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BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUES

HAMAS: *Its Ideology and Record*

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Hamas' landslide victory in January's Palestinian elections has created what many are calling an "earthquake" in Palestinian politics. Hamas, designated a terrorist organization by the United States and European Union, has carried out hundreds of attacks primarily against civilian non-combatants in Israel, killing Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.

Hamas Covenant

Preamble

'Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.'

While it is too early to predict precisely what Hamas' election victory will mean in the long term for the peace process, for now the results appear to have dealt a tremendous blow to prospects for peace. This is because Hamas, in addition to its violent record as a terrorist organization, harbors a radical Islamist ideology that explicitly calls for the killing of Jews, destroying the State of Israel and replacing it with a radical Muslim theocracy. This ideology is based on an underpinning of blatant anti-Semitism adopted from Europe's darkest period, and is deeply embedded in Hamas' ideological manifesto which it calls a "Covenant."

There is already extensive speculation about whether or not Hamas will moderate its behavior in order to govern effectively even if it does not moderate its ideology. Time will tell what will be the ultimate consequences of Hamas' election victory. Meanwhile, to better understand this new situation, it is important to have a fuller understanding of Hamas' background, ideology and track record.

Radical Islamism: A Brief Background

Almost every country in the Middle East is affected by radical Islamist movements. In addition to Israel, Arab regimes throughout the Middle East are under increasing attack by Islamist movements, and Islamist violence has become endemic from the Philippines to Chechnya. Attacks against the U.S., Spain, England and other countries have increased dramatically in recent years.

The year 1979 was a watershed for the radical Islamists. Although the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord was a defeat for Islamist

ideology, the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the strong resistance of the Afghani *mujahadeen*, (among whom was Osama bin Laden) against the invading Soviet army invigorated the movement. The same year saw the seizing of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamic radicals, which led to the deaths of 5,000 people, mostly pilgrims on the Hajj, in a battle with the Saudi army. Two years later Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the first Arab leader to sign a peace treaty with Israel, was assassinated at the hands of the *Takfir wa-Hijrah* -- a splinter of the Muslim Brotherhood. The radical Islamist movement thus came of age.

Hamas' Ideology

Hamas is an Arabic acronym that translates to the Islamic Resistance Movement. It is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, a militant Islamic movement founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al Banna and dedicated to purging Egypt of Western influences, particularly British colonial rule.

In the 1960s and 70s, the Brotherhood experienced a resurgence of popularity in Egypt, Jordan and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hamas developed as a branch of the Brotherhood where they cultivated a system of social services, called *da'wah*. The Brotherhood built "an impressive social, religious, educational and cultural infrastructure, which gave them a political stronghold, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank."¹ Hamas carries out *da'wah* activity as part of its overall strategy to gain popular support. The military wing and the social support wing are inseparable, and mutually dependent.

The popular-social base is maintained materially by the charity committees and ideologically through instruction, propaganda and incitement delivered in the mosques and other institutions and through leaflets. This base is the source for the recruitment of members into the units which engage in riots and popular violence.²

Hamas draws primarily from two ideological fonts: the universalistic Islamic principles of the Muslim Brotherhood, which endeavors to return Arab-Islamic society back to a traditional Islamic state, and the Palestinian tenet of popular liberation coupled with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in all of Palestine.

Hamas: A Branch of the Muslim Brotherhood

After its founding, the Muslim Brotherhood's popularity spread rapidly. By the 1940's it had actively allied itself with Nazi Germany toward the goal of ending British rule in Egypt. During this time the Brotherhood spread throughout the Arab world.

*"The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine."
 Hamas Covenant, Article 2*

In 1948, after Israel's establishment, the Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al Banna, proclaimed that, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it." (As the Muslim Brotherhood in the Palestinian territories, Hamas put al Banna's quote in their Covenant's preamble.) After three attempts by the Brotherhood to assassinate Egyptian President Nasser in 1966, Nasser executed the Brotherhood's leadership. Eventually the Brotherhood came back, and today it holds 20% of the seats in Egypt's Parliament. It boasts a very complex financial network that connects the operations of seventy Brotherhood branches worldwide. Hamas is but one of these branches.

¹ The Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel. Background Report on Hamas http://www.ict.org.il/organizations/org_frame.cfm?orgid=13

² *Ibid.*

The movement has not changed its basic ideology in the nearly eighty years of its existence, and holds a long-term view for achieving its goal: the creation of a pan-Islamic state comprised of all Muslim countries, based on their interpretation of *shari'a*, the religious law of the Qu'ran.

A Portal for Anti-Semitism

By the late 1930s, Nazi Germany had established contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood. Before long the Brotherhood adopted fascist trappings, including a creed of unconditional loyalty to the leader, and a paramilitary organization whose slogan "action, obedience, silence" echoed the "believe, obey, fight" motto of the Italian Fascists.³ From the Fascists al Banna also borrowed the idea of heroic death.⁴ Hamas' glorification of "martyrs" dying in the act of suicide bombings echoes this fascist mode.

After al Banna was murdered in 1949, his successor Sayyid Qutb wrote a book called "*Our Struggle with the Jews.*" The title's similarity to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which in German means "My Struggle" and whose main subject is the battle between "Aryans" and "the Jews," is not coincidental. Qutb adapted and transformed Hitler's formulation of "the Jews" as "eternal enemies" of the "Aryan race" to "the Jews" as the "eternal enemies" of Islam. His main theme is "the Jews" use Christianity, capitalism and communism as weapons in their war to subvert Islam, and are responsible for all sorts of evils, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, sociology, materialism, sexual depravity, the destruction of morals, and global capitalism. All this represents a mortal, existential threat to Islam.⁵

Hamas also adapted this anti-Semitic imagery in its core ideology. Its Covenant states that the Jews "have been scheming for a long time ... and have accumulated huge and influential material wealth. With their money, they took control of the world media... With their money they stirred revolutions in various parts of the globe... They stood behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution and most of the revolutions we hear about... With their money they formed secret organizations - such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs and the Lions - which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies and carry out Zionist interests... They stood behind World War I ... and formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains... There is no war going on anywhere without them having their finger in it."⁶

Another Muslim Brotherhood member, Haj Amin el Husseini, the father of Palestinian nationalism, and the Mufti of Jerusalem, was a close collaborator with Nazi Germany at the highest levels. He regularly appeared on German radio broadcasts to the Muslim world denouncing the Jews as the "most fierce enemies of Muslims."

"National Socialist Germany knows the Jews well and has decided to find a final solution for the Jewish danger which will end the evil in the world."

Haj Amin el Husseini
Radio Berlin, November 2, 1943
National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³ *Terror, Islam, and Democracy*, Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, *Journal of Democracy* Volume 13, Number 2 April 2002

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger, by Robert S. Wistrich, American Jewish Committee, April 2002

⁶ Hamas Covenant, Article 22. See: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm>

Hamas' Covenant includes references to the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" to prove the point of an international Jewish conspiracy. (See sidebar) (The "Protocols" are a forgery purporting to be the minutes of a secret meeting of international Jewish leaders plotting to take control of the world. It forms the Judeo-phobic basis of Nazi ideology, and has been called by historians a "warrant for genocide."⁷)

Another source of Hamas' anti-Jewish animosity is the Muslim Brotherhood's interpretation of Islamic theology.

Hamas Covenant

Article 32

"Zionist scheming has no end, and after Palestine, they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates River. When they have finished digesting the area on which they have laid their hand, they will look forward to more expansion. Their scheme has been laid out in the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'..."

Dr. Reuven Paz of the Herzliya-based Institute for Counter-Terrorism writes:

The approach of the Muslim Brotherhood to the existence of the State of Israel is not founded on a struggle against Israel or the Zionist movement specifically; rather, it is part of the perennial historical struggle between Islam and Judaism (which) according to radical Islamists, begins with the attempts of Jews in the Arab peninsula to prevent the prophet Muhammad from spreading the true religion and bringing his mission to the world.⁸

Hamas Covenant

Article 28

Israel, Judaism and Jews challenge Islam and the Muslim people. 'May the cowards never sleep.'

Hamas: Its Growth and Evolution

With the outbreak of the first Palestinian *intifada* in 1987, Hamas evolved into a militant organization which directed its activities not only against Israel, but also against Yassir Arafat's Fatah, the primary group within the PLO, whose ideology is primarily nationalist and does not emphasize Islam.

During the 1990's, Hamas emerged as a "spoiler" as it began to use suicide bombers as a means of disrupting the peace process. By the time of the "Al Aqsa" intifada in 2000, Hamas already led the way in a war of terror against Israeli civilians.

Hamas receives funding from a variety of sources: direct financial aid from Iran, donations and membership fees, fund-raising in the Arab world and the West, from Palestinian expatriates, and private benefactors in Saudi Arabia and other Arab states.

⁷ See "Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion," Norman Cohn, Serif Publishing; New edition March 1, 1996, and "Antisemitism: Protocols of the Elders of Zion", the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007058>

⁸ Paz, Reuven, "Sleeping with the Enemy: A Reconciliation Process as Part of Counter-Terrorism -- Is Hamas Capable of 'Hudnah'?", The Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Interdisciplinary Center June 25, 1998, Herzliya, Israel.

In March 2005, Hamas agreed to a unilateral ceasefire with Israel. It was brokered by Egypt in Cairo, where Hamas and twelve other Palestinian groups met. The Cairo Agreement, as it became known, called for a period of calm (*tahdi'a*). Notwithstanding this "calm" Hamas continued attacking Israeli targets, including firing dozens of Qassam missiles from the Gaza Strip into Israeli towns and a number of attacks in the West Bank. And Hamas leaders made it clear that this was but a "tactical" move, and they were still committed to their goal of destroying Israel. Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said after Israel's Disengagement from Gaza:

"Neither the liberation of the Gaza Strip, nor the liberation of the West Bank or even Jerusalem will suffice us. Hamas will pursue the armed struggle until the liberation of all our lands. We don't recognize the state of Israel or its right to hold onto one inch of Palestine. Palestine is an Islamic land belonging to all the Muslims... We do not and will not recognize a state called Israel. Israel has no right to any inch of Palestinian land. This is an important issue. Our position stems from our religious convictions."⁹

Hamas' Alliances: Iran, Syria, Hezbollah

Syria serves as an important base for Hamas, providing crucial infrastructure for its operational, political, military and propaganda activities. Hamas's High Command resides in Syria and runs its operations from the Hamas' political office, headed by Khaled Meshaal, in Damascus. This High Command is in daily contact with Hamas including its terrorist wing, Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam (named after a Brotherhood leader "martyred" in the Arab Revolt of 1936 in British Mandate Palestine).

The week prior to Hamas's electoral victory in the Palestinian elections in January 2006, Meshaal met in Damascus with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and the deportation of Israeli Jews to Europe or North America, and has denied the Holocaust.

Meshaal praised Ahmadinejad for these comments. In December 2005, he met Ahmadinejad in Teheran and *Al Jazeera* reported that Meshaal "praised Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president, for his 'courage' in having dismissed the Holocaust as a myth and calling for Israel to be moved out of the Middle East to Europe or North America."

Hamas Covenant

Article 7

"The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.'"

The Lebanese terror group Hezbollah also developed a close relationship with Hamas. Shi'ite Iran is Hezbollah's main sponsor. In 1993, Hamas became the first branch of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood to open an official office in Teheran. In April 2001, Iran hosted an "International Conference of Support for the Intifada and the Islamic Revolution in Palestine" in Teheran, which included Hamas and Hezbollah. It is not coincidental that Hamas began using Hezbollah tactics, such as the choice of certain explosives, and

⁹ Asharq Al-Awsat, August 18, 2005

mortar attacks on civilian populations.

Hamis Terrorism

Hamas is responsible for 426 terrorist attacks since 2000, primarily targeting civilians. Fifty-eight of these attacks were suicide bombings, resulting in 377 deaths and 2,078 injuries.

"The people who carry out suicide bombings are not martyrs, they're war criminals, and so are the people who help to plan such attacks."

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch

Among the most heinous:

- **August 9, 2001:** Sbarro Pizzeria bombing in downtown Jerusalem in which fifteen people were murdered, including six children ranging in age from two to sixteen. Another 130 were maimed.
- **March 5, 2003:** Suicide bombing that murdered 17 people and wounded 53 in a suicide bombing of a passenger bus on en route to Haifa University. Nine of dead were children, including an Israeli Arab. Another Israeli Arab was also killed
- **August 19, 2003:** Twenty-three people were killed and over 130 wounded when a Hamas suicide bomber detonated himself on a passenger bus in Jerusalem. Five of the dead were children, including a three year old and an 11 month old.
- **August 31, 2004:** Sixteen people were killed and 100 wounded in two suicide bombings within minutes of each other on two Beersheba city buses. Among the dead was a 3 year old child.

During the Oslo peace process (1993 – 2000), Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad together carried out at least 30 suicide attacks, killing 120 Israelis, mostly civilians. These attacks were aimed at stopping or slowing the Oslo peace process, and were a major contributing factor to Oslo's failure. For these attacks, deliberately aimed primarily at non-combatants with the aim of killing as many civilians as possible, the U.S. and European Union have declared Hamas a terrorist organization.

After the Elections: Can Hamas Change and Reform?

In the January 25th, 2006 Palestinian elections, Hamas won 76 of the 132 seats, becoming the dominant political faction in Palestinian society. Fatah won 43 seats and in Palestinian law, Hamas obtains the right to name the prime minister and Cabinet and run the PA's daily affairs. Mahmoud Abbas – leader of Fatah – however, remains as President.

"We shall never recognize the legitimacy of a Zionist state..."

Khaled Meshaal
Head of Hamas' Political Bureau,
writing in The Guardian
January 31, 2006

Hamas ran as the "Change and Reform Party." Since its victory, many analysts and government officials around the world are asking if Hamas, now that it has the responsibility of governing, will actually change and reform. The hope is they will be forced to moderate their views, and

come to terms with Israel's reality and existence, if they are to succeed in governing the Palestinian Authority and maintain the flow of Western aid to the PA.

Gershon Baskin, co-CEO of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, a joint institution of Israelis and Palestinians dedicated to the two-state solution, has serious doubts. He wrote the day after the elections:

The Hamas government of the Palestinian Authority will not be intimidated by US and EU threats to stop financial support. Iran's millions of barrels of oil everyday being pumped and sold all over the world will provide the Palestinian Authority with the ability to withstand any international boycott.

Thus far, Hamas leadership has shown little inclination that it is moderating its stand on Israel. Khaled Meshaal, speaking on *Al Jazeera* on January 29, said the following:

We will not withdraw from our fundamental principles, from our rights and our strategic goals. The map of Palestine, for any Hamas member... is the well-known Palestinian map... As for recognizing [Israel] and amending our charter, Hamas is not the kind of movement that succumbs to pressure.

Meshaal asserts Hamas' commitment to its core ideology, what he calls their "fundamental principles. His reference to the map of Palestine "well known" to "any Hamas member" is chilling: Hamas' Covenant defines exactly the parameters of the map, as being "every inch of Palestine." (See sidebar)

Hamas Covenant

Article 6

'The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.'

The same day, senior Hamas leader in Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar told CNN's Wolf Blitzer of the minimal conditions for Hamas to offer a *hudna*, which, historically has referred to a long pause in hostilities, during which armies prepared for later battles. The determination of this calm would be made entirely by Hamas, but only after Israel would unconditionally agree to all of Hamas' demands, which are:

Israel must: withdraw to the pre-1967 armistice lines; remove the blue stripes from its flag, because the "stripes on the flag are symbols of occupation (and) signify Israel's borders stretching from the River Euphrates to the River Nile," allow the full "right of return" of all refugees to their former homes in Israel, and release all Hamas prisoners.

CNN's Blitzer pressed him on whether Hamas would negotiate with Israel and accept Israel's right to exist. Zahar evaded the questions.

Even many Palestinians have serious doubts that Hamas will change. Prior to the elections, one Fatah official said: "Hamas is trying to replace the PA. Since 1988 their goal has been to replace the PLO. The strategy remains the same but the tactics are different. It's the Muslim Brotherhood strategy of infiltration"¹⁰

¹⁰ Cited in *Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration*, Middle East Report N°49 – 18 January 2006, International Crisis Group Conflict Prevention Partnership, European Union

As of now Hamas remains dedicated to Israel's destruction. Its ideology is entrenched and is permeated with anti-Semitism, it is allies with the most anti-Semitic regime today, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Iran, and it is part of a larger international movement whose ultimate ideological goals do not include Jewish Israel in a vision of the Middle East ruled by a single Islamic state.

Professor Kenneth W. Stein, director of the Institute for the Study of Modern Israel of Emory University, describes what will be the likely scenario:

Hamas will stay faithful to jihad, to resistance, to guns, to Palestine and to Jerusalem... Hamas will enter the Palestinian legislative council on the platform of resistance"

**Head of Hamas Election List
Ismail Haniyah,
at an election rally in Gaza
Gulf Daily News, 1/20/06**

"With its unexpected success, Hamas is faced with reconciling rhetoric with reality. Its rhetoric still calls for Israel's elimination. But realistically its objective must be to govern or control education, social welfare, health care, and religious affairs. To receive the external funds the majority of Palestinians so desperately need, Hamas will have to find a formula that does not drop its political objectives, but is sufficiently moderate in tone and actions to open the cash flow."¹¹

The editors at the San Francisco *Chronicle* sum up the challenge well:

Before the West can cooperate with Hamas, it is Hamas that must open its mind to core issues such as Israel's existence as well as terrorism as a principal strategy. So far, Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders have given no clear indication that they are rethinking anything.¹²

The victory of Hamas marks a victory for the forces of terror in the world, paradoxically clothed in the garb of a democratic election. The adage that one must "make peace with your enemies" may not apply in this new situation. Hamas' victory and the ascension of its rejectionist and murderous ideology is a paradigm shift requiring another question: "Does your enemy want to make peace with you?"

Judging by the statements of Hamas' leadership, before and after the election, the answer to this question is far from encouraging. ♦

Hamas "is not going to acknowledge the ownership of any inch of Israel on this holy land. We are not looking to Israel as a partner now or in the future."

**Mahmoud Zahar
Hamas leader and
candidate
AP. 1/18/06**

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¹¹ Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2006, Microsoft Corporation.

¹² San Francisco *Chronicle*, January 31, 2006