desire and mood of the sultan.' In contrast the ʿulamaʾ in Palestine did not just carry books and pens: 'For us, ʿulamaʾ and muftis, the *fatāwā* are not fitting except in the courtyards of clamour, the mujahidin ʿulamaʾ advance towards the front positions, they carry weapons and the spearhead, not book and pens only, should I talk to you about them? Perhaps another time.'

Clearly Rayyan identified with the second type of religious scholar. More specifically, he saw himself as a militant cleric (*ʿālim mujāhid*). His role models were the *ʿulamaʾ murābiṭun* of classical times, who travelled to support those defending the

[527] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 148.

frontiers of the burgeoning Islamic territory. These battles and the ʿulamaʾ that participated in them were a frequent image in his articles. The ascetic hadith collector and *murābiṭ* Abdullah bin al-Mubarak (d. 797), was his jihadist ideal: 'in the fighting of the enemies of God and in spending, and in *al-ribāṭ*, and in calling the ʿulamaʾ to jihad. The way in which Ibn Mubarak gathered knowledge, asceticism and jihad thus Nizar Rayyan was.'[528]

In his article 'The Gentlemen ʿUlamaʾ al-Murabitun in the Broad-Mouthed Frontier-Ways and the Roads' he described the model of ʿ*ālim* that he subscribed to.[529] This text, published on 23 September, was a continuation of his article above. He launched into a description of the *futūḥāt*, the early Islamic conquests, in which he used the first person plural to create a continuum between the past and the present: 'Those days the Persians stretched in the East from the edges of the Arabian Peninsula till the walls of China. […] and we were few in number'. Having set the scene in its historical context he engaged the main subject, the role of the ʿulamaʾ guarding the frontier-ways (*thughūr*) of the expanding Islamic empire: 'The ʿulamaʾ guard their frontier-ways generation after generation, so this imam *mujāhid* Abdullah bin al-Mubarak guards the northern entrance in the high edges of Syria, and guards [*yurābit*] the port of Tarsus and Aleppo'. This was a particular feature of the Ahl al-Hadith:

> Like that were our ʿulamaʾ and especially Ahl al-Hadith, imam ibn al-Mubarak was an imam in hadith and jihad. Another imam who proceeds in his path is Abu Abdullah Ahmad bin Hanbal who says: I left to the frontier-ways on my feet and I caught, that is to say: he was picking dates from the ground from hunger, he accompanies the mujahidin in the places of the arrows, he issues [*yufti*] legal opinions to the *murābiṭun* in the frontier-ways and teaches them their religion, and relates to them the hadith in the place where one expects death.

Himself an expert in hadith—evidenced in the pervasiveness of this type of text in his writings—he was clearly identifying with Ahl al-Hadith, a compound also intimately

[528] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 606.
[529] Nizar Rayyan, 'Al-Sada al-ʿUlamaʾ al-Murabitun fi Afwah al-Thughur wa-l-Sikak', *al-Risala*, 23 September 2004, p. 14.

connected to the origins of purist Salafism.[530] He then drew the comparison to the fight against Israel, criticising

he who leaves the holy frontier-way to the Jews, and made compulsory the swagger, playing and sitting, and does not cover a single day the shine of his shoes with the dust of the battle, and does not sneeze from the smell of the bomb, or the dust of the tanks.

He proceeded to address the notion of *ribāṭ*, its relation to jihad and to establish through reference to classical religious authorities the pre-eminence of the duty to carry out jihad. The term *ribāṭ*, which is used as a synonym or subcategory of jihad, comes from the verb *rabaṭa* 'to tie' and is used in this context in reference to tying a horse while waiting for battle. According E. W. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* the word can also mean 'spirit', as in 'firm in spirit'. For the explanation of the notion, Rayyan relied mostly on *fatāwā* by Ibn Taymiyya, who argued, for example, that to practice it, to be a *murābiṭ* that is, is better than making the pilgrimage to Mecca and precedes devotion to the book of God:

Al-ribāṭ is the perseverance of the imams and ʿulamaʾ, professors and preachers, for 'the best is that you serve jihad' and 'better than turning around Mecca and Medina' that is because *al-ribāṭ* is from the species [*jins*] of the jihad and precedes the species of devotion to the book of God [*al-ribāṭ min jins al-jihād, wa-jins al-jihād muqaddim ʿala jins al-nask*].

Other than the *fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyya enjoining Muslims to engage in jihad and *ribāṭ*, the scholars and the works that he most often quoted were Ibn Hanbal as well as the canonical hadith collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim. He admired Ahmad ibn Hanbal for his support for *ribāṭ*, as illustrated above, though also intellectually. Rayyan's explanation (*sharḥ*) of Ibn Hanbal's *Kitab al-Waraʿ* (*The Book of Piety*) was one of his most celebrated books among his students and colleagues in Gaza and

[530] As Meijer explains 'the name Salafism goes back to the *Ahl al-Hadith* during the Abbasid caliphate, who concentrated on the study of the *hadith* as a means to purge Islam of non-Muslim accretions.' Meijer, p. 4.

perhaps the one he was most proud of.[531] As seen earlier, one of the adjectives that used to describe Rayyan was 'ascetic', a feature that also defined Ibn Hanbal, who's major works includes *Kitab al-Zuhd* (*The Book of Renunciation*). These are references that situated him squarely in the purist Salafi camp. Such Salafis also followed the doctrinal works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), a student of Ibn Taymiyya, who Rayyan also appreciated. I now examine in more detail some key components of his intellectual universe.

The concepts of *jāhiliyya* and *kufr*, already mentioned in passing above and intimately connected to the notion of jihad, were central to his writing and to his militancy. In his article of 17 June 2004 'Just Imagine if the Jews Exited from Ashqelon as they Are Leaving from Gaza Now?' Rayyan framed the struggle with Israel in terms of a fight against *jāhiliyya*.[532] He criticised those who doubted that the Jews would leave historic Palestine and he set this within the narrative of the Qurʾan, in particular verse 59:2 is again used: 'you did not think that they would leave'. He went on to compare the doubters to the hypocrites during the Battle of the Trench (*al-khandaq*)—though it was more a siege than a battle—in March-April 627, when 'morale in Medina was weakening and the false Muslims began to whisper that Muhammad had promised that God would give them victory but that now their lives, their families and their children were in imminent danger.'[533] He quoted the explanation of Qurʾan 33:12 in al-Tabari's *tafsīr*, which made reference to the siege: 'And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is sickness were saying, "God and His messenger have promised us nothing but illusion."' Rayyan described this lack of faith as *jāhiliyya* and *kufr*:

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[531] The book by Ibn Hanbal contains recommendations to the pious in many aspects of life, based on the Qurʾan and hadith and anecdotes from the lives of prominent ascetics, Livnat Holtzman, 'Ahmad Ibn Hanbal', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* (Brill Online, 2009).
[532] Rayyan, 'Kaifa bi-kum idha Kharaja al-Yahud min al-Mijdal kama Yakhrujuna min Ghazza Al-Ana?'
[533] John Bagot Glubb, *The Life and Times of Muhammad* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), p. 243.

So that day the people were divided in two groups. One group sees the real *kufr* in the trench and Medina as an eternal destiny, another group is sending dust on the base of the old *jāhiliyya* and sees the words of our Prophet as a real promise 'now we invade them and they cannot invade us' and like that the people are every time.[534]

After this Rayyan extended the idea of *jāhiliyya* to contemporary 'secularism and globalisation' as he prepared to relate it to modern day 'secular heretics' (*zanādiqat al-ʿalmāniyya*), which referred to the Palestinian nationalist and leftist factions. Through this struggle with Israel the members of the Islamic movement also 'take off the clothes of the contemporary *jāhiliyya*', while 'the heroic martyrdom' of Rim al-Riyashi and Hanadi Jaradat, two Palestinian women who died carrying out suicide attacks in January 2004 and October 2003 respectively, 'brings to mind the standing of the secular heretics [*zanādiqat al-ʿalmāniyya*] that is falling in a deep hole', he wrote.

In his articles in *al-Risala*, he presented history as a constant struggle against *jāhiliyya*, but it was not only identified with Israel as in the article above. He identified the modern *jāhiliyya* more generally as a set of forces united against Islam:

Forces of East and West agreed to ignore the differences between them so that Islam is the enemy that takes first place in the list of priorities, and it must be struck with planes, tanks and artillery, and against its resistance, bases and firm points; in order for the *umma* to lose the supplies that come to it from this religion which is inexhaustible and unending.[535]

His definition of *jāhiliyya* had also a strong moral dimension. It was the corrupting influence of the sultan's Islam, of the West, of Israel. In *Dirasat fi-l-Sira*, a collective work published in 2003 by IUG, Rayyan also defined it as a mental state and a form of organisation: 'The *jāhiliyya*, as the Qurʾan defines it, is a psychological state that rejects being led by the guidance of God and it is also an organisational situation [*waḍʿ tanẓīmī*] that rejects the rule by what God sent down'. This is followed by Qurʾan 5:50, which is the verse used by Qutb in *Fi Zilal al-Qurʾan* to illustrate the same

[534] The quote is of Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 64, Hadith 153.
[535] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 608.

concept.[536] Though the latter may be a coincidence, given that there are only four verses in the Qurʾan that mention the word, the terms in which he defined the concept were decidedly Qutbist.

This was evidence of the influence of al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya in him. The notion of *jāhiliyya* is a prime example of the way that the Wahhabi ideology and Qutbism fortuitously overlapped, as has already been discussed. As Lacroix confirms: 'There is indeed a close ideological affinity between Qutbist thinking and the Wahhabi tradition, both of which are based on the same Manichaean opposition between Islam and *jāhiliyya*'.[537] Meijer also ratifies that *ḥākimiyya* is a notion that purist Salafism and Qutb coincide over.[538] The positions of Wahhabism and Qutbism coincided also in the accusation of heresy, which Salafis defined particularly broadly: 'Failing to interpret the scriptures as the pious ancestors allegedly did (*ʿala fahm al-salaf*) would be an innovation. It would open the door to relativism and could render one liable to accusations of unbelief (*kufr*).'[539] Further evidence of this link to al-Sahwa were the traces of the intellectual output of Muhammad Qutb, Sayyid Qutb's brother, in the remains of Rayyan's extensive personal library that survived the bombing of his home.[540] Muhammad Qutb played a leading role in the theoretical development of al-Sahwa, in particular in adapting his brother's thought to Wahhabism, to the point that some of his disciples called him the 'sheikh of the Sahwa'.[541] This coincidence in the readiness of both Qutbists and purist Salafis more generally to apply the notions of

[536] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 608.
[537] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, pp. 51–52.
[538] Meijer, p. 25.
[539] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, pp. 8–9.
[540] The few hundred books rescued from the rubble were inherited by Bashir Sulaiman, a pupil and assistant of Nizar Rayyan who was also interviewed for this research and cited here.
[541] Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: the Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, p. 53.

jāhiliyya and *kufr* against fellow Muslims was most controversial and it is Rayyan's dismissal of fellow Palestinians as apostates in the context of Gaza that I now turn to.

Dropping the Pen to Take Up the Gun

Rayyan wrote his last column in *al-Risala* on 30 September 2004, the second day of a major Israeli military offensive in the north of the Gaza Strip, the centre of which was his home, Jabalia refugee camp. The title 'Verily Shooting is the Strength'[542] was taken from Muslim's hadith collection and used in reference to the rocket attacks that the Israelis were trying to stop with their offensive.[543] Rayyan displayed again his knowledge of hadith to justify the position of Hamas. He also addressed the emerging criticism of the practice of shooting rockets from some sectors of the Palestinian public and in particular the inhabitants of the areas from where the missiles were launched which were also the areas that the Israeli army punished in response. The first part of the article was composed of a series of *aḥādīth* from al-Bukhari and Muslim in which God ordered the Prophet to shoot and the Prophet did the same to the companions. He then made the comparison between Muslims' enjoyment of shooting and what they achieved with it in classical Islamic history with the conflict against Israel.

This article was representative of the rebellious (*thaurī*) and zealous (*hamāsī*) style that he adopted in much of his writings in *al-Risala* in which he focused on the activation of the culture of resistance, *ribāṭ*, jihad and martyrdom connecting the contemporary mujahidin to their ancestors and reviving their memory. This style responded primarily to the high levels of violence from Israel that characterised this period and its purpose was the mobilization (*taʿbiʾa*) of Palestinians. Although he also aimed to instruct, through historical and religious references, the form of his articles is not that of the sermon but of a song or a poem, to imbue the reader with passion for

[542] Nizar Rayyan, 'A-la inna al-Quwa al-Rami', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 30 September 2004).
[543] Sahih Muslim, Book 33, Hadith 241.

Palestine, the liberation of which he established as a religious duty, and for the military struggle against Israel.

Dropping the pen in September 2004 is a prelude to his eventual abandonment of institutional politics in order to be more involved in direct action. The Israeli military aggression of September 2004 was the time when the media began to report seeing Rayyan dressed in military fatigues, carrying weapons and accompanying Palestinian militants defending the camp, which from then on became a somewhat regular occurrence. In footage that was then shown on a loop on Israeli television after his assassination in 2009, Rayyan was seen carrying a rocket launcher, and, unlike all the other members of Hamas' military wing that he walked with, barefaced, again taunting the Israeli army. Already a burly man in his younger years, he had by this time grown a large belly. His hair, which was thick and black, shortly cropped on his scalp and a long, bushy beard, had begun to grey. His heavy build and rugged look contrasted with the high, frantic pitch of his voice when delivering an arousing speech to a crowd. During the incursion against Jabalia refugee camp, when he was not directly participating in the fighting 'he was going around the fighters, with his weapon inspecting the condition of the mujahidin, and comforting them, confirming to them that victory was their ally, with the permission of God', while declaring to the media: 'they will not enter our camp, that means, they will not enter our camp'. He also used Hamas's al-Aqsa Radio to give the combatants religious counselling (*taujīh sharʿī*) informing them, for example, that they were exempted from attending Friday prayers in the mosque so that they wouldn't abandon their positions. This activism on the ground culminated with his departure in 2007 from the Political Office of Hamas. Ostensibly he took this decision to devote himself to study. However, the year 2007 is when Rayyan's

militancy peaked, though not in the fight against Israel, but against what he termed 'secular heretics', and more particularly, the Palestinian nationalist movement al-Fatah.

The repudiation of politics in favour of religious knowledge was in fact a major feature of Nasir al-Din al-Albani's criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood. With his accusation that 'the Muslim Brotherhood paid more attention to politics than *ʿilm*, religious knowledge, al-Albani laid the basis of the present day friction between Salafism and the Brotherhood'.[544] This also became part of a debate within purist Salafism. To counter al-Sahwa movement, the Saudi religious establishment tried to reinforce its support for a politically disengaged Salafism by promoting Rabiʿ al-Madkhali, one of al-Albani's disciples who defended such quietist stance and by extension official Wahhabism against the Sayyid Qutb-infused thought of al-Sahwa. This consolidated a split in modern purist Salafism, which became clearly divided between the Qutbists and the Madkhalis.[545] In the Egyptian context in which Richard Gauvain applies this distinction, the Madkhalis were distinguished by their support for the regime, in other words, quietism and accommodationism, while the Qutbists were characterised by the denouncement of the regime's legitimacy on the grounds that it did not rule by shariʿa and by their revolutionary leanings.[546] This distinction must however not obscure the fact that the quietist and the activist tendencies exist within Wahhabism from its very origins. As Madawi al-Rasheed argues, this reflects more broadly the history of Wahhabism, which has been torn between consent and contestation.[547] Therefore, in abandoning politics and wavering between scholarly pursuits and fighting Rayyan was displaying his own internal struggle between these different inclinations, which he resolved in the end by turning to the armed struggle.

[544] Meijer, p. 10.
[545] Gauvain, p. 10.
[546] Gauvain, p. 39-41.
[547] Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The Countercoup of the ʿUlamaʾ

In the Gaza Strip, Nizar Rayyan is perhaps best known for his role in the 2007 countercoup against al-Fatah, in which more than a hundred people died over the five days it lasted. This was a historical turning point. It marked the separation of Gaza and the West Bank into two different, and rival, political units and was for that reason the nadir of the Palestinian nationalist movement, at least since 1967. It also represented the zenith of the influence of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas. Tension built up during the Second Intifada, between al-Fatah and Hamas, over the leadership of the struggle. While Hamas, which had been decimated during the 1990s, was on the rise, the al-Fatah-controlled PA was taking an enormous beating from Israel and was at the same time losing control over its cadres. Some Hamas members also wanted to settle scores from the repression they endured during the 1990s. During the Second Intifada Hamas had effectively upstaged al-Fatah as the leading Palestinian faction. Although the Movement had paid lip service to the unity of all Palestinian factions, it had not lost many an opportunity to undermine the PA.[548] This section examines the role that two clerics, Yunis al-Astal and Nizar Rayyan, played in the countercoup, in which they used their religious authority to justify the attacks against fellow Palestinians, members of nationalist al-Fatah movement.

The details surrounding the events are intensely contested by Hamas and al-Fatah, and each referred to it using their own particular term. For al-Fatah and those who support their version of events, this was 'the coup' (*al-inqilāb*) or 'the military coup' (*al-inqilāb al-ʿaskarī*). For Hamas, this was 'the settlement' (*al-ḥasm*). David Rose, Milton-Edwards and Farrell and Eldar provide some of the most authoritative, detailed

[548] The way every attack by Hamas against Israel led the Jewish state to retaliate and destroy the PA is described in Charles Enderlin, *The Lost Years: Radical Islam, Intifada, and Wars in the Middle East 2001-2006* (New York: Other Press, 2007).

and eye-opening accounts of these events in English and Hebrew.[549] Rose's retelling focuses on the Bush Administration's pressure on al-Fatah to take on Hamas and how this led the latter to stage a pre-emptive attack and purge the al-Fatah-controlled Palestinian security forces in Gaza. The Palestine Papers, collected by the satellite channel al-Jazeera, are a treasure trove of documents detailing how the Palestinian president Mahmud ʿAbbas and his al-Fatah associates, planned together with the US and Israel to defeat Hamas militarily.

The background to this conspiracy is the unexpected and overwhelming Hamas victory in the 2006 parliamentary elections, which the Quartet for the Peace Process—formed by the EU, the UN, Russia and the US—chose not to recognise in the name of the international community. After their success in the polls, tension started to rise between Hamas and al-Fatah due in particular to the latter's refusal to handover the control of the Palestinian security forces to the new, Hamas-appointed, Interior Minister. This provoked Hamas to set up its own security forces, which inevitably started to clash with those loyal to al-Fatah. In turn the latter started to receive weapons and training from the US with the clear aim of taking on their Islamist rivals. The training and arming was happening quite openly, and media reports on the subject were aplenty, including US officials bragging to the media and before their Congress about the progress al-Fatah forces were making.[550]

The struggle between the two movements was one that Rayyan took an active part in promoting: 'The shaykh had a clear effect in the jihad against the "secular heretics" [*zanādiqat al-ʿalmāniyya*], when this term became prominent in his sermons, whether in

[549] David Rose, 'The Gaza Bombshell', *Vanity Fair*, April 2008.
[550] See for example: Avi Issacharoff, 'New Fatah Gaza Force Training for Future Clashes With Hamas', *Haaretz*, 1 April 2007 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/new-fatah-gaza-force-training-for-future-clashes-with-hamas-1.217164> [accessed 6 September 2016]; Dan Murphy and Joshua Mitnick, 'Israel, US, and Egypt Back Fatah's Fight against Hamas', *Christian Science Monitor* (Cairo and Tel Aviv, 25 May 2007) <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0525/p07s02-wome.html> [accessed 6 September 2016].

the media or in the mosques'.[551] In fact, he explicitly sanctioned the violence on religious grounds:

The mujahidin were waiting from him for a fatwa that would clarify for them the rule [*ḥukm*] to fight the secularists, for the shaykh was a professor in anchoring in the Islamic legal tradition [*taʾṣīl sharʿī*], starting from the saying by God most high: 'O Prophet, strive against the unbelievers and the hypocrites [*al-kuffār wa-l-munāfiqin*]. Be harsh with them. Their abode is Jahannam—an evil journey's end' [Qurʾan 9:73].[552]

In June 2007 Rayyan's shrill voice blasted throughout Gaza on al-Aqsa Radio, in what amounted to a set of orders and justifications for the military takeover by Hamas of the al-Fatah controlled security forces. 'The war between us and them is the war of Islam and apostasy [*ridda*]', 'we will pray Friday in the assembly room [*al-muntada*]' of Palestinian President Mahmoud ʿAbbas, and '*zanādiqat al-ʿalmaniyya'*, are phrases that he repeated through al-Aqsa Radio and still rung in people's ears years later.[553] It was this last binary in particular, directed against al-Fatah, which underpinned Rayyan's religious justification for what happened. Though it is primarily connected to the violence of June 2007, conflict between leftists and Islamists in Gaza dates back decades, and this is actually a struggle that he personally participated in his youth, though then on the losing end, when he allegedly survived an assassination attempt by a group of secularists and communists.[554]

He advocated for the countercoup in ways that explicitly revealed his Wahhabi sympathies. In closed-door meetings of the Hamas leadership Rayyan argued in favour of an attack against al-Fatah forces by pointing to the pact of 1744, the founding moment of the Saudi state, when Muhammad ibn Saʿud joined forces with the preacher

[551] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', pp. 577–78.
[552] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', p. 577.
[553] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', pp. 577–78.
[554] Ramadan Ishaq Al-Zayyan, 'Karamat al-Shaykh al-Shahid Ustadh Duktur Nizar Rayyan', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 1–42 (p. 9 and 13).

Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab. Ibn Saʿud promised to apply the version of Islam held by Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab, who in turn would legitimise Ibn Saʿud's power. Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab declared jihad against neighbouring tribes, whose practices of praying to saints, making pilgrimages to tombs, he believed to be the work of idolaters and unbelievers. The links to Saudi Arabia on this issue were not only intellectual and historical; Rayyan actually consulted his decisions with Saudi clerics:

> And as the shaykh told me that he used to be in contact with the great ʿulamaʾ in Saudi Arabia, and used to consult them on the rule to fight the secularists, and the ʿulamaʾ agreed with his opinion to fight them. And one of the ʿulamaʾ said to him: we have a proverb in Saudi Arabia that says: 'the one that eats onion does it much', in it there is the indication that fighting the secularists is legitimate but it is difficult for the people to accept.[555]

Those clerics were clearly not connected to the Saudi religious establishment, which would have contested such interpretation of history. Indeed, the events were also a turning point among quietist Salafis in Gaza, who, following the Madkhali trend, expressed their repudiation at the pre-emptive attack that Hamas launched. As Hroub points out, it was then that 'they found themselves facing what they had been trying to avoid for many years, namely speaking out about politics.'[556] They compared Hamas to the Kharijites because they had disobeyed the *wālī al-amr*, i.e. Mahmud ʿAbbas. As Milton-Edwards commented, in keeping with the Madkhali trend, these quietist Salafis respected authority 'to the extent that they will tolerate authoritarianism to avoid civil war or chaos.'[557] The Kharijites were an early sect that split away from the *umma* 'because they refused to make any compromise with expediency'.[558] This adjective was common currency, with different factions in the Islamic world throwing it against each

[555] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', p. 578.
[556] Hroub, 'Salafi Formations in Palestine and the Limits of a De-Palestinised Milieu', p. 173.
[557] Milton-Edwards, p. 266.
[558] Hourani, p. 3.

other. Indeed Hamas was at around this time using these same arguments against Jihadi-Salafis as we shall see in the next chapter.

In his public statements Rayyan also recalled the battles by the Prophet and his companions in Mecca and Medina. In the interview with al-Aqsa Radio in the middle of the fighting he proclaimed: 'O mujahidin, be assured that you are on the right path. This is the way of the Prophet, of the companions. Whoever denounces us must remember this well, that in this way Medina was purified, and Mecca was purified, and a brother fought his brother in Mecca and in Medina and the Arab peninsula until the people had returned to their religion'. [559] Thus Rayyan employed *takfīr* against fellow Palestinian, members of al-Fatah.[560]

Al-Astal also played a role during this period, legitimising attacks on al-Fatah by pronouncing *takfīr* against them. His article 'The Urgent Duty to Surround the Internal Danger for those who Hurry to Support the External Enemy' written on 7 June 2007, is evidence of the sort of justification he provided. In this article he borrowed unusually heavily from *sīra* to compare the alliance between al-Fatah and Israel against Hamas with the support of the Jewish tribe of Bani Quraidha to al-Ahzab against the Prophet and his companions.[561] The following are the last two paragraphs where he applied the lessons from the classical texts to the current period:

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[559] This recording of a radio interview with Rayyan during the very events of the countercoup, in which he encouraged Hamas to fight and kill, is titled 'A Letter from the Martyr Nizar Rayyan to the Fatah Collaborators and the Secularists': Maisara10, 'Risala al-Shahid Nizar Rayyan ila ʿUmalaʾ Fatah wa-ila al-ʿAlmaniyyin', *YouTube*, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nxVU9djnVM> [accessed 6 September 2016].In this video he also referred to the secular heretics that received support from the Jews, in allusion to al-Fatah: Islamic Organization for Resistance Media, 'Munawarat al-Qassam fi al-Shimal - al-Juzʾ al-Awwal', *YouTube*, 2007 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8XoW63sa9o> [accessed 6 September 2016].

[560] Though Rayyan did not use the term *kāfir* specifically, he used different variants of the term '*ridda*' (apostasy) in his radio interview. *Zandaqa* is however on its own a sufficient condition to declare someone an unbeliever. For details see Frank Griffel, 'Apostasy', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, 2007 <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2066/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_SIM_0044>.

[561] Al-Astal, 'Wujub al-Musaraʿa fi Tatwiq al-Khatar al-Dakhili li-Lladhina Yusariʿun fi Muzahara al-ʿAdu al-Khariji'.

And if the Jews represent today the external enemy that occupied our nation, and expelled us from our houses, sixty years ago or more, then annexed what remained of it, with parts of the neighbouring states also, a whole forty years ago. The ones that supported them in this aggression are the traitors [*al-khawana*] among our countrymen, the ones that are not satisfied with informing them, spying for them. It has come to such a point these days, like the first hypocrites said: 'and if you are attacked, we will help you' [Here he only cites part of Qurʾan 59:11, without the last sentence that is important to understand its full meaning: 'but God bears witness that they are lying']. Although God had warned us in his saying: 'If they do help them, they will certainly turn their backs, and then they will not be helped', The Rounding Up [Qurʾan 59] 11-12.

And he ended the article:

For that reason God above the seven heavens ruled: just as it was at the expense of the Jews of Bani Quraidha, because they supported al-Ahzab against us; it is still the voice of wisdom concerning all that support our external enemies, especially when they shoot us from one bow, so the glances swerve, and the hearts reach the throats, and the believers suffer, and they shake like a severe earthquake. Would it be enough if the support was an aggression from one side, and the other side restrained his hand and patience, and confronted his missiles and his resistance to the invasion of the aggressors?! Our lord gave us patience, and made our feet firm, and made us victorious over the infidels [*al-qaum al-kāfirīn*].

Such hostility and the use of the term 'infidels' (*kāfirīn*) and 'hypocrites' (*munāfiqīn*) in relation to al-Fatah had been ongoing since at least 19 June 2006 in an article he wrote during the ongoing security chaos in Gaza in which he discussed the boycott of the Hamas government and more particularly the aggressions of the so-called 'Death Squad' of the Palestinian Preventive Security Services.[562]

This represented a profound change for Hamas. The Movement had not taken Qutb's ideology to the conclusion that others did in the last quarter of the twentieth century and never went as far as to excommunicate fellow Muslims from Islam by dismissing them as infidels. Indeed this was one of the hallmarks that distinguished it from Takfīrī movements (movements that practice *takfīr* against fellow Muslims*)*. Even the Egyptian Brotherhood was one step closer to such practice since its main focus was the Islamisation of society and the corrupt Egyptian regime was clearly perceived as an

[562] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Raya al-ʿIzza wa-l-Tamkin Tatarassakh fi Filastin raghma Anfaq al-Munafiqin', *al-Risala*, 19 June 2006, p. 18.

obstacle to that. This was however not the concern of Hamas, which focused on the struggle against the Israeli occupation. Thus, in his own writing al-Astal had used the notion of *kufr* from time to time, but always in reference to Israel. For example, his column on 22 March 2001 was called 'The Hijra is Incitement to Fight the Infidels'.[563] In it he argued that the way to liberate Palestine was through the divine guidance of the Qurʾan, rather than the earthly leftist and secularist ideology that had failed for the previous fifty years. In this article he used strong language against 'the Oslo team'—in reference to the Palestinians who signed the Oslo agreement in 1993 with Israel and the PA that was created as a result—which he ended up calling 'the fifth column pigs' but until 2006 he had stopped short of associating them with *kufr*.

The use of *takfīr* is a very controversial issue among religious scholars. Al-Qaradawi was very critical of it. He 'accused Qutb and his followers of challenging the integrity not only of the state but, more seriously, of the very fabric of Islamic civilization. In al-Qardawi's view […] Muslims must heed the example of the pious ancestors (*al-Salafiyyun*) and postpone judgment on other Muslims'.[564] Even Salafi scholars that represented the official Wahhabi tradition qualified the positions of Qutb as *bidaʿ*. They accused Qutb of deriving interpretive distortions due to his lack of knowledge of the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). At the heart of this argument, whether that of the official Saudi Salafi scholar or al-Qaradawi, against Qutb was that only qualified scholars could interpret the Qurʾan and guide the *umma*. Not to do so would be to disrupt social harmony and give in to turmoil. As Calvert explains: 'According to Qaradawi, the definition of Islam should emerge from public, critical discussion conducted by the leading *fuqahāʾ* (jurists) only. Unqualified agents such as Qutb are apt to have their judgment clouded by emotion and selfish desires. Amateurs

[563] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Hijra Tahrid ʿala Qital al-Kafara', *al-Risala*, 22 March 2001, p. 20.
[564] Calvert, p. 285.

will be attracted to allegorical or excessively literal understandings of Islam's textual sources, or become preoccupied with controversial side issues.'[565] Rayyan and al-Astal could not be accused of such ignorance since they were religious experts. They were however also like Qutb using the scriptures for their own ends.

The countercoup shows Rayyan at his most uncompromising. In the competition between Palestinian factions to lead the struggle against Israel, acts of internal political violence had already occurred, however, they had been isolated attacks because in the Palestinian territories the sense of a shared struggle against a common enemy was felt intensely by all Palestinians. Raising the guns against each other was a red line for Palestinians in general and for Hamas, in particular. It was Hamas leader Ahmad Yasin who decided not to fight back against al-Fatah, when in November 1994 the PA's police shot dead fourteen Palestinians during a Hamas demonstration outside the Palestine Mosque, in Gaza City. In the following years Yasir Arafat, in order to save the Oslo process, went about the destruction of the Islamic Movement. Thousands were arrested and some died in prisons while being tortured by the Palestinian security forces. Hamas expressed anger but did not respond in kind. During the Second Intifada relations began to deteriorate again. The first serious outbreak of inter-Palestinian violence since November 1994 took place in July 2005, with deadly clashes between Hamas and Palestinian security forces, in which two were killed and dozens wounded.[566] Thereafter it escalated unstoppably. Killings and attacks between the two sides became a regular occurrence during what Gazans refer to as 'the period of security chaos'. But the events of 2007 represented a sharp departure. In fact, Rayyan was explicit in reversing Yasin's firm position. Rayyan's brother ʿAbd al-Latif recalls a class his brother Nizar gave in

[565] Calvert, p. 287.
[566] Graham Usher, 'The New Hamas: between Resistance and Participation', *Middle East Report*, 21 August 2005 <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero082105> [accessed 6 September 2016]; Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, p. 55.

al-Qassam Mosque in Nusairat refugee camp, in the central governorate of the Gaza Strip, in which he said: 'Ahmad Yasin used to say "if you stretch out your hand to me to kill me, I shall not stretch out my hand to kill you" [Qurʾan 5:28]… but today we say if your hand is stretched to fight me, I will cut your neck'. ʿAbd al-Latif added: 'It is a clear and honest message to not to try to fight and uproot Hamas movement, and if they tried the response will be stronger than they expect.'[567]

The above narrative however grants Rayyan and scriptural interpretation excessive agency in the countercoup. Rayyan was not the one who took the decision to launch the pre-emptive attack. Hamas' top leadership had already made up their minds and needed no further convincing. They were trying to take on the US-trained al-Fatah forces before it was too late. This was the reason why the meetings where this subject was discussed were so short.[568] The purpose of Rayyan's tirade was tactical, to mobilize (*taʿabiʾa*) the fighters and the grassroots behind the decision. The way this functioned psychologically is most evident in the following part of his verbal onslaught:

> O children of al-Qassam you are on the right path, your ʿulamaʾ tell you that, leave those who say this is a civil war. This is not a civil war now when collaborators mobilise, this is a war on the secular heretics, who fight our religion, and our *umma* and kill our imams, and kill our children in the houses of God, and desecrate our mosques, and burn our universities. These are low people, they deserve nothing except fighting and killing.

He did two things here to lighten the moral burden of the Hamas fighters executing this decision. First he was explicitly appealing to his own authority as a religious figure and second he was reframing the violence from a civil war to jihad. It was very difficult for Palestinians to raise weapons against each other. Gaza being small—1.7 million people in 360 square kilometres—people knew each other. Many families had both al-Fatah and Hamas members. The ʿulamaʾ, claiming to represent a

[567] Al-Fara, p. 552.
[568] Sulaiman, Bashir. Interview by author. Handwritten notes. Jabalia town, 3 February 2015.

superior authority, provided them a religious justification to violate those personal bonds. This also illustrated the function that the ʿulamaʾ exercised in Hamas, to mobilise the population in a violent conflict more broadly, which is also a reason for their rise during the Second Intifada. In particular, religious scholars played an important part in the ideological training of the fighters. For a Palestinian to fight a formidable military force as Israel's, the belief in fighting and individual sacrifice as a religious duty and that death in battle would make one a martyr would almost have been a necessary condition. However, this did not mean that religious belief among Palestinians was the main motivation for fighting Israel, but that religion was an instrument to reach political goals. This is in agreement with Robert Pape's thesis that 'the presumed connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism', or any of the world's religions, is misleading, given that non-religious organisations are also leading instigators of such attacks.[569] Rather, he argues, 'what nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland.' In these cases, religion 'is often used a tool by terorrists organizations in recruiting and in other efforts in the service of the broader strategic objective.'[570] Differently phrased, the use of religion was tactical.

Anchoring in Revelation

Let us now analyse in detail his use of the religious reference through the notion of anchoring in the Islamic legal tradition (*taʾṣīl sharʿī*) with which he sanctioned violence against 'secular heretics' as we have seen earlier. A quote above by ʿAbd al-Latif Rayyan is instructive because it provided, casually, a specific definition of the meaning of this notion: the fighters were waiting for a fatwa from Rayyan that would clarify for

[569] Pape, p. 3.
[570] Pape, p. 4.

them the rule (*ḥukm*) to fight the secularists, starting from a specific verse in the Qur'an, given that Rayyan was an expert in *taʾṣīl sharʿī*. Thus, out of the scriptures, a rule was extracted, and an expert decided its application in a particular context. This was also part of the process of emitting a fatwa.

Though it was violence that Rayyan justified in the countercoup, his colleagues explained his ability to anchor political decisions in the Islamic legal tradition more generally. In one of these his son Biraʾ explained a number of issues that he researched for this purpose: He 'often wrote about the legitimacy of the team work [*mahsrūʿiyya al-ʿamal al-jamāʿī*] 'politics' and the formation of parties, and once he commissioned me to research 'the *hudna* [truce] in Islam', as he was preparing for a class [*nadwa*], and likewise we discussed the participation [*ishrāk*] with the Christians of Palestine and its wisdom and he was in favour of gaining [*kasb*] them and dealing with them well.'[571]

Yahya al-Fara, general prosecutor of the Rafah district court, described the context in which the anchoring in the Islamic legal tradition took place with reference to Rayyan's role as a religious authority within the political leadership of Hamas:

> He was distinguished from others in that he was a leader in his area and was considered a religious reference [*marjiʿan sharʿiyyan*] more than a political reference [*marjiʿ siyāsī*], and they used to look at him in the political leadership as a religious reference even though he was a member of the political leadership, and he was not able to give a political opinion, except by anchoring in the Islamic legal tradition [*taʾṣīl sharʿī*] and in any interview or political press conference with him they would take his word as if it were a legal fatwa [*fatwa sharʿiyya*], due to his reputation among the people as a religious scholar [*ʿālim sharʿī*].[572]

He further claimed that Rayyan was more than a politician because 'he is distinguished as a shariʿa politician [*al-siyāsī al-sharʿī*], because he used to add to his political ideas a characteristic of the shariʿa, anchoring in the Islamic legal tradition these ideas and points of view'. [573] In this account al-Fara assumed that Rayyan's

[571] Al-Fara, p. 554.
[572] Al-Fara, p. 549.
[573] Al-Fara, p. 555.

position as a religious reference placed him above politics. Underpinning this was a belief in the superiority of religion over politics more generally. As al-Fara further explained, Rayyan

believed politics was an original part of religion, that cannot be separated from it. And his political positions were ruled by a vision based on the Islamic legal tradition [*al-ruʾya al-sharʿiyya*], and he used to often say: the shariʿa politics [*al-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*] has a wide door, the *sīra* of the Prophet and the predecessors [*salaf*] encompasses every event.[574]

I have discussed this same question regarding the supposed precedence of religion over politics in Islamism and the advantageous position this leaves for the religious scholar in chapter 2. And just as I did then I argue here concerning Rayyan that despite these claims the relationship was more often one in which he served the political leadership, though it was also ambiguous, shifting and dialectical in that both exercised influence over each other to different degrees depending on the circumstances. Moreover, this appears have been the inevitable outcome of collapsing the distinction between religion and politics.

It is true that the political leadership appears to have consulted him during the process of decision-making. Al-Fara stated that 'the political leadership of the Movement and the Palestinian government led by the prime minister, used to send the martyr doctor asking him for his legal religious [*sharʿī*] opinion on some new political issues'.[575] ʿAbd al-Latif Rayyan explained this in similar terms: 'If something new appeared to them that needed a legal ruling [*fatwa sharʿiyya*] the prime minister and the political leadership of the Movement would send it in a letter to Dr. Rayyan and he would respond to them in the same way.'[576] Elsewhere al-Fara gave the impression that among the various ʿulamaʾ that the political leadership normally consulted, Rayyan had an unusually important role. This left little doubt that Rayyan was influential, however,

[574] Al-Fara, p. 554.
[575] Al-Fara, p. 555.
[576] Al-Fara, p. 549.

there were also numerous indications that Rayyan's colleagues were trying to exaggerate his importance and that he served more to provide a religious justification to decisions already taken. For example, in a footnote al-Kurd explained:

The strangest that he read to me was an anchoring in Islamic legal tradition [*taʾasil sharaʿi*] (*aḥādīth*) to allow the taking care of al-Fatah members on account of the offense that their leaders did to our members in the West Bank. He would read a draft and assign me to listen to it, and he informed me that at the end he would present it to the Prime Minister Ismaʿil Haniyya.[577]

Rayyan himself boasted that he could 'anchor' in the Islamic legal tradition all the political positions of Hamas: 'He used to say: I can anchor every position that Hamas takes'. Similarly, al-Fara quoted Rayyan's son Biraʾ as he explains how his father worked on the anchoring of all the positions of the Movement, as a post facto explanation:

I remember that in his last days he wrote the anchoring of the most important positions of the movement and its main lines, and he showed them to the prime minister, and he consulted them with some people of knowledge, and he mentioned some in his speech that he gave in the last meeting of the *shūrā* council before the war [at the end of 2008], and [the Hamas leader and former Minister of Interior] Abu Musʿab, Saʿid Siyam [1959-2009] was so moved that he cried profusely.[578]

The last sentence in particular suggests that this was a kind of virtuoso performance.

That such anchoring was an established practice and one that was central to the implementation of shariʿa by the Hamas government is corroborated by an announcement that Hamas Prime Minister made at a conference organised by Department of Shariʿa the IUG in March 2006 on 'Islamic Legislation and the Demands of Reality'. In the opening speech Ismaʿil Haniyya expressed his intention to introduce the position of Adviser to the Prime Minister on Anchoring in the Islamic Legal Tradition. The stated purpose was to 'protect Islamic shariʿa and summoning it on all the various issues'. The statement took place shortly after the Hamas election victory

[577] Al-Kurd, p. 335.
[578] Al-Fara, p. 554.

and while it was trying to form a national unity government, which Haniyya proceeded to anchor himself: 'Islamic shariʿa in its foundations and its texts protects national unity. We will proceed patiently with the dialogue (with the parliamentary coalitions) until we obtain a definitive formula for the next government.' Similarly the ministers would be chosen according to the two conditions extracted from Qurʾan 28:26 of skill and honesty.[579] Subsequently, Mazin Haniyya was appointed to this advisory role, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

This chapter claims further that it is precisely Rayyan's Salafism, and the break from the classical Arabic jurisprudential tradition that it prescribes, which gave him the flexibility to fulfil this role, that of anchoring in the Islamic legal tradition any decision taken by the Movement. This has been a direct result of the denunciation of *taqlīd* and the primacy of the scriptures advocated by Salafism, which led to a defence of individual study of the Qurʾan and the hadith to answer one's own concerns and act as *mujtahidūn*.[580] This also meant that they could pass judgement independently of a religious institution. Therefore, Griffel concludes, 'the common characterization of the contemporary *salafiyya* as a conservative or even reactionary movement should always be confronted with this caveat.'[581] For example, Nasir al-Din al-Albani, the self-taught hadith expert revered in purist Salafi circles, 'often described as apolitical, he was, in fact, willing to cooperate with whatever political authority he was confronted with as long as that cooperation would allow him to pursue his reformist agenda of practicing *fiqh* based on an independent study of hadith.'[582] Though it must be kept in mind that

[579] 'Haniyya Yaʿtazim Istihdath Mansab "Mustashar li-Raʾis al-Wuzaraʾ li-Shuʾun al-Taʾsil al-Sharʿi"', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 16 March 2006), p. 14.
[580] We must keep in mind that this was not the only current within Salafism. The other—represented by the Hanbali and the Wahhabi scholarly establishment—is highly hierarchical and practiced *taqlid*.
[581] Griffel, 'What Do We Mean By "Salafī"? Connecting Muhammad ʿAbduh with Egypt's Nur Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History', p. 208.
[582] Griffel, 'What Do We Mean By "Salafī"? Connecting Muhammad ʿAbduh with Egypt's Nur Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History', p. 218.

such flexibility has been a widespread phenomenon and not exclusive of Salafi religious scholars. Muhammad Qasim Zaman examines the role of the ʿulamaʾ in an Islamic context through history to argue that they were constantly defining and redefining tradition to facilitate change in way that was very similar to what Rayyan did to justify certain political position.[583] It is only that Salafism made this markedly easier.

Complexities and Contradictions of a Purist Salafi Brother

The image of the purist Salafi cleric that rejected the different legal schools and defended a literalist interpretation of the scriptures contrasts with the flexibility of the *mujtahid*, involved in the process of religious anchoring in support of politics just described. Ultimately such disparity puts into question any project that aims to recreate an ideal past—which the purist Salafi project is premised upon—indicating that subjective interpretation underlies any such attempt. This incongruity, between an ideal and its application, was also reflected in certain inconsistencies in opinions Rayyan pronounced and discrepancies in the very way he conducted his life, which undermined his purist Salafi credentials—as well as the purist Salafi project in toto.

Inflexibility was a characteristic attributed to Rayyan and he is often presented as a very strict purist Salafi in all aspects. Zaidan and al-Farani, graduate students of IUG, in a section of their paper called 'We Do Not Accept Patched or Partial Solutions' (*La Naqbal bi-l-Hulul al-Tarqiʿiyya wa-la bi-Ansaf al-Hulul*), epitomised this image. They argued that Rayyan 'warned against the dissolution of religion, and the dissolution of the cause, and befriending an infidel [*kāfir*] or adulterer, hypocrite or unbeliever [*zindīq*], and enemy of Islam, because that is not in religion.' Thus he expressed himself in favour of a 'black and white distinction.'[584] The absence of his belief in compromise

[583] Zaman, p. 3.
[584] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 610.

was perhaps best exemplified in his attitude towards the conflict with Israel. As they pointed out in the conclusion of their paper:

> Rayyan affirmed that there is no solution with the occupier except by the escalation of resistance, and all military positions must be confronted, and that the skulls, and the limbs and blood must be offered, since the doors of victory and strength do not open except through limbs and blood.[585]

In a similar way, many of the conference papers eulogised Rayyan, highlighting the way he exemplified *al-sunna al-nabawiyya.*

However, this panegyric collection of papers could also not help but point to certain contradictions in the man. Zakaria Zain al-Din, a former student of Rayyan who then became a colleague in the department of Hadith, had a section called 'The Contradiction Even if it Was Superficial Is Difficult to Comprehend' (*Al-Tanaqud wa-lau Kan Zahiriyyan Yasʿub Istiʿabhu*). First, Zain al-Din found contradictory Rayyan's wavering between activism and seclusion already recorded above:

> At other times he left the sphere of the Movement, the *daʿwa*, for going around with the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas. Suddenly he left all that, isolated himself in his library and did not respond to anyone's invitation even for a lesson. […] then he proceeds abruptly to what he had to do with the Movement, even at the front leadership, and maybe for long months he has no chance to stay in his library.[586]

Rayyan was clearly hesitating between his religious and his political duties, doubting which took precedence over the other, or even whether he should be engaging in politics at all; the purist Salafi ascetic rebuking the Muslim Brotherhood political activist, the Madkhali vs. the Qutbist.[587]

Then there were also contradictions relating to issues closer to the core of Islamic doctrine, and that highlighted the tension between the modernist Brother and the literalist Salafi more exclusively. On one occasion, Zain al-Din asked Rayyan what he

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[585] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 625.
[586] Zakariyyaʾ Subhi Zain al-Din, 'Ma Ruwwuit-hu min al-Rayyan Wahd-hu', in *Muʾtamar al-ʿAlim al-Shahid al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu fi Khidmat al-Islam* (Gaza: Faculty of Usul al-Din, The Islamic University in Gaza, 2009), pp. 139–136 (p. 159).
[587] Meijer, p. 10.

thought of the posters with photographs of martyrs posted around Gaza. 'He said that there is no harm in them, because he has a proof of the issue according to hadith'. This Zain al-Din confirmed when studying under him for his Master's degree. However, years later, when the two were walking in the streets of the IUG, Rayyan looked at the posters on the walls with the pictures of martyrs and exclaimed:

> By God the Islamists went far with the pictures, they must not do that. I said to him surprised: You were the one that declared a legal opinion [*aftaita*] on that. He replied, denying, I issued a legal opinion about these pictures? I issued a legal opinion on pictures of trees and the likes that does not have a soul.[588]

Here Rayyan was struggling over the correct, or in Salafi terms, the purer interpretation of scriptures and a popular Palestinian custom. And even regarding Israel there were sign of compromise, for example in him having studied possible justifications for a truce that we saw earlier.

Rayyan's Nationalism

Further, such contradictions underline the error in the very pursuit of an explanation of Rayyan's motives and actions by constructing a linear narrative that relies on a neat intellectual and scriptural genealogy rather than its multi-layered complexity, including the central importance of Rayyan's personal history and Palestinian nationalism in the context of the conflict with Israel. His colleagues, most of them clerics, steeped as they were in Islam's classical scholarly tradition, were focused on accounting for Rayyan's life through reference to their shared intellectual heritage, the scriptures and classical Islamic history and scholarship, form which they derived their authority. But not even they could stop themselves from making reference to Rayyan's personal history and trauma, in the context of the conflict, to explain his drives.

His brother, ʿAbd al-Latif, traced Nizar's jihadism to his 'displacement', which he placed at the centre of his personal narrative. A section on 'The Love of the Martyr

[588] Zain al-Din, pp. 158–59.

Shaykh For Palestine' (*Hub al-Shaykh al-Shahid Rahimhu Allah li-Filastin*)[589] preceded the one on 'The Love of the Shaykh for Jihad' (*Hub al-Shaykh Rahimhu Allah Taʿala ʿala-ihi li-l-Jihad*).[590] ʿAbd al-Latif also explained how Nizar's love for jihad started with the stories he heard from his father on the death of his grandfather and his uncle in 1949. While Zaidan and al-Farani mentioned the displacement in 1948 as the fourth and final factor that influenced his jihadism: 'He was influenced by the bitterness of the displacement [*tahjir*] from the houses'.[591] Waʾil al-Zard also highlighted the influence of Rayyan's personal history and the political, rather than religious, motivations that were behind his love of jihad and desire for martyrdom:

> From among the reasons of the love of the shaykh for martyrdom is that he saw often in his sleep that he returns to his village that was stolen by the Jews and expelled him from it by force of arms. Every time we visited him in his house he used to talk to us about a new vision. We found him with his chest wide open and his features relaxed waiting to return to his village with an incredible longing.[592]

On their last meeting before his death, Rayyan dwelt on the suffering that everyday Palestinians experienced as well as his own personal sacrifices: The death of his grandfather and uncle during al-Nakba. And during the Second Intifada the death of a brother and his son, as well as the serious injuries sustained by three of his sons. Rayyan could only explain the suffering to himself in terms of a divine plan: 'God wanted to make our generation an example of the meanings of patience and sacrifice', to make it easier for the following generation.[593] In this last quote the appeal to God appeared, again, poignantly as a mechanism to give meaning to suffering and to understand the conflict.

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[589] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', p. 568.
[590] 'Al-ʿAlim al-Mujahid al-Shahid al-Ustadh al-Duktur Nizar Rayyan wa-Juhud-hu al-Jihadiyya', pp. 568–69.
[591] Zaidan and Al-Farani, p. 607.
[592] Al-Zard, p. 520.
[593] Al-Zard, pp. 520–21.

More generally, nationalist narratives figured prominently in Rayyan's own writings, which were not always filled with religious references, but often also grounded in Palestinian folklore and the experience of dispossession.[594] In fact at times Rayyan even defended the countercoup in purely nationalist terms, arguing that the al-Fatah forces were mere agents of Israel and the United States, and so killing them was no different from killing the latter. The day after the fighting had ended Rayyan said that it was the happiest day of his life, except for the day that Israel dismantled the settlements in Gaza, in 2005. 'He did not forget the flood of joy from sweeping away the criminals, that the basic conflict is with the occupation, and the real joy is when they leave any inch of our land!'[595] The word 'occupation', and its derivatives, 'occupier' and 'occupied', appeared frequently in the proceedings, and often the first two were used as synonyms of Israel. Thus his biographers were at pains to point out Rayyan's concern for the conflict not just as a divine struggle but also an occupation.

Both Purist and Modernist

Rayyan thus had the appearance of a strict purist Salafi but also held positions that distinguished him as a modernist Brother. His Palestinian nationalism, examined above, was one of the main characteristics that differentiated him from purist Salafis. In a previous chapter Qutb's repudiation of nationalism has been mentioned. Jihadi-Salafis, another variety of purist Salafis, were also very critical of it. The Palestinian Jihadi-Salafi scholar ʿUmar bin Mahmud abu ʿUmar, alias Abu Qatada (b. 1960?), who adhered to pan-Islamic transnationalism, held Hamas's nationalism in contempt.[596] The idea of negotiating a truce with Israel, a mainstream Hamas position that Rayyan

[594] Nizar Rayyan, 'Al-Islah al-Siyasi al-Manshud', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 5 August 2004).
[595] Al-Fara, p. 551.
[596] For a full discussion on Abu Qatada's criticism of Hamas see Petter Nesser, 'Abu Qatada and Palestine', *Die Welt des Islams*, 53.3–4 (2013), 416–48.

endorsed, also drew the ire of al-Qaʿida representatives, who went out of their way to denounce the Movement in public, as I shall discuss further in next chapter.

Rayyan's support for participation in democratic elections again placed him firmly in the modernist Brotherhood camp.[597] Rayyan had not only been a founding member of al-Khalas Party but also his colleagues repeatedly used his support for participation in the 1996 legislative election to exemplify his vision and courage, given that the majority of the leadership of Hamas had opposed it at the time. Al-Fara argued that this was, however, 'not out of belief in Western democracy, but he saw the elections—like most Islamists—the best way to reach governance.'[598] This he further explained stating that as an Islamist he saw the rule of shariʿa as a red line, that is to say he did not belief that 'the people could choose anything other than the revelation of Islam'. However, 'democracy in the usage [*ʿurf*] among Islamists that means: that the people choose their leaders and not their Revelation [shariʿa].'[599] This was however not uncommon even among modernists. Hasan al-Turabi's and Rashid al-Ghannushi thought that active participation in the political process, including the formation of coalitions with non-Islamic movements, 'will help Islamic movements seize power and impose Islamization "from above".'[600] Al-Turabi in particular was seen to be very much in favour of a gradual penetration of the state institutions. And this is not exclusive to Islamism. As Wickham indicates, Marxist parties have participated in elections despite their end goal being antidemocratic.[601] This also supported the inclusion-moderation hypothesis by which the very act of participating resulted in democratic values

[597] This must be nuanced by recognising that though it was traditionally a movement that repudiated politics some purist Salafi groups have embraced democratic elections, such al-Nur Party in Egypt in 2012.
[598] Al-Fara, p. 551.
[599] Al-Fara, p. 551.
[600] Mishal and Sela, p. 8.
[601] Wickham, 'The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party', p. 205.

becoming ingrained. Leaving aside the question of the sincerity and extent of Rayyan's belief in democracy or the democratic process, his support for participation indicated at the very least, as al-Fara also pointed out, that he was in favour of 'change from the inside'—his performance during the countercoup was on the other hand a clear indication of the exact opposite, even taking into consideration the intense antagonism which preceded it.

His attitudes towards Christians and Shiʿa were also indicative. On relations with Christians, another point of tension for purist Salafis, Rayyan was in favour of cooperating with them in government. In this he disagreed, for example, with a fellow Hamas *ʿālim*, Salih al-Riqab, who specifically opposed Hamas's alliance with Christian candidates in the 2006 elections.[602] His lack of animosity towards the Shiʿa also stands out again as more in tune with modernism and untypical of purist Salafi thought. Though his staunch Salafi credentials meant that 'he held strong and renowned views about Shiʿi beliefs and their errors', that 'never implied that he opposed the Hamas alliance with Iran', adopting thus the more inclusive approach of the modernists.[603] In fact, when Khalid Mishʿal was facing a wave of criticism for his warm relations with Iran, Rayyan defended him. His position was the same regarding 'the alliance of Hamas and Hizbullah' which he argued in favour of and which to him 'did not mean negligence on the issue of belief'. His explanation after refusing an interview with Hizbullah's *al-Manar* satellite channel is revealing in this respect: 'I am a man of religious sciences [*ʿilm sharʿi*], my positions are attributed to religious experts [*al-sharʿiyyin*], I work as a lecturer at the Faculty of Shariʿa [*kuliyya sharʿiyya*], this channel *al-Manar* mixes religion (the Shiʿi belief) with politics a lot, and I don't like to

[602] Al-Bardawil, 4 February 2015.
[603] Al-Fara quoting Rayyan's son Baraʾ, Al-Fara, p. 552.

appear in it.'[604] Instead he directed the reporter to another Hamas leader, who, Rayyan said, could do what he couldn't. 'Yes, he was very bitter about the Shiʿi beliefs, but he did not see an objection to an alliance with them, for the sake of Islam and the cause', Al-Fara concluded.

Though perhaps the most palpable marker of more inclusive modernist approach of the Brotherhood spirit—as well as the tensions and contradictions that he struggled with internally—is Rayyan's style of dress. The way he clothed himself was in fact the first contradiction that Zain al-Din pointed to in the section of his paper referred to above. Thus Rayyan 'appeared sometimes with the clothes of the ʿulamaʾ of al-Azhar, with a jubbah and tarbush, at others with a suit and tie, a third with a galabiya, many times he would shorten it, thus it appeared in front of the people a contradiction in personality and positions'. In this case, however, Zain al-Din chose to explain away this apparent incongruity. He pointed to a more inclusive and expansive interpretation of the scriptures than that of purist Salafis, who were usually particularly strict in this sphere: 'But our shaykh from what it appears and what I understood from him through our studies with him on hadith relating to dress, he did this to show to the people that all this is permitted,' wrote Zain al-Din.[605] His donning of the Azhari robe and hat was perhaps most revealing, given his otherwise heavy-handed criticism of 'state Islam' and criticism of Ashʿarism.

The repudiation of Ashʿarism, central to purist Salafism, was a feature of Rayyan's thought. But even in this he displayed a reformist approach. Ashʿarism, which has Egypt's al-Azhar University as its stronghold, is one of Islam's most popular theological traditions. However, purist Salafis find Ashʿarism 'to be misguided,

[604] Al-Fara, p. 553.
[605] Zain al-Din, p. 158.

heretical, or offensive to God in one way or another.'[606] Instead, purist Salafis rely on the Hanbali doctrinal system, as refined by Ibn Taymiyya. However Rayyan's position towards Ashʿarism was not revolutionary but gradualist, seeking as he did to avoid a confrontation over this issue. In a paragraph exalting Rayyan's capacity to bring about change in society, al-Kurd wrote: 'I remember on this issue he mentioned to me the way to change the Ashʿarite belief that we have in the Gaza Strip, to the right belief by transmitting this belief to the emerging generation and not confusing the current ones with it'.[607]

Conclusion

This chapter compares and contrasts purist and modernist Salafism. The avoidance of doctrinal disputes, willingness to compromise in an attempt to unite different Muslim groups as well as people more generally, is one of the modernist Brotherhood's core characteristics. The Brotherhood is not identified with one creed or legal school but tries to encompass them all.[608] This spirit is to an extent encapsulated in a statement made by its founder, Hasan al-Banna, in one of the early conferences of the movement, in which he said that the Brotherhood is 'a Salafiyya message, a Sunni way, a Sufi truth, a political organisation, an athletic group, a cultural-educational union, an economic company, and a social idea'.[609] For purist Salafis on the other hand, doctrinal disputes were almost essential. Because of this there was an inevitable conflict between the two systems of thought. It is thus the tensions that the influence of purist Salafism within the Brotherhood creates that have been explored in this chapter.

[606] Lauziere, *The Making of Salafism*, p. 7.
[607] Al-Kurd, p. 337.
[608] This is a point also made in Osama Abuirshaid, 'The Dialectic of Religion and Politics in Hamas' Thought and Practice' (Loughborough University, 2013), p. 70.
[609] Mitchell, p. 14.

Academically, as a hadith expert and with regards to theology and jurisprudence, Rayyan fell squarely in the purist Salafi camp. Most theological or legal questions he resolved appealing to either the collections of hadith of al-Bukhari and Muslim, or the treatises of Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. He therefore eschewed Ashʿarism. He also used of the notions of *jāhiliyya* and *kufr* like he had learnt to in Saudi Arabia. However, such intellectual universe did not just translate into militancy and he demonstrated a great amount of flexibility. It was the notion of *taʾṣīl sharʿī*, founded on Salafi scripturalism, which allowed him to display a margin of flexibility and adaptability, and challenged the image of the Salafi literalist. Thus Rayyan, unhindered by centuries of scholarship, was able to justify, or anchor, positions for Hamas that sharply distinguished it from purist Salafis. One of Rayyan's biographers actually refers to this when he highlight Rayyan's centrism and moderation:

> Nizar Rayyan excels in anchoring all political, social, economic, security, and military issues in the shariʿa, because he is distinguished in *daʿwa*, and academically, and practically and with a high degree of intelligence and culture and he is one of the preachers who most follows the development of the era, and he is distinguished by the centrism [*wasaṭiyya*] and moderation [*iʿtidāl*].[610]

Rayyan is renown for his militancy; centrism and in particular moderation are far from what is conjured in the minds of many if not most Palestinians in Gaza when they hear the shaykh's name, however for an *ʿālim* who was also a self-proclaimed purist Salafi he was both of those things. Rayyan was an example of a particularly powerful religious scholar, but one that fundamentally abided by the political leadership.

While this chapter has examined the tension between purist Salafism and Hamas within the Movement, next chapter will examine this exact tension in relation to Hamas and groups outside of the Movement.

[610] Al-Fara, p. 548.

Chapter 6 – 'A Solid Building': Hamas and Jihadi-Salafism

There have been tensions between Hamas and other Islamic groups in the occupied Palestinian territories since the inception of the Movement. These groups competed over the correct interpretation of religion and/or over leadership in the struggle against the Israeli occupation. Milton-Edwards lists four such rivals: Palestinian Islamic Jihad, quietist Salafis, Jihadi-Salafis and Hizb al-Tahrir.[611] Much of this conflict has not been apparent at all. In fact, Hamas has actively tried to sweep it under the carpet. It was with the disagreements between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafis that major divisions in the Islamist ranks have spilt into the open and it is these that this chapter focuses on. The rift took place around the Movement's participation in the elections in 2006, changing its status from an opposition movement, one defined by military resistance, to a governing authority.

Two episodes are examined in detail in this chapter, first the Hamas response to a series of recordings from 2006 and 2007 in which the deputy chief of al-Qaʿida Ayman al-Zawahiri lashed out on the Movement, and second, the Hamas assault against a Jihadi-Salafi group in Rafah, in August 2009. The first illustrated the fissures between Hamas and al-Qaʿida and in the Islamist field in general. The latter represented the zenith of the competition between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafi groups in Gaza. The two were also causally connected. Al-Zawahiri's proclamations paved the way for the rise

[611] Milton-Edwards, p. 265.

of those groups in the Strip. This competition with Jihadi-Salafi groups remains a running theme to this day and is a major source of tension in Gaza.[612]

This chapter aims to examine in detail the profound differences that exist between Hamas and al-Qaʿida and in the process provide a more nuanced definition of each, while it attempts to problematise any facile comparisons. The conflict between Hamas and al-Qaʿida has attracted some attention in Western academic circles. Where this analysis aims to make a contribution is in examining Hamas's internal discourse regarding al-Qaʿida. The discussion will refer back to the roots of Hamas in the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaʿida as a Jihadi-Salafi organisation, as well as the competition between the two over the inheritance of the Salafi legacy. Rather than treating Hamas as a monolithic whole, this chapter offers the perspective of different factions within the Movement, although the focus will be, as in previous chapters, on the perspective of Hamas's ʿulamaʾ class, which played a central role in this struggle.

Early Encounters with the 'Other'

The chapter starts with a discussion of the tension between Hamas and quietist Salafism years before its confrontation with Jihadi-Salafism in order to show how closely these early disagreements resembled the latter ones, thus illustrating a consistency in the Movement across time, in particular before and after entering government in 2006. The aim is to illustrate the positions that Hamas adopted against Jihadi-Salafis later were not just expedient. By quietist Salafism I mean a group of the Madkhali tendency of purist Salafism.

Rivalries with other Islamist groups rarely reached the pages of *al-Risala*, especially not before 2006. Almost the sole object of criticism was Israel and the al-

[612] The incarceration of Salafis, for example, continued in late 2015, see Hasan Jabr, 'Ghazza: Muʿataqalun Salafiyyun Yadribun ʿan al-Taʿam li-l-Mutalaba bi-Itlaqi-him', *al-Ayyam*, 29 September 2015.

Fatah-led PA. This was because Hamas tried to promote an image of utmost unity among Islamists, often making reference to the expression '*bunyān marṣūṣ*' from the verse in The Ranks that reads 'God loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as though they are a solid building' (Qurʾan 61:4).[613] This went to the very heart of the modernist Brotherhood spirit running through Hamas's veins. As already mentioned Hasan al-Banna railed against the divisiveness of *ḥizbiyya*.[614] The Movement considered internal divisions counterproductive and a diversion from the real struggle against the Israeli occupation as well as from the awakening of the *umma* more generally. It was also a question of pride; Hamas considered itself the only address of the Islamist movement in Palestine and therefore did not want to even acknowledge the existence of other groups.

From time to time however, examples of internal friction appeared on the margins of the paper, like cracks in the building. 'A Preacher Is Prevented from Continuing the Friday Sermon in the al-Suq Mosque by Members of Hizb al-Tahrir in [the West Bank city of] Qalqilia' was an article that appeared in a small box at the bottom corner of a page in *al-Risala* in April 2000.[615] The attack took places when the preacher started to discuss issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Hizb al-Tahrir, founded in 1952 by a schoolteacher from the West Bank city of Tulkarem who broke away from the Brotherhood, is not necessarily a Salafi movement but it does share some key features with purist Salafism, which serve to introduce relations between Hamas and Salafi groups in Gaza on the eve of the Second Intifada.[616]

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[613] See al-Astal's reference to this verse in the late 1990s in the context of the need for the *umma* to unite, Al-Astal, 'Al-Anʿam 65'.
[614] Mitchell, p. 265.
[615] 'Manʿ Khatib min Muwasala Khutbat al-Jumʿa fi Masjid al-Suq min qibali Afrad Hizb al-Tahrir fi Qalqilia', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 6 April 2000), p. 16.
[616] This is according to the definition in Jacob Høigilt, 'Prophets in their own country? Hizb al-Tahrir in the Palestinian context', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 15.4 (2014), 504–20. On the other hand, Olivier Roy compares Hizb al-Tahrir to a Salafi movement and the International Crisis Group equates the two, Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: the Search for a New Ummah*, p. 66; International Crisis Group, *Radical Islam in Gaza*, *Middle East Report* (Gaza City/Ramallah/Jerusalem/Brussels, 29 March 2011), p. 5.

According to the article, the aggressors pulled the preacher from the minbar and cut off the microphone when he started to speak about the need for a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, arguing that 'preachers must not use the minbar for political issues and their promotion, due to the fact that the minbar belongs to the messenger of God, and its sanctity [*qudsiyya*] must be respected'. In fact Hizb al-Tahrir was not opposed to mixing religion and politics per se, what it objected to was nationalism.[617] The rest of the worshipers, the article continued, 'expressed their opposition and condemnation to the style that was followed in opposition to the sermon, which led to great chaos in the mosque, which contradicts the sanctity of the mosque and its authority'. This example summarises the dispute between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafi movements after 2006 in a number of ways: The opposition to Hamas's blend of politics and religion, in particular its nationalism; and the use of force in order to try to disrupt it. There was also a divergence in the interpretation of the meaning of 'sanctity', which maybe understood for our purposes as 'Islam'; purist Salafis considered Hamas's interpretation of religion and politics a violation of Islam, while Hamas considered a violation of Islam the use of violence in a certain precinct (a mosque) or under a certain authority (theirs).

Another rare example of the tension with Salafi groups is an article by Yahya al-Khafaja (b. 1958), 'On the Threshold of the Coming Dawn... Muslims are One Umma', published six months after the article above and on the day the Second Intifada broke out.[618] Khafaja was a local leader of al-Khalas Party from Rafah, in the southern tip of the Mediterranean strip. A bookish looking man, with eyes framed in round metal glasses, he had managed the finances of *al-Jamʿiyya al-Islamiyya*, the main Hamas *daʿwa* association after graduating in Business Administration from the West Bank

[617] Hroub, 'Salafi Formations in Palestine and the Limits of a De-Palestinised Milieu', p. 157.
[618] Yahya Khafaja, 'ʿAla Aʿtab al-Fajr al-Qadim... al-Muslimun Umma Wahida', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 28 September 2000), p. 20.

university of Birzeit and had been arrested several times by Israel and the PA for his activism in Hamas. Al-Khafaja was not a regular contributor to *al-Risala*, but wrote occasional pieces in the late 1990s and early 2000s. He represented the lay Islamist intellectual, knowledgeable of both classical texts and modern Islamist writers.

The background to this article is an event al-Khalas had organised to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet for which ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Rantisi had been invited to speak. The purist, supposedly quietist, Salafi group, which gathered round al-Abrar Mosque in Rafah, distributed a fatwa in response calling them infidels (*kuffār*) and heretics (*zanādiqa*) for marking such occasion, which they considered *bidʿa*. Such disagreements had not been uncommon and they went both ways. On a previous occasion when al-Qaradawi had issued a fatwa against the *niqāb*, al-Khafaja duly printed and distributed it. In conversation years later he framed the quarrel as one between radicalism (*tashaddud*) and centrism (*wasaṭiyya*). The objective of pursuing the latter was to avoid infighting among Muslims, including the use of *takfīr*. Al-Khafaja appealed to the scriptures to defend this argument. To justify the concept of the *wasaṭiyya* he made two points. First he quoted a hadith related by the wife of the Prophet, ʿAʾisha: 'Whenever the Prophet was given a choice between two matters, he would choose the easier one' (*mā khuyira rasūl allah baina amrain illā akhdh aisar-humā*), in other words the preference is for the interpretation of the scriptures according to what does least harm.[619] Second, he referred to Ibn Taymiyya's book *The Removal of Blame from the Great Imams* (*Rafʿ al-Mulam ʿan al-Aʾimma al-Aʿlam*) in which the author, also known as Shaykh al-Islam, reviewed the circumstances in which religious

[619] This hadith is cited in both Muslim and al-Bukhari hadith collections.

scholars were justified in interpreting the scriptures in different ways from each other.[620]

Khafaja's article explored these arguments in more detail. He described the *umma* as ripped apart. It needed to be united to become strong and rise again. This is what the Islamists were working towards despite the efforts of Western secularism and their collaborators in the East against it. The main section of the article was subtitled, 'The ʿUlamaʾ and the Preachers… The Desired Role' (*al-ʿUlamaʾ wa-l-Wuʿaz… al-Daur al-Matlub*). He identified himself as an 'Islamic reformer' and a proponent of the modern Salafi school, which he juxtaposed against the ʿulamaʾ and preachers that were busy issuing prohibitions instead of trying to overcome the divisions that riddled the *umma* by urging Muslims 'to forget their partial differences'. The text revolved around a quote by Rashid Rida urging Muslims to unite. He referred to Rida explicitly as a modernist Salafi, 'the leader of the modern Salafi school' (*zaʿīm al-madrasa al-salafiyya al-ḥadītha*) and founder of the influential journal *al-Manar*, thus confirming the currency of the label within Hamas circles. Rida had set the rule that '"we cooperate on what we agreed and we excuse each other on what we disagreed on". And what is meant is: "the cooperation of the people of the *qibla*" together against the enemies of Islam'. He prodded Muslim scholars to take note of the cooperation of 'world Judaism' and the 'Western crusades' and contrasted it with the differences that split the *umma*, launching in the last few lines against the preachers who repeated the disparities among the scholars, focusing in their *fatāwā* on prohibition (*taḥrīm*):

> And it is strange what I heard 'that she who uncovers her face and her hands is unveiled and her husband is cuckold' and that 'whoever uses an Islamic occasion to make a celebration' he is an apostate [*zindīq*], that is to say an infidel [*kāfir*], and the last was a fatwa to make the Shiʿa apostates [*takfīr*], Why? In this time that we must unite our ranks.

[620] Khafaja, Yahya. Interview by author. Handwritten notes. Rafah, 1 February 2015.

This led him to declare that 'the *fatāwā* are measured in time, and place and individual'. Such historicisation of revelation and the calls for unity placed him firmly in the modernist movement. Though they became much more heated later, this argument was very similar to those that would divide Islamists in Gaza after 2006, when Jihadi-Salafis accused Hamas of unbelief and the Movement appealed to the unity of the *umma* and the multiple interpretations of the scriptures. It illustrated how such quietist Salafi groups could evolve into al-Qaʿida and other Jihadi-Salafi formations.

The main thrust of al-Khafaja's message was the criticism of the divisiveness of purist Salafis. He defended a more flexible interpretation of the scriptures with greater inclusiveness and that encouraged unity among Islamists. The rest of the chapter unpacks these themes in more detail tracing the history of relations between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafism thereafter.

Al-Qaʿida and Hamas

The attacks by al-Qaʿida on 9/11 propelled the organisation onto the centre stage of international attention, eclipsing other versions of political Islam. The tendency was to draw a veil over the differences between them and reduce all Islamists to a global terrorist organisation. Israel has long propounded the existence of a link between Hamas and al-Qaʿida. As mentioned at the start of this thesis, with the rise of ISIS—an offshoot of al-Qaʿida—and increased animosity against Iran, Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that there was no difference between those two and Hamas. Policy analysts working on the 'war on terror' have made a similar argument, hinting that Hamas is like al-Qaʿida an international terrorist organisation. In *The Search for al-Qaeda*, for example, Bruce Riedel claims that there is evidence that links the two in cooperation in certain attacks outside the borders of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. He also suggests that al-Qaʿida would like to establish a franchise in Palestine, potentially in partnership

with Hamas.[621] Similarly Matthew Levitt in *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* presents Hamas as part of a global jihad network and very close to al-Qaʿida.[622] Such partnership, as this chapter will clarify, is actually almost inconceivable.

The efforts by Kim Cragin, of RAND Corporation, to distinguish the two are noteworthy. She criticises the way that 'since September 2001, many senior policymakers in the United States have tended to view the clandestine world of terrorism and political violence as one big lump of "evil-doers."'[623] This view, she argues citing a speech by president George W. Bush as an example, has guided the 'war on terror'—though she fails to mention that Bush's vision on this issue was in turn shaped directly by a phone call to his then Israeli counterpart Ariel Sharon.[624] 'The reality is much more complex', she adds. Her article, commendably, is aimed at establishing the important distinctions that there are among 'Sunni jihadists' given that groups within that category 'argue viciously among themselves'. Cragin's analysis however is coloured by her stated purpose, which is to provide 'US counterterrorism policy' with 'a clearer definition of its adversaries', which makes her treatment of the subject excessively reductionist. Thus, according to her, the nature of this debate centres on 'what exactly constituted a credible jihadist movement'. This is however only part of the discussion. Fundamentally, she leaves out the Hamas perspective, which is more concerned about its Islamist than its Jihadist credentials. This explains, for example, why she makes reference to Salafism, as an 'ideological subcomponent of Sunni-Islam', but doesn't discuss the concept in any meaningful way to draw the differences between

[621] Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), p. 127.
[622] Levitt, p. 227.
[623] Cragin, p. 576.
[624] Shlaim, p. 728.

the two. To offer a better understanding of the relation between the two I now turn to how Hamas viewed al-Qaʿida.

At first also Hamas compared itself with al-Qaʿida. In its efforts to present all Islamists as a united front, Hamas showed respect, solidarity and admiration for the organisation. They shared some overarching goals, primarily their anti-imperialism and the desire to awaken the *umma*. Further, there appeared to be a division of labour over the specific struggles they engaged in that prevented a conflict of interest. Al-Qaʿida was a global struggle, primarily against the US, though also fixed on the corrupt Arab regimes. Hamas was focused exclusively on fighting Israel and liberating Palestine. This shared anti-imperialism was also evident from Hamas's response to the attacks of 11 September 2001. The immediate reaction in *al-Risala* was summarised by the title of the editorial piece, 'America's Bitter Harvest', which asserted 'the US reaped a bitter fruit, which it sowed with oppression, and hatred, and injustice, against the souls of the weak among its people and all of humanity.'[625] It then listed the numerous acts of injustice and oppression that the US practiced against different people of the world, first and foremost through its support of Israel against Palestinians.

The 9/11 attacks against Manhattan's Twin Towers took place in the midst of the Second Intifada, while Israel was conducting intense daily military operations against Palestinians, bombing Gaza from the air, bulldozing great swaths of land and people's homes, as well as killing, wounding and maiming thousands of Palestinians during incursions with its infantry. Gaza was not only isolated from the outside world, but also divided internally by the Israeli military. The Palestinians were painfully aware of the United States diplomatic cover and material support for Israel. The US provenance of military hardware was clearly marked on the remains of missiles and rockets that ripped

[625] 'Risalat-na: Hisad Amrika al-Murr', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 13 September 2001), p. 3.

through their houses and bodies. The sense of American injustice, due to its unconditional support for Israel, was widespread, and for this reason, many Palestinians felt that with the events on 9/11 the US had been held accountable, a feeling that is echoed in the editorial above. For this alone many considered Bin Ladin a hero and his photograph was sold together with that of Hamas leaders and martyrs on the streets of Gaza.

Al-Zawahiri's Recordings

For these reasons the Movement received the recordings that Ayman al-Zawahiri issued between 2006 and 2007, in which the Egyptian Islamist voiced vitriol against Hamas, with a sense of shock and betrayal. It was Hamas's participation in the legislative elections of January 2006 that pushed the deep lying differences between the two most prominent Sunni militant movements into the surface. The Movement was also concerned that the turnaround of al-Qaʿida, which commanded a following worldwide, would affect its popularity in the Muslim world.

On 4 March 2006 a twenty-minute statement was broadcast by al-Jazeera in which al-Zawahiri commented on the most recent developments globally. In the process he pilloried Hamas for participating in the legislative elections and urged it to continue with the armed struggle against Israel. Participating in the elections constituted recognition of the peace agreements signed between the PLO and Israel, which contravened shariʿa, he argued. The recordings by al-Zawahiri were so sensitive that at first Hamas avoided engagement in the controversy in an effort not to fuel the flames. Most officials refused to comment and the few declarations adhered to a strict line. The only acknowledgement of al-Zawahiri's recording found in *al-Risala* was an article by

Rami Khiris, one of its leading reporters, titled 'Al-Qaʿida... Will Solidarity Turn into an Organisation in Gaza?'[626]

The next message, aired on 20 December 2006 and in which al-Zawahiri criticised the negotiations between Hamas and al-Fatah taking place at the time to form a unity government describing the latter as secular atheists, provoked the mildest of responses from Ismaʿil Radwan, a professor of Hadith at the IUG presented then as spokesperson for Hamas:

> We respect the points of view, except that al-Zawahiri spoke as if he was criticising a movement that had abandoned the choice of resistance and jihad and had slipped towards Oslo. […] It is impossible that we repudiate resistance and that we recognise and work with the unjust agreements between the enemy and the previous Authority.[627]

After the second message Hamas began to show weariness of the attacks and in writing Usama ʿAmir, a press official at Hamas's Political Office abroad as well as an aide to the office head Musa abu Marzuq, penned a forceful response in 'Fatah... Hamas... Al-Zawahiri... And the Palestinian Issue.'[628] The statement by al-Zawahiri transmitted on 11 March 2007 was the boldest condemnation of Hamas yet. He accused Hamas of apostasy and renunciation (*ridda wa-tafrīṭ*) after having fallen in the quagmire of concessions, abandoned Palestine and sold its principles in exchange for political authority. Finally, he announced the Movement's death to the *umma*. The leadership was still very restrained in its verbal declarations to the media. Khalid Mashʿal, who after the death of Yasin and al-Rantisi had become the head of the Movement, when probed on his response answered only: 'I think that it is not noble that I criticise a man

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[626] Rami Khiris, 'Al-Qaʿida... Hal Tatahauwal min al-Taʿatuf ila al-Tanzim fi Ghazza', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 9 March 2006), p. 5.
[627] 'Radwan Yuʿaqib ʿala al-Zawahiri: "Hamas" Ustuhdifat li-Tamassuki-hi bi-Thawabitha wa-Tahaddat al-ʿAlam bi-ha', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 20 December 2006 <https://www.palinfo.com/73089> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[628] Usama ʿAmir, 'Fatah... Hamas... al-Zawahiri... wa-l-Shaʾn al-Filastini', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 8 January 2007), p. 18.

that is pursued by America'.[629] However, the Movement had already decided to unleash its condemnation issuing an official press release, 'Dr al-Zawahiri Your Reading Was Mistaken and the Expression Betrayed You', in which it only lightly veiled its rage.[630]

It had taken more than a year of regular verbal onslaughts by the al-Qaʿida leader before Hamas had felt the need to issue an official statement. One of the main reasons why Hamas took offense from al-Zawahiri was his lack of recognition of sacrifices that the Movement had made, and continued to suffer, in defence of the Palestinian cause and Jerusalem. This was echoed in the communiqué as well as most other declarations by Hamas leaders and activists around that time. However, there were other more urgent issues Hamas wanted to address. Al-Zawahiri's speech was broadcast shortly after the Mecca Agreement, on 8 February, in which al-Fatah and Hamas set the basis for the formation of a unity government. Indeed the Movement had come a long way in its embrace of the political process and it was clearly concerned that accusations that it had made too many concessions would damage its credibility.[631] Thus Hamas's press release started by underlining one of its most uncompromising positions, that Palestine was Islamic waqf. This was followed by reassurances of its commitment to liberation of the whole of Palestine through jihad and resistance—though without stipulating whether the latter would be military or other.

But then it also introduced three arguments of import to justify its political manoeuvring; mechanisms that Hamas used to introduce flexibility to its maximalist views. First, the existence of different ways of interpreting the scriptures: 'We in Hamas understand the differences of opinion and legal reasoning [*ijtihād*] on the positions, with whichever agreement here or there, or on a certain issue, like the Mecca agreement or

[629] Lama Khatir, 'Baina Hujum al-Zawahiri wa-Muruʾa Mashʿal', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 13 March 2007 <https://www.palinfo.com/25978> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[630] Hamas, 'Akhtaʾta al-Qiraʾa ya Duktur al-Zawahiri fa-Khan-ka al-Taʿbir', 12 March 2007.
[631] For more details see Are Hovdenak, *Al-Qaeda - A Challenge for Hamas?*, 12 January 2009.

other'. The second argument was that Hamas, unlike al-Qaʿida, was on the ground and knew best when and how to act, and the third that it looked after the interests of the Palestinian people:

> Resistance is our strategy, but how? And when? That depends on our considerations, and we evaluate the issues according to the reality of the moment, and more knowledge of what surrounds us in terms of conditions and states, and we deal with them according to what serves the interests [*maṣalīḥ*] of the Palestinian people.

The existence of different forms of legal reasoning (*ijtihād*) was a particularly important argument that was repeated in the press release and numerous other articles by Hamas supporters around that time. Usama ʿAmir, the spokesperson of the Hamas Political Office mentioned above, addressed this subject in some detail in the two articles he wrote on the speeches by al-Zawahiri. He stated in his first piece that Hamas 'respects all opinions and legal reasoning [*ijtihādāt fiqhiyya*] that contravene its vision' while defending 'its right to take a different turn according to its reasoning that is also based on the principles of shariʿa'.[632] And he expanded on this in his second piece. The question is not only al-Zawahiri's 'disrespect for the legal reasoning of the other [*ijtihādāt al-ghair*] which are based [*tastanid*] on scriptural legal reasoning [*ijtihād sharʿī*]', but also that

> as long as the issue is an issue of *ijtihād*, and there is no definite Qurʾanic text [*naṣṣ qurʾānī qaṭʿī*] it is not permitted for al-Zawahiri or other to consider their legal reasoning the only one [*al-uḥādī*], that it is the only legal opinion that there is no ambiguity in it, and for that all other ideas are thrown out.[633]

In his article 'Al-Zawahiri... Where the Error Hides!!' Kamal Jabir, a journalist writing in Hamas's main website, PIC, corroborated ʿAmir's argument, stating that 'the more dangerous thing is that al-Zawahiri behaves towards others as if he owns the

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[632] ʿAmir, 'Fatah... Hamas... al-Zawahiri... wa-l-Shaʾn al-Filastini'.
[633] Usama ʿAmir, 'al-Zawahiri Marra Ukhra', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 2007 <https://www.palinfo.com/48749> [accessed 6 September 2016].

exclusive rights to understand Islam and the way to implement it to reality'.[634] Jabir described this as an 'imaginary belief' and asserted that by demanding that Hamas implement shariʿa, al-Zawahiri failed the 'Prophet's test' as found in the hadith 'God was merciful on a person who knew his ability'. He then introduced the notion of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*. The very animosity that al-Zawahiri displayed towards Hamas and other 'brothers in religion', and by doing so standing with 'every international, regional and local power against Hamas', went against the principles (*aḥkām*) and objectives (*maqāṣid*) of shariʿa. Indeed using the shariʿa against Hamas when the Movement is still finding its feet itself also contravened the spirit of the law: 'At a time when Hamas had not yet consolidated its authority, it is considered a repugnant manipulation of the merciful shariʿa to attack Hamas in its name and attempt to disrobe it and shake the trust of the Muslim masses in it.'[635]

The liveliest discussions on al-Zawahiri's messages took place in PALDF, the main online discussion board of the Movement.[636] Al-Zawahiri had provoked also the indignation of 'Dr Uthman', one of the board members of PALDF. The intensity of the anger towards the Egyptian was such that he had shot back with a response, one day before Hamas issued its press release.[637] The brunt of Dr Uthman's argument was that al-Zawahiri attacked Hamas and any other fellow Muslims simply because they followed a different school of thought. Al-Zawahiri's tirades were 'unjust attacks

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[634] Kamal Jabir, 'Al-Zawahiri... Aina Yakmun al-Khalal!!', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 7 July 2007 <https://www.palinfo.com/78319> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[635] Jabir.
[636] Despite its claims to the contrary, it was directly linked to the PIC and therefore to Hamas (rarely referred in its English form, its Arabic name was *Shabaka Filastin li-l-Hiwar*)
[637] Dr Uthman, 'Lam Takun Yauman maʿa Filastin Ayyuha al-Zawahiri la-Takun maʿa-ha al-Ana', *Palestine Dialogue Forum*, 2007 <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=117574> [accessed 6 September 2016]. Cragin mistakenly refers to this article as an 'Official Release of the Islamic Resistance Movement' and mistypes the date it was issued. This one, like most other Arabic material that she refers to, she gathers from organisations that track online activity of terrorist organisations and translate their statements. Cragin, p. 588.

against Hamas, in which there is no recommendation or critique but pillorying, shaming and compounded hatred'. He compared al-Qaʿida to the Kharijites because they acted according to their interests and did not look at the consequences of their actions. The differences between Hamas and al-Zawahiri were framed also in terms of severity (*tashaddud* or *taʿaṣṣub*) and extremism (*taṭarruf*) against centrism (*wasaṭiyya*) and moderation (*iʿtidāl*). In line with this he took issue with al-Qaʿida attacks on civilians, in particular the November 2005 bombings against a group of hotels in Amman, in which most of the victims were Jordanian. Indeed the legitimacy of this particular aggression divided Jihadi-Salafis themselves.

Dr Uthman made a series of very specific ad hominem attacks against al-Zawahiri that on closer inspection revealed the profoundly different schools of thought that the Egyptian doctor and the Brotherhood, and by extension Hamas, represented. He denounced al-Zawahiri for having undermined Palestinian jihadists for fifteen years, a reference to ʿAbdullah ʿAzzam having been driven out of al-Qaʿida. After his arrival in Peshawar in the late 1980s, 'al-Zawahiri had not bothered to pay allegiance to ʿAbdallah ʿAzzam—then widely seen as the father and the theoretician of jihad against the Soviets'.[638] Instead he directed his attention towards Usama bin Ladin, to push the Saudi away from his mentor—ʿAzzam—and to ensure his organisation, Islamic Jihad, received most of the funding from the Saudi billionaire. This was also for ideological reasons. Al-Zawahiri wanted to turn jihad against the Arab regimes, in keeping with his Qutbist understanding of *jāhiliyya*.[639] He belonged to the Egyptian jihadist movement that had developed in parallel to the Brotherhood's legalistic and nonviolent approach while the leaders of the latter were in jail during the 1950s and 1960s. His jihadist movement repudiated political participation in favour of revolutionary change, to

[638] Lacroix, 'Ayman al-Zawahiri, Veteran of Jihad', p. 154.
[639] Hegghammer, p. 99.

overthrow the Egyptian regime and establish an Islamic state in its place. ʿAzzam on the other hand was keen to maintain the unity of the Muslim community against external enemies, and in that respect was closer to Hasan al-Banna and the modernist Brotherhood heritage. For this reason various commentators in Hamas media observed that al-Zawahari animosity towards the Movement was rooted in his deep enmity towards the Brotherhood.[640]

Dr Uthman also accused al-Zawahiri of not caring for Palestine. This was due to a disagreement between al-Zawahiri and Hamas over the interpretation of the Palestinian cause that also bared essential differences between the two. As Cragin notes, for al-Qaʿida this was mostly a religious issue, over control of Jerusalem. It saw Palestine as a central Islamic cause that was the responsibility of the Islamic *umma* as a whole. For Hamas, however, the notion of Palestine as an Islamic cause overlapped with its Palestinian nationalist project, over the struggle for Palestinian statehood. That is to say, Jerusalem was both the second holiest shrine in Islam and also the capital of the Palestinian state. Like Abu Qatada, who believed the root cause of all problems of Muslims, including the occupation of Palestine, was the apostasy of Muslim regimes, and the priority was therefore to deal with that, al-Qaʿida didn't recognise the nationalist dimension, because it was conceptually opposed to all forms of nationalism.[641] ʿAmir stated it bluntly when he wrote that Hamas cannot stop

> al-Zawahiri, or anyone else, from talking about an issue that according to his intellectual makeup he does not see as an internal issue, since there is nothing in his custom [*'urf*] and that of his adherents that is called an internal Palestinian, Iraqi or Somali issue, since they consider that 'miserable stinking nationalism' as they say in their literature,

[640] See: Khatir; Yasir Al-Zaʿtara, 'Al-Zawahiri wa-Hamas... baina al-Naqd wa-l-Tahrij', *al-Dustur*, 13 March 2007. Khalil Al-Samadi, 'Hamas baina al-Zawahiri wa-ʿAbbas', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 21 July 2007 <https://www.palinfo.com/176012> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[641] For a full discussion on Abu Qatada's criticism of Hamas see Nesser.

and so they say that it is their right to intervene and by force in the Palestinian cause and other causes that impinges on the present and future of every Muslim.[642]

This distinction was palpable in Hamas's dogged commitment to confine the military struggle within those borders. In a press release issued on 29 April 2006 and titled 'Hamas Rejects the American Claims on its relation to al-Qaʿida and considers it Part of the American Campaign Against it', Hamas responded to declarations by the then Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch about its supposed relations with al-Qaʿida, and it stated that the Movement's 'resistance activity against the occupation is limited to the Palestinian territories'.[643] In fact, as Are Hovdenak argues, this is in contrast to not only al-Qaʿida but also the most prominent Palestinian nationalist organisations that have a long history of violence outside Palestine and Israel.[644]

Thus, part of the quarrel between al-Zawahiri and Hamas was over ownership of Palestine and the interpretation of its struggle. And this was not just at a theoretical level. Hamas denounced that the real agenda behind the verbal attacks on Hamas, was to create for al-Qaʿida a presence in Palestine. Palestine was central to al-Qaʿida's rhetoric, but it had done little militarily to support the cause. No doubt it had found it difficult to break into the Palestinian arena due to the fact that there were already so many well-established Palestinian factions. Others also pointed to the Israeli security capabilities.[645] And this was a matter of some embarrassment for the organisation. Seen in this light the speeches by al-Zawahiri were a denunciation of Hamas but also an incitement to those in Gaza, particularly the youth, who were attracted by al-Qaʿida, and

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[642] ʿAmir, 'Fatah... Hamas... al-Zawahiri... wa-l-Shaʾn al-Filastini'.
[643] *Hamas Tarfud al-Iddiʿaʾat al-Amrikiyya hawla ʿAlaqatha bi-Tanzim al-Qaʿida wa-Taʿtabir Dhalika Juzʾan min al-Hamla al-Amrikiyya did-ha*, 29 April 2006 <https://web.archive.org/web/20060519140823/http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2006/29_4_06.htm> [accessed 16 September 2016].
[644] Hovdenak.
[645] See Yasir Al-Zaʿtara, 'Madha Yataratab ʿala Iqtiham "al-Qaʿida" li-l-Wadʿ al-Filastini', *al-Hayat* (London, 20 May 2007).

its appeal to jihad, martyrdom and revolution, to announce their allegiance to the organisation.

The wrangle with al-Zawahiri showed the major fault lines between Hamas and al-Qaʿida. Hamas believed in the existence of different interpretations of the scriptures, which gave it flexibility to manoeuvre politically and make compromises, with the higher interests of the Palestinian people always in mind. Hamas also believed in unity among Islamists. Al-Zawahiri on the other hand did not agree with political participation and nationalism. Also, unlike Hamas it was keen to engage 'the internal enemy'. For this reason it found reprehensible Hamas's willingness to establish a unity government with the secular al-Fatah.

However, that these were Hamas's stated positions does not mean it lived up to them. Despite, for example, Hamas's openness to allying with the al-Fatah at a particular point, the Movement was not consistent in this respect. There were profound contradictions within Hamas's ranks, including those who shared al-Zawahiri's Qutbist tendencies. According to ʿAmir, 'Hamas and its ʿulamaʾ and leaders do not treat al-Fatah with the logic of belief and unbelief [*al-īmān wa-l-kufr*] even if al-Fatah members claimed the opposite'. He further asserted that

> returning to the issue of calling a traitor [*takhwīn*] and an infidel [*takfīr*] which al-Zawahiri included in his last tape against Fatah and some of its leaders, it is incumbent upon al-Fatah to be reassured that Hamas will not one day be al-Qaʿida or al-Zawahiri that al-Fatah will be categorized as an infidel movement by Hamas.

He ended the article reflecting on the Algerian civil war in the 1990s as well as internal violence in Iraq in 2000s, which he guaranteed Palestinians would not repeat. However, six months later Hamas launched the countercoup with the support of at least two of its ʿulamaʾ branding al-Fatah members as 'secular apostates' and although it might not have counted as civil war, it certainly was civil strife.

The article by Dr Uthman provoked a heated argument and some of the participants in the forum accused him and other critics of al-Zawahiri of representing only a faction within Hamas.[646] It was true. There was significant support for al-Qaʿida within Hamas's grassroots, as well as Gaza more generally. Though also Hamas security officials denounced that the forum had at times been taken hostage by 'Takfīrī elements', external to the Movement, and that they should have invested greater efforts to vet contributors and censure their comments.[647] It is this tension between Hamas and these home-grown Jihadi-Salafis that will be analysed in next section of this chapter.

Jihadi-Salafism in Gaza

It didn't take long after 9/11 for Israel to claim, more in the form of an accusation, that al-Qaʿida had established a presence in Gaza.[648] Such claims intensified after the Israeli withdrawal from the Strip in September 2005. By then the Movement was highly sensitive to any attempts to compare Hamas to al-Qaʿida or any claims to the presence of al-Qaʿida in Gaza. 'The Israeli aims in spreading these rumours is to create a comparison between Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip and the presence of al-Qaʿida in Gaza, that is, this organisation must be treated like it is treated in Afghanistan', wrote the *al-Risala* reporter Rami Khiris summarising succinctly how the Movement felt. Hamas was very aware that 'Israel exploited the international campaign against terrorism in order to strike against and distort the struggle of the Palestinian people'.[649] After the Hamas electoral victory in 2006, the West Bank-based al-Fatah leadership jumped on the bandwagon. Palestinian President Mahmud ʿAbbas mentioned the issue

[646] Dr Uthman, 'Madrasa al-Muzaiyyidin!!', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 15 March 2007), p. 18.
[647] 'Al-Daʿwa ila Hajb al-Mawaqiʿ "al-Takfiriyya" wa-Muwajaha al-Qaʾimin ʿalai-ha wa-Taʿaziz al-Fikr al-Wasati', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 4 September 2009) <https://www.palinfo.com/47960> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[648] A more detailed account of the rise of al-Qaʿida-like groups in Gaza is documented in International Crisis Group.
[649] Khiris, 'Al-Qaʿida... Hal Tatahauwal min al-Taʿatuf ila al-Tanzim fi Ghazza'.

for the first time in an interview with the London-based *al-Hayat* newspaper on 2 March 2006.[650] From then on al-Fatah's leadership and the Israeli political and military establishment repeated the accusation at regular intervals while Hamas officials denied it.[651] At first, these were mostly wishful thinking. In the end however, in the Gaza pressure cooker, they became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In his article on the subject, Khiris recognised a growing trend, 'in particular in the south of the Gaza Strip, among Salafi groups or those that call themselves Ahl al-Sunna, that support the idea of al-Qaʿida, however it has not been confirmed that they are an organisational extension of it.' There was in fact widespread sympathy across the Gaza Strip, and 'in some of the cities of the Gaza Strip you can listen during the prayers after the Friday sermon in more than one mosque that the preachers prays for Usama bin Ladin, al-Zawahiri and [the Jordanian leader of al-Qaʿida's Iraqi offshoot, Abu Musʿab] al-Zarqawi'. The biggest impact is among youths: 'In a quick survey of some of the adolescent youths it appears that the person of al-Zarqawi and Bin Ladin are dear among a large section of them and they exchange CDs that include scenes of decapitations of al-Qaʿida hostages in Iraq'.[652] It was the anti-American sentiment that al-Qaʿida appealed to: 'Pictures of Bin Ladin are also hanged in the houses and shops and are sometimes raised in the demonstrations against the American practices or the mistreatment of the West against Muslims.' The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq,

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[650] Ghassan Charbel, ''Abbas li-'al-Hayat': Muʾashshirat ila Wujud "al-Qaʿida" fi Ghazza wa-l-Daffa wa-l-ʿAwaqib Takhrib Kul al-Mantiqa', *al-Hayat* (London, 2 March 2006), p. 1.
[651] For example, In January 2010 Israel announced again the arrival of al-Qaʿida into Gaza: 'Mazaʿim Sahyuniyya hawla Wusul Tanzim al-Qaʿida ila Qitaʿ Ghazza', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 16 January 2010 <https://www.palinfo.com/99685> [accessed 6 September 2016]. At the end of the year in December 2010 the Palestinian Prime Minister Ismaʿil Haniyya denied another such allegation by Israel: 'Haniyya: La Wujud li-Tanzim al-Qaʿida fi Ghazza', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 2 December 2010 <https://www.palinfo.com/88444> [accessed 6 September 2016]. At the end of the following year, December 2011 The Hamas Ministry of Interior issued again a denial of Israeli press reports to that effect: 'Al-Dakhiliyya Tanfi Dukhul ʿAnasir min "al-Qaʿida" Ila Ghazza', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 12 December 2012) <https://www.palinfo.com/69516> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[652] Khiris, 'Al-Qaʿida... Hal Tatahauwal min al-Taʿatuf ila al-Tanzim fi Ghazza'.

thrust the image of Jihadi-Salafis to the forefront of the fight against imperialism, into the imaginary of Palestinians. There were other reasons for the rise of such groups in Gaza. One major factor was that the turn by Hamas from resistance to government was not accompanied by the creation of a political horizon, due to the international boycott on the Hamas government and the siege on Gaza. Considering the formidable challenge that Jihadi-Salafis constituted what is surprising is not that these groups arouse in Gaza but that Hamas kept such a tight lid over them and managed to maintain its authority. Disembarking in Gaza with a heavy ideational baggage, sharply distinguished from Hamas's and an already proven global appeal at a vulnerable moment for the Movement 'these opposition elements better appeal to the besieged constituency that is prevalent in Gaza than Hamas', as Milton-Edwards claims.[653]

The battle over people's minds was particularly intense among the Islamists and followers of Hamas, but it wasn't just confined to them. During the Second Intifada al-Fatah cadres had experienced a wave of religiosity and some of them decided to leave the nationalist movement. But instead of joining Hamas, their former rivals, they merged into new organisations. Some of these were close to the thought and practice of Hamas, like Nasir Salah al-Din Brigades and the al-Ahrar movement. Others were more in opposition to Hamas, like Jaish al-Islam, which in turn split away from Salah al-Din Brigades.[654] Alongside these defections, the affinity of the more belligerent sectors of Hamas with Jihadi-Salafis was evident in the joint operation its armed apparatus carried out with Jaish al-Islam activists in June 2006 in which Gilad Shalit was captured. This attack was considered within Hamas a coup by its more militant wing. The Israeli journalist Shlomi Eldar sees the Shalit capture as a putsch by Ahmad al-Jaʿbari, leader of al-Qassam Brigades, against the political leadership of the Movement. After the

[653] Milton-Edwards, p. 260.
[654] Salah Hamida, 'Tanzim al-Qaʿida fi Filastin', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 2008 <https://www.palinfo.com/81995> [accessed 6 September 2016].

election victory, the political direction of Hamas was desperately trying to prove itself politically by forming a unity government and was thinking of anything but an attack against Israel.[655] Also, this took place at the peak of the violence between Hamas and al-Fatah in the streets of Gaza, which prompted al-Jaʿbari to push for a Movement led by the military wing that would not seek a compromise with the other factions.[656] However, this partnership did not last and the kidnapping of the British journalist Alan Johnston in March 2007 led in September 2008 to a bloody offensive by Hamas against the quarter in southern Gaza City where Jaish al-Islam had made itself strong.

The vast majority of Jihadi-Salafi attacks were however against fellow Palestinians in Gaza. On 6 May 2007 a man was killed and eight others wounded, among them children, when members of a Salafi group opened fire and threw hand grenades at a festival in a UNRWA school in the city of Rafah. The group criticised the event for encouraging the mixing of the sexes and teaching girls to sing and dance, thus supposedly contravening the principles of shariʿa.[657] This was followed by aggressions throughout the Gaza Strip, against mixed schools, video shops, Internet cafes, restaurants, pharmacies and coiffeurs among others.

The turning point in the conflict between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafism took place in Rafah on 14 August 2009, when ʿAbd al-Latif Musa (1959-2009), the leader of Jund Ansar Allah—a group established shortly before the major Israeli military offensive against Gaza that started in December 2008—declared an Islamic Emirate in Palestine from the pulpit of Ibn Taymiyya Mosque. The assault on the temple was preceded by a number of aggressions by the group, the most recent of which had been one on 21 July against a wedding party in Khan Yunis after which two members of Jund Ansar Allah

[655] Eldar, p. 211.
[656] Eldar, p. 213.
[657] 'Rafah: Qatil wa-Thamaniya Jarha fi Iʿtidaʾ ʿala Hudur Mahrajan Madrasi', *al-Ayyam* (Gaza, 7 May 2007), p. 1.

had been arrested. They were also accused of being involved in the attacks against the UNRWA school mentioned above and—this was key—against the home of Marwan abu Raʾs, a Hamas parliamentarian as well as the head of the PRSL.[658] The assault in Rafah led to the death of twenty-eight people, including Musa and at least seven from the Hamas forces, as well as more than a hundred wounded. Hamas wanted to send a strong signal.

Mobilizing the ʿUlamaʾ

'The Palestinian government will not allow the return to a security chaos in the Gaza Strip under whatever umbrella it be', was the central message that the Hamas media carried to justify this extraordinary act of aggression. Imposing law and order had been its only major achievement—certainly in the field of services—after it won the 2006 elections. However, though Hamas tried to reduce the problem to a law and order issue, it could not hide that it saw the Jihadi-Salafi groups primarily as a challenge to it monopoly over the interpretation of Islam in Gaza and more specifically, as Milton-Edwards argues, that they undermined 'Hamas's claim and attempt to monopolise power and governance according to their own Islamist agenda.'[659] In declarations which indicated the sensitivity of the denominations, the Ministry of Interior was careful to underline 'that the clashes took place with Takfīrī elements and not a Salafi group', and also that 'the clashes which occurred were between those individuals and the Palestinian police, not Hamas Movement'.[660] Thus confirming that Hamas wanted to define these events as a law and order issue as well as that 'Salafi' was a label that it did not consider a disparagement—but it actually claimed for itself. In a similar effort to

[658] Rami Khiris, ''Anasir al-Takfir Tamil ila Istikhdam al-ʿUnf Dakhiliyyan wa-Tazhad fi Muwajaha al-Ihtilal', *al-Risala*, 17 August 2009, p. 2. This article also claims that these groups were only involved in internal attacks, which was an argument Hamas often used to discredit them.
[659] Milton-Edwards, p. 260.
[660] 'Dakhiliyya Ghazza: Ishtibakat Rafah Waqaʿat maʿ ʿAnasir "Takfiriyya" wa-Laisa Jamaʿa Salafiyya', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 15 August 2009) <https://www.palinfo.com/31878> [accessed 6 September 2016].

discredit the group's religious credentials, the head of the Interior and Security Committee of the PLC Ismaʿil al-Ashqar, who had also been deputy secretary general of al-Khalas and chairman of the board of *al-Risala*, said: 'We will not allow ideological, moral and national deviators to impose their agenda and what is in their ill minds on our people and our Palestinian resistance'.[661]

A series of circumstantial evidence provided further indication that this was a conflict over religious legitimacy. The attack by Jund Ansar Allah against the head of the PRSL, the organisation that issued the *fatāwā* that bestowed the government with its religious legitimacy, sent a clear message. Also, the immediate reason for the takeover of Ibn Taymiyya Mosque was that it had been built on government land without a permit, and it should therefore be handed over to the Ministry of *al-Awqāf*.[662] While in the past it competed with the al-Fatah's Ministry of *al-Awqāf* over control of the mosques, Hamas was now the one that tried to assert its authority over the houses of worship through its ministry.

Indeed, the timing of these events also revealed other aspects of the contest over religious authority. With the death of Nizar Rayyan on New Year's Day 2009 Hamas had lost its most significant stalwart against Jihadi-Salafis and it was no coincidence that the greatest direct challenge from this group to Hamas' authority, the declaration of the Emirate in Rafah, took place the summer after. Though strictly not a Jihadi-Salafi given his formal affiliation to Hamas, Rayyan was both a Jihadi and a Salafi, without hyphen. These credentials served Hamas well in its claim for authority over the Islamic field. And his death left a vacuum which Musa took advantage of. These two figures

[661] 'Lan Nasmuh al-Munharifin Fikriyyan, wa-Wataniyyan bi-Fard Ajandat-hum', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 15 August 2009) <https://www.palinfo.com/176486> [accessed 20 September 2016].

[662] The Gaza authorities threatened to occupy it numerous times, while its benefactors continued to expand it. The final showdown was precipitated by an order that gave Musa until 13 August to handover the mosque. Milton-Edwards, p. 265.

represented competing models of religious authority. Rayyan and Musa were born in the same year, and like Rayyan, Musa was also active in the most prominent quietist Salafi organisation in Gaza, Dar al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna, as a teacher at Ahl al-Hadith al-Sharif institute. Beyond this, their paths diverged. Musa was not a professional religious scholar, but had studied medicine in Alexandria University. In this respect he resembled more al-Zawahiri who was also a medical doctor by training. It was in Egypt that Musa came into contact with ʿulamaʾ of al-Daʿwa al-Salafiyya, one of the main quietist Salafi organisations in the country, and acquired his religious expertise. On his return from Egypt he started to preach at the mosque of Ahl al-Sunna in Khan Yunis, which he continued doing for fifteen years, after which time he preached at al-Nur Mosque in Rafah, and then finally at Ibn Taymiyya Mosque. He based his teachings, which were also distributed through recordings, on two books he had written on *ʿaqīda* and *fiqh*. Rayyan on the other hand was a professional religious scholar and a prestigious professor at the IUG, trained in Saudi Arabia where he had become a pupil of ʿAbdullah ʿAzzam. While both Rayyan and Musa were part of the quietist Salafi establishment in Gaza, one had turned to Hamas and the other represented those quietist Salafis who turned into Takfīrī Jihadists. It was his independence from the IUG in particular that signalled Musa's existence outside the range of influence of Hamas. At the same time Musa tried to claim part of Rayyan's legacy for himself. Though they were more direct inheritors of al-Zawahiri's heritage, in 2009 Jund Ansar Allah had tried to appropriate the name of ʿAbdullah ʿAzzam, Rayyan's mentor and a figure that commanded great respect within Hamas and among Palestinians generally: Shortly after the attack on Ibn Taymiyya Mosque, a*l-Risala* published an interview with ʿAzzam's son Hadhifa who

claimed that the group had contacted him about their plan to call themselves after his father's name 'Abdullah ʿAzzam Brigades', though Hadhifa refused.[663]

Rayyan was dead, but there were other religious scholars that Hamas could mobilise to wage the ideological battle over religious authority. Abu Raʾs, the head of the PRSL, was explicit about the central role of the Hamas ʿulamaʾ in the struggle against the Jihadi-Salafi movements in Gaza. In fighting Takfīrī thought and protecting society from it, 'the duty of the ʿulamaʾ is greater than the duty of the government which looks after security, because the ʿulamaʾ are ones that reach the hearts of the people', he argued. He also sketched what their task was: 'So that this thought is not dominant and the youths take refuge in it, it must be the duty of the ʿulamaʾ of Islam and their activities to clarify the principles of Islam, the correct understanding of Islam and the tolerance of Islam'.[664]

Further, the Jordanian commentator and Hamas sympathiser Yasir al-Zaʿtara, whose articles were often reproduced in *al-Risala*, suggested bringing prestigious international ʿulamaʾ to establish a dialogue with them: 'and in this context it is better that capable ʿulamaʾ engage with these groups in dialogue, with messages from ʿulamaʾ from abroad that command respect in these circles, to turn them away from the internal violence and severity and *takfīr* that serves the occupiers.'[665] And this *al-Risala* did, hurrying to summon global religious legitimacy from friendly purist Salafi figures. A communiqué published in the website of Shaykh Hamid al-ʿAli, a former secretary general of the Salafi Movement in Kuwait who had been considered an 'al-Qaʿida

[663] 'Najl ʿAbd Allah ʿAzzam: Majmuʿa Ansar Allah al-Takfiriyya Ittasalu bi-i li-Istighlal Ism Walidi', *al-Risala*, 17 August 2009, p. 4.
[664] '"Daur al-ʿUlamaʾ" Akbar min al-Hukuma fi Muharaba al-Fikr al-Takfiri', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 2009) <https://www.palinfo.com/56738> [accessed 6 September 2016].
[665] Yasir Al-Zaʿtara, '"Jihadiyyu" Ghazza idh Yatlubuna "al-Wikala" al-Qaʿida', *al-Jazeera.net*, 2009 <http://www.aljazeera.net/home/Getpage/6c87b8ad-70ec-47d5-b7c4-3aa56fb899e2/e4f7e7d8-33ed-4b89-93b6-30d94bf64e3d> [accessed 6 September 2016].

facilitator and financier', was cited to show the support of Salafis for Hamas.[666] In the article, 'Scholars of Religion: The Strip is Islamic and It is not Allowed to Overstep the Legitimate Government', he was presented as 'one of the prominent *ʿulamaʾ al-sunna* in the Islamic world'. Throughout the piece he tried to confer legitimacy on the Hamas ʿulamaʾ: 'The exit from this division is with the intervention of the ʿulamaʾ and the wise in Palestine, to repulse this evil from them before it gets out of control and so that the reasons for deviation are avoided'.[667] Al-ʿAli further emphasised the sovereignty of Hamas and the authority of its ʿulamaʾ, enjoining Palestinians in Gaza to abide by them: 'It is not permitted for any person to deviate from the framework of the government or rise according to his desire or mood, this is forbidden and rejected. Who issues Islamic principles are the ʿulamaʾ and those who have knowledge that have the ability to extract shariʿa principles.' And Hamas government might at times fall short, however 'it has what it has in terms of shariʿa basis and is founded on the *fatāwā* of the ʿulamaʾ, though it must be excused if it [the government] did not agree with them [the *fatāwā*]' on certain occasions. The article included quotes from Mahir al-Huli, then dean of the Faculty of Shariʿa of IUG, as well as a communiqué by Yusuf al-Sharafi, associate professor of Hadith at the same institution. On the next issue of *al-Risala* a full article was published by al-'Ali in which he is presented as 'one of the great Salafi theoreticians'.[668]

While the ʿulamaʾ were the medium the message was centrism. Milton-Edwards correctly describes how Hamas presented this as a conflict between 'moderation' and

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[666] For background on al-ʿAli see Lawrence Wright, 'The Rebellion Within', *The New Yorker* (New York, June 2008) <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/06/02/the-rebellion-within>.
[667] 'ʿUlamaʾ Din: al-Qitaʿ Islami wa-la Yajuz Tajawwuz al-Hukuma al-Sharʿiyya', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 17 August 2009), p. 5. For the original communiqué by al-ʿAli see 'Bayan fi Ahdath Ghazza al-Muʾsifa', *Shaykh bin ʿAbd Allah Hamid al-ʿAli* <http://www.h-alali.org/m_open.php?id=01f050aa-894a-11de-a0d2-00e04d932bf7> [accessed 7 September 2016].
[668] Hamid bin Abdullah Al-'Ali, 'Arbi' 'Ala Hamas', *al-Risala*, 20 August 2009, p. 18.

'radicalism', a distinction that was largely ignored by the West. 'Hamas's leaders repeatedly claim to be the "moderate" face of Islamism, far more palatable than the jihadi ideologues and their armed followers represented by salafi-jihadi insurgents in the Gaza Strip', she states.[669] Thus the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior called 'on all who try to be convinced of their ideas to learn the centrist Islam from the people of knowledge and the ʿulamaʾ, calling on the ʿulamaʾ and the preachers to make the Palestinian people aware of the truth of the religion.'[670] Then on 9 September the Ministry of *al-Awqāf* organised a two-day conference, 'The Missionary Discourse Between Centrism and Excess [*ghulu*]', in which the most prominent Hamas religious scholars participated.[671] The Minister, Talib abu Shaʿar, highlighted the role of the ʿulamaʾ and especially 'their position regarding the issues that the Muslim society is going through under the spell of confused ideas'. The conference included lectures by Mazin Haniyya on centrism and its milestones in Islam; Yunis al-Astal on Islamic shariʿa, between theory and practice; and Yusuf Farhat on the principles of the missionary discourse in Islam. The second day Salman al-Daya spoke about excess and its reasons, manifestations and treatment; Jabir al-Samiri on *takfīr*, its dangers and its divine precepts (*ḍawābiṭhu al-sharʿiyya*); and Umar al-Hums on the legitimate conditions (*al-shurūṭ al-sharʿiyya*) to change the reprehensible (*al-munkar*).[672] The ʿulamaʾ tried to defend the centrist path as emanating unequivocally from Islam. In an attempt to emphasise that there was no relativism in interpreting the texts Abu Raʾs argued that 'the lack of attention to the evidence and commentaries (*al-adilla wa-l-*

[669] Milton-Edwards, p. 260.
[670] 'Al-Dakhiliyya Tuʿlin Intihaʾ al-ʿAmaliyya al-Amniyya wa-Tulawih ila Duluʿ Sulta Ramallah fi al-Hawadith', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 2009) <https://www.palinfo.com/176487> [accessed 7 September 2016].
[671] 'Abu Shaʿar: al-Wasatiyya Miza al-Umma al-Islamiyya... Wa-Khitab-na Yaltazim al-Asala wa-l-Muʿasara', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 2009).
[672] 'Abu Shaʿar: al-Wasatiyya Miza al-Umma al-Islamiyya... Wa-Khitab-na Yaltazim al-Asala wa-l-Muʿasara'.

tafāsīr) is what led to severity of some groups and their excess'. With the same purpose in mind of dismissing the idea that there was any ambiguity in the texts as to the path of Islam, ʿAbd al-Karim al-Kahlut, the sightless mufti of Gaza, proclaimed that 'Islam is clearer than the Sun in its directions and society is in great need of *daʿwa* and reform'. And he called 'those with confused ideas to return to religion, to take religion from its origin (the Qurʾan and the sunna), to look at the morals of the Prophet Muhammad, to model themselves on him, and distance themselves from extremism and excess.'[673] This notion of an objective understanding of religion and interpretation of the text, contrasted with the argument made previously when engaging al-Zawahiri that there were different forms of legal reasoning and they were all equally valid.

At a workshop that had taken place a week earlier on 'The Role of Internet Forums in Spreading Extremist ideas Among Youths', Hamas officials, intellectuals, ʿulamaʾ and journalists proposed a more concrete set of ideas to arrest the influence of Jihadi-Salafis. Hamas spokesman Sami abu Zuhri recommended the distribution of 'Salafi *fatāwā* opposed to these Takfīrī ideas that their proponents disguise as Jihadi-Salafi ideas'. While Yunis al-Astal said that 'these websites and ideas should be monitored and the response to them anchored in the scriptures'. He then invoked the authority Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the Muslim ʿUlamaʾ Union that he headed. He suggested establishing contact with them 'to guide the sites that send out the centrist thought and show that severity (*tashaddud*) is not a characteristic of religion'.[674]

By an extraordinary coincidence al-Qaradawi had launched, days after the assault on Ibn Taymiyya Mosque, his book *Fiqh al-Jihad* with the aim of carving a centrist alternative to the Jihadi-Salafi interpretation of jihad. During the presentation of the

[673] 'Abu Shaʿar: al-Wasatiyya Miza al-Umma al-Islamiyya... Wa-Khitab-na Yaltazim al-Asala wa-l-Muʿasara'.
[674] 'Al-Daʿwa ila Hajb al-Mawaqiʿ "al-Takfiriyya" wa-Muwajaha al-Qaʾimin ʿalai-ha wa-Taʿaziz al-Fikr al-Wasati'.

work, al-Qaradawi commented on the attack in Gaza, confirming that 'Hamas was right because it tried to dissuade Jund Ansar Allah from fighting their brothers, but they refused, and it was obliged to use force and for those like them I wrote *Fiqh al-Jihad*'.[675] *Al-Risala* duly published an article on the event. The appeal to al-Qaradawi wasn't casual but directed at his prescriptive authority. His book was a milestone in the development of centrist thought, as it turned from a relative term into something closer to a belief-system with a fixed set of principles. Beyond the pale were those that consider the UN-sanctioned state system and international borders as sinful and 'claim that Muslims must fight the whole world' including other Muslims. On the other side 'there is also a party that falls short and is neglectful, and they are the ones that want to kill the jihad in the *umma* and make it surrender to those who attacks it, under the claim of peace, that is what Israel and Western colonialism want for us'. And thus, he declared, 'Islam is a religion of jihad and peace, it wages jihad against those who fight it and comes close to those who extends their hand in peace, and that was spread against [*'alā*] the sword not through [*bi*] the sword.'[676]

Rival Interpretations of Ijtihad and the Issuance of Fatawa

Though the promotion of centrism responded to the rise of Jihadi-Salafism, this was also part of a broader intellectual project to promote a modernist interpretation of Islam that I have chartered since chapter 1. On the issue of *al-Risala* of 17 August, the first circulated after the assault on the Mosque of Ibn Taymiyya, Yusuf Ali Farhat published the last of a series of ten articles on renewal (*tajdīd*) in Islamic thought.[677] Farhat, a

[675] 'Al-Qaradawi: Hukumat Ghazza Muhiqqa fi Qital Majmuʿat (Jund Ansar Allah)', *al-Risala* (Cairo, 24 August 2009), p. 8.
[676] He cited the example of the Prophet who during the first thirteen years of his mission before him and his companions left for Medina, were not allowed to defend themselves from the polytheists though these had raised their swords against them, 'Al-Qaradawi: Hukumat Ghazza Muhiqqa fi Qital Majmuʿat (Jund Ansar Allah)'.
[677] Yusuf Farhat, 'Jaulat fi al-Fikr al-Islami: Mazahir al-Tajdid fi al-Fikr al-Islami (10)', *al-Risala*, 17 August 2009, p. 18.

former leader of *al-Khalas* who was also an admirer of Nizar al-Rayyan having written an eulogy of him in *al-Bayan* a Riyadh-based Salafi magazine, served as director general of preaching and guidance (*waʿẓ wa-irshād*) at the Ministry of *al-Awqāf*. In the personal details section of his Twitter account he also expressed his commitment to centrism: 'we call for tolerance and reject rigidity [*taʿaṣṣub*]'. In the article he signalled his support for modernist Salafism, emphasising Islam's 'commitment to freedoms and human rights'. But it was his defense of 'renovation in confronting the challenges of the modern age through *ijtihād*' that revealed the unique interpretation that Hamas gave to this distinctly Salafi intellectual instrument for issuing *fatāwā* and a key distinguishing factor from its Jihadi-Salafi rivals. This discussion confirms and develops what in fact has already been discussed in chapter 4 regarding Hamas's *lajnat al-iftāʾ*, and in particular the precedence of the *shūrā* over the fatwa and the separation of the executive authority from the ʿulamaʾ.

The article is of particular interest because it describes the mechanism for the use of *ijtihād* and more specifically the role of the ʿulamaʾ, though more than this Farhat was describing the model of Islamic governance that Hamas was developing. Farhat argued that 'since the existence of ʿulamaʾ with encyclopaedic knowledge had become rare, if they had not disappeared, collective associations [*haiʾāt jamāʿiyya*] must be created that water the yield and limit the wrong, this of course does not contradict the individual efforts to make *ijtihād*'. Such collective associations were no doubt organisations such as the *iftāʾ* committees of IUG and PRSL (the Arabic for 'league' was also '*haiʾa*'). This was in keeping with al-Qaradawi's thoughts as expressed in his book *Contemporary Ijtijhad between Discipline and Dissolution*, in which he argued for collective *ijtihād*, while also 'being very concerned to disqualify other than

theologically educated scholars from doing *ijtihād*.'[678] Indeed the promotion of such collective associations was also very directly related to the concerted campaign against the Jihadi-Salafi threat in Gaza and their issuing of *fatāwā* against the Movement. This had been a problem for years. In March 2007, when Hamas was already struggling with Jihadi-Salafis, the League's head Marwan abu Raʾs had warned that the mosques in Gaza were out of control with preachers 'hurrying' to declare people infidels. 'It is not permissible to leave the minbars to a struggle over different opinions as the preachers alternate between them issuing rules and *fatāwā* according to their opinion which misleads the people' he said, adding that 'the performance of the preachers was weak and could not be relied upon'. He did recognise that different rulings did not necessarily reflect a contradiction between *fatāwā* but only 'differences in the jurisprudential opinions because *fiqh* has room for many useful deductions for the Muslim society' and even 'an expert in *fiqh* had more than one opinion over one issue'. But he was very much in favour of restricting who could issue legal rulings to the ʿulamaʾ and their collective associations.[679]

There was however a contradiction in this solution. The disavowal of the ʿulamaʾ in favour of a more widespread use of individual *ijtihād* was a central feature of Salafi modernism and its project of renewal. This stood in tension with the prominent role of the Hamas ʿulamaʾ who monopolised *ijtihād* in the struggle against Jihadi-Salafism, and which would only be reinforced with collective association. Yusuf al-Sharafi, associate professor of Hadith at the IUG, appeared to recognise this inconsistency implicitly. On the one hand he spoke of the need to drink from the original source: 'We in Gaza support the march of thousands to memorise the Qurʾan'. But he also acknowledged the

[678] Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 57.
[679] Marzuq.

multiple interpretations of shariʿa, and for that reason Muslims should consult the ʿulamaʾ:

> We study reality well and we restore issues to their right place and the shariʿa foundation says 'extirpate the corrupter before bringing the benefits'. And another is 'the action on the least damage'. This is why we emphasise to our youth that they return to their *shuyūkh* and ʿulamaʾ so that they help them understand the truth of this centrist religion.[680]

In an interview with *Felasteen*, a newspaper sympathetic to Hamas that had been established in Gaza after the 2006 elections, al-Astal compared the issuing of *fatāwā* in Hamas and al-Qaʿida, as the central difference between the two. In the process he threw more light on the role of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas, and the tension between individual and collective *ijtihād*. The first difference was the background: 'Both al-Qaʿida and Hamas spring from the Islamic religion, but the process of understanding religion between them is different in the culture of those who are qualified to issue *fatāwā* in the two movements', al-Astal said.[681] Though he refused to state it explicitly, what he was referring to here was that al-Zawahiri, the 'unofficial spokesman, chief polemicist and principal ideologue' of al-Qaʿida,[682] was not a trained scholar. In similar terms al-Azhar's ʿulamaʾ had scorned Qutb. Further, he added dismissively, 'al-Qaʿida extends itself in issuing *fatāwā* on killing and *takfīr*'. On the other hand, in Hamas the decision-making process did not depend on any individual in particular but derived its legitimacy from the consensus: 'We issue our positions through the necessary consultation and the decision of the majority when there are different opinions, no individual is solely responsible for a decision, in order for it not to submit to robbery [of the decision by one person] at all'.[683] This implied a fundamentally different approach to the

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[680] 'ʿUlamaʾ Din: al-Qitaʿ Islami wa-la Yajuz Tajawwuz al-Hukuma al-Sharʿiyya'.
[681] Usama Radi, '"Hamas" wa-'al-Qaʿida' baina al-Wasatiyya wa-l-Tashaddud', *Felasteen* (Gaza, 17 June 2008), p. 4.
[682] Kepel and Milelli, p. 161.
[683] 'Al-Astal: Qitaʿ Ghazza Yatahaddad-hu Khatar al-Ghazu al-Fikri bi-Ism al-Islam', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 20 August 2009), p. 2.

implementation of shariʿa. He referred to this elsewhere regarding Hamas's relations with Iran, to which, as already mentioned, some of its ʿulamaʾ were opposed but couldn't veto because Hamas took all its positions according to the necessary consultation (*shūrā*) and the decision of the majority in case there was a plurality of opinions. 'No official can make the decision individually, so that it is not subject to pressures at all', he reiterated.[684] And he highlighted gleefully the collective-consultative (*shūrī jamāʿī*) decision-making process of Hamas, where 'the lowest ranks participate in the weightiest policy decisions and the most insignificant issues a narrow circle of people, like the political leadership and the general *shūrā* council, is enough'.[685]

Thus, al-Qaʿida leaders issued *fatāwā* without being religious scholars that they imposed on the majority, while in Hamas it was the ʿulamaʾ that issued *fatāwā*, and these were subject to the decision of the majority. If al-Astal's collective-consultative decision-making process was an interpretation of Farhat's collective associations (and at least linguistically there was an overlap in the wording used) then the system was more democratic than it at first appeared, diminishing the sense that the ʿulamaʾ assumed authority. This was the model of Islamic governance that Hamas was developing, one in which ʿulamaʾ played a role—providing religious legitimacy and also some degree of content—but were far from having the last word. This was confirmed by Jihad al-Saʿadi, a Palestinian commentator who agreed and further described the different place that the ʿulamaʾ occupied within each organisation:

> For Hamas the jurisprudential shariʿa reference [*marjiʿiyya sharʿiyya fiqhiyya*] is far from the 'military and political' men of the movement, they issue *fatāwā* from inside the square of the event that they are living in, but in al-Qaʿida the leaders are themselves the party that issues religious rulings [*jihat al-iftāʾ al-sharʿiyya*] which directs the

[684] Yunis Al-Astal, 'Al-Shubhat al-Marduda fi Lamazat Maʿduda', *The Palestinian Information Center*, 22 August 2009 <https://www.palinfo.com/17583> [accessed 25 March 2016].
[685] Radi.

religious issues of the organisation in the rulings regarding contentious matters [*ahkām al-nawāzil*].[686]

But this was not only about two organisations from the Salafi school of thought that defended individual *ijtihād* and had developed that tool in a different direction. Hamas was here also reverting, unwittingly or not, to the role of the ʿulamaʾ from the first centuries of Islam, in which they maintained a distance from the ruling elite, the executive authority—and therefore a degree separation between religion and politics—while al-Qaida was conflating their role. Thus, for example, Bin Ladin had written his 1996 'Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places' in the style of a fatwa 'thereby rhetorically obscuring the historical fact that fatwas have typically been the preserve of the ʿulamaʾ'.[687]

The criticism that Jihadi-Salafis lacked knowledge of the scriptures was further evidence that fundamental to the difference between the two organisations was the question of who had the right to interpret the scriptures, that is, exercise *ijtihād*. Al-Astal claimed that

> those who accuse the people of unbelief for the simplest of reasons don't have enough knowledge of Islam. But they rely on a superficial reading of some of the texts, or they exceed the proper bounds in its interpretation without a clear and authentic method [*manhaj uṣūlī*] for the interpretation of the texts and deducing meanings.[688]

He later contrasted the authority of the ʿulamaʾ against the very limited knowledge of the youths that make up most Jihadi-Salafi in Gaza, 'young men who almost none of them know a small part of the texts, but they have the courage to regard with contempt the great ʿulamaʾ of the *umma*.'[689] Their youth and lack of knowledge, he

[686] Jihad Al-Saʿadi, 'Qiraʾa Maudu'iyya fi al-Fawariq baina Hamas wa-l-Qaʿida', *al-Jazeera.net*, 30 July 2007.
[687] Euben and Zaman, p. 11.
[688] 'Al-Duktur Yunis al-Astal Yatahaddath ʿan Wasatiyya al-Haraka al-Islamiyya Muqabil al-Ghulu wa-l-Tafrit', *The Palestinian Information Center* (Gaza, 2008) <https://www.palinfo.com/38164> [accessed 7 September 2016].
[689] 'Al-Duktur Yunis al-Astal Yatahaddath ʿan Wasatiyya al-Haraka al-Islamiyya Muqabil al-Ghulu wa-l-Tafrit'.

implied, made them easy to manipulate. The superficial understanding of religiosity was further underscored, he argued, in the emphasis of these groups on the outward signs of religiosity, in particular, their appearance, the long hair and the short knee-length robes. Also, the fact that their religious knowledge came from websites and pamphlets directed to them by their leaders, as opposed to the real sources.[690] Therefore, Al-Astal proposed, the conflict with Jihadi-Salafis 'is more a phenomenon of disruption than intellectual conviction'.[691] Despite this backhanded dismissal he felt obliged to address their accusations in detail, displaying his full rhetorical arsenal.

An Intellectual Invasion

Al-Astal issued a communiqué on 17 August 2009 after the assault on the mosque in Rafah titled 'The Doubts Responded with a Number of Hints' in which he countered one by one to the main arguments by such groups against Hamas.[692] In the internal arena 'perhaps what is the biggest danger that threatens us today is the intellectual invasion in the name of Islam [*al-ghazu al-fikri bi-ism al-islam*]', he announced in reference to the Jihadi-Salafi groups in rather dramatic terms. Though at the same time he refused to address them as anything other than 'some individuals', which reflects his reluctance to take them too seriously and also to grant them such honourable title as 'Jihadi-Salafi'. He was explicit about what he aimed to do in this pamphlet: 'And since ideas [*al-fikr*] are not resisted except with ideas; it is incumbent upon us to deal with all the issues that those tens hold against the government, to reveal the truth in them, to

[690] 'Majmuʿa Musa... Shubban Sughar ʿUnwan-hum al-Shaʿr al-Tawil wa-l-Ziyy al-Bakistani', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 17 August 2009), p. 6.
[691] 'Al-Duktur Yunis al-Astal Yatahaddath ʿan Wasatiyya al-Haraka al-Islamiyya Muqabil al-Ghulu wa-l-Tafrit'.
[692] Hamasforever, 'Al-Yaum al-Saʿa 4 wa-li-Muddat Saʿatain maʿa Dr. Yunis al-Astal', *Palestine Dialogue Forum*, 2009 <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=464570> [accessed 7 September 2016]. These were reported on in *al-Risala* on 20 August, 'Al-Astal: Qitaʿ Ghazza Yatahaddad-hu Khatar al-Ghazu al-Fikri bi-Ism al-Islam'. It is then published in full in the Hamas website 'The Palestinian Information Center', Al-Astal, 'Al-Shubhat al-Marduda fi Lamazat Maʿduda'.

show the religious origins [*al-uṣūl al-sharʿiyya*] that we are based on'. In this way this document provides an unusually revealing account of how Hamas saw Jihadi-Salafism and itself, or, at least, wanted to be seen.

Central to al-Astal's justification was the difficulty inherent in political work, where Hamas had to choose between different options, which were not distinctly right or wrong but indeterminately better or worse: 'The political work in this reality is similar to the one who walks on a rope or survives a minefield'. That is to say, the inevitable compromise between the circumstances and principles, otherwise referred to as pragmatism. However, he also believed that the scriptures could accommodate many interpretations: 'the door of *ijtihād* is very wide', he insisted. Further, Hamas relied on the modernist path, which, as mentioned previously with reference to Ibn Taymiyya and ʿAbduh, was a form of utilitarianism. That is, the objective of shariʿa (*maqṣad al-shariʿa*) was to promote the common good (*maṣlaḥa ʿāmma*), not the enforcement of individual rules (*ḥudūd*). And in this spirit, one of its guiding principle was that 'if the change of any objectionable act will lead to a more objectionable act like shedding blood then such change is forbidden, and the silence on it is the lesser of the two evils [*ḍararain*],' echoing the hadith cited by al-Khafaja at the beginning of the chapter.[693] Therefore political participation was justified as an instrument to change society peacefully, including change of the reprehensible (*taghyīr al-munkar*), which was preferable to transformation through violence. Jihad supported and reinforced the political work: 'Jihad is not the basis, the peaceful change [*al-taghyīr al-silmī*] is, and if this change was successful it suffices with it, otherwise the use of force is necessary in the opposite case', al-Astal wrote.[694] This also implied that it was forbidden for 'the individual to take the law into his own hands' because it 'leads inevitably to turmoil and

[693] 'Al-Qiyadi Al-Bariz Fi Harakat Hamas Al-Duktur Yunis Al-Astal Li-'Filastin': Manhajna Wasati Wa-L-Itijah Ila Al-ʿunf Wa-Iraqa Al-Dimaʾ Yasud Abwab Al-Daʿwa'.
[694] Radi.

threatens security and creates chaos'—which was exactly the argument that quietist Salafis had used against Hamas for opposing the authority of Mahmud ʿAbbas. The use of force to bring about change is thus 'conditioned on sovereignty [*wilāya*]', which belongs to the government and the security apparatus. While individuals by trying to introduce change with their hands 'are insolent towards the government, especially because it introduces change, but gradually [*bi-l-tadrīj*] and according to the list of priorities, without that leading to bloodletting, as much as possible.' This was the same accommodationism that we discussed in chapter 3 in relation to Hasan al-Banna.

Al-Qaʿida on the other hand was a mixture of Salafi thought and that of Takfir wa-l-Hijra, al-Astal postulated, which meant it treated the door of *ijtihād* as extremely narrow. There was one right way and everything else was wrong. There was no compromise and relative progress, but deviation. As a Takfīrī organisation al-Qaʿida started off dismissing society as in a state of disbelief, while Hamas considered society Muslim. Indeed Jihadi-Salafis in Gaza directed most of their criticism and aggression internally. Al-Astal rejected *takfīr*: 'The believers are brothers, they are tough on unbelief [*kufr*] and merciful on each other'. He paraphrased Qurʾan 61:4 saying that Muslims 'are like the single body, like a solid building', adding that it is considered evil for a person to hate a Muslim, every Muslim for another Muslim his blood, money and honour are forbidden, and our Prophet, ordered us: 'do not return after me [my death] to be infidels, and you strike each other's necks'.[695]

One of the proclamations made by ʿAbd al-Latif Musa during the sermon in which he announced the creation of an Islamic emirate, was that the Hamas Government and Movement should either implement shariʿa, *ḥudūd* and the Islamic principles or turn into a secular party under the umbrella of Islam. The demand to

[695] 'Al-Duktur Yunis al-Astal Yatahaddath ʿan Wasatiyya al-Haraka al-Islamiyya Muqabil al-Ghulu wa-l-Tafrit'. The last quote is from Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 92, Hadith 28.

implement *ḥudūd* was often repeated by Takfīrī groups in Gaza and it is one that Hamas ʿulamaʾ took exception to. Al-Astal mocked it: 'It provokes those people to see an impudent wedding or some of the adornments and not see heads flying in different directions, and hands amputated, and backs whipped, so they cry for the inactive shariʿa in their eyes'.[696] Responding to Musa's proclamation more specifically al-Astal said: 'This is a word of truth from which evil is desired, because the implementation of shariʿa is not confined to *ḥudūd*, but the *ḥudūd* are the last thing to implement from shariʿa'.[697] Further, he argued, Islam is about prevention rather than punishment: 'Those individuals do not know the condition for the implementation of *ḥudūd*, which is to provide the people the needs, so that the halal becomes easy because Islam yearns for protection, not the implementation of *ḥudūd*, its system is based more on preventing than treating'. In any case, he argued, the implementation of *ḥudūd* was difficult because they 'are contested by doubts, and have many limitations and the complete details are long'.[698] Yusuf al-Sharafi, the associate professor of Hadith at IUG, summarised this drawing a distinction between *ḥudūd* as a means to an end and an end in itself: '*Ḥudūd* is a means to create a clean society and not the end goal [*ghāya*] in itself'.[699] For al-Qaʿida the means—that is, *ḥudūd*, jihad, violence—were ends in themselves.

Because violence only addressed the manifestation of corruption (*maẓāhir al-fasād*) Hamas advocated a comprehensive reformist programme that went to the roots of corruption. Political participation, in particular in Parliament was an essential part of the Islamisation of society, that is, the implementation of shariʿa. Jihadi-Salafis criticised it, arguing that God is the only legislator, appealing to the notion of *ḥakīmiyya,* and that

[696] 'Al-Astal: Qitaʿ Ghazza Yatahaddad-hu Khatar al-Ghazu al-Fikri bi-Ism al-Islam'.
[697] 'ʿUlamaʾ Din: al-Qitaʿ Islami wa-la Yajuz Tajawwuz al-Hukuma al-Sharʿiyya'.
[698] 'Al-Astal: Qitaʿ Ghazza Yatahaddad-hu Khatar al-Ghazu al-Fikri bi-Ism al-Islam'.
[699] 'ʿUlamaʾ Din: al-Qitaʿ Islami wa-la Yajuz Tajawwuz al-Hukuma al-Sharʿiyya'.

the Palestinian basic law referred to the Islamic shariʿa as one source of law among others, which they considered a form of polytheism. According to al-Astal, however, they were confused by the name 'legislative council'. In fact 'the parliament has two basic roles, they are the supervision and the passing [*sann*] of laws', and he considered both undisputable. Here he was specifically avoiding the verb '*sharraʿ*', meaning 'to legislate'. Hamas was also accused of apostasy (*ridda*) for participating in democratic elections, which was according to Jihadi-Salafis unbelief (*kufr*). Though having disagreed on their criticism of parliament, al-Astal agreed with 'those people' that democracy is to be repudiated 'because it means in the ideological essence the rule of the people by the people, and this means the participation of the people with God in the sovereignty [*ḥakīmiyya*] or taking it as a God without Him'. He described it as part of the Western colonial legacy, together with the constitution and positive law (*qawānīn waḍʿiyya*), and argued that despotism often hid behind it. But he claimed that Hamas did not endorse democracy as a belief system (*ʿaqīda*), but only the elections and the ballot boxes, that is, the mechanism. The latter was within the bounds of the concept of consultation (*shūrā*) for the representative (*wakīl*) to find out the opinion of the people. This were rhetorical manoeuvres but still a snub to the Sayyid Qutb School—that he had endorsed in the past as seen in chapter 2 with reference to *ḥākimiyya*—and an endorsement of modernist Salafism.[700]

Hamas, al-Astal continued, also considered democracy a pragmatic choice in order to break into 'the places of decision-making in the ministries and parliament in order to approach complete Islamisation day by day' as well as a way to bring about change without resorting to violence. It was used to advance peacefully on to the corrupters instead of spending strengths on a bloody conflict that should be saved for

[700] Tamimi makes this same argument almost word for word in *Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat Within Islam*, pp. v–vi.

the occupation. 'Was there another path to stop the political deterioration? And the moral haemorrhaging and other, except with the political competition?' He asked, in what could be construed as evidence of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis despite its utterly cynical intent. In order to emphasise his argument against violence to change society, he ended asking, 'are we preachers or judges?' paraphrasing Hassan al-Hudaibi's book of 1969, *Duʿa la Quda* (*Preachers, not Judges*), thus positioning himself unmistakeably away from the Qutbist, revolutionary camp.[701]

Much of his article consisted of practical examples of the changes that Hamas had introduced while in government, thus providing a rather unique insight into what the Movement considered were the main components of its project to Islamise society and implement shariʿa in agreement with the theoretical framework outlined in the previous paragraphs. It had headed a drive to bring

> to the legislative council more ʿulamaʾ specialised in shariʿa and Islamic jurisprudence. We were determined to control the legal committee, which is the mother of the other committees, and it is the only one that its president and decision makers and most of its members are from the Hamas coalition in the council, who are also its legal experts [*fuqahāʾ*] and muftis.

During the previous three years, since Hamas won the elections, forty-four laws had been 'reviewed and sifted through in terms of what goes against Islam or is in contradiction with the interest of the Palestinian people.' Just as seventeen new laws were enacted to protect the fixed principles (*thawābit*), like the right of return, prohibiting any compromise on Jerusalem and Palestine, the right to resist the occupation, and criminalising anyone that interfered with the resistance, or branded it as violence or terrorism. Also a law was created to institutionalise zakat, establishing a special association for it, and another on penal procedures and punishments, which introduced the standards of proof of crimes and the proportionality of the punishment

[701] For the context and impact of this book see Gilles Kepel, *The Prophet and the Pharaoh: Muslim Extremism in Contemporary Egypt* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985), p. 103.

according to the crime, as prescribed by shariʿa. Though more laws needed to be overhauled and new ones had to be created to organise other domains.

He also cited the religious duties that government members fulfilled: 'The prime minister and a number of parliamentarians and ministers lead prayers on Friday and in the mosques, and preach and issue *fatāwā*, and organise the *daʿwa* through the Ministry of *al-Awqāf*, the media and the instruction of the Movement [*al-tarbiyya al-tanẓīmiyya*]'. Regarding the 'manifestations of deviation and moral corruption that were widespread in some of the ministries and association' they had limited these, probably a reference to changes to the gender-mixed offices and clothes worn by women in them.[702] Al-Astal also highlighted the role of education in reforming society, from childhood to its most advanced stages at university. In the economic sphere, he boasted that the government financed itself and development projects without resorting to usurious or foreign loans that imposed conditions on Hamas that might have contradicted its principles, evoking notions of protectionism deeply-held by the Brotherhood mentioned in earlier chapters. Based on these principles they established the Islamic National Bank, an insurance company and a system for the provision of small loans, he said. Also they tried to break with the dependency on Israel, for example in their imports of citrus fruits and gourds, which they attempted to grow in Gaza in larger quantities.

Finally, he responded to three key criticisms by Jihadi-Salafis regarding the external relations of Hamas: the ceasefire with Israel, and relations with Iran and Russia. He justified them purely on the grounds of political advantage, though always with a reference to the sunna to legitimise them. Ceasefires provided a time for the Palestinian resistance to rest and rearrange its ranks. He cited the treaty of Hudaibiyya

[702] ʿAtallah abu al-Sibah made a similar comment in relation to the changes he introduced to the Ministry of Culture when he served as minister there. Abu al-Sibah, ʿAtallah. Audio recording. Rafah, 1 February 2015.

with the Quraish as precedent. Receiving money from Iran was justified because despite being a Shiʿi country it was a Muslim state and its political positions were better than many Sunni Arab countries that embraced US military bases, countries that in any case failed to provide support. For this he used the example of Safwan bin Umiyya, an infidel whose armour the Prophet sought in a raid, therefore justifying receiving support from someone despite being an infidel, an issue that was central to the debate over *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾa* and of particular importance to Wahhabis and Jihadi-Salafis, as discussed in chapter 2. Regarding relations with Russia, al-Astal used the classic 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' principle. He recognised it had to 'look away' from the repression against Chechen Muslims, which he himself had denounced on countless occasions in his columns, but was justified because the country was the strongest rival to the US, Israel's provider, 'and this position there is no shame in it'. For this he cited again the treaty of Hudaibiyya, which the Prophet agreed to despite the fact that a number of his companions remained in prison that he couldn't rescue.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that far from refusing the epithet Salafi, at the root of the disagreement between Hamas and al-Qaʿida was in fact a competition over the label and legacy. The two organisations overlapped and at the same time clashed over the meaning of this contested term. The Hamas communiqué against al-Zawahiri was the best exponent of this competition as it proclaimed that 'Hamas is a Salafi, jihadist and resistance movement'. The Movement used the terms 'Salafi' and 'jihadist' in order to emphasise its common ground with al-Qaʿida. However, the comma between the two words was anything but accidental. It indicated that Hamas did not identify itself with the version of Salafism that al-Qaʿida represented, that is, 'Jihadi-Salafism', though it did with the two terms separately. This was also evident in the subtle but consistent way

Hamas and especially its ʿulamaʾ resisted using the label 'Salafi' regarding quietist Salafis or Jihadi-Salafis, calling them Ahl al-Sunna, '*takfīriyyūn*' or prefacing the term with the sentence 'those who apply the designation of *salafiyya* to themselves.'[703] This was confirmed in interviews. 'We are all Salafis. Salafism in the correct meaning is the followers of Muhammad', said the speaker of the PLC Ahmad Bahr.[704] Both Hamas and al-Qaʿida identified with the reformist Salafi movement, which believed in a return to the origins of Islam, to the time of *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, in order to transform and revive the *umma*, however, how each understood what this involved was profoundly different. While the tendency of Hamas was towards the modernist school and the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaʿida leaned in the direction of the purist Salafism born out of the encounter between Wahhabism and Sayyid Qutb's thought.

For much of the history of the Movement this tension was almost imperceptible. In keeping with a basic Muslim Brotherhood principle, Hamas was determined to present Islamists as united. However, eventually the differences between the two emerged and Hamas reaffirmed its modernist heritage: the existence of multiple interpretations of the scriptures; the objectives of shariʿa as more important than the enforcement of punishment*;* and the 'higher interests of the people' that was crucial for ʿAbduh to reinterpret the law and adapt it to modern problems.[705] All these emphasised flexibility. Justifications for particular policies were primarily pragmatic calculations in which principles were inevitably compromised. Al-Qaʿida on the other hand saw in this the changing of religion according to one's interests and dismissed Hamas as '*tanwīriyyūn*'.[706] Jihadi-Salafis had a much narrower definition of *ijtihād*. They were more focused on fighting moral corruption and imposing *ḥudūd* than in the struggle

[703] 'Al-Duktur Yunis al-Astal Yatahaddath ʿan Wasatiyya al-Haraka al-Islamiyya Muqabil al-Ghulu wa-l-Tafrit'.
[704] Bahr, 5 February 2015.
[705] Hourani, p. 151.
[706] Dr Uthman, 'Madrasa al-Muzaiyyidin!!'

against Israel. Palestine was an Islamic not a nationalist cause. They were also dismissive of the methods of the Brotherhood to achieve its goal, and chose revolution over political participation.

Such clash was also apparent in their conception of religious authority and the role of the religious scholar within it. If we compare Rayyan and Musa, both appealed to a similar source of authority, that of purist Salafism, with their involvement in Dar al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna. However, one was a Saudi-trained religious scholar, who had been a pupil of ʿAzzam, who in turn had a doctorate from al-Azhar. The other was a follower of al-Zawahiri, and like him was a medical doctor not a professionally trained religious scholar. And while Hamas boasted to a group of trained ʿulamaʾ, their rulings were subject to the *shūra* where the scholars were a minority, al-Qaʿida's leaders on the other hand imposed their *fatāwā* on the majority. Hamas was developing its own system of Islamic governance. But there were contradictions in it. The central role that the ʿulamaʾ played and the emphasis on their religious authority were at odds with the Salafi spirit that prescribed a break away from the monopoly of the ʿulamaʾ over the interpretation of the scriptures in order to revive Islam. Hamas's ʿulamaʾ also found themselves in the contradictory position of reaffirming unequivocalness and objectivity of their interpretation of the scriptures in one set of circumstances while arguing for their pluralism and de facto relativism—though they would have never used that word—in another.

The centrist path that the ʿulamaʾ defended was also to some extent only rhetoric. The religious scholars didn't practice what they preached. Hamas had used what amounted to the language of *takfīr* against al-Fatah. Also, the attack on Ibn Taymiyya Mosque was clearly not an act of moderation. However, there was at the same time a certain consistency in the positions of Hamas towards purist Salafism in different time

periods that reflected differences between the two from their origins. Thus, the arguments made against purist Salafism in 2000 were very similar to those made years later against Jihadi-Salafism. Also, while for example Cragin argues that refusal to participate in the 1996 elections was an indication of 'parallels between Hamas and Al Qaeda' that then dissipated over time, the Movement's decision to participate in the elections in 2006 was actually not a radical departure at all, but wholly consistent with its modernist tendencies.

Conclusion

This thesis has been trying to understand Hamas from within. This does not only mean telling the story of Hamas in their own words but, more importantly, analysing articles and publications that are intended for an internal Hamas audience. Paying attention to the different speakers and conversations internal to Hamas involves also avoiding the mistake of attributing to the Movement as a whole positions that only represent a certain faction or individual within it, although some sort of reductionism is inevitable, indeed necessary. *Al-Risala* newspaper and the other Hamas publications examined here represent a unique and understudied source through which to analyse such internal conversation.

One of the central questions about Islamist movements concerns the role of religion and revelation in politics. Indeed this is often formulated in the form of an accusation against Hamas, particularly because, following the tradition of the Enlightenment, revelation is presented as the opposite of reason. Both Israel and al-Fatah, for example, accused Hamas of being controlled by religious scholars, to make the claim that it was revelation and not reason that guided the Movement. This thesis has approached the role of revelation in Hamas through the notion of religious reference in the Movement and more particularly the function of its religious scholars. The Hamas ʿulamaʾ represented to a large extent the religious reference of Hamas (they are literally referred to as such, '*al-marjiʿiyya al-dīniyya*'). Primarily, this thesis analyses the relation between the ʿulamaʾ, the political leadership of Hamas and decision-making in the Movement.

The case of Hamas offers a rare case study of a Sunni Islamist organisation with a trajectory from a resistance movement to a governing authority. Hamas is therefore an

exceptional example of an Islamist movement coming to power and holding it—albeit in rather extreme circumstances due to an international boycott, a siege and regular military onslaughts against Gaza. And for this reason it also offers a unique test case to study how an organisation of these characteristics responds to being the ruling authority. In particular, it has allowed me to begin to address a question related to the one above on politics and revelation, that has become central to the debate about Islamism—though mostly in the form of a concern among outsiders—which is, what does the application of shariʿa actually mean?

Understanding Islamism through Salafism

In order to trace the role and influence of the religious reference in Hamas and to map the main internal debates on this question, this thesis has identified the existence of two Salafi tendencies within the Movement, one purist and the other modernist.

Salafism is usually presented as a rival movement to the Muslim Brotherhood, and rarely as a trend within that organisation or any one of its offshoots. In contrast to this, I have proposed an understanding of Islamism as a movement that is intimately linked to the essential meaning of Salafism and the power of an idea. In all its forms Salafism is a reformist movement that seeks the revival of Islam through the individual's return to a personal encounter with the original scriptural sources. This thesis has identified purist and modernist Salafism as the two main trends that carry this Salafi spirit and that are running through Islamism as a whole.

These two currents have clear historical origins, in the thought of the eighteenth century Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab and that of the modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The influence of these trends in Hamas can also be traced historically. Thus, they roughly coincide with the division in Hamas between religious scholars who studied in Saudi Arabia, where they were influenced by

Wahhabism, and the lay Islamists that were influenced by the centrist movement, a version of the modernist movement that was developed in Egypt in the 1980s and also spread to Sudan, both countries where Palestinians went to study and came into contact with it. However, this distinction is far from clear-cut. Many of those identified here as Hamas religious scholars were actually members of al-Khalas Party, whose platform was brazenly centrist. Also, after 2006 when Hamas was confronted by Jihadi-Salafism in Gaza the Hamas ʿulamaʾ assumed even more explicitly the centrist rhetoric. At the same time they struggled with certain purist Salafi tendencies. In this way this thesis has attempted to present Hamas in its complexity, torn by different ideas and trends at different points in its history.

There was a certain amount of self-identification, as a (purist) Salafi and as a centrist or even modernist Salafi. There was a widespread consensus that the religious scholars, particularly those who had studied in Saudi Arabia, were purist Salafi, though they would call themselves simply 'Salafis' and never 'Wahhabis'. On the other hand the label 'centrist' was one that they would all have wanted to ascribe to themselves. While only in rare cases, such as that of the lay intellectual Yahya Khafaja documented at the beginning of chapter 6, would someone have used the epithet 'modernist Salafi'. These labels are therefore used here also as analytical categories. These two trends had a specific set of characteristics that have been defined throughout the thesis, which have been used to classify the development of the trends in one direction or another.

Both modernist and purist advocated a form of scripturalism. The difference was that purist Salafism was characterised by literalism. Another key feature of purist Salafism was its exclusiveness, that is, it defined itself to a great extent negatively, in terms of what it was not, which it also repudiated in the strongest possible terms. Modernist Salafism on the other hand, was a type of religiosity that propounded

inclusiveness. While purist Salafism considered itself the most authentic path, modernist Salafism was about finding a balance between 'authenticity and modernity', in the words of al-Khalas's political manifesto. The reference to modernity is particularly relevant because the exclusivity of purist Salafism and the inclusivity of modernist Salafism has been understood in this thesis primarily in relation to Islam's encounter with the Western liberal tradition, which is what that use of the word 'modernity' makes reference to there. Further, it is through this lens that the interpretation of revelation of each of these groups is also understood. That is to say: In their expansive application of reason to revelation, the modernists were reacting against the Enlightenment philosophers who had made reason and revelation contradictory forces.[707] Purist Salafis were also reacting to rationalism when they chose to use reason to interpret revelation more restrictively. As Euben points out in relation to Sayyid Qutb, while he 'does not eschew the exercise and importance of human reason for understanding aspects of the world, he is outraged by the claim that reason and scripture are equally important for knowledge and guidance'.[708] Ultimately, this thesis identified Hamas as essentially a modernist Salafi movement—but with a purist Salafi strain within it. And it is for this reason that the Jihadi-Salafis dismissed the Movement as *tanwīriyyūn*, that is, 'of the Enlightenment'.

The Profound Influence of Centrism and Modernist Salafism

The concept of centrism originated with the Qurʾan itself and was developed through Islamic intellectual history, from Ibn Taymiyya to Muhammad ʿAbduh and Rashid Rida. In the last quarter of the twentieth century this idea was revived by Yusuf al-Qaradawi to counter the purist Salafi influence of Qutb. The centrist trend crystallised within Hamas at a particular historical moment, around the time of the 1996 Palestinian

[707] Euben, p. 101.
[708] Euben, p. 94.

legislative elections and in the form of al-Khalas Party. The decision to create a party was clearly strategic, to avoid the complete disappearance of the Movement, which was being intensely persecuted in the mid-1990s, but it also responded to profound debates within Islamist circles in the region. Al-Khalas was the Palestinian branch of a region-wide franchise of centrism. Its most direct sources of influence were first those of the Egyptian New Islamists and modernists from Tunisia and Sudan, in particular Rashid al-Ghannushi and Hasan al-Turabi. The creation of the Party was also in keeping with the accommodationist spirit of the Brotherhood, which endorsed political participation. This was well embedded in Hamas. For example, Mahmud al-Maqadma, a key Hamas leader and ideologue renowned for his militancy, supported political participation. Also Ahmad Yasin's arguments against participating in the elections in 1996 were pragmatic calculations.

Hamas's refusal to partake in the vote had little to do with an opposition to democracy conceptually on the basis of religious precepts. The influence of Sayyid Qutb's revolutionary and purist Salafi thought cast a very long shadow over Islamism and the influence of his thought in Hamas was undeniable, however it was confined to certain spheres, mostly to do with the struggle against Israel. The Qutbist interpretation of *ḥākimiyya* as precluding the participation in democratic elections was rarely found in Hamas. On the other hand, the ideas from his early phase, and more specifically those found in his book *Social Justice in Islam*, which represented the modernist spirit of the Brotherhood, were featured in *al-Risala* prominently. Such concern constituted also a reversion to the thought of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, who had been influenced by the Aristotelian notions of distributive justice, transmitted through Muhammad ʿAbduh, one of the fathers of Salafi modernism. It was also the

result of the influence of European political concepts and ideas that were popular in Egypt at the time of his writing.

Centrism as embodied by al-Wasat and al-Khalas parties was similarly characterised by an endorsement of Western liberal concepts and institutions, such as citizenship and human rights, notions that were primarily linked to a narrative of pluralism. For example, the concept of citizenship undercut the exclusivist notion of a religion that privileged believers over non-believers, in the case of Islam, *ahl al-dhimma*. Similarly, the political programme of al-Khalas distanced itself from any attempt to frame the conflict with Israel as one between Muslims and Jews, and instead treated it as a struggle against an occupation. This constituted a repudiation of the Manichean vision that characterises Qutb's writings in particular with regards to the Jews, though also purist Salafism more generally. Such exclusivist vision, epitomised in the notion of *kufr*, was pervasive in the Hamas Charter.

The endorsement of such Western liberal concepts, a distinguishing feature of the centrist trend, was profound. As Lori Allen points out Hamas had gone beyond a cynical appropriation of Western discourse to serve its purposes, and was genuinely trying to find points of political intersection and mutual recognition with the international community. It had 'become entwined within the human rights system, by engaging with HROs [human rights organisations], providing human rights training, and submitting reports to UN bodies'.[709]

The significance of al-Khalas Party has not been recognised nor has its enduring impact in Hamas. First, it was a pioneering organisation having been established shortly before its Egyptian counterpart, al-Wasat Party. But more importantly, the participation of Hamas in the 2006 elections through the Change and Reform List is the clearest

[709] Allen, p. 157.

evidence of the victory of the centrists' reformism over the Qutbist revolutionaries. Further proof of the direct influence were the former al-Khalas members that became Hamas deputies, on top of a number of ministers, deputy minsters and general directors of ministries that also had belonged to al-Khalas. Programmatically there were many similarities between the political platform of al-Khalas and Hamas in 2006. Moreover, the rhetoric of centrism more generally has been pervasive in the Hamas government since it won the elections.

With the intense concern and fascination over Jihadi-Salafism in the post-9/11 world, the influence of centrism and modernist Salafism has been widely neglected. Similarly, the attention received by Hamas's use of violence has obscured a major aspect of the Movement, in which lies the key for the resolution of the conflict with it.

Morality: the Hinge of Islamism and the Intersection of Purist and Modernist Salafism

Morality is one of the major preoccupations of Hamas and Islamism. As Ira Lapidus points out—in an article that represents what by now is a standard narrative of Islamism—the new Islam envisioned by Islamists 'no longer cultivate the historical forms of legal, theological and philosophical knowledge. The Islam they envision is not a return to Caliphs, Imams and holy men, nor a revival of historical political concepts, but is a new Islam of commitment to an abstract concept of community and moral authority.'[710] Questions of morality are deeply embedded in politics generally, and the Muslim tradition exhibits this concern since the first centuries of its existence. For medieval Muslim scholars government was 'first and foremost about the maintenance

[710] Ira Lapidus, 'Islamic Revival and Modernity: the Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 40.4 (1997), 444–60 (p. 448).

of a moral order'.[711] Olivier Roy has used this to criticise Islamism—and the classical Islamic tradition too—arguing that this obsession with morality has in fact prevented the development of a real political project. He claims that Islamism regresses inevitably into an ultra-conservative 'neofundamentalism', a form of purist Salafism distinguished by a puritanical and petty concern over moral rectitude, instead of focusing on developing state institutions.[712]

However, politics should not be limited to state and government. The fact is that through morality Islamism has stayed politically relevant, as Salwa Ismail proposes. It is through the drive for moral reform that Islamist movements have made demands in the political sphere and have become important political actors. The political importance of moral questions was, for example, fundamental to the struggle between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafism in Gaza after the 2006 elections, in which the debate over the use of violence in the practice of the duty to command right and forbid wrong was central. Before that the link between morality and the conflict with Israel was deeply held by Hamas and used against the PA to great effect. One should be wary of reducing a phenomenon like Islamism to a specific theological turn, but it is tempting to see Muhammad ʿAbduh's and Rashid Rida's commentary and the way they transformed the duty to command right and forbid wrong from a collective duty—to be taken care of by the state or subsection of it, like the ʿulama'—to an individual obligation and the link they then made between such individual duty and *daʿwa*, as paving the way for it. Thus, Lapidus probably wrote the above quote with Qutb's thought system in mind, but the modernists were actually the ones who set the foundations for it.

The struggle between the modernist and purist Salafi interpretations of Islam within Hamas was also very noticeable in the attitudes towards morality found in the

[711] Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 286–87.
[712] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, pp. ix–x.

Movement, and in particular in relation to the use of violence in the enforcement of the duty to command right and forbid wrong. On the one hand references to Qutb's *jāhiliyya* and the influence of Hawwa's preference for the enforcement of the duty 'with the hand', distinguished the purist Salafi trend. On the other, the modernist strand showed a clear predilection for the accommodationist school of Hasan al-Banna, preferring the 'good admonition' to violence. The official position of the Movement was clearly closer to that of al-Banna. Accommodationism was in fact well established in the Islamic tradition. As I have argued, it may be traced through Rida and ʿAbduh to Ibn Taymiyya, who took a more utilitarian position towards the duty through his interpretation of the concept of *maṣlaḥa*. This concept was key for ʿAbduh to reinterpret the shariʿa and adapt it to modern problems more generally. Hamas also used it frequently when appealing to the higher interests (*maṣāliḥ*) of the Palestinian people, for example, against Jihadi-Salafism.

And yet, this was not just a competition between the purists and the modernists within the Movement. There was also a division of labour. While its transformation from a collective to an individual duty meant initially the absence of a role for the scholars in its practice, running in parallel there has been a drive in modern times to organise its function by a subgroup of society, which thrust the responsibility back onto the ʿulamaʾ, as the writings in *al-Risala* illustrated in the attack against al-Tahuna hotel and the alcohol outlets. It fell on them naturally, due to their traditional role as the interpreters of shariʿa and the guarantors of the Islamic moral ideal. Therefore, while this thesis agrees with the importance of the moral sphere in Islamism outlined by Lapidus in the quote above, it contradicts the rest of his assertion because I also argue that Hamas established an ʿulamaʾ class that did 'cultivate the historical forms of legal, theological and philosophical knowledge', and in fact was also—though probably not

consciously—working towards 'a revival of historical political concepts' as we shall now see.

The Emergence and Function of an ʿUlamaʾ Class within Islamism

With their superior knowledge of the religious texts, the ʿulamaʾ had a strong claim over religious authority but they came under attack because through history they have been perceived as mostly representing the interests of the ruling authorities over their subjects. Reacting to the monopoly of the clergy over religion, Salafism, from which Islamism springs, was a clear attempt to revive religion by cutting out the middleman, between the individual and God. Islamism is therefore associated with an assertion of the individual's direct access to the sacred, 'much as the Reformation sought to make the Biblical text accessible to laymen.'[713] The profile of the lay intellectual is therefore strongly correlated with Islamism. As Ira Lapidus further states, 'typically the leadership of these movements are not the ʿulamaʾ, the traditional learned elite, but a new intelligentsia'.[714] This phenomenon was especially acute in Qutb who was branded a deviant by al-Azhar for his challenge to the ʿulamaʾ's monopoly over the interpretation of the scriptures.[715] Gilles Kepel claims that the ʿulamaʾ traced the genealogy of Qutb to the Kharijites. 'Against the Kharijites, the *ulema* always chose the state, for the state—however evil and iniquitous, and even if issued of violence or dynastic succession—at least defended Muslim society against infidels.'[716] The influence of ʿulamaʾ in Hamas, like al-Astal and Rayyan, was therefore paradoxical.

However, such animosity between Islamism and the ʿulamaʾ is not mandatory. The modernist Salafis didn't try to completely sideline the ʿulamaʾ but also to transform their function. ʿAbduh and Rida wanted the religious scholar to find the middle path

[713] Euben, p. 61.
[714] Lapidus, p. 447.
[715] Euben, p. 191.
[716] Kepel, *The Prophet and the Pharaoh: Muslim Extremism in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 59.

among men and women, between reason and literalism, between secularism and conservatism. In the end, this last tendency has been the more prevalent in Hamas, which has witnessed the rise of the religious scholars within its ranks. Though Hamas might not have had formal religious institutions of consequence, there were a number of bodies that played a major role in the ascent and influence of the ʿulamaʾ. Both al-Khalas party and *al-Risala* served as important minbars for the Hamas religious scholars, and many of them were active in both. Their real fiefdom, however, was IUG and the two fatwa committees that they created, one belonging to the university and another functioning across Palestine, the PRSL. These were institutions that before the 2006 elections were also used by Hamas to wrest control from the PA over the religious field, and in particular the Ministry of *al-Awqāf*. There was also a historical event that facilitated their rise. The Second Intifada marked a turning point in the influence of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas due to the death of the top leadership. It was the assassination of Yasin that gave way to the increasing visibility of Rayyan. Yasin's religious charisma had challenged the monopoly over the religious field by the religious scholars. Their influence was also felt in the Palestinian Parliament after the 2006 elections where a third of Hamas members had a degree of some sort in the Islamic sciences.

So what was the role of religious scholars within Hamas? On the face of it, the notion of Islamic totalism appears to give the religious scholar, and his superior capacity to connect politics to the Qurʾan, a position of superiority over the Movement. For a movement that saw 'Islam as a total system, complete unto itself, and the final arbiter of life in all its categories', the claim of authority of the ʿulamaʾ over the religious sphere was a permanent challenge to the political leadership of the Movement.[717] However, in actual fact collapsing the distinction between religion and

[717] Mitchell, p. 14.

politics effectively made religious norms subservient to political goals and they too became subordinate to the political leadership. Thus their role was primarily advisory not executive. This also explained why they were usually in the second and third rank of the leadership, somewhat removed from decision-making though still able to impact politics. There might have been a particularly persuasive or unusually well positioned cleric, such as Nizar Rayyan, but for the most part the religious scholars served the political leadership and supported its decisions. Yunis al-Astal though he thought of himself as superior to the politicians in his capacity to interpret the scriptures, he was in actual fact trying to find religious justifications for their positions. At all critical points in the history of the Movement this has been the case. More particularly, the ʿulamaʾ served to legitimise the political decision in front of the base of the Movement. Their articles in *al-Risala* served also the military wing of Hamas who consumed the fiery religious rhetoric and used it as inspiration. We see this in the higher voltage animosity in the pieces by Yunis al-Astal, who served this purpose well in his role as 'preacher as warrior', the prototype of the Islamist preacher. Such subservience was also reflected in the very structure of the Movement and the fact that it had no influential formal religious structures, no such a thing as a mufti or imam of the Movement. Even if there was a formal *iftāʾ* committee within Hamas—though there probably wasn't—the Movement consulted different individuals and organisations. And most importantly, the *shūrā* overruled the fatwa ultimately.

The ʿUlamaʾ, Anti-hermeneutics and Modernity

The ultimate obedience of the religious scholars to the political leadership is exemplified even at the peak of their influence. The countercoup in June 2007, with the use of *takfīr* against fellow Palestinians championed by Nizar Rayyan, is the most notorious example of the impact of the ʿulamaʾ in Hamas as well as of purist Salafism,

even Wahhabism specifically since Rayyan used examples from the history of Wahhabism explicitly to justify the aggression. It also represented the confluence of Wahhabism and Qutbism. Sayyid Qutb had been essential for the education of most Hamas leaders, however up to that point his influence had been in terms of the means not the ends. Hamas had not declared the PA morally corrupt and guilty of unbelief. Instead Qutb's thought manifested itself primarily in Hamas as a justification for violence against Israel as is evidenced in the writings by al-Astal and Rayyan. Ahmad Yasin had also declared internal fighting a red line for political reasons in the belief that Palestinians must remain united in the struggle against their common enemy and avoided any division that would only weaken them. For this reason the 2007 countercoup constituted a major shift for Hamas intellectually and tactically, if not strategically.

However, the countercoup was not primarily an ideological conflict. Ultimately it was the result of a political calculation. Just as al-Astal and Rayyan used the scriptures to mobilise the Palestinians, to reassure them of the righteousness of their cause and fire up their courage in the struggle against a formidable enemy like Israel, in the countercoup they used their religious authority to lighten the moral burden on the Hamas militants to fight and kill fellow Palestinians and neighbours.

Intellectually Rayyan exhibited the characteristics of purist Salafism, and more specifically the Jihadi-Salafi type. He was clearly influenced by Qutb, whose basic concepts were part of his mental universe. Otherwise, his references were the standard medieval Salafi authorities. And it was using these references that he had justified the countercoup. However, Rayyan was at the same time a Muslim Brother. He was a Palestinian nationalist, and his nationalism was rooted in his own displacement as a refugee, which was also central to his desire for martyrdom and love of jihad. His focus

was on fighting 'the Israeli occupation' at least as much as in a metaphysical struggle against the Jews. Rayyan was generally regarded as inflexible in religion but actually also exemplified the modernist Muslim Brotherhood tradition of compromise and inclusivity.

It was his role as a religious scholar and more specifically his capacity to anchor in the Islamic legal tradition (*taʾṣīl sharʿī*) that he used to sanction the fighting. However, this was also the main tool for the support that Rayyan provided to the Hamas politicians on a whole range of issues and not just military matters. He was a champion of political participation. He was defended Hamas's relation with Iran, despite his antagonism to Shiʿism, and in favour of allying with Christians in politics. Regarding Ashʿarism, he proposed gradual change. Other policy positions that he anchored for the Hamas leadership were the notion of *hudna* in Islam. Similar flexibility manifested itself even in the way he dressed, which constituted a visual display of pluralism—though also perhaps the internal contradictions that riddled his mind.

The purist Salafi rigorism and inflexibility contrasted with the receptivity with which Rayyan supported the Hamas project. At the same time it was precisely Rayyan's Salafism, and the break from the classical jurisprudential tradition that it prescribed, which gave him the pliability to fulfil this role, anchoring in revelation all the important decisions taken by the Movement. The repudiation of *taqlīd* advocated by Salafism meant that greater numbers of Muslims were encouraged to carry out their own interpretation of the scriptures. Rayyan was of course not just any Muslim, he was a trained religious scholar, and this gave him even more freedom from the constraints of centuries of scholarship liberally. This at times led to blatant contradictions. While Rayyan and al-Astal practiced *takfīr* against al-Fatah the Hamas ʿulamaʾ—among them

al-Astal—were simultaneously condemning its use against fellow Muslims by al-Qaʿida and Jihadi-Salafis in Gaza.

Such liberal use of the religious reference was also evident in the way al-Astal picked and chose different Qurʾanic commentaries depending on the circumstances. He admitted to being heavily influenced by Sayyid Qutb's *tafsīr* but he argued that it was relevant to the Palestinian context only during specific periods of their history. Al-Astal explained that Qutb's *tafsīr* reflected the period in Egypt between 1954, the start of the persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, till 1965, the year before Qutb was hanged. And so the text was relevant to any period that was similar to it, 'when people's most basic religious freedoms and morals are threatened. But when there is a relaxation of the repression of people's freedoms and the political situation this book, due to its harshness, is not appropriate'. For Palestinians it served as a response to their sufferings under Israeli control. But, after the Israeli army and settlements left the Gaza Strip in 2005 and Palestinians no longer lived under direct occupation 'the thinking of Qutb is no longer a hundred per cent relevant to this current period'. Hence, he argued, 'the *tafsīr* of the Qurʾan must be renewed in order to accompany the needs of the *umma* in every circumstance.'[718]

What he was here also recognising implicitly was that ultimately any form of representation of the past is an interpretation, which contradicted the anti-hermeneutical stance that is intrinsic to purist Salafism more generally. Anti-hermeneutics is at the core of the debate over Islamism because it illustrates a profound tension between the temporal and the eternal and in particular how reason can be used to apply the eternal revelation to a specific set of circumstances at a particular moment in time. At the end of the spectrum stood Sayyid Qutb who denied that his own understanding of Islam was

[718] Al-Astal, 22 September 2013.

even an act of interpretation. Such denial is typical of Islamists—of the purist Salafi tendency—who 'tend to reject the authority of past religious commentaries and textual interpretations in favour of what the text "really says," thereby denying that determining what the text "really says" is itself an act of interpretation'.[719] This justifies a common concern about Islamism that by mixing religion and politics an element—revelation—is introduced into politics over which no reasoning is possible. As Euben adds, the 'anti-hermeneutical stance places fundamentalists in an epistemologically privileged position from which to determine, once and for all, the one and only authentic way to live'. This anti-hermeneutical argument was found, for example, in an article in *al-Risala* on 16 April 1998 by Muhammad Shihab, a pharmacist from Jabalia town who was a member of al-Khalas and would later became a Hamas PLC member, 'Who Owns the Complete Truth?!'.[720] In it he criticised relativism, which he associated with secularism.

Al-Astal would also never have recognised that revelation is anything but eternal. The closest he came to this was in his explanation of the relevance of different commentaries and when he asserted that 'verses have many meanings'.[721] In practice however he was constantly interpreting and reinterpreting revelation, applying the scriptures in different ways depending on the circumstances, displaying the flexibility that is normally attributed to the modernists in their effort to renew Islam. This thesis throughout has pointed towards numerous examples that illustrate such flexibility in al-Astal, Rayyan and Hamas more broadly. In particular, when defending itself against Jihadi-Salafism the Movement made specific reference to the existence of different, equally valid interpretations of the scriptures in official communiqués and through individual declarations. This was an expression of Salafi modernism but also, more generally, of modernity in which truth is pluralistic, if not relative. In fact, the Islamic

[719] Euben, p. 18.
[720] Muhammad Shihab, 'Man Yamlik Al-Haq Al-Mutlaq?!', *al-Risala*, 16 April 1998, p. 13.
[721] Al-Astal, 'Al-Hashr 2'.

canonical texts—like the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity—lend themselves to multiple interpretations, for they not only speak ambiguously but also inconsistently about a whole range of issues.[722]

The ʿUlamaʾ in the Service of Government

The consolidation of the ʿulamaʾ as a religious class within Hamas took place after the Movement entered government. Their role in support of the government became more clearly defined and their flexibility performing that function came into full view.

Becoming a governing authority transformed Hamas, which up to that point had been primarily a resistance movement. Accordingly the role of the ʿulamaʾ changed fundamentally. In February 1998 Ibrahim al-Maqadma, the influential Hamas intellectual, had set down some thoughts on the subject in his article 'The ʿUlamaʾ and the Rulers' on his vision of the role of the religious scholar. He was highly critical of the ʿulamaʾ that simply served as a rubber seal for the ruler, while he praised those that kept their independence and at times criticised the ruler harshly. He cited the defiant Ahmad bin Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya, the foundation stones of purist Salafism, as themselves examples of the latter.[723] Such definition suited Hamas in the late 1990s when it was in the opposition. In fact al-Maqadma was a close friend and mentor of Nizar Rayyan, who fit well that model outlined. However, as a ruling authority it was al-Qaradawi's centrism that became their reference. This was because they were tasked with defending Hamas from the attacks of Jihadi-Salafism, whether al-Qaʿida or other homegrown groups.

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[722] For a discussion of a number of examples see Neal Robinson, pp. 64–66. Tariq Ramadan, who is close to the modernist path, would not say that it is ambiguous or contradictory but that it is elliptical and the different verses must be understood according to the historical context in which they descended. He is however in complete agreement about the Quran having multiple readings, see Tariq Ramadan, 'Reading the Koran', *The New York Times Book Review* (New York, 6 January 2008).

[723] Ibrahim Al-Maqadma, 'al-ʿUlamaʾ wa-l-Hukam', *al-Risala* (Gaza, 26 February 1998), p. 13.

Though unprecedented in the scope of the challenge the conflict with Jihadi-Salafism was not altogether new and the change in the positions adopted by Hamas must not be overstated. The arguments between Hamas and Jihadi-Salafis was substantially similar to those it had had for years, well before entering government, with other groups that challenged the Movement over its interpretation of Islam and its hegemony in the Islamic arena. Hamas was however pained by the fact that the divisions with other Islamist movements became so notoriously visible. The 'unity and reform of Islam' was fundamental to al-Afghani's and ʿAbduh's project for an Islamic renaissance, and for the Brotherhood thereafter.[724] Furthermore, the conflict forced Hamas to confront the existence of different interpretations of the scriptures thereby undermining its anti-hermeneutical stance.

The stakes were high because there was substantial support within Hamas and in Gaza for al-Qaʿida. Hamas was also torn from within, particularly among its rank and file, some of who were seduced by the Jihadi-Salafi propaganda and were disappointed that Hamas no longer spearheaded the military struggle against Israel after it entered electoral politics. However, more than a military challenge Hamas perceived this as an intellectual invasion and a struggle over religious legitimacy and the correctness of their interpretation of Salafism. Thus, the Movement resorted to its religious scholars as well as international figures to discredit Jihadi-Salafism. Al-Astal appealed to al-Qaradawi and the Muslim Scholars Union. It was al-Qaradawi's centrist credentials that al-Astal was directly invoking. References to centrist ideologues were then found in the series of articles on 'Renewal in Islamist Thought' by Yusuf Farhat, which started on 15 June 2009 and which mostly cited Yusuf al-Qaradawi, though also thinkers like Hasan al-

[724] Hourani, p. 109.

Turabi and Muhammad ʿImara. These directly addressed and tried to refute the arguments and actions of Jihadi-Salafis in Gaza.[725]

The ʿulamaʾ started by framing the conflict with Jihadi-Salafis as a struggle between 'radicalism' and 'centrism', 'extremism' and 'moderation'. Moderation took the form of choosing the least confrontational path, the peaceful over the violent. This was about reform before revolution. Change should be peaceful and was objectionable if it led to more harm. Political participation was a way to change society peacefully. With this argument Hamas criticised the use of force against its rule in Gaza: If the individual should take the law into his hand it would only create chaos. Thus al-Astal had gone from trying to undermine the al-Fatah-controlled PA and encouraging attacks against alcohol outlets to preaching the centrist path. He was still invoking religious authority, making references to the scriptures, but no longer in the service of the purist Salafi path.

At the same time Hamas was itself being charged by quietist Salafi groups of the same accusation it was making against Jihadi-Salafis, for its own opposition against PA President Mahmud ʿAbbas, who was also the leader of al-Fatah. And in response Yunis al-Astal argued that ʿAbbas had lost his legitimacy due to the security cooperation with Israel and the American security envoy Keith Dayton. He supported this reinterpreting the key verse Qurʾan 4:59, where the doctrine of *wālī al-amr* is anchored, in such way as to explain that obedience to the ruler was conditioned on his or her own subservience to God and the Prophet, as well as that ruler being a Muslim, 'not a leftist or a secularist'.[726]

[725] See his discussion on the duty to command right after the attack against the wedding in Khan Yunis the previous 22 July, Yusuf Farhat, 'Jaulat fi al-Fikr al-Islami: Taghyir al-Munkar wa-Dawabit-hu al-Sharʿiyya (7)', *al-Risala*, 27 July 2009, p. 18.
[726] 'Al-Duktur Yunis al-Astal Yatahaddath ʿan Wasatiyya al-Haraka al-Islamiyya Muqabil al-Ghulu wa-l-Tafrit'.

Salafism, Democracy and the Western Liberal Tradition

The positions adopted by the Hamas clergy illustrated a degree of transformation. For example, al-Astal no longer saw parliamentary participation as contradictory to *ḥākimiyya*, as he had years before. His attitude towards the duty to command right and forbid wrong had apparently also been reversed. It was also true that his support for democracy—and apparently also that of Nizar Rayyan—was conditioned and cynical, as a means to break into the institutions of power, though as I have repeatedly stated the inclusion-moderation hypothesis is premised on the transformative power of participation. But more than this what this thesis has argued is that beyond their individual inclinations, doubts and transformations, real or imagined, al-Astal and the Hamas clergy were there essentially to back the positions of the political leadership, adapting their version of Islam to the changing historical context, social needs and challenges. At the beginning of this thesis the thought of al-Astal, representing purist Salafism, was seen as contrasting and competing against centrism. However, when years later it was incumbent upon al-Astal to defend centrism he became its champion. This was strikingly similar to the path of his intellectual mentor Saʿid Hawwa, who, according to Itzchak Weismann, 'resorted to sectarian jihadi language in the late 1970s, but was also author of the Charter of the Islamic Front in Syria and other documents that showed commitment to democratic rule.'[727]

This thesis has shown the strong influence of purist Salafism within Hamas. It has focused intentionally on some of the most militant religious scholars in the Movement and shown that even such figures showed significant pragmatism and flexibility. Their role in politics did not just resemble that found in Wahhabism in the form of 'discrete

[727] Though Weismann doubts that Hawwa 'pushed the Brotherhood into a doomed confrontation with the regime in the Hama uprising of 1982', Itzchak Weismann, 'Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50.1 (2014), 171–74 (p. 172). This is unlike al-Astal who did play a role in the 2007 countercoup.

advice (*nasīḥa*) given by the ʿulamaʾ to the ruler behind the scenes'.[728] It was more like the way Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab himself used religion to legitimise Muhammad ibn Saʿud's political power. A more recent template would be that of al-Albani, who was also willing to use his knowledge and authority to cooperate with any political authority that allowed him to continue to practice *fiqh* according to the independent study of hadith. In sum, they were analogous to the state ʿulamaʾ that they so bitterly criticised.

No doubt that the relationship with the political leadership was dialectical and the religious scholars influenced decision-making too. But in essence this was a time-hallowed custom not dissimilar to the emerging Islamic constitutional order of classical times in which the scholars, as the official interpreters of the shariʿa, 'continued to act as though they were authorising the social order that was increasingly governed by the ruler.'[729] Such division of roles represented the very separation between Islam and politics, Islam and the state that Islamists tried to deny. This difference came into sharper focus, when comparing Hamas with an organisation such as al-Qaʿida, in which the leaders of the latter collapsed the distinction between themselves and the ʿulamaʾ. The leaders of al-Qaʿida, who were not formally trained scholars, were the religious reference and issued *fatāwā* that went uncontested. In Hamas on the other hand the *fatāwā* were issued by formally trained ʿulamaʾ and were then presented to the *shūra*. With this Hamas's own system of Islamic governance was being outlined, one in which, contrary to the anticlerical spirit in Salafism, the religious scholar kept a tight grip over *ijtihād*, but under oversight.

This has implications for the application of shariʿa in society. Given that the goal of the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas was an offshoot, was to create an Islamic

[728] Meijer, p. 17.
[729] Feldman, p. 51.

society, through the coercive power of the nation state, and that for this purpose its most important political tool was shariʿa, Rayyan as a 'shariʿa politician' should have been at the forefront of Hamas's political project. However, the role that Rayyan—and al-Astal—performed in Hamas exemplified the relationship between religion and politics in the Movement more generally, and that was one of the former in the service of the latter. In fact, instead of being an obstacle to Hamas's pragmatism Rayyan's Salafism was a vehicle for it. Rayyan's role within Hamas more generally contradicted the standard narrative that places purist Salafism and the Brotherhood as two competing trends. And that was due to Hamas's modernist inclusivism but also the sense of openness, 'democracy' and 'individual empowerment' that purist Salafism in fact advocated when it came to interpreting revelation and making legal decisions.[730] Its modernist roots also meant that democracy and other Western liberal concepts had for years been part of core Hamas beliefs and therefore the Movement held the promise of being capable of reconstructing shariʿa to make it 'fully consistent with democratic norms'.[731] As Tariq Ramadan argues, the thought of the modernists, firmly rooted in the Islamic tradition, holds the key to making Islam compatible with the West.[732] What the Hamas ʿulamaʾ provided was the religious reference to the process of governance—of whatever type—that was essential to Hamas to justify it as Islamic.

[730] Griffel, 'What Do We Mean By "Salafī"? Connecting Muhammad ʿAbduh with Egypt's Nur Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History', p. 208.
[731] Wickham, p. 205.
[732] Ramadan, *Aux Sources du Renouveau Musulman: d'al-Afghani a Hassan al-Banna, un Siecle de Reformisme Islamique*, pp. 22–23.

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