

HAMAS

Palestinian Political Power and the Arab Uprisings



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Preface

I must admit that contemplation over thesis topics began in the early summer prior to beginning this Masters program at Radboud University Nijmegen. Because my mind was stubbornly set on avoiding any of the extensively discussed topics regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my thoughts and ideas led me a long way until producing the ideas discussed in this thesis. Something fresh and current was my aim. Until only about three months prior to the deadline of this thesis my ideas and thoughts began to really come into focus. Facing the challenges of researching such a dynamic topic as Hamas and the challenges of researching a currently developing subject where in many cases I was forced to wait for developments to unfold in order to conduct an analysis, in the end everything fell into place. Although both a stressful but exciting academic journey, struggling to discover and reveal the true nature of my thoughts and provide them with a voice was certainly an enriching and rewarding endeavor.

The ones who have provided support, patience, consideration, and advice have all been or will be confronted with a warm personal expression of gratitude and appreciation.

But once more, I deeply thank you and am indebted to you all. You know who you are.

Executive Summary

The popular upheavals in the Middle East and the Arab world have had a deep impact on regional politics as well as on local conflicts, particularly the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. With political and social change sweeping the region, various influential regional actors have been forced to alter their political strategies, conforming to new strategic circumstances. This has led to opportunities, uncertainties, and disadvantages for prominent actors in the Palestinian political spectrum such as Hamas.

The impact of the Arab uprisings on Hamas led to politically strategic reevaluation and regional alignment reconfirmation. Factors such as the Muslim Brotherhood taking power in Egypt and the pull out of Hamas's headquarters from Syria in addition to other regional circumstances have politically repositioned Hamas in the region and within the Palestinian political spectrum.

The strategic advantage of such circumstances however allows Hamas to seek political will in the corridors of power increasingly dominated by Islamists in the region. The challenge for Hamas is to establish a new strategic profile which functions both between Palestinian political factions and as a balance between tactical regional alliances.

The most evident outcome of this scenario is an increased strategic depth to Hamas's political strength. The impact level in which this can be determined is explained by the degree of availability and ability to secure and maintain various sources of power and alliances.

This determination is used due to shifting regional political circumstances transpiring

as a result of the Arab uprisings. Such significant transformations include, the new found sense of empowerment among the Arab public, the reestablishment of the Palestinian agenda as an Arab-wide responsibility, Hamas's increased recognition as an international political actor, the opening of political space through Arab and Islamic channels as well as the West due to the effect the Arab uprisings have had on their policy, the decline of American influence in the region, as well as the new strategic political orientation the ascendancy of Islamists to political power have produced in the region.

These factors are significant because they allow Hamas's political reach to expand through channels previously blocked due to diplomatic and political isolation from regional as well as Western states. The new favorable regional environment has significantly strengthened Hamas expanding the degree through which sources of power and alliances are accessible.

This thesis will demonstrate how, as a result of the Arab uprisings, the changing political realities in the region have significantly favored Hamas to amplify its overall political power. As a result, the uprisings have a significant impact also on Palestinian political power and thus fundamentally alter the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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Abbreviations

FATAH	<i>Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniya</i> /Palestinian Liberation Movement
HAMAS	<i>Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah</i> /Islamic Resistance Movement
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA	Palestinian Authority
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The ongoing popular upheavals that have swept throughout the Middle East and the Arab world since late 2010 - commonly referred to as the “Arab uprisings”¹ (Massad, 2011) – have had a historical impact on the region, influencing regional politics in an unprecedented manner. Especially since the collapse of the regime in Egypt,² traditionally considered the center of the Arab world’s political weight, many scholars and analysts acknowledge that the upheavals have impacted Palestinian politics and particularly Hamas³ both within the Palestinian political spectrum and in the wider region (Brown, Ibish, & Schanzer, 2012). As the uprisings have destabilized traditional alliances in the region - reconfiguring Middle East politics and producing an erratic rebalancing of power among influential states - Hamas is maneuvering to re-identify itself within the changing political landscape (Ashrawi & Marwan, 2011; Ibish, 2012). As the organization is dependent on its external leadership – with its Political Bureau based outside the Gaza Strip - for political, diplomatic, and financial arrangements, the current situation has disrupted its traditional regional configuration producing a crisis within the organization, leaving Hamas’s current strategic regional alignment in a state of uncertainty.

As one of the two halves of the Palestinian leadership⁴ and one of the two largest and most powerful Palestinian political factions, Hamas embodies a major source of Palestinian political power. Established as a potent political and military power within the Palestinian political spectrum,⁵ any transformation within Hamas, and particularly its regional strategy, will certainly have a massive impact on domestic Palestinian affairs. The Arab uprisings have produced both threatening and opportunistic prospects for Hamas forcing the organization to maneuver, adjust, and even conform to regional realities and circumstances.

At a time when the Islamist trend is rising and US-American power is declining in the region, Hamas has been cautiously pushing itself to take advantage of regional opportunities

¹ The “Arab uprisings” refer to the revolutionary wave of protests, demonstrations, and rebellion occurring across the Middle East and North Africa that began in 2010.

² Referring to the Mubarak regime that ruled for 40 years until mass protests forced the collapse of his rule.

³ Hamas is the name of the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement and political party that governs the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Hamas is an acronym of *Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmiyyah*, or Islamic Resistance Movement.

⁴ The government of the occupied Palestinian territories, consisting of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, is split between the Palestinian Authority (PA) governing the West Bank and Hamas governing the Gaza Strip.

⁵ Hamas overwhelmingly won a decisive majority in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, defeating, and ending more than 40 years of domination by, the PLO-affiliated Fatah Party. This almost immediately led to a military conflict between the two groups in which Hamas took control of the Gaza strip after forcing out Fatah. In addition, Hamas survived the 2008 Gaza war with Israel and continues to confront Israeli military operations into, and blockade of, the territory.

increasingly attempting to integrate itself as a ‘normal’ diplomatic and political actor.⁶ Although the new regional environment provides an incentive for Hamas to moderate its hard line strategy of Islamic resistance, it is attempting to change as little as possible - for ideological reasons, reasons of competitive political advantage within Palestinian politics, and reasons of maintaining organizational discipline (Brown et al., 2012). However, any change will be determined by how it adapts to the new regional strategic realities, and more specifically to new alignments as “the region’s strategic landscape is now primarily defined by sectarian allegiances.” (Ibish, 2012; Mutter, 2012).

Continually locked in a rivalry with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) for national leadership since the death of former president Yasser Arafat in 2004,⁷ Hamas’s regional strategic maneuvering play a role in politically strengthening the organization, possibly determining its future position within Palestinian politics. Traditionally, its competitive political advantage against the PLO and the PA has stemmed from Hamas’s hard line resistance towards Israel, facilitated by its alliance with Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah (Brown, et al., 2012).⁸ While the prospects for a new strategic profile has and is being intensely analyzed, little study has been conducted about whether any prospective regional alignment will impact not only the political power of Hamas but particularly Palestinian political power as a whole.

This research intends to analyze these circumstances surrounding Hamas within the context of the Arab uprisings and expand contemporary analysis on how the organization’s political maneuvers and prospective alignments will impact Palestinian politics. This research also attempts to relate Hamas’s current state of affairs into the broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, shedding light on future developments and on possible directions the conflict may be heading to as a result of prospective changing political circumstances. Therefore, this research will focus on Hamas’s contemporary strategic alignment prospects, particularly as alliances and external arrangements for Hamas often determine their political clout, both domestically and regionally.

In order to pursue this research interest, analysis must focus on the sources of power which facilitate political power for Hamas. Due to the nature of Palestinian politics, alliances have played a major role in determining the limits of Palestinian political power - explained further in

⁶ Recognized and ostracized as a terrorist organization by a number of states, particularly Israel, the United States, and a variety of other western countries, Hamas has endured a campaign of international isolation against its legitimacy as a governing body since winning parliamentary elections.

⁷ Under Arafat, Palestinian politics were more or less monopolized under his rule. His death opened up the political playing field allowing political parties to vie for power, particularly the two largest, Hamas and Fatah.

⁸ Hezbollah is a Lebanese Shiite Muslim militant group and political party which maintain control mainly over South Lebanon. The Hamas (Sunni Muslim), Hezbollah (Shiite Muslim), Syria (Alawite), and Iran (Shiite Muslim) alliance functioned as a nonsectarian anti-Israel front in the region. With the region defaulting along sectarian lines, the alliance has become severely jeopardized.

chapter three. Therefore, in addition to applying the concept of political power, the notion of alliances will be theoretically oriented within the framework of political power. The scientific relevance of this research lies in the actuality that political power and alliances for Hamas and other prominent Palestinian political actors confirm the theory conceptualized by Gene Sharp. In his theoretical concept, Sharp identifies material resources as one of the six power sources in which the degree of political power emerges. I intend to focus specifically on this power source and claim to prove that the degree of availability to this particular source determines Palestinian political power. In addition, I claim that the degree of availability of material resources is determined by the availability of alliances conceptualized by Stephen Walt. This theoretical basis will help an understanding of Hamas's contemporary strategic alignment prospects ultimately influencing Palestinian political power. However, in order to understand the backdrop of this analysis, it is necessary to clarify the manner in which Palestinian political relationships are fashioned.

The dynamics of Palestinian political affairs has been shaped and continues to be shaped and reshaped by changes in the region's political landscape, consequently impacting the political attributes that structure the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Historically, and at present, the (re)configuration of alliances in the region has shifted not only the strategy of Palestinian political actors but also the weight of their political power. Due to their dependence on external assistance and arrangements, whether military, economic, or political, diplomatic, etc., the political weight of Palestinian actors is, to a large extent, determined by their external alliances and affairs. In addition, since the establishment of any Palestinian political representative body, the asymmetry of power in favor of Israel, particularly its political form, has and remains a fundamental disparity characterizing Israeli-Palestinians relations (Gallo & Marzano, 2009; Waage, 2005, p. 6). However, as a result of the Arab uprisings, the removal of authoritarian leaders with whom Israel had cultivated alliances, it becomes more difficult for the Israeli State to "maintain a system of domination that has no place in the contemporary realities of the Arab world" (Ashrawi & Marwan, 2011).⁹ As the changing political realities have been more favorable to Hamas than to its rivals (Sadiki, 2011b) and as these realities, according to Marwan Bishara, "will change in a serious way the equation within Palestine [...] strengthen[ing] Hamas," (Bishara, Ruch, & Pundak, 2012) the Gaza-based leadership possesses the potential to enhance its political clout through "reintegrating the organization into the mainstream Sunni Arab fold," (Brown et al., 2012) cultivating ties with states in the region. A political scenario which strengthens Hamas, integrates it further into the political mainstream, and elevates its position higher onto the forefront of the Palestinian political spectrum invokes a restructuring of

⁹ The former authoritarian regime in Egypt, for example, collaborated with Israel on maintaining the Gaza blockade (Egypt shares a direct border with the Gaza Strip) and overlooked Israel's military policies in and occupation of the Palestinian territories. In addition, with American influence declining in the region, Israel's number one ally, American-Israeli compliant or allied regimes that have either collapsed or been affected by the Arab uprisings, meaning subjected to popular demands of governmental change in such areas as foreign policy, breaks the stated "system of domination".

both internal Palestinian relations and Israelis-Palestinian relations. Therefore, the potential for a fundamental shift in the power dynamics that structure these relations is significant for analyzing future developments relating to continuing conflict, peace negotiations, or even conditions conducive to constructive conflict resolution.

This research will explore two interrelated fundamental factors that impact Hamas, Palestinian politics, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, namely the significance and role of alliances and political power. Due to the dissymmetry of power between Israel and the Palestinians, and the significance alliances have for the formation of political power for Palestinian actors such as Hamas, both these interrelated factors play a profound role in the conflict and in Palestinian political affairs. It has long been acknowledged that the impasse in peace negotiations and protraction of conflict are to a large extent a result of the asymmetry of power in favor of Israel, (Gallo & Marzano, 2009; Waage, 2005) attributing this scenario primarily to factors of alliance and political power.

The relevance of this research project stems from the notion that fundamentally Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been shaped and protracted by strategic alliances and political power¹⁰ as described above. Any significant alteration of these two interlinked factors will have a meaningful impact not only on the power dynamics both within Palestinian politics and between Israel and the Palestinians, but also on the future of the conflict. For this reason, this research provides a narrow focus on a specific fundamental aspect of this conflict as well as expanding on academic material pertaining to the notions of alliances and political power in conflicts for use by other Middle Eastern, Israeli-Palestinian, or conflict academics, analysts, and experts. At a time where the Arab uprisings as well as their impacts continue to unfold in the region, this study and the findings derived from it can be of academic and social use contributing significantly to the latest analytical research on Palestine, the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the conflict in the context of the Arab uprisings.

Therefore, the central aim of this research is to investigate and analyze the impact of Hamas's prospective strategic alignment in the region on Palestinian political power as a result of the new realities incited by the Arab uprisings. Thus, the central question derived from this analysis is: ***What is the impact of Hamas on Palestinian political power as a result of the Arab uprisings?***

In order to identify the level of impact by Hamas, the nature of its political power must first be understood. However, in order understand the nature of Hamas's political power the nature of Palestinian political power must be historically explored. Afterwards, Hamas's impact on Palestinian politics can be determined. Accordingly, two important secondary questions must

¹⁰ The origins of the conflict which date back to the early 1930s through the late 1940s were inspired by the formation of political power facilitated by local and external alliances.

then be answered. *What is Palestinian political power? What is the impact of Hamas on Palestinian politics?*

Because the Arab uprisings have had a significant impact on Middle Eastern and thus Palestinian politics, they have also played a major role on the readjustment of Hamas's political strategy in the region and within the Palestinian political spectrum. Given the direct relevance of the influence of the Arab uprisings, a third secondary question must be asked. *How has the Arab uprisings impacted Hamas?*

I assume that analyzing the impact the Arab uprisings have had on Hamas will lead to an understanding of present and future effects on Hamas's political strategy. However, in order to gain a more accurate analysis of Hamas contemporary circumstances and how this will impact its prospective political position, it would provide for valuable analysis to examine its prospective regional alignment and how this may affect Palestinian politics. Such circumstances thus warrant a fourth secondary question. *How does Hamas's prospective regional alignment impact Palestinian politics?*

In this thesis, I will analyze and discuss the ability and availability to secure and maintain sources of power for Hamas in the context of the new regional political landscape. It will then become apparent from this research that as a result of the Arab uprisings, the degree of power sources for Hamas, as a result of its prospective regional alignment, have increased, expanding the strategic depth of its power affecting the formal Palestinian political center and thereby impacting Palestinian political power. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the manner in which such strategic depth of Hamas's power also plays into the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

1.1 Methodology

In order to answer the first question on Palestinian political power, reference to theories of political power will be examined in addition to the historical development of Palestinian politics. The second question will make use of relevant literature examining the dynamics of Hamas's rise as a political power in order to analyze the significance of its position within the Palestinian political spectrum and region. Following an adequate understanding of Hamas's strategic significance, the contemporary regional realities produced by the Arab uprisings will be examined in order to reveal its impact on Hamas. This will be done by analysis of the latest studies which have produced findings relevant to this thesis. The fourth question will analyze Hamas's prospective alignment within the regional realities through analysis of reported actions related to its external relations with states in the region thereby linking its impact on Palestinian politics. Based on the research conducted on the four secondary questions, the central question

will be answered by exhibiting Hamas's impact on Palestinian political power through an exemplification of two significant impacts on the formal Palestinian political center.

The methodology of this research will be based on textual analysis of various academic and media publications and literature produced by a number of leading scholars, politicians, journalists, and practitioners focusing on political power theory, alliances, Hamas, Palestinian politics, contemporary Middle East politics, and the Arab uprisings. Archival research will be used to discover findings which support the hypotheses of this thesis. In addition, attention and documentation of unfolding Middle East news and events that contribute to this research will be applied. Media sources will contribute to a significant amount of findings as Hamas is an extremely loquacious but enigmatic organization where a number of its internal and external deliberations are reflected in public discourse and actions through the press. For this reason, a part of this research must be approached through analysis from the public record. As a result of the currently unfolding nature of this topic, information gathering is ongoing and will continue throughout the duration of this study.

1.1.1 Methodological Barriers

The Middle East has been and remains an area of considerable geostrategic importance, revealed by the efforts that past and current superpowers have devoted various resources and attention for the region. Due to this fact, the Middle East has an intense history of complex relationships and various profound circumstances which merit an adequate understanding of cultural, political, and sociological factors, and a complete inclusion and/or consideration of these elements cannot be considered in its entirety. In addition, when analyzing such a matter as alliances, a specialized knowledge of Middle East diplomacy is something that I cannot claim to be proficient in.

As the scope of this thesis is limited and I primarily conducted research on Hamas, I was not able to include the extensive material, both historical and contemporary, on the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Palestinian Authority (PA), and Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization that would expand the scope of analysis. Furthermore, I have limited myself to matters pertaining to material resources and external relationships in order to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a specific outlook. As I cannot review here the extensive literature on political power, I have focused on the line of thought I wished to apply and exemplify in this thesis. Further in-depth research of sources of political power referred to not only by Gene Sharp but other political theorists would undoubtedly enrich my research project.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter two introduces the theoretical framework of this thesis. It provides an overview of the concepts applied throughout the research starting with the theory of political power. The

subsections that follow discuss the six sources of political power, a critique, and the method used to measure political power in this study. The next sections of this chapter will explain the use of the concept of alliances leading up to the conceptual model and concluding with the overall application of the all concepts involved in an attempt to explain how the main research question will be answered.

Chapter three summarizes the history and genesis of Palestinian politics from pre-1948 to the emergence of Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) followed by the years leading up to the Oslo Accords. This first part attempts to provide an understanding of the nature of contemporary Palestinian politics. The second part of the chapter explains the politics after the Oslo Accords until the present and concludes by defining Palestinian political power in an attempt to answering the first secondary question of this study.

Chapter four summarizes the history and origins of the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement known as Hamas. It begins by explaining the origins of the movement and its history beginning in 1987. Subsequently, an elaboration of Hamas's organizational structure, political strategy and ideology, and sources of funding will provide an understanding of the organization and its significance. The second part discusses the impact of Hamas on Palestinian politics, the second secondary question, through three significant aspects. The first, Hamas's landslide victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, second, the six-day defeat of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority which resulted in Hamas successfully taking control of Gaza, and third, the split and gradual political separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Chapter five discusses the significant impact of the Arab uprisings on Hamas's organization. It gives an overview of the Arab uprisings that began at the end of 2010 and its impact on regional politics. The Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Alliance is then analyzed followed by the strategic crisis the breakdown of the alliance has created for Hamas. The resulting effects of the uprisings are explained in order to demonstrate the threats, opportunities, and prospects of shifting regional realities for Hamas.

Chapter six analyses the regional realignment in regards to Hamas's external relations with states such as Qatar, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and Tunisia. Elaboration on Hamas's relations with these countries, as well as with Iran and Hezbollah, will shed light on the Islamic organization's future prospective regional alignments. The chapter then discusses the findings from such relations providing an understanding of Hamas political role in the region and how its new found sense of political strength impacts Palestinian politics.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Concept of Political Power

Amongst the key concepts in Western traditions of political thought is the concept of power, political power, and its effects. Various political theorists and schools of thought define and approach the concept of power in different ways. It is a concept which comprises a deep and lengthy history where a notable lack of agreement about its precise definition exists. It is no secret that literature on political power is more than plenty, and even more so, the concept is very much an elusive one. Much existing work on political power has focused on questioning the sources of power. For instance, does political power flow from control over national, economic, electoral, or even ideological resources? Can political power be contained and organized by constitutions, institutions, a culture or a nationality? Or does it ultimately depend on military capacity or coercive power?

The notion of power alone is ascribed to a number of various things on a number of various grounds. The English word “power” derives from the Latin and French words which mean “to be able” (Bell, Edwards, & Wagner, 1969, p. 3). The word “power” behaves in much the same way as the word “ability”, X has the power to do something is to say that X *is able* to do something meaning X *can* do something (Bell et al., 1969, p.3). However, in order for the notion of “power” to function as the relationship between people it must reflect the origin that politics is a collective phenomenon. Therefore, politics defines the idea that political power must entail some human relationships (Bell et al, 1969, p. 4).

Hannah Arendt suggests that the source of power arises out of the human ability to act in concert (Arendt, 1970, p. 82). Power, she (1970, p. 82) argues, is “never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only as long as the group keeps together. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with (*potestas in populo*, without a people or group there is no power), disappears, ‘his power’ also vanishes.” However, in order for a group or for human relationships to reflect political power they must manifest the ability to conduct a political act which has an effect on the established social order. For instance, attempts to implement, alter, or subvert policies, procedures, laws, institutions, etc. by decision-making within the political system or by civil opposition, social pressure, or armed force outside of normal political processes would be considered political acts. This exemplifies that political acts require the cooperation of more than one person, in other words they are collective acts (Bell et al., 1969, p. 5). This means that the foundation of political power lies in the collective ability of relationships to conduct political acts. Political acts alone, however, do not result in the establishment of political power. To achieve a significant outcome from such acts requires strategic skills, organization, and planning. Thus, in order to possess the ability to conduct effective political acts that establish influence requires power.

Many political researchers today consider the three dimensions of power developed by Robert Dahl, Peter Bachrach, Morton Baratz, and Steven Lukes as the defining aspects of political power. The first dimension, decision-making, was defined by Dahl as the source and main indicator of power. Exposing this definition as the basis of power to be too simplistic, Bachrach and Baratz developed the notion of agenda-setting as the second dimension of power. Lukes later ascribed power through the addition of a third dimension which he termed as preference-shaping, suggesting this to be another important aspect of normative power in politics (Lukes, 1974).

Other theorists have suggested that the establishment of such power arises from the possession, administration, or control of valued resources. Dahl refers to these as the *base* of an actor's power, which consists of "all the resource-opportunities, acts, objects, etc. that he can exploit in order to effect the behavior of another" (Dahl, 1957, p. 203). Some political scientists (i.e. Gene Sharp, Robert Dahl) assert that necessary sources of political power consist of diverse items such as wealth, military capabilities, prestige, skills, information, knowledge, physical strength, authority, human resources, intangible factors, material resources, sanctions, and even personal rewards like recognition or affection (Bell et al., 1969, p. 126; Sharp, 2010, p. 18-19). Not all sources, however, constitute the power of any particular agent. The specific resources which constitute sources of political power depend upon the nature of the agent and the social setting under consideration (Bell et al., 1969, p. 126). According to Sharp (1973, p. 11), "If political power is not intrinsic to the power-holder, it follows that it must have outside sources." Analysis of such sources is a significant aspect of political power that has been examined and defined by a number of prominent theorists, some identified above.

However, due to the ambiguous, elusive, and extensive nature of such a concept as political power, and the various definitions political theorists have proposed, any work that applies an analysis of such a concept must propose a definition in order to maintain a clear line of focus. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, political power will be defined according to Gene Sharp's¹¹ (1980, p. 27) definition as, "the totality of means, influences, and pressures – including authority, rewards, and sanctions – available for use to achieve the objectives of the power-holder, especially the institutions of government, the State, and groups opposing either of them."

2.1.1 Six Sources of Political Power

As explained above, sources of political power emerge from and may be held through a variety of items and dimensions. Sharp identifies six sources necessary to secure and maintain political power. He (1973, p. 11) claims that, "In fact, political power appears to emerge from the interaction of all or several of the following sources:"

¹¹ Gene Sharp is an American professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth who is known for his extensive and influential writings on nonviolent struggle.

- *Authority* – The extent and intensity of the ruler’s authority among the subjects is a crucial factor affecting the ruler’s power.¹²
- *Human resources* – The ruler’s power is affected by the number of persons who obey him, cooperate with him, or provide him with special assistance, as well as by the proportion of such persons in the general population, and the extent and forms of their organizations.
- *Skills and knowledge* – The ruler’s power is also affected by the skills, knowledge and abilities of such persons and the relation of their skills, knowledge and abilities to his needs.
- *Intangible factors* - Psychological and ideological factors, such as habits and attitudes toward obedience and submission, and the presence or absence of a common faith, ideology, or sense of mission all affect the power of the ruler in relation to the people.
- *Material resources* - The degree to which the rulers control or have access to property, natural resources, financial resources, the economic system, and the means of communication and transportation helps to determine the limits of his power.
- *Sanctions* – The final source of a ruler’s power is the type and extent of sanctions at his disposal, both for use against his own subjects and in conflicts with other rulers (Sharp, 1973, p. 11-12).

According to Sharp’s (2010, p. 19) theory, these sources depend on the acceptance of the regime, on the submission and obedience of the population, and on the cooperation of innumerable people and the many institutions of society. The degree of availability of cooperation, obedience, and support will either expand or contract the power of any government. This determines the ruler’s availability of all or several of the six sources necessary to secure and maintain political power.

2.1.2 Critique

Critics of Sharp’s theory have accused him of being too simplistic in his theoretical approach to power. Brian Martin has notably cited limitations both conceptually and structurally in Sharp’s approach. He (1989, p. 219) argues that “Sharp’s theory of power is much too simple to capture the full dynamics of society, if it is not misconceived entirely.” Martin (1989, p. 218, 220) suggests that once Sharp establishes his basic ruler-subject classification the complexity of

¹² Here Sharp defines Authority as the “...right to command and direct, to be heard or obeyed by others,” voluntarily accepted by the people and therefore existing without the imposition of sanctions. The possessor of authority may not actually be superior, it is enough that he be perceived and accepted as superior. While not identical with power, authority is nevertheless clearly a main source of power (See Sharp, 1973, Power and Struggle, p. 11).

power structures tend to be dropped out of the picture limiting the relevance of his theory. His lack of detailed justification does not incorporate relevant contemporary systems and political life such as the structures of capitalism, patriarchy, and bureaucracy.

Sharp (1973, p. 12) suggests that sources of the ruler's power "depend *intimately* upon the obedience and cooperation of the subjects" (Sharp's emphasis). "The most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be the obedience and submission of its subjects. Obedience is at the heart of political power" (Sharp, 1973, p. 16). Martin (1989, p. 220), referring to this concept as the consent theory of power, accuses Sharp of focusing "first and foremost on the ruler-subject dichotomy and on consent and its withdrawal." He (1989) cites the irony that "while sharp's analysis is most applicable to authoritarian regimes which more closely approximate the ruler-subject picture, his ideas have gained the greatest following in liberal democracies where the complexity of power structure limits the relevance of his theory."

Martin exemplifies how Sharp's theoretical foundation for conceptualizing political power is ultimately focused upon the state and the involved structural mechanisms (i.e. state bureaucracy, police, and military) in his analysis. All such mechanisms, Sharps suggests, "are under the command of the person or group which occupies the position of 'ruler' at the head of the state" (cited in Martin, 1989, p. 214). This certainly limits the adaptability of his theoretical application from rulers, forms of control and/or power by actors that function beyond the traditional machinery of state dynamics. Furthermore, the necessary sources of political power identified under Sharp's theory assume reference ultimately to dictators and other forms of obvious authoritarian rule. It restricts the idea that such sources may be accumulated and concentrated by other styles of agents or actors. This neglects taking into account "the nature of the agent and the social setting under consideration" (Bell et al., 1969, p. 126).

2.1.3 Method of Measurement

The purpose of this study is neither to analyze or critique existing theories of power nor to develop its own theory of power. Instead its objective is to analyze Hamas, the sources of and through which it facilitates its power, and to discuss its impact on Palestinian political power. In order to determine this, I have chosen to apply the concept Sharp explains as the necessary sources of political power.

Sharp's work is known for theoretical strategies on nonviolent struggle against authoritarian oppression. Such conceptualizations however have no place in my research. Rather, for my analysis, I am only using the logic Sharp constitutes behind the sources of political power and applying them to exemplify the degree, limits, and origins of political power within Palestinian politics. More specifically, I am attempting to exemplify not the manner through which to expose

the weaknesses and dissolve prominent Palestinian authorities but to explain the basis and source of their power.

In this study, political power will depend on the level of availability to material resources identified above, and the ability to acquire, secure, and maintain all or several of those sources - the reasons for narrowing Sharp's six sources of power to only one source will be explained in the last section of this chapter. Sharp (1973, p. 12) argues that it is always a matter of the degree to which some or all of these sources of power are present and how their availability is subject to constant variation which brings about an increase or decrease in the ruler's power. The degree that the availability of these sources is limited, the ruler's political power is also limited.

It is not enough, however, to only measure the level of availability to sources in order to define an actor's degree of political power, especially for the actors focused on in this study. As various concepts of power explain, relationships are a significant part of maintaining power. It is not only securing sources or the procurement of resources which are necessary for power but also the relationships which facilitate those sources. Therefore, when examining political power, taking relationship into account as a component of power is of significant importance. In this case, political power also includes the ability to acquire, secure, and maintain relationships, or alliances, a concept explained in the following section.

Since political researchers have not managed to produce any precise method to measure political power, assigning a scale of measurement which could explain political phenomena is certainly a problematic endeavor. Any attempt must require specific and clear parameters on the object of study. Taking into consideration that both sources of power and alliances produce a level of impact, measuring political power should then consist upon the degree of the following:

- Level of availability to power sources
- Level of ability to secure and maintain power sources
- Level of availability to alliances
- Level of ability to secure and maintain alliances

Thus, the impact of these sources on Palestinian political power generally and on Hamas more specifically will be analyzed through these elements.

2.2 Concept of Alliance

Much research and literature has been produced on the concept of alliance. Stephen Walt in his classic *The Origins of Alliances*, for instance, defines *alliance* as: a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states (Walt, 1987, p. 1). He explains that this definition assumes some level of commitment and an exchange of benefits for

both parties; serving the relationship or failing to honor the agreement would presumably cost something, even if it were compensated in other ways. Following Walt, I also use the terms *alliance* and *alignment* interchangeably throughout this thesis. However, my definition of these terms will vary somewhat. Usually concepts of alliance in international politics refer to states and the balancing of power between them. Because Hamas, Palestine, and/or any associated organizations or actors are not recognized as part of any state entity, although they may function as one, this research will apply a looser concept of alliance/alignment based on the following definition. For the purpose of my study, an alliance/alignment will be defined as: a formal or informal relationship of political, economic, or tactical cooperation between two or more political actors or sovereign states.

This definition allows for a more flexible usage of the term making the definition more inclusive of both non-state and state entities.¹³ Furthermore, the looseness of such a definition allows for the consideration of informal or ambiguous relationships due to the fact that “many contemporary states are reluctant to sign formal treaties with their allies” (Walt, 1987, p. 12). For instance, according to Walt (1987, p. 12), “there has never been a formal treaty of alliance between the United States and Israel, but no one would question the level of commitment between these two states.” “Changes in that commitment, moreover, have been revealed primarily by changes in behavior or by verbal statements, not by the rewriting of a document.” This is also true for non-state actors such as Hamas and other Palestinian political actors for reasons which may include politics and/or security.

Referring back to the concept that political power lies in the collective ability of relationships, alliances may then be implying a source of influence. The arguments of political power theories all indicate that forms of power are related to not only collective participation but the circumstances of such collective activity. However, for non-state actors to possess influence or wield power beyond state dynamics they must facilitate strategic arrangements formed via alliances. Therefore, as alliances and external arrangements for Palestinian political actors often determine their political clout – domestically, regionally, and internationally – I will use the notion of alliances by theoretically orientating it within the framework of political power.

¹³ This flexibility is necessary for the reason that the nature of Palestinian politics function entirely outside traditional notions of sovereign state structures with prominent political actors ultimately operating as non-state entities.

2.3 Conceptual Model

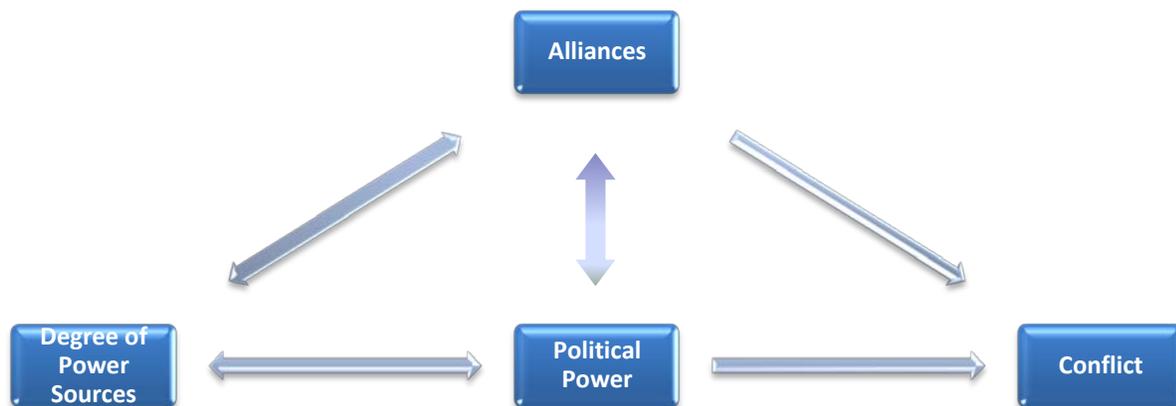


Figure 1: Conceptual Model by Nasser Ishaq

2.3.1 Application of Theory

As explained above, Sharp's literature ascribes political power ultimately to the subjects of a state. His conceptualization focuses on explaining sources of power within the state structure while this research applies the concept to entities in the context of non-state actors. Although its application will vary somewhat, its use in no way invalidates the analysis. The following research will show that the concept is easily applicable to non-state actors that operate as state-like entities although not internationally recognized as such.

In other words, there will and must be some flexibility with both concepts described above in order to fit the state-like circumstances of Palestinian political structures which correspondingly function almost exactly as a state, with notable exceptions including the lack of sovereignty and independent elements a state would contain. This, however, does not exempt the traditional processes or development of processes which are ascribed to the notion of political power from Palestinian society and politics. This research will reveal how the sources of political power even function in the same manner in the Palestinian political context.

In this study, I would like to focus specifically on the source of political power which is facilitated by material, particularly financial, resources. Material resources, identified above as one of the six sources of power, is the degree to which the rulers control or have access to property, natural resources, *financial resources*, the economic system, means of communication and transportation helps to determine the *limits* of power. Sharp identifies only this source as being indicative of determining limits to an actor's power. So, what is being proven through this theory? Due to the reasons that frame the nature of Palestinian politics (explained in Chapter 3), this source in particular, I claim, explains the foundation of not only Hamas's political power,

but Palestinian political power in general and therefore produce, to a large extent, the means, influences, and pressures available for use to achieve objectives.

Although all or several of the six sources of power may characterize other components of political power for Hamas, and even more so those which specifically define material resources, financial resources, especially so, comprises the main source of power in Palestinian politics that derives from external arrangements initiated via alliances. For reasons of limited time and space, it is not possible to analyze and elaborate on the other sources of political power Sharp identifies that may apply. Therefore, it is necessary to restrict the focus of this thesis. Throughout this thesis I will exemplify how alliances for Hamas, as well as in Palestinian politics, function to satisfy the power source Sharp identifies as material resources.

Chapter 3: Palestinian Politics

3.1 History of Palestinian Politics

Historians such as Ilan Pappé have traced historical accounts of Palestinian politics as far back as the early 1700s. From the rise of the Husseini family of Jerusalem, which dominated local Palestinian politics ever since the British Mandate was officially established in 1923 until its end in 1948 (Pappé, 2007, p. 22), to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the first Arab-Israeli war that ensued to the forming of national movements and political parties thereafter, Palestinian politics has evolved and shaped according to both local and regional developments. During the Ottoman rule and European colonialization of various Arab states, the character of Palestinian politics and movements has been pan-Arab in nature. Confronting first colonialism and then Zionism¹⁴ was understood by Palestinians as a struggle of all Arab states (Ibrahim, 2012a). Until this time, Palestinian political awareness depended on a wider Arab consciousness and no serious Palestinian political movement existed (Ibrahim, 2012a). The 1952 Egyptian revolution followed by the presidency of pan-Arabist Gamal Abdel Nasser from 1956 until 1970 greatly enhanced this trend until Israel's victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war left national liberation to the Palestinian people themselves. This is where Palestinian politics began to evolve into contemporary political parties and national liberation movements. Therefore, contemporary Palestinian politics grew out of the circumstances and conditions which established what is today known as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁵

Given its extensive and complex history, a historical recollection of Palestinian politics will primarily be analyzed following the creation of the state of Israel and more specifically after the creation of Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization and the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) by the Arab League,¹⁶ both elaborated on further in the next section.

¹⁴ According to Pappé, "Zionism emerged in the late 1880s in central and Eastern Europe as a national revival movement prompted by the growing pressure on Jews in those regions either to assimilation or risk continuing persecution. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the leaders of the Zionist movement associated this national revival with the colonization of Palestine." (See Pappé, 2007, p. 10) The Zionist movement aimed to seize the land of Palestine. The Zionist project from Jewish immigration to the Balfour declaration (which promised a national home for Jews in Palestine) followed by the colonization of Palestine, the goals of the Zionist movement threatened Palestinian existence prompting the emergence of a Palestinian national movement. (see Ibrahim, 2012a)

¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict arose out of political aspirations, the Zionist movement aiming to establish a state in Palestine and the Palestinian movement emerging to liberate lands seized by Zionist conquest. It is therefore a political conflict that also relies on the balance of power and the ability to coerce the other into the formers envisioned political reality.

¹⁶ The Arab League, or officially the League of Arab States, was formed in 1945 as a regional organization made up of twenty-two Arab states mainly from the Middle East and North Africa. Its aim is the establishment of strong relations and cooperation between member states.

3.1.1 Fatah, Arafat, and the PLO

While Haj Amin al-Husseini was the first prominent leader of the Palestinian nationalist movement from 1921 until 1948, leading a rebellious campaign against British colonialism and growing Jewish influence that began in 1936 and continued through 1939, contemporary Palestinian nationalism and political movements evolved out of the leadership of Yasser Arafat.¹⁷ In 1958, Arafat founded the Palestinian Liberation Movement known as Fatah, a reverse acronym for *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniya* (Schanzer, 2008, p. 17). In the 1960s and 1970s, Arafat catapulted Palestinian nationalism back onto the world stage with attacks against Israeli targets both in Israel and abroad (Schanzer, 2008, p. 8, 19). Seen as the only prominent figure to restore Arab power in the region, Nasser's devastating defeat in the 1967 Six-Day war tarnished Palestinian confidence in Arab regimes to liberate Palestine, turning to Arafat and his Fatah organization for salvation, thus "captured the imagination of the Arab world" (Schanzer, 2008, p. 19). Arafat emerged out of the Six-Day war as the only clear winner of all the Arab actors and, according to Schanzer (2008, p. 19), "became the de facto leader of the Palestinian people and the military commander in the 'struggle for Palestine.'" The outcome of 1967 inspired the idea that national liberation for Palestinians would only be achieved by Palestinians themselves, engendering a new Palestinian political consciousness that consequently resulted in the establishment of various national political parties.

Arafat emerged as an international voice, image, and identity for all Palestinians and the Palestinian struggle for liberation. He consolidated the Palestinian narrative and political aspirations through Fatah's regional arrangements and organizational tactics. Not only did he establish a political platform for the Palestinian cause but he also generated an existential political and military threat to Israel - regardless of how incomparable its power was to that of Israel - triggering its attention toward Arafat's activities. Fatah was the first Palestinian political entity that resorted to armed struggle against Israeli aggression. This elevated and escalated both Fatah and especially Arafat's political prominence and legitimacy to the forefront of Palestinian politics, leaving decision-making and agenda-setting under his command and essentially providing him the necessary political will to lead Palestinian political strategy. The consolidation of Palestinian political power became more evident with the formation and control by Arafat and his Fatah organization of what was established as the PLO.

In 1964, the Arab League established the PLO which became an umbrella organization of Palestinian factions (Khalidi, 2006, p. 138-139).¹⁸ Following the 1967 Six-Day War, where Israel defeated the Arab armies and gained control of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem)

¹⁷ Yasser Arafat was an engineer working in Kuwait when he decided to organize a resistance movement to liberate Palestine.

¹⁸ For example, some of the larger factions, after Fatah, include the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) and made up the parties which divided Palestinian politics.

and Gaza Strip, in 1968 the PLO came under the control of Yasser Arafat who, under the leadership of his own Fatah organization, moved to position the PLO as the only entity that actively sought to liberate Palestine from Israel (Schanzer, 2008, p. 16). This political and paramilitary organization began establishing Palestinian political institutions such as the Palestinian National Council (PNC), a nominal legislative body, and a PLO Executive Committee of which Arafat became the Chairman. From 1968 until his death in November 2004, Arafat created a one-polar structure of Palestinian politics, overcoming internal opposition within Fatah and successfully co-opting the Palestinian left, the communists, the popular and democratic fronts under his leadership within the structure of the PLO (Shikaki, 2007, p. 8). Allowing other factions a voice within the PLO, any meaningful influence was contained resulting in Palestinian politics being completely dominated by Yasser Arafat (Shikaki, 2007, p. 8).

The 1974 Rabat agreement in Morocco by a summit of Arab leaders passed a unanimous resolution declaring the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people for the first time. This move provided regional and international legitimacy to the organization allowing it to broaden its political reach. The meeting also resolved that oil-rich Arab states would provide multi-annual financial aid to states in confrontation with Israel and the PLO, a condition which assisted sustaining the organization's solvency (Sela, 2002, p. 158). The summit was very significant for establishing Palestinian political influence in several ways.

First, it created the conditions for an independent political agenda to be taken by the Palestinians themselves. Second, it established and recognized an independent Palestinian representative body to define a political agenda. Lastly, it allowed for the creation of political, diplomatic, and governmental institutions to flourish a Palestinian political voice and agenda as well as its influence to channel and expand through the region and internationally. This was the foundation of Palestinian political power.

Furthermore, the agreement also forced King Hussein of Jordan to relinquish his claim to speak on behalf of the Palestinians and acknowledge a future Palestinian state independent of Jordan (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002, p. 176).¹⁹ In addition, it "weakened the American position as then U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger agreed with the Israelis that it was preferable to negotiate with Hussein rather than with the PLO" (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002, p. 176). It is worth mentioning, however, that the intention of Arab states to establish the PLO at that time was in fact to control and monitor the untamed political and military activities of various Palestinian groups conducted within their states against Israel. Of course, such activities provoked and instigated tensions and military retaliatory action by Israel toward Arab states

¹⁹ The 1948 war between Arab states and Israel resulted in what are today the occupied Palestinian territories, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Before the 1967 Six-day war, Jordan assumed control of the West Bank while Egypt assumed control of the Gaza Strip.

accommodating Palestinian liberation movements and groups, potentially destabilizing the political and social functions of these states.

Establishing such a body as the PLO could be seen negatively as it represented the failure and weakness of Arab nationalism to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, escaping the burden and dumping the situation on Palestinians themselves to handle their own affairs. In addition, Arab-wide responsibility for and consciousness of the conflict has essentially been reduced to the Palestinian population. However, this point can be noted as a significant move in not only considerably contributing to establishing a stronger Palestinian social and political consciousness, but also the Palestinian notion of nationality and an independent political mechanism to peruse a reality for that nationality.

3.1.2 Until the Oslo Accords

Until the Oslo Accords, the center of Palestinian politics operated outside the occupied Palestinian territories. Reliant on accommodation from Arab states, the PLO established offices, institutions, operations, and contacts around the Arab world. Tensions and conflict resulted in the relocation of its headquarters from Jordan, to Lebanon, and then Tunisia between the late 1960s, 70s, 80s, until the early 1990s. Only the outbreak of the first *Intifada*²⁰ (uprising in Arabic) in 1987 led to negotiations between Israel and the PLO and changed the course of Palestinian politics.

In 1993, Israel officially recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and the signing of the Oslo Accords established the right for Palestinians to govern themselves in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. In other words, the accords consolidated the center of Palestinian politics into the Palestinian territories. Arafat and other high level PLO exiles returned and developed the structures of the current Palestinian political system. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was then set up with Arafat appointed as chairman later elected as president in 1996. Although the PLO was now headquartered inside the Palestinian territories, it should not be confused with the establishment of the PA, which Fatah is the ruling party of. The PA only operates as the local governing body of the Palestinian territories but is ultimately accountable to the PLO, which still is the only Palestinian political body that holds internationally recognized representative and diplomatic status over the Palestinians.

²⁰ Lasting from December 1987 until 1993, the first Palestinian uprising was in response to Israel's continued military occupation of the Palestinian territories. Actions primarily included acts of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience.

3.2 Contemporary Palestinian Politics

According to Khalil Shikaki (2007, p. 3-4), “Two vital needs shaped Palestinian politics during the [...] years since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority: ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, and building a sovereign state based on the principles of good governance.” He (2007, p. 3-4) suggests that “four events shaped, and in turn were shaped by, Palestinian domestic outcomes during those years: the Oslo peace process, which began in 1993; the second intifada, which began in September 2000; the passing of Yasser Arafat in November 2004; and the Israeli disengagement from Gaza in September 2005.”

As the Oslo process failed to deliver either the end of the occupation or bring about a resolution to the conflict, Palestinian frustrations and resentment toward the process grew. Coupled with the increasing perception that the PLO, PA, and Fatah were increasingly becoming corrupt and authoritarian, the collapse of the fall 2000 Camp David peace talks,²¹ and the second *Intifada* in 2000 marked the end of the Oslo era. The chaos, demand for violence against Israel, and devastating consequences the *Intifada* had on Palestinian society and economy engendered greater fragmentation within Fatah and increased the popularity of its rival Hamas, an Islamic Palestinian resistance and political movement opposed strongly to both the Oslo process and to any permanent peace with Israel.

Palestinian Politics, however, were still, for the most part, dominated and dictated by Yasser Arafat. His death in November 2004 opened up the political system and allowed the integration of Hamas into the political process, facilitating the holding of local elections in December 2004 followed by parliamentary elections in January 2006. The holding of elections, according to Shikaki (2007, p.5), was a culmination of the gradual weakening of the formal political center in the Palestinian political system, the gradual opening of that system, and the emergence of powerful rival centers. The elections were the “only possible way to prevent the formal political center in the Palestinian political system from utterly collapsing” (2007, p.5).

In the years leading up to the elections, the second *Intifada* was an expression of the frustrations about the lack of progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the lack of improvement of social, economic, and political conditions within the Palestinian territories. Frustration gradually translated into shifting political support for Hamas. Its hard-line strategy of resistance began to convince Palestinians of a plausible alternative to the stagnant and unproductive PA strategy of peace negotiations which had only resulted in intensified hardship and military occupation for Palestinians. The Israeli disengagement from Gaza in September 2005 not only allowed Palestinians in Gaza to manage their political affairs independently but allowed for armed

²¹ In July of 2000, the Camp David Summit was held between Yasser Arafat, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and former U.S. President Bill Clinton. The summit resulted in an unsuccessful attempt to negotiate final status issues to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (See Khalidi, 2007, p. 162-163)

resistance to thrive. The 2006 parliamentary victory of Hamas was an indication of a shift in Palestinian political attitude and Palestinian politics.

The failure of agreeing on power-sharing and the establishment of a unity government stifled any progress towards national reconciliation, locking Hamas and Fatah in a rivalry that continues until the present. The tensions that later ensued between the two factions led to Hamas's fierce conquest of the Gaza Strip. It became immediately evident that "the West Bank and the Gaza Strip represent two separate spheres of control for the foreseeable future" (ATFP, 2007).

In an attempt to impede Hamas's ability to govern, the PA cut off funds to Hamas appointees and civil servants as well as other necessary financial resources Gaza required for daily life and operations. Unlike the PA/PLO, who has become reliant on international funds and donor aid, Hamas possessed its own separate, and to an extent steady, flow of financial resources, an important and fundamental feature of the Islamic movement exemplified further throughout this thesis. In response, Hamas's ability to establish its own parallel institutions, dismantle the PA's security infrastructure, and reinvigorate its social support networks, possible due to its separate channels for material resources, allowed it to consolidate its leverage, strengths, and authority over the PA, and in turn, sustain itself as a political power (ATFP, 2007; Caridi, 2012, p. 258).

The aforementioned situation defines, and continues to define, the domestic political dynamics of contemporary Palestinian politics in which "The outcome of the struggle between Hamas and the PA will not only relate to the redistribution of power within Palestine, it will affect the very prospects of statehood and the shape of Palestinian society" (ATFP, 2007).

3.3 Defining Palestinian Political Power

Palestinians have developed a long history of politics throughout the last hundred years. Through the various stages of institution building, emergence of political parties and movements, and efforts at establishing international influence I proposed to ask two questions that I feel must be raised regarding Palestinian politics. Do Palestinians possess political power? If so, what is the nature of Palestinian political power?

Very few political researchers have provided an elaborate analysis of defining the notion of Palestinian political power and probably almost no one has provided a description of what the source of that power might be. As part of this research, I will attempt to do so. It must be made clear however that as Palestinian political power is a major part of the focus of this study, defining Palestinian political power is only a part of this research. Covering all the conceptual elements which could be debated when explaining Palestinian political power cannot be accomplished in this study.

Since political power is such a difficult concept to define precisely, making an attempt at defining Palestinian Political power, and especially doing so with the lack of any previous literature, will certainly prove to be difficult given the limited nature of this thesis. Therefore, I must admit that the deep elaboration which this concept warrants will most likely be insufficient, and will certainly require continued investigation beyond this study, an investigation I plan to continue following the completion of this work. The findings and narrow definition that will be produced for exemplifying Palestinian political power for now will have to suffice for the sake of completing this thesis. Furthermore, I believe it is important and certainly useful for Palestinian politics to possess a clear and developed understanding regarding the limits and source of its national power.

3.3.1 The Source of Palestinian Political Power

After a historical account explaining the evolution of Palestinian politics, it may be stated that Palestinian political power has been historically composed from the development of national movements and political agendas coupled with wider Middle East politics and strategic arrangements. Historically, the most prominent Palestinian political actor, the PLO, conducted “Intensive political activities [...] [which] took the form of political, social, and political penetration; institution building, and the control of students, workers, and welfare and charity associations. The PLO thus became a symbol of Palestinian national identity and aspirations for independence and statehood” (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 149). The ability to champion the Palestinian cause appears to constitute the ability to possess Palestinian political power.

However, a question continues to be left unanswered: where does the source of Palestinian political power originate from? Do its origins lie in the unique history of Palestinian nationalism? Or, do they lie in the unique ability to stimulate and concentrate nationalist aspirations into Palestinian political leadership to achieve the political agenda of an independent Palestinian state? In order to recognize the source of power from Palestinian nationalism, explanation must divulge an evident understanding of the resurgence of Palestinian identity, a matter most notably developed by Rashid Khalidi. This requires a look back into the emergence of the PLO. According to Khalidi,

“The PLO was founded in 1964 by the Arab League in response to pressures Arab states felt from burgeoning independent Palestinian organizations and from Palestinian popular sentiment, and was meant to contain and control these pressures. Although it was thus initially not an independent actor, the Arab states quickly lost control of it, as it was refashioned by these organizations into the primary vehicle of Palestinian nationalism, a process which was completed by 1968” (Khalidi, 1997, p. 260n2).

As I mentioned above, the PLO was the first political entity which concentrated and formulated a center of gravity for a Palestinian political movement and agenda. Palestinian nationalism was the tool behind centralizing such political phenomena. It must also not be forgotten that such nationalism was a construction of the political conflict with Israel which became minimized from a pan-Arab-Israeli conflict into an Israeli-Palestinian one. Therefore, one could argue that due to the conditions and circumstances of conflict the source of Palestinian power arose out of the vehicle of reactionary Palestinian political nationalism. But does nationalism and conflict suffice for a source of Palestinian political power?

It has been argued, however, that Palestinian power originates from the intransigent political nature of Palestinian society. On this basis, influence in guiding the collective public agenda thus heralds the power of Palestinian nationalism and therefore influence over Palestinian society is necessary. A major force that has fundamentally advanced the Palestinian agenda is intransience of the Palestinian people. Khalidi (2007) has suggested that “the strength of the Palestinians, if you look at the past hundred or so years, has not been their political institutions, has not been their political parties, has not been the various movements or leaders who have mainly badly represented them. It’s been the intrinsic strength of Palestinian society.” However, I am discussing Palestinian power from the level of ability of political actors and not from a widespread national sense that takes into consideration the collective make up of Palestinian society. Since serious Palestinian politics and actors emerged outside the core of Palestinian society, its source must thus be external.

The PLO as a political entity motivated the contemporary notion of Palestinian identity by the amalgamation of nationalist sentiment and political agenda. This occurred outside the territory Palestinian nationalist aspirations were meant to liberate, pre-1948 Palestine. The consciousness of modern Palestinian nationalism was thus triggered through the political force of the PLO and their ability to consolidate such nationalism. However, the objective of any political agenda is to carry out a political act, in this case the liberation of Palestinian land seized by Israeli forces and established an independent state. From the understanding about political power discussed in chapter two, according to the application of such a notion in this study, in order to carry out a political act requires power. The sources of such power emerge from and may be held through various items and dimensions. Sharp’s theory explains that such sources are dependent on the degree of availability to cooperation, obedience, and support determines the availability to the six sources necessary to secure and maintain political power.

However, history reveals a significant characteristic about the nature of Palestinian politics. It was born and evolved out of the cooperation, obedience, and support of other states. It can be concluded then that other states determine the degree of availability to those three elements as well as all or some of the six necessary sources to secure and maintain political power. However, it was not only that other states determined the degree of availability of sources but determined a

particularly vital source required for any continuance of political activity and therefore power, material resources being that vital source.

Although it is evident that relationships in this case are fundamental in facilitating sources of political power, the PLO, or any Palestinian political actor, depends on the availability to material resources as the foundation of their political reality. The PLO's ability to persevere its existence as a political power has always "depended on Arab states providing bases, supplies, training, money, arms, political backing, and protection against retaliation" (Rubin, 1994, p. 128). According to one historian, "Few independence movements have been so heavily dependent on external assistance, and the PLO's survival was conditioned on maintaining 'unity at any price'" (Rubin, 1994, p. 128). Therefore, the source of Palestinian political power originates from the availability and ability to secure and maintain external relationships and thereby material resources from those relationships. These two elements, external relationships and material resources, are thus necessary to secure and maintain Palestinian political power.

It is thus apparent that Palestinian political power could also be defined in various ways from various approaches. However, in order to stay in line with the theoretical framework of this study, a definition of Palestinian political power will reflect the definition of political power as described by Gene Sharp. Therefore, Palestinian political power will be defined as: the totality of means, influences, and pressures – including authority, rewards, and sanctions – over the availability and ability of securing, acquiring, and maintaining valued material resources and alliances available for use to achieve the objectives of the power-holder, especially Palestinian institutions of government, Palestinian society, and Palestinian nationalism.

Chapter 4: Hamas

4.1 Origins, History and Organization

Hamas, an acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah* or Islamic Resistance Movement, was originally founded as a splinter faction of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in 1987 (Caridi, 2012, p. 36, 48), an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928 (Tamimi, 2007, p. 3). The Muslim Brotherhood, or *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* in Arabic²² - henceforth referred to as the Ikhwan in this chapter, was believed to have established itself as the first religious and political movement of its kind in Palestine even prior to the existence of Israel in 1948 (Schanzer, 2008, p. 15). According to Jonathan Schanzer (2008, p. 15), the British mandate of Palestine was one of the first territories to be influenced by the Ikhwan movement.²³ The Ikhwan in Palestine generally focused on social and cultural activities, having little impact on the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 as they refrained from any active involvement in politics or violence and, as an organized movement, soon disappeared due to the social and political collapse and territorial fragmentation of the Arab-Palestinian community (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 16).

The Arab-Israeli war resulted in Jordan and Egypt ruling over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively, between 1948 and 1967.²⁴ During this period, the Ikhwan reestablished its activities in the Palestinian territories as an organized political movement. Jordan's policy toward the Ikhwan was one of relative tolerance, enabling the movement to establish itself as an open and moderate opposition group. Egypt, however, maintained their domestic policy of either tolerance and repression of the organization - which included the 1949 ban of the Ikhwan in Egypt - enabling the reorganization of the Ikhwan in the Gaza Strip into a religious-educational center entitled Unification [of God] Association (*Jam'iyyat al-tawhid*) (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 17). Egyptian control over the Gaza Strip caused a geographic split within the Palestinian Ikhwan extending the Islamist organization's ideology deeper into the Palestinian enclave (Schanzer, 2008, p. 16). Tensions and further repression forced the Islamic movement in both Egypt and the Gaza Strip to go underground. The stark contrast in political freedom and opportunities, as well as the social and economic makeup, between both Palestinian territories influenced the nature and structure of the Ikhwan. In the West Bank their activities were moderate and open, in the Gaza Strip they acquired a more concealed, radical, and militant form.

²² The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) in the Egyptian town of Isma'iliyah (See Tamimi, 2007, p.3).

²³ The Ikhwan had its first contact with Palestine as early as the 1930s and later around 1945 it established its first branch in Jerusalem soon followed by several other branches in most of the major Palestinian towns and villages.

²⁴ Jordan officially annexed the West Bank in April 1950 while Egypt preserved the military administration of the Gaza Strip established during the 1948 war, refraining from annexation of the territory. (See Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 16-17)

After Israel began its military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Six-Day Arab-Israeli War, which more or less brought the two territories together, it enacted a more permissive policy regarding social and cultural Islamic activity, providing the Ikhwan a new opportunity to develop its organizational endeavors. This scenario provided the conditions for the rapid rise of the Ikhwan in the Gaza Strip and its construction of institutional and social infrastructure which deeply penetrated Palestinian society there. The founding of the Islamic Center (al-Mujamma' al-islami) in 1973 and its legalization in 1978 became the base institution for Islamic activity and influence for the Ikhwan at the beginning of the 1980s (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 19-20).

As the influence of the PLO increased during the 1970s, Israel as well as some Arab states such as Jordan, experienced the heightening dangers of such influence and noticed the advantage of a thriving political Islamic presence in the territories to counteract that of the secular nationalist of the PLO and Fatah. As Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and their operations to combat secular PLO factions intensified, significantly weakening the PLO and increasing clashes between Palestinian and Israelis, the Palestinian Ikhwan became increasingly convinced of establishing a part of the Ikhwan "to go beyond the religious and cultural dimension and to push for direct confrontation with the Israelis" (Caridi, 2012, p.55). This meant the introduction of a political dimension. Thus, in 1982 an operational branch of the Ikhwan took shape through Islamists within the Palestinian territories and in exile. The outbreak of the first Palestinian *Intifada* (uprising) which began in Gaza in 1987 led seven senior Ikhwan leaders to transform the Ikhwan in Palestine into a resistance movement which became the Islamic resistance movement today known as Hamas (Tamimi, 2007, p. 20-11).

4.1.1 Organizational Structure

Hamas currently operates as an organization divided into three interrelated wings; a social welfare wing, a political wing, and a military wing. Its leadership consists of an internal leadership based in the Gaza Strip and an external leadership which until recently was based in Damascus, closed due to the revolt by opposition groups against Syria's Assad regime. The internal leadership consists of two branches, the main one in the Gaza Strip and one in the West Bank. Both branches are governed by the Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shura*), and the Political Bureau (*al-Maktob al-siyasi*).

The external leadership consists of the Political Bureau which is Hamas's highest decision-making body that determines the overall policy and military strategy of the organization. It operates with a degree of autonomy due to its external nature as well for the ability to conduct responsibilities such as financial arrangements and diplomacy. The Bureau is made up of fifteen members elected through a democratic decision-making process by the General Consultative Council. Members select their representatives in local Consultative Councils from various

regions inside and outside the Palestinian territories who then nominate representatives to the General Consultative Council.

The root of Hamas's popularity stems in part from its social welfare wing. This welfare wing provides welfare, cultural and educational services and activities to Palestinians in the occupied territories and refugee camps in the region. Since its founding, Hamas has provided social services – which include relief programs and the funding of schools, orphanages, mosques, healthcare clinics, soups kitchens, and sports leagues - that have either been neglected, not provided, or discontinued by the PLO in the past and later the PA until the present.

The organization's military wing known as *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades* was formed in 1992. The wing engages in such activities as acting against suspected collaborators, intelligence gathering, procuring weapons, and conducting military operations. As with the Political Bureau, the military wing operates with a degree of autonomy, although an integral part of Hamas.

4.1.2 Political Strategy and Ideology

Established only five days after the first *Intifada* had begun, Hamas distinguished itself as a Palestinian nationalist movement with an Islamic-national vision, context, and meaning. On August 18th 1988, less than nine months after its founding, Hamas published what was its first written document publicizing its position. When drafted, the Hamas Charter, or *Al-Mithaq* (the covenant) in Arabic, was a representation of Hamas's ideological and political position on many issues at the time which was a reflection of how the Ikhwan perceived the conflict in Palestine (Tamimi, 2007, p. 148). The charter affirmed Hamas's duty to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation and establish an Islamic state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and on land that is now the State of Israel.

However, Hamas leaders and official spokesmen today find the Charter no long relevant and hardly ever quote or refer to it, most convinced of its hindrance on the organization and dismiss it as a historical document of Hamas original philosophy (Tamimi, 2007, p. 147-149). Leader of the Political Bureau Khaled Meshaal “does not view [the Charter] as a true expression of the movement's overall vision, which “has been formulated over the years by inputs from the movement's different institutions”” (Tamimi, 2007, p. 149).

Hamas has built its image as an activist and armed resistance movement with a sole strategy of national liberation from Israeli occupation. However, the organization has proven to operate with a sense of political realism and pragmatism adjusting vigilantly to the existing political reality. Their strategies have reflected time and again “a perception based on neither a full acceptance nor a rejection of the political order,” never losing sight of its socio-political interests and well aware of its political constraints and structural limitations (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 147). According to Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela (2007, p. 147),

“Adjustment had become the main feature of Hamas’s political conduct. Its strategies of controlled violence, negotiated coexistence, and calculated participation all reflected Hamas’s effort to avoid making a decision about its conflicting commitments to an all-Islamic vision and a Palestinian nation, on the one hand, and to communal interests, on the other. Whereas an all-Islamic vision would mean a strategy of confrontation with Israel, the PLO, and the PA, local communal considerations would encourage Hamas to adjust to the changing circumstances and acquiesce in the political reality.”

Such strategic considerations reveal that Hamas’s political calculations do not rule out the possibility of incorporating itself into the Palestinian political order.

4.1.3 Sources of Funding

When Hamas emerged as a newly established political movement, its material resources were limited, leaders local and inexperienced, and international contacts few. Hamas’s ability to survive and develop both as a social and political organization has been dependent on the actions of other states, an intrinsic characteristic of most non-state actors (Chehab, 2007, p. 129). As a result of Israel’s military occupation of the Palestinian territories and particularly Israel’s deportation policy, Hamas began to forge a base outside the territories (Chehab, 2007, p. 129). It then worked to garner support from and establish contacts with various Islamic organizations, Arab and Islamic states in the regions, and Palestinians, particularly the refugee population whose appeal to secular Palestinian factions began to dwindle (Chehab, 2007, p. 129-131). Hamas began to compete for popularity with other groups by establishing various social programs and projects to support the community, activities the PLO were known to spend generously on until it became deprived of its funding from Gulf States due to its support for Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War in 1990 (Chehab, 2007, p. 130).²⁵ Gradually, the Gulf States and Islamic charities began “switching their financial generosity and allegiances to Hamas” (Chehab, 2007, p. 130). Furthermore, according to Mishal and Sela, “[The Mujamma’ leaders] ties with the [Ikhwan] in Jordan were instrumental in enabling them to forge close relations with Islamic institutions in Saudi Arabia, which in the 1970s and 1980s provided generous financial aid to Islamic associations and communities in the Middle East and elsewhere” (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 21). “These international connections abetted the Mujamma’s fund-raising efforts in the neighboring countries and in the late 1980s contributed to the restructuring of Hamas based on ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ leadership and institutions and facilitated the movement’s activism in the context of Middle East regional politics” (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 22). As Hamas began to gain further support and developed as an organization, it

²⁵ The decision by former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait was highly unpopular among a number of Arab governments, especially Saudi Arabia and Gulf States who were militarily weak and saw Saddam’s military superiority as a threat.

added a foreign affairs department to its political structure, taking advantage of increasing support contacts, expanding its regional outreach, and further establishing external arrangements.

Hamas has thus always been and continues to be heavily dependent on fundraising by Arab and Islamic States, primarily wealthy states from the Gulf region. Such states finance the Islamic organization via *zakat* (charity donation), one of the five pillars of Islam, which states that every Muslim has a duty to care for the poor, widows and orphans and which became an obligatory tax paid by Muslims all over the world as a percentage of non-essential income (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 150). As Hamas is an external part of the Muslim Brotherhood's International Da'wa apparatus, sharing visions and objectives with various Islamic movements worldwide, a significant and stable source of the organization's funding and financial resources originates from Islamic states and Islamist networks. The further Hamas can stretch its social and political outreach and the deeper it can penetrate the social and political institutions of other states and societies the greater the capacity of its financial resource base. This point is crucial to keep in mind as it helps understanding the significance of alliances and external arrangements for Hamas, especially in relation to the Arab uprisings and Hamas's prospective alignment discussed later in this thesis.

In the early 1990s, as the PLO's began to pursue peace negotiations with Israel and establish closer diplomatic relations with the West, countries firmly resisting to such actions, notably Syria and Iran, began to shift the focus of their relations and support toward Hamas. This marked the beginning of what became a strong alliance between these three actors. Hamas's later tensions with the PLO and Fatah, Western condemnation of the organization as a terrorist organization, international isolation, and Israeli blockade pressed Hamas closer toward a Syria-Iran and also Hezbollah alliance. Iran, especially in the 2000s, became Hamas's largest source for material resources, especially military and financial resources (Wurmser, 2007). In accordance, Syria became Hamas's center for smuggling such resources. Hezbollah's established experience as a fierce resistance movement against Israeli occupation assisted Hamas's operatives in Lebanon with military and organizational training. This improved Hamas's efficiency and effectiveness as a political faction and movement. The resources acquired from both Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah provided them with the ability to compete with and confront the PLO both militarily and politically.

Inside the Gaza Strip, Hamas's strengthening abilities allowed for the establishment of a prominent and profitable tunnel industry below the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. This industry is allowing Hamas to import goods and resources (including military resources), thereby meeting the living standards of residents in Gaza and receiving tax revenues (up to 14.5% import tax on all goods) which account for nearly twenty percent of the organization's budget (Al-Faisal, 2012). Such measures were intensified as a result of the Israeli blockade on

the Palestinian enclave, the halting of funds by the PA and the international isolation of the Hamas government.

Because Hamas operates with a high level of secrecy, it is almost impossible to estimate the exact amount of total funds it holds and the exact amount of funds which originate from external sources. This includes military resources and capabilities as well. Various sources are only able to produce estimates which conclude that a significant degree of Hamas's material resources are provided by Iran and Syria. Therefore, due to the economic restrictions of Israeli occupation and the history of Palestinian dependency on external assistance it can only be further concluded that the majority of Hamas financial resources originate from external sources. In other words, their political power has been facilitated via the establishment of alliances, thereby determining their availability and ability of securing, acquiring, and maintaining valued material resources for use to achieve their political objectives within Palestinian society. The sources of funding for Hamas therefore provide its source of political power. The degree of availability to alliances and the degree of availability to financial resources determines the degree of Hamas's ability to establish political power within the Palestinian political spectrum.

4.2 Impact of Hamas on Palestinian Politics

Hamas emerged onto the center stage of Palestinian politics as an Islamic alternative to the PLO, challenging the organization, and later the PA in the Gaza Strip, as a political force and sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Its active participation in the first *Intifada* directly threatened the PLO's hegemony and political domination of the Palestinian arena (Mishal & Sela, 2006, p. 36). As Hamas grew stronger and garnered wider support among the Palestinian population its gradual impact on Palestinian politics became increasingly evident, especially after the second *Intifada*.²⁶

The weakening of the formal political center and opening up of the political system allowed Hamas to consolidate support from the shifting political sentiment among the Palestinian public that accumulated since the late 1980s. The Islamic movement's landslide victory in the 2006 parliamentary elections, a high 73 percent, was not only an evident indication of this, but also an immediate alteration of Palestinian politics from a uni-polar to a multi-polar system. By Hamas agreeing to participate in elections, it sought to translate its popularity among Palestinians into formal political power and attempted to control the political system from within. The rise of Hamas, however, did not result from some sudden shift in Palestinian political opinion but was

²⁶ In contrast to the first intifada which consisted of resistance and involved activities of popular civil disobedience, the second *Intifada* was heavily militarized and involved armed resistance making it much more violent. The Al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing, played a major role in battling Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Hamas's participation demonstrated its capability of and capacity for armed resistance and upheld its reputation for action as oppose to only rhetoric, a characteristic which has haunted the PLO in the past and especially after the start of the Oslo peace process.

the culmination of a long process of Palestinian alienation from both Israel and a Fatah leadership that failed to deliver results in every sphere (Shikaki, 2007, p.6).

Hamas's history of non-participation in political processes, tolerance by Israel, deep social and religious institutional roots and contacts, accumulation of material resources, and active armed resistance in Gaza have allowed the movement to entrench itself deeply into the Gaza Strip. The September 2005 Israeli disengagement from Gaza further strengthened its grip on the Palestinian territory.²⁷ After the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, tensions between Hamas and Fatah began to rise in 2005 and intensified after Hamas's 2006 electoral victory. The utter failure of reaching a power-sharing agreement resulted in the outbreak of fighting between forces on both sides in 2007. Within days, Hamas forces took over control of the entire Gaza Strip.²⁸ The Palestinian Authority was thus split into two polities. Both the elections and the forceful takeover over of Gaza exemplified the popularity Hamas established over the years in Palestinian society and the considerable power it possessed within the Palestinian political spectrum. The rapid and powerful takeover of the Gaza Strip created a deep political division between Hamas and Fatah. It revealed how threatening a force Hamas was and completely put the function of the PLO and PA in disarray, revealing their weakness as a political and military force.

Today, Hamas embodies one half of Palestinian political power. It consists of one half of the Palestinian leadership and is one of the two most powerful and largest Palestinian political factions, next to Fatah. Its deeply rooted institutions, social networks, and military capabilities have manifested an influence which cannot be overlooked within the Palestinian polity. The culmination of Arafat's death, the Israeli disengagement from Gaza, the 2006 electoral victory, the surprisingly fierce takeover of Gaza, the survival and resilience of Hamas after Israel's major militarily offensive in 2008, known as Operation Iron Cased Lead,²⁹ manifested the transformation of the political stage that currently delineates the dynamics of Palestinian politics. Perhaps the most significant turning point which transformed Hamas's political life, thinking, and practice since its emergence has been its overwhelming and unforeseen victory in the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections in the Palestinian territories. The victory marked the transformation of the organization from a resistance movement to a governing body in power. This has placed Hamas in a unique position in which it must function and uphold its character as a resistance movement while assuming the responsibilities of a government.

²⁷ Although Israel pulled out of the Gaza Strip unilaterally, due to domestic Israeli politics, among the Palestinian public, the move symbolized an achievement for the Islamic resistance.

²⁸ The takeover of the Gaza Strip was the first real demonstration of Hamas power. Schanzer (2008, p. 107) describes how the mere six days Hamas battled for Gaza reminded Palestinians of Israel's lightning six-day victory over Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in 1967. The threat from Hamas for Israel was so significant that a reversal of Israel Defense Forces policy was made to provide weapons to the PA in order to root out Hamas and prevent its takeover of the West Bank (Schanzer, 2007, p. 123).

²⁹ Operation Cast Lead was an Israeli military offensive launched on the 27th of December 2008 against Hamas. In January of 2009 Israel unilaterally declared a ceasefire.

Furthermore, its position as a separate and parallel governing body to the PA over one of the two Palestinian territories has not only entrenched deeper the already geographically divided territories but has created a split along operational, ideological, and political lines. As a result, this situation produced deeper Palestinian political disunity where Palestinian national reconciliation has defined contemporary Palestinian politics. Numerous attempts at reconciliation efforts have failed and attempts at forming a national unity government have proved elusive. Therefore, since the death of Arafat in 2004 and since Hamas's emergence as a plausible candidate for national leadership, Hamas has been locked in an ongoing rivalry for leadership with the PLO and PA, a situation that has sustained the national division until the present. The rivalry has become so profound that, according to Hussein Ibish, any serious attempt for national reconciliation will only materialize as a result of one party's terms prevailing, as the underpinnings of both political establishments cannot be merged together: Hamas's firm strategy of armed resistance and refusal to recognize Israel and the PLO's strategy of negotiating a two-state solution with Israel and institution building on the ground (Brown et al., 2012).

Chapter 5: The Impact of the Arab Uprisings on Hamas

5.1 The Arab Uprisings

Beginning in Tunisia on December 18th, 2010, a revolutionary series of popular protests, demonstrations, and rebellion, commonly referred to as the “Arab Uprisings,” (Massad, 2011) the “Arab Spring,” (Wallerstein, 2011) and the “Arab Awakening,” (Bilal, 2011) swept through the Middle East and North Africa. After the successful overthrow of former Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, a wave of unrest later toppled governments in Libya, Yemen, and most notably the regime of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. In Jordan, mass demonstrations have resulted in King Abdullah’s dismissal of two successive governments and implementation of a series of governmental reforms. Syria is currently locked in serious civil uprisings where opposition groups are attempting to topple the government of Bashar al-Assad through armed struggle. Other countries such as Morocco, Bahrain, Sudan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and Oman have also experienced either civil disorder and major or minor protests that led to governmental changes.

The motivations behind the uprisings originate from various socio-political and economic factors including the lack of economic opportunities, high unemployment, social inequality, extreme poverty, government corruption and oppression, and the lack of political and social freedoms. Actions by the masses were a revolt against decades-long authoritarian rulers who oppressed political free will and opinion monopolizing political power. The collapse of a number of these regimes is finally opening up the political space for public opinion allowing opposition groups to participate in a new era of democratic reform.

These events have undoubtedly had implications on various actors, conflicts, and political arrangements, certainly disrupting the political configuration in the region. Long time Palestinian Legislative Council official Hannah Ashrawi stated that the popular uprisings have created a scenario which has destabilized traditional alliances and reconfigured the regional balance of power, deeply transforming Middle East politics (Ashrawi & Marwan, 2011).

For Hamas this has certainly had implications on its standing in the region and has forced the organization to reconfigure its regional strategy to reflect the changing political realities. In addition, the Arab uprisings have created both threats and opportunities for the organization. In a time of declining American influence in the region (Mohammed, 2012) and the Islamist trend rising (Sadiki, 2011a), Hamas has been put in a situation where although the upheavals have presented a time of crisis, their outcome may provide enormous opportunities. The next section will explain why the threats for Hamas lay in the breakdown of its traditional alliances and elaborate on the implications the readjustment has on its political strategy. However, further on, it will be explained how its opportunities lay in the beneficial prospects of new alliances and a

new a regional alignment. The remaining parts of this chapter attempts to provide a clear understanding of how the Arab uprisings have had an impact on Hamas.

5.2 Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Alliance

Traditionally, Hamas's most significant alliances have existed with Syria, Iran and Hezbollah. As Arafat and the Palestinian political leadership began to shift course and favor the Oslo Accords, disagreement over such dealings began the forging of ties between the four actors (Chehab, 2007, p. 134-157). As Hamas arose out of the first *Intifada* as an armed resistance movement against Israel, financial, political, and military support began to gradually gravitate toward Hamas and away from Arafat and the PLO. The Israeli blockage on the Gaza Strip and the political isolation imposed by the West in rejection of Hamas's electoral victory drove the movement further toward an open alliance with the aforementioned actors.

Hezbollah, operating as a proxy for Iran, was naturally absorbed into the alliance. Along with Syria and Iran, Hezbollah also provides military training and support to Hamas. Hezbollah's own history of resistance against Israel in Southern Lebanon, the influence of both Hamas and Hezbollah within the populous Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, the relationships forged with Hezbollah amongst deported Hamas members to South Lebanon, and the close ties with Iran naturally provided for a tactical alliance. Furthermore, an important factor of this alliance was its non-sectarian character. Iran traditionally supports Shiite Muslim groups, such as Hezbollah. Hamas is a Sunni Muslim group and Syria operates under a secular government where most of the governmental elite are Alawites. It is also important to note, however, that despite such an alliance and the strong impact such forces within that alliance have on the existence of the Islamic faction, "Hamas remains fiercely independent in its operation" (Gray & Larson, 2008, p. 129). This indicates that the composition of such an alliance and its intrinsic strategic arrangements are neither sectarian nor ethnic but tactical.

At present, one of the major impacts of the Arab uprisings has been the reconfiguration of ties along sectarian lines, largely due to the uprising currently taking place in Syria. This in turn has impacted the Hamas-Syria-Iran-Hezbollah alliance, dramatically jeopardizing its stability and literally dividing the Middle East. Hussein Ibish (2011b) argues that, "The region is realigning in my view very strongly along sectarian lines. This is most clear in Syria, where only non-Sunni actors now support the Assad regime, and almost all Sunni actors –including Turkey and the Arab Islamists and Arab governments – are opposed to the Assad regime. BICOM (2012) also suggests that, "The conflict in Syria is widely seen in the Arab world as a sectarian confrontation in which a majority Sunni population is being suppressed by a non-Sunni, Alawite minority."³⁰

³⁰ Alawites, also known as Alawies, Nusayris and Ansaris, are a minority sect who follow a branch of the Twelver, or Imami, school of Shiite Islam who are predominately concentrated in Syria.

Concerning the implications this has for Hamas, Ibish (2011b) claims that, “Hamas has been forced to seriously readjust its regional role because it can no longer remain part of the Syria-Iranian alliance of which it has been a core member for almost two decades.” He further claims that the relationship with Syria is “now essentially seen, by most of the other Arab Sunni Islamists – and Sunni governments – in the Arab world, as a Shiite alliance led by Iran of entirely non-Sunni actors, mostly Shiites. Certainly this is a non-Sunni Alliance and maybe in so many ways an anti-Sunni Alliance.” This situation has wedged Hamas amid its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood and its allegiance to Syria and the alliance. To further complicate matters for Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood has explicitly supported the uprisings against the Assad regime in Syria. “Unlike Hezbollah, a Shiite organization, it is extremely difficult for Hamas to identify with Assad in this context” (BICOM, 2012).

As clarified in an earlier chapter, Hamas, ideologically, is an offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, under such conditions, the organization cannot continue nor depend on the old circumstances which, according to Ibish (2011b), “allowed it to uniquely be aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood movement on the one hand and this sort of Shiite or quasi-Shiite Iranian alliance on the other.” The breakdown of such a unique alignment, he further argues, has “put Hamas in an impossible situation vis-a-vis the headquarters of its politburo, its external political leadership – Khaled Meshaal and his colleagues – they really cannot stay in Syria in the long-run and they cannot rely on Iran as a principle patron or source of much of anything” (Ibish, 2011b).

The uprisings in Syria put Hamas in a very difficult position. Hamas could not be seen as going against the trend of popular uprisings in the region while simply not being able to continue its operations in a country experiencing the instability of serious uprising and armed revolt. This situation has been the primary threat for Hamas. It has certainly created a dilemma in which Hamas must strategically distance itself from a key patron which hosts its headquarters, possibly jeopardizing its financial support from Iran - as a result of failing to identify with the Assad regime, breaking the strategic alliance - and align itself with regional strategic advantages in order to salvage both its standing, image and more importantly the organization’s continued existence. In consideration of such changing strategic realities, Hamas thus “has closed its headquarters in Damascus, in the minds of its potential allies” (Naylor, 2012).

5.2.1 Hamas’s Strategic Crisis

The dilemma of the scenario explained above has clearly caused a crisis within Hamas in regards to the manner in which it will adapt to the regional strategic realities. The Arab uprisings, which have fostered a change in the regional order, have impacted Hamas in two major ways. Firstly, due to the fact that the entire region has become split along sectarian lines, Sunnis versus everyone else in the region (Brown et al., 2012), Hamas has encountered the collapse of its traditional regional alignment, the dilemma explained above. Secondly, the sectarian split has

forced Hamas's regional strategic profile from the past ten years to become unsustainable, further forcing the organization to choose its Sunni Islamist identity (Ibish, 2011b).

These two factors have forced Hamas's external leadership to leave Syria, in addition to the revolt raising major security and operational concerns. It must now resettle its headquarters, secure new sources of funding, and reestablish, readjust, and reinvent its external political operations and apparatus. Currently, the external leadership and its constituency are geographically dispersed around the Middle East, with offices and residences of leaders temporarily relocating from Syria to primarily Jordan, Egypt, Qatar and also Lebanon and Turkey (Sadiki, 2012).

It is worth reiterating the significance of the external leadership, the political bureau, for the Hamas organization here. The external leadership almost functions as the executive branch of the organization. Khaled Meshaal and other individuals of the bureau uphold both regional and international diplomatic relations and networking, set high level policy, procure financial resources, and manage and maintain various political arrangements. Additionally, they have built the regional profile of Hamas in the past and are responsible to rebuild it in the future. In regards to financial resources, the internal leadership as well as the organization as a whole is heavily dependent on the external leadership for such arrangements. It is for these reasons that the external leadership as held hierarchical primacy within the Hamas movement. Therefore, the organization heavily depends on the stability and existence of its external leadership as the foundation for its operational development.

The position of the political bureau is clearly significant. Therefore, any disruptions to the magnitude explained above of its operations certainly explain the basis for the crisis. This indicates, however, that if changes in the regional order manifest themselves as a crisis for a Palestinian political actor such as Hamas, then not only is Hamas heavily dependent on its external arrangements for political stability it is also clearly a major source of its influence.

5.3 Strategic Realignment: shifting regional realities

Based on the analysis above, I claim that the Hamas leadership certainly must consider a strategic reassessment of its position in the region. Although the Arab uprisings have caused a crisis for the organization, they have duly created an environment for significant opportunities by three major developments transpiring in the region. The first is the decline of American influence in the region. The second is the ascendancy of Islamist movements to power or ascending to power. Lastly, the third development is the decline of Hamas's diplomatic isolation.

These three developments have and are continually impacting Hamas's reassessment of its political strategy while contributing to its realignment in the region. The following three sections

attempt to exemplify the shifting regional strategic realities these developments have caused and the reason they have provided opportunities for Hamas.

5.3.1 The Decline of American Influence

Since the United States launched its devastating wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a newly found anti-Americanism became widespread throughout the Arab and Islamic world. Resulting in nothing more than a financial burden on the U.S. budget, the wars, especially the Iraq war, have both seriously damaged America's image in the region and have brought about the decline of its long-time political influence. Although perceived as an occupying force in Iraq, representing a stark reminder of continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands in Arab consciousness, the United States' regional influence has also suffered from the impacts of the Arab uprisings.

In regards to the changing political realities produced by the uprisings, Linda Heard (2011) suggests that "leaderships can no more cozy up to Washington now that they are under intense public scrutiny. The days of the U.S. pulling the strings and dictating the foreign policy of Middle East states are numbered." She also argues that, "Cash-strapped Washington is in the process of slashing its foreign aid budget which officials have admitted negatively impact America's influence" (Heard, 2011). In a time where the political landscape is changing in the Arab world, domestic challenges in the U.S., such as the economy, are preventing its influential participation, or interference, in the democratic transformation of Arab states.

Decreasing influence in the political affairs of Arab states enable governments to revise their domestic and foreign policies in response to the rejectionist attitudes of Arab public opinion. Thereby also contributing to the decline of American power and providing a favorable political environment for Islamic movements such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood to thrive. The fact that the US administration "was forced to hold official talks with representatives from Islamist movements who came to power or are on their way into power in Arab Spring countries" and that "Israel has officially expressed its concern about these talks, because they add international legitimacy to Islamist taking over power, which constitutes a serious transformation in Israel's strategic environment," is a clear indication of the point (Al-Naami, 2012).³¹

5.3.2 The Ascendancy of Islamists to Power

Prior to the Arab uprisings, oppressive authoritarian regimes exercised power in attempting to contain political Islamist organizations. After the uprisings, Arab public opinion has become

³¹ According to Al-Naami (2012), "An alliance with a world superpower has always been one of the pillars of Israel's security outlook, and the relationship with the US was a top strategic asset." This is to illustrate the significance of the U.S. for Israel and exemplify the decline in U.S. power and influence in the region.

very influential in Arab governmental decision-making. Popular demand for democracy has forced the opening up of a number of political systems in the region to be more inclusive of opposition parties.

As a result, Islamist parties have thus risen to positions of political power in a number of Arab states such as Tunisia, Yemen, and most notably in Egypt. The rise to power of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in particular was a major victory for political Islam, especially as Egypt is the most populous Arab country and is considered the political weight of the Arab world. The empowerment of Islamist parties has also forced Western governments to reassess their attitudes and thus their relationships with a number of Arab governments. In the midst of dramatically improving relations with Islamists in power, the increasing consolidation of Islamist power will not only reshape the political character of the region but also the strategic alignments of regional states.

For Hamas as an Islamic movement, this certainly provides for a political environment in which its ability to forge alliances has increased to a significant extent. The fall of Mubarak's authoritarian regime in Egypt, considered hostile for Hamas, has already increased the advantageous prospects for both the Gaza Strip and Hamas. The gradual breakdown of the five year old blockade on the Gaza Strip, at least by Egypt, and the reassessment by the new Muslim Brotherhood government of travel and border restrictions as well as diplomatic relations signifies the advantages of ascending Islamist power. The new Islamist government in Tunisia and the influence of the Islamist rise in Jordan, another state previously hostile to Hamas, have led to the embrace of the Palestinian Islamic faction with a new found sense of warmth. The opportunities for various political, economic, and regional cooperation with other Islamist governments and political organizations coupled with changing Western attitudes provides for an array of strategic advantages and opportunist possibilities, entirely opposite from the restricted and hostile surroundings which defined the pre-uprising era.

5.3.3 Declining Diplomatic Isolation

The new regional dynamics which have resulted from the two developments discussed above have contributed to the decline of Hamas's diplomatic isolation. With the United States, and also the European Union, shifting their attitude toward Hamas, the organization is becoming increasingly able to expand its political outreach on the international stage.

A significant sign of such a development signifying the opening of international channels of diplomacy was when "in late 2011 and early 2012, Gaza Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh for the first time since 2007 left the Gaza Strip, embarking on two regional tours that included stops to Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, Tunisia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran" (International Crisis Group, 2012, p.4). In addition to the positive outcome of these visits, where

Turkey for instance offered assistance to Gaza worth hundreds of millions of dollars, many states met Haniyeh as a prime minister and not as merely a Hamas leader (International Crisis Group, 2012, p.4). With the recent presidential victory of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Muhammad Mursi in Egypt, some Hamas officials were quick to express their confidence. Considered a Hamas moderate, Ahmad Yousef suggested that the Mursi presidency will “get the international community to recognize us [Hamas] and deal with us, just as it did with the Islamists in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen” (Ma'an News Agency, 2012a). Yousef was also confident that the new Egypt will “help end the West’s isolation of the movement, as well as ending Israel’s blockade on the coastal enclave” (Ma'an News Agency, 2012a). The circumstances which have allowed for both Haniyeh’s tour to transpire and Yousef’s confidence to be expressed were a result of both the decline of Western influence and of Islamists rising to political power. Jonathan Schanzer argues that “Washington once had the clout to deter countries like Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt from backing a designated terrorist group [Hamas]. But after the great regional tectonic shifts of the past two years, U.S. consternation has become a secondary consideration for these new governments” (Schanzer, 2012).

Another indication can be illustrated by Hamas’s recent cooperation with European states and the United Nations. According to a Middle East report by the International Crisis Group, “In January 2012, parliamentarians from Gaza visited Switzerland, where they attended a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; two months later the UN Human Rights Council invited a Hamas leader from Gaza, Ismail Ashqar, to speak” (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 4). Such contacts indicate that recognition of Hamas is increasing.

The dealings of Hamas officials above mark a crossroads in Hamas’s diplomatic activity. The developments in the region as a result of the Arab uprisings seem to weaken the organization’s past political constraints. Contemporary circumstances are thus indicating an impact on Hamas’s diplomatic standing. As Hamas increasingly finds legitimacy on the world stage and becomes further integrated as an international political actor the availability of political and economic channels for Hamas to develop closer international ties appear to be increasing, no longer confined to the past and constrained alliance which characterized its political profile in the region.

Chapter 6: Hamas's Prospective Alignment and its Impact on Palestinian Politics

6.1 Analysis of Hamas's New Alliances

The previous chapter has demonstrated a clear shift in regional dynamics as a result of the Arab uprisings. More importantly, it has also demonstrated the impact of the uprisings on Hamas and the unavoidable repositioning of both the organization's regional political strategy and alignment in the region toward strategic relationships with states such as Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey.

However, moving toward such an alignment thus requires closer ties with the wider Arab world. Hamas's strategy of adjustment and independence as a regional organization³² provides it with the ability to take advantage of a favorable regional landscape in the interest of strengthening the organization's regional position. Some argue that regional strategic considerations reveal the most advantageous opportunity for such ties to strengthen is by aligning along Arab sectarian lines. Hussein Ibish (2012) confirms that, "Hamas's external leadership is trying to reintegrate the organization into the mainstream Sunni Arab fold, cultivating closer ties with states like Qatar, Jordan and Egypt, while distancing itself from Iran and abandoning Syria altogether." As a result of this, Ibish (2012) claims that, "Hamas needs to find a new regional strategic profile." The organization's attempt at reintegration is further confirmed by Hamas shifting the balance of its external relations towards such states, a focus of the first half of this chapter (BICOM, 2012).

This section provides various findings about Hamas's recent external relations with prospective alliances. Five states have been selected for examination; Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia. Also included is an examination of relations with Iran and Hezbollah. Hamas's relations with other states in the region, such as Libya, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Algeria, Yemen, etc, have also either improved or have taken a new strategic direction, related also to Islamist parities gaining political power. However, the selected states are the ones considered not only due to their significance for this research but are also states that have shown the most significant activity in regards to relations with Hamas. In addition, although states such as Libya and Yemen for instance were considerably affected by the Arab uprisings and have contributed to the regional Islamist shift in the region, their attempts at establishing closer relations with Hamas are far less evident. In contrast, the impact the uprisings have had on Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan's relationship towards Hamas as well as the strong efforts by Turkey and Qatar to engage with Hamas as a response to the new strategic environment the Arab uprisings have produced provide for a clearer demonstration of Hamas's prospective regional alignment.

For these reasons selection has been limited to the five aforementioned states plus Iran and Hezbollah. The details regarding relations with all seven actors attempt to reveal two significant distinctions concerning Hamas's developing regional arrangements; one being a prospective

³² In reference to the independence Hamas's enjoys amid the foreign influence of its allies.

strategic alignment, and second, the competitive political advantage gained from such arrangements. Such distinctions are later intended to divulge Hamas's impact on Palestinian politics in the second half of this chapter.

6.1.1 Qatar

Qatar has become increasingly reputable for its diplomatic engagement in the Arab world, especially since the beginning of the Arab uprisings. Although Hamas was a part of the old Syria-Iran-Hezbollah alliance, Qatar continued to maintain a warm relationship with the Islamic faction. Only several years ago, Qatar was advocating in support of Hamas in the diplomatic arena.

Based on their recent collaboration, their relationship appears to have taken a completely new direction. According to Schanzer (Hamas Rising, 2012), "Qatar has quietly become one of the Palestinian Islamist party's most generous new benefactors." In February 2012, after Hamas closed its headquarters and pulled its operations completely out of Damascus, it was reported that Khaled Meshaal moved to and resumed his work from Qatar, an indication of a new relationship in the making. According to a June Congressional Research Service report (cited in Schanzer, Hamas Rising, 2012), it was confirmed that Qatar was officially the state where Meshaal "conducts his regular engagement with regional figures," a major indication of Hamas's potential new headquarters for its political bureau.

The newly found relationship has immediately lead to Qatar providing financial resources to Hamas and aid for reconstruction projects, including housing and even sports projects, in the Gaza Strip. Hamas officials in February 2012 announced a \$250 million plus deal signed with the Qatari government for such projects (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 3). In addition to the generous funding provided by Qatar, Schanzer (2012) suggests that, "The Qataris also appear to be helping Hamas reintegrate into the Sunni fold."

It has also been reported that Hamas has "enjoyed favorable coverage" on one of the Arab world's most influential satellite stations Al Jazeera (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 3). The Qatari channel has even been accused of being "an organ for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood" (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 3). In July, Qatar also assisted Hamas ease and resolve Gaza's electricity crisis with the delivery of 30 million liters of fuel from the oil-rich Gulf state (Gulf Times, 2012). In addition, the Qatari capital Doha has been the stage for the latest reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas in February of 2012, the so-called the Doha Agreement.

The aforementioned cooperation between Hamas and Qatar based on arrangements that have only taken place in 2012 appears to indicate an increase in the intensity of their relations and portray Qatar as one of Hamas's closer allies.

6.1.2 Turkey

Turkey, like Qatar, has also been diplomatically engaged with states in the region, attempting to enhance its influence. It has also been a diplomatic supporter of Hamas in recent years. In 2011, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, "I don't see Hamas as a terror organization. Hamas is a political party" (Haaretz, 2012). Following the recent events in the region, it was reported that, "Turkey's Islamist government has also embraced Hamas, both economically and diplomatically" (Schanzer, 2012). Turkish sources allege that Erdogan had "instructed the Ministry of Finance to allocate \$300 million to be sent to Hamas's government in Gaza" (Bannoura, 2011), signifying a financial relationship of invaluable significance between the two parties.

In January 2012, Turkey also pledged to assist the Gaza Strip with delivering humanitarian aid (Today's Zaman, 2012), rebuilding and repairing mosques (Hürriyet Daily News, 2012), and the construction of a hospital worth \$40 million (Today's Zaman, 2012). Sources have also reported that "Erdogan positively responded to a statement by Hamas Political Bureau Chief, Khaled Mashaal, who called for boosting the relations between Hamas and Turkey" (Today's Zaman, 2012). Recent history has shown that diplomatic relations between Hamas and Turkey seem to have been friendly. The Turkish-led flotilla of 2010 which intended to break the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip is an indication of such friendly relations (Issacharoff, Khoury, Azoulay, Pfeffer, & Reuters, 2010). However, based on the recent events of 2012, their relationship certainly appears to have strengthened.

6.1.3 Jordan

After King Abdullah ordered the expulsion of the Hamas leadership from Jordan in 1999, for alleged "illicit and harmful" activities, the organization has not made an official visit to the Arab Kingdom since (Baroud, 2012a).³³

For the first time since, it was reported back in January of 2012 that Qatari officials accompanied a large Hamas delegation to Jordan for an official visit. In another later visit in June, Hamas leader Meshaal received a royal welcome from King Abdallah, marking Hamas's third visit since its expulsion (Harel & Issacharoff, 2012). Precluding these historical visits, former Prime

³³ Following the Oslo Accords, Hamas was seen as a cause for tension between the US, Israel, and the PA at the time and was ordered out of the territory by the King, forcing the organization to search for a new base where then Syria agreed to provide the organization a political platform.

Minister Awn Khasawneh in October 2011 stated that Jordan's expulsion of Hamas in 1999 had been "a political and constitutional mistake."

In regards to a change in relations, Ramzy Baroud (2012a) claims that, "The transformation is so significant that it is no longer open for debate." Concerning the meetings, the Associated Press reported that, "Jordan's King has met with top Hamas leaders as part of an about-face effort to engage with Islamists, who have been gaining ground all over the Mideast" (Baroud, 2012a). This apparent Hamas-Jordanian rapprochement certainly signifies a potential reestablishing of ties and "reflects the shifting alliances taking place in the Middle East" (Baroud, 2012a). Furthermore, it is important to note that Jordan is a very close ally of the United States in addition to its good relations with Israel, especially in regards to security cooperation.

6.1.4 Egypt

After the much anticipated electoral victory by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the new leadership has provided a significant boost of confidence to Hamas. This newly found confidence was expressed by Ismail Haniyeh stated that "We are confident that Egypt, the revolution led by Mursi, will never provide cover for any new aggression or war on Gaza and will not take any part in blocking Gaza" (Al-Mughrabi, 2012) – in reference to the former Egyptian regime's participation in enforcing the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip. Mursi's victory has empowered Hamas, as well as other Islamist parties in the region. As the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood exerts efforts to consolidate its power, Hamas will increasingly find a new sense of political freedom and favorable support. For Hamas, the former authoritarian regime of Hosni Mubarak was perceived as the guardian of policies aimed at isolating Gaza and maintaining the blockage, policies that also complied with Israeli security demands. However, "Considering the historical ties between Hamas and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is hoping that Mursi's advent to power will pose a major challenge to Israel's economic blockade and political siege, which the movement has struggled with since its election victory in 2006" (Baroud, 2012b).

Since Mursi's victory, arrangements with Hamas have already translated into a number of significant changes. The most noteworthy of these changes has been the easing of long-imposed travel restrictions on Gaza residents allowing Palestinians to pass through Egypt on their own arrangements, allowing greater freedom of movement, leaving or entering (Al Jazeera, 2012a). The new policy on the Rafah border crossing, the sole civilian crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, now permanently opens the border for twelve hours a day and includes an increase in the number of travelers allowed from Gaza to 1,500 per day. Sixty percent of Gazan citizens blacklisted by Egypt have been removed from the list, and visa entry requirements for Palestinians have been loosened, granting them 72-hour visas providing time for transit within Egypt and arrangement of travel documents and plans (Ma'an News Agency, 2012b). Such

measures indicate a significant change from the heavy restrictions imposed by the blockade of the Gaza Strip since 2006.

Egypt provides another powerhouse ally for Hamas in addition to its strengthening relations with Turkey and continuing ties with Iran, creating a strong regional triangle of power. Some argue that “the victory of Muhammad Mursi in the Egyptian presidential elections could enable Hamas to secure international recognition” (Ma'an News Agency, 2012a). Hamas official Ahmed Yousef, widely regarded as a moderate in Hamas, stated that “the Mursi’s presidency could help end the West’s isolation of the movement, as well as ending Israel’s blockade on the coastal enclave” and “get the international community to recognize us and deal with us, just as it did with the Islamists in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen” (Ma'an News Agency, 2012a).

6.1.5 Tunisia

In Tunisia, where the Islamist An-Nahda party, the country’s largest political party, has come into power, Hamas has enjoyed red-carpet treatment during its visits to the country in which the Arab uprisings originated. Following An-Nahda’s electoral victory in the fall of 2011, it was reported that for the first time a Hamas parliamentarian, Houda Naim, was invited to address a Tunisian political rally (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 2).

Since the country’s revolution and the electoral victory of An-Nahda, frequent contacts and visits have been made by prominent Hamas officials such as Prime Minister Haniyeh which are an indication of the closer and strengthening ties between Hamas and Tunisia. According to an International Crisis Group interview, in November 2011 a senior Hamas leader was quoted saying, “You cannot compare the position of Hamas in Tunisia four years ago to the position of Hamas with the An-Nahda government” (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 29). The senior leader was making a comparison to the pre-uprising authoritarian Western-backed ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to the democratically elected Islamist government of today.

In July 2012, Khaled Meshaal was invited to address the congress of An-Nahda (Samti, 2012), the party’s first public general meeting in Tunisia after forty years.³⁴ According to Tunisialive (Samti, 2012), “The opening Quran recitation at the ceremony was interrupted by loud cheers from the massive crowd of Ennahdha [An-Nahda] supporters as Meshaal arrived in the hall and took his place next to Ennahdha party leader Rached Ghannouchi. Thousands of attendees started chanting, ‘The people want the liberation of Palestine!’” Meshaal enjoyed a standing ovation and enthusiastic support for the movement and its goal to liberate Palestine.

³⁴ Prior to the popular uprisings that lead to the fall of the former authoritarian regime of Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, An-Nahda’s held secret meetings in exile.

Since Tunisia is still in revolutionary transition it may not be in the position to materially support Hamas. However, its political support especially by the country's ruling party is certainly clear. It must also be noted that following the revolution, An-Nahda reinforced its relations – politically, strategically and economically - with the Islamic Republic of Iran, a traditional ally of Hamas (Chaouachi, 2012). Such political activity further serves as an indication supporting the growing ties between Hamas and Tunisia, in comparison with the former Tunisian regime whose policies and political arrangements were more in line with those of Western states.

6.1.6 Iran and Hezbollah

Although a number of analysts suggest that support from Iran - Hamas's largest supporter and supplier of money, weapons and training (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 6) - and Hezbollah has dwindled due to the regional circumstances and Hamas's abandoning of Syria, others, including Hamas officials, reject this claim. It was stated in the previous chapter that Hamas maybe distancing itself from Iran and its stance on Syria may jeopardize its financial support. Due to the fact that Iran is a significant source of support for Hamas, the organization would certainly have an interest in maintaining such ties.

It has been reported that Iran still continues, and may possibly have increased, its funding to Hamas (Al Arabiya News, 2012a; World Tribune, 2012). In regards to weapons, Schanzer (2012) suggested that the "Iranian weapons pipeline still appears to be robust." It has also been reported that Hezbollah has maintained its ties with Hamas. Analysts have suggested that the warm welcome of Hamas Premier Ismail Haniya's by Iran in February 2012 provided an indication that relations between Hamas and Iran remained strong, especially after Hamas had already pulled out of Syria completely (Akram & Kershner, 2012). In July 2012, it was reported that Khaled Meshaal "reiterated that Hamas will maintain its close and strong relations with Iran and Hezbollah" (FARS News Agency (FNA), 2012). Although these actors are traditional allies for Hamas, it is important to highlight that in addition to regional changes and improved relations with new states Hamas has not completely lost ties with its old alliance, nor its material support.

6.2 Analysis

Based on the analysis above, Hamas has certainly expanded its political and strategic outreach. Although the uprisings in Syria and the Arab uprisings in general, may have caused an operational disruption within Hamas, it has certainly provided the conditions for expanding relations with and support from a number of regional states. Table 6.1 below displays an approximate indication of the change in relations prior to the uprisings and Hamas's relations with selected states at present.

Table 6.1 Relations with Regional States

	Prior to Arab Uprisings (Pre-2011)	At Present (Fall 2012)
Qatar	Warm	Strong
Turkey	Warm	Strong
Jordan	Cold	Warm
Tunisia	Cold	Strong
Egypt	Cold	Warm
Iran/Hezbollah*	Strong	Strong
Syria*	Strong	Disrupted

Note: The countries in bold letters indicate states where Islamist governments are in power.

*Indicates traditional allies for Hamas.

The chart indicates a significant shift in Hamas's relations with regional states following the start of the Arab uprisings in December 2010. In regards to the organization's prospective regional alignments, the findings seem to prove that Hamas is attempting to maintain balanced relations with states in the region, and not particularly to align with any distinct political character as it did with the Syria-Iran-Hezbollah alliance. For instance, Hamas continues to maintain a strong relationship with Iran and is significantly improving relations with Egypt. This could further be supported by the fact that Egypt's state-media on August 19, 2012 announced a historic visit by President Mursi to Iran's capital Tehran, making the first visit by an Egyptian head of state since the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 (Al Jazeera, 2012b). In the interest of seeking opportunities available from regional circumstances and in the interest of maintaining its largest supporter Iran, a balanced policy is certainly both in Hamas's strategic interest and in line with its strategy of adjustment.

The above reveals one of the two most significant distinctions concerning Hamas's developing regional arrangements. The second relates to Hamas's competitive political advantage. What the Palestinian Islamic faction gains from such external arrangements is significant political leverage within Palestinian politics. One of the more apparent alliances is with other Muslim Brotherhood branches throughout the region. In the interest of expanding various networks of influence and contacts, Hamas will naturally align its policies and strategy more strongly with other Muslim Brotherhood parties in the Arab world, especially Egypt's as it borders the Gaza Strip. The increase in allies thus leads to the availability of further support and a position of strength against a Palestinian political leadership suffering from declining legitimacy, declining Western interest and support, financial crisis, at the mercy of international, mainly Western, donors and further subjected to pressures from a regional environment in which Muslim Brotherhood movements are gaining influence. The second half of this chapter will exemplify Hamas's competitive political advantage in more detail and conclude with an analysis of its effects on Palestinian politics.

6.3 Impact on Palestinian Politics

Hamas's prospective alignment has impacted Palestinian politics on a profoundly fundamental level. Based on the advantages of the new Islamist regional landscape for Hamas, the Islamist faction is thus in an increasing position of political strength in its long-standing political rivalry with the West Bank-based secular PA for national leadership. In order to support this claim Hamas's position will be based on two factors: its hardening stance in Palestinian national reconciliation efforts and its ability to implement change for Palestinians on the ground in the Gaza Strip.³⁵ These two factors can be explained by Hamas's higher degree of availability to secure support, whether financial or other, which has become possible due to its ability to establish closer ties with the states examined above. As a result, their ability to produce political outcomes has increased. In order to exemplify this, facts regarding Hamas's increased availability to support must be illustrated. Below is an indication of various types of support provided in 2012 alone.

³⁵ It must be noted that other factors such as pressures for Palestinian leaders to manage their dwindling legitimacy may also be a factor to demonstrate the impact of Hamas's new regional position on Palestinian politics. The ability to heed Palestinian public demands for good governance, a healthier democratic system, political and social freedom, and improved living standards given the circumstances above, may also be a measure to demonstrate this impact. However, I have chosen the two above as all aspects of Palestinian politics cannot be covered due to the limiting nature of this thesis.

Table 6.2 Support provided from Regional States January 2012 to August 2012

Egypt	Iran	Qatar	Turkey
<p>500,000 + liters of industrial fuel from Egypt (Taha, 2012)</p> <p>- Increase in the Egyptian power supply from 22 to 30 megawatts*</p> <p>- Building of a natural gas pipeline from Egypt to Gaza*</p> <p>- Connecting Gaza to a joint Arab power grid*</p>	<p>- Continued funding from Iran (Al Arabiya News, 2012a)</p> <p>- Continuing supplies of weaponry and military training (World Tribune, 2012)</p> <p>- The increased flow of needed goods and medical supplies</p>	<p>- \$250 plus million for reconstruction projects to rebuild Gaza (International Crisis Group, 2012, p. 3)</p> <p>- Operational assistance: offices, equipment, communications, etc</p> <p>- 30 million liters of fuel to increase the overall amount of fuel into Gaza (Gulf Times, 2012)</p> <p>- Increase supply of fuel from six to ten trucks per day (Alresalah.ps, 2012)</p>	<p>- Financial support - \$300 million grant (Bannoura, 2011)</p> <p>- \$40 million hospital project (Today's Zaman, 2012)</p> <p>- Deliveries of humanitarian aid and support for reconstructions projects</p>

* Part of a three-phase plan to power Gaza with electricity at 100% capacity (Ma'an News Agency, 2012b).

In addition, Hamas's budget for 2012 has risen to an estimated \$869 million, compared to an estimated \$630 million in 2011, and an estimated \$540 million in 2010 (Jewish Policy Center, 2012). Its 2012 budget marks a significant increase from its budget of only \$40 million in 2005 (Ma'an News Agency, 2011). It is important to keep in mind that the blockade of the Gaza Strip began in 2006 after Hamas's electoral victory, and only began to ease in June of 2010.³⁶ This suggests that external arrangements were significant for the increase in the organization's budget. However, new forms of support in 2012, the easing of the blockade on the Gaza Strip, in addition to continued support from traditional alliances and from Hamas's Islamic charity

³⁶ The blockade of the Gaza Strip refers to the strict land, air, and sea restrictions and heavy economic sanctions imposed by Israel, Egypt, and the Middle East Quartet on the Gaza Strip as a result of Hamas coming to power. The Quartet refers to the United Nations, United States, European Union, and Russia who are involved in the diplomatic mediation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

(*da'wa*) apparatus all appear to indicate the strong and stable position Hamas finds itself in, both politically and economically.

Furthermore, it was reported in May 2012, Palestinian airlines, grounded since 2005, has resumed and plans to expand flight operations from Egypt's El-Arish airport located only 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the Egyptian-Gaza border, compared to approximately 400-500 kilometers (250-300 miles) to Gaza's nearest airport (Laub & Barzak, 2012).³⁷ In addition, prospects of establishing a free-trade zone, for which plans have already been prepared, would generate traffic estimated at \$2 billion a year and direct bus routes stretching from Gaza to Morocco could connect the Gaza Strip to the rest of the region (The Economist, 2011). Hence in addition to the aforementioned support, closer political ties with states in the region will most likely merit economic benefits and cooperation. For a small enclave such as the Gaza Strip, (a total area of 365 sq km, 141 sq mi) the possibilities and opportunities of open borders and free trade are vast. Along with the prospects of expanding opportunities through air and land, a major advantage the Gaza Strip has over the PA's landlocked and Israeli occupied West Bank is its access to the Mediterranean Sea, which due to 'current' Israeli restrictions limits access to Palestinians in Gaza. However, such access, located not far from the Suez Canal, a vital global trade route, within the changing political environment could pose increased future opportunistic prospects.³⁸

All the above factors and prospective possibilities undoubtedly conclude the benefits of the new regional political landscape, a significant shift in contrast to pre-uprising conditions. Clearly based on these facts the material benefits make evident that a correlation clearly exists between the favorable environment of an Islamist regional landscape and the increase in Hamas ability to implement changes. A correlation also exists between these two factors and Hamas's rising influence within Palestinian society and within the Palestinian political spectrum. Its ability to secure support and resources provides it with the ability to produce outcomes - socially, economically, and particularly politically.

In contrast, the stability of the PA is increasingly threatened due to an intensifying financial crisis (Najib, 2012),³⁹ an energy crisis (Ma'an News Agency, 2012c), declining popularity in favor of Hamas (PressTV, 2012), and pressures of adjusting to a regional landscape increasingly dominated by Islamists. Figures indicate that the PA requires approximately \$160 million per month to maintain its operations as an authority. Currently, it possesses an estimated budget deficit of \$1.3 billion dollars (Najib, 2012). Furthermore, the PA also suffers from the

³⁷ Due to Israeli restrictions after the second *intifada*, its bombing of Gaza's only airport in 2001, and closures of Gaza's borders the airline was forced to eventually suspend its operations (See Al Arabiya News, 2012b)

³⁸ The more pressure Israel feels from neighboring Arab states, their increased isolation may perhaps lead to the easing of such restrictions. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood government is the key to such prospects.

³⁹ The PA is heavily dependent on international donors, primarily from the West, for its availability to financial resources in order to satisfy its operational duties as a governing body – salaries, social and economic services, etc. Also, Western assistance in many cases limits its strategy as it must operate in accordance to Western demands.

interrelated complexities of Israeli military occupation.⁴⁰ Therefore, its ability to produce leverage in regards to terms for national reconciliation with Hamas is weakening. Due to such circumstances, Hamas's clear political advantage has allowed it to adopt a firm "wait-and-see" strategy regarding national reconciliation.⁴¹ Therefore, any attempts at reconciliation would encounter a hard stance along the Islamic faction's terms. The facts above clearly demonstrate Hamas's reinforced position of strength in regards to its political rivalry with the PA. As Islamists continue to gain strength in the region, Hamas's political leverage will increase accordingly.

⁴⁰ Compared to Hamas and other governments in the region, the PA is in a uniquely complex position. The PA operates as a state-like entity being the only government in the region to lack a military force, sovereignty over its territory, and whose political and economic affairs are interrelated to the systemic grasp of Israeli military occupation. An essential feature which differentiates the PA's control of the West Bank from the Gaza Strip is Hamas's full territorial control of the enclave. Israel's disengagement from Gaza allowed the enclave a degree of internal independence. Current circumstances allow Hamas a new degree of independence over its social, economic, and political affairs in contrast to the complexities of governing over a fragmented West Bank territory in which the PA must govern.⁴⁰

⁴¹ In regards to the "wait-and-see" strategy, "Regional developments have been largely advantageous to the movement and stand to benefit it further still. The success of Islamist organizations region-wide cannot but bolster Palestinian Islamists, boost their standing and heighten their influence. Gaza enjoys a strategic depth, and Hamas a political one, that both lacked not long ago. Relations have improved with a vast array of countries, and more progress is expected." (See International Crisis Group, 2012, p.35).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Since its emergence in 1987 until the present, it is clear that a level of Palestinian political influence has gravitated toward Hamas and the Gaza Strip. Established as an alternative to the PLO and its ruling party Fatah, Hamas indented to sustain a strategy of resistance under an Islamic pretext, in contrast to the secular PLO and their engagement in peace negotiations, deviating from their traditional character of resistance.

History has shown that the PLO was the sole organization concentrating material and financial resources intended for leading the Palestinian political agenda. They thus concentrated power into the formal Palestinian political center in the West Bank. The question of Palestinian political power (the first secondary question) was exemplified as: the totality of means, influences, and pressures – including authority, rewards, and sanctions – over the availability and ability of securing, acquiring, and maintaining valued material resources and alliances available for use to achieve the objectives of the power-holder, especially Palestinian institutions of government, Palestinian society, and Palestinian nationalism. This definition allows a clear line of focus for such political phenomena and an approach to follow any transformation of the formal Palestinian political center.

According to the research conducted in this study, Hamas's historical and contemporary impact on Palestinian politics (the second secondary question) demonstrates a shift in the formal political center as a result of its development into an independently functioning political establishment that parallels that of the traditional PLO. The impact of the Arab uprisings on Hamas (third secondary question) have revealed that the most evident outcome for the Islamic organization is its strategic depth to Palestinian political power in an emerging Middle East where Palestinians can restore their affluence through the corridors of political power dominated by Islamists, exemplifying that its opportunities outweigh its threats providing it with a new role in the region.

Therefore, the impact of Hamas's prospective alignment on Palestinian politics (fourth secondary question) is exemplified by the political strength Hamas holds within the Palestinian political spectrum, especially in regards to its political rivalry with the PLO, PA and Fatah and its ability to stand firm on terms of national reconciliation. This reality, according to the findings in this study, leads us to the central question of this thesis: What is the impact of Hamas on Palestinian political power as a result of the Arab uprisings? The findings in this research denote that Hamas impacts Palestinian political power in two significant ways.

First, Hamas's position of political strength has weakened the traditional formal Palestinian political center gravitated around the PLO, PA, and Fatah in the West Bank. Its character of resistance and Islamic vision has consumed a large degree of Palestinian nationalism, splitting

the Palestinian agenda both ideologically and politically, and more notably the elements that compose the notion of Palestinian political power defined in this thesis, essentially material resources and external relationships.

Second, as a result of the political, ideological, and geographical split of Hamas and the Gaza Strip and the PLO/PA and the West Bank, two nodes of centralized political power have formalized. The consolidation of Hamas's power in the Gaza Strip both gravitated and concentrated Palestinian political influence toward Hamas, dividing and diverting a significant degree of influence toward one node of Palestinian power. As a result, the formal Palestinian political center is therefore significantly shifting towards Hamas and the Gaza Strip, essentially breaking and altering the dynamics of the traditional concentration of Palestinian political power on a single centralized body, the PLO.

These two impacts can be supported by the materializing impacts of the Arab uprisings on and realignment of regional political realities for Hamas and Palestinian politics. What these two impacts establish is that the source which constitutes material resources for political power described by Gene Sharp proves sufficient in explaining both Hamas's and Palestinian political power. History has shown that the nature of Palestinian political power is determined by availability and ability to secure and maintain such a source.

Based on the findings in this research, it can be concluded that there is a significant increase in the level of availability and ability for Hamas to secure and maintain the flow of resources. Such ability and availability is facilitated by the increased degree for Hamas to possess the ability to secure and maintain alliances as a result of its increased availability to secure and maintain alliances in the region, especially when compared to pre-uprising circumstances. Compared to a gradual decrease in such levels for the PA, the increase in levels for Hamas has clearly determined a correlated shift to the degree of their political power. The Arab uprisings have resulted in a favorable scenario for Hamas and propel the Islamic organization into a position of political strength over the PA. In regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Hamas's newly found sense of empowerment, and particularly the sources from which that power originates, unquestionably alters the dynamics of the conflict. The adjusted regional political orientation, increased international recognition for political Islamist parties – including Hamas – and strengthening international diplomatic and political channels and networks for such parties provides a more favorable political environment resulting in increasing political isolation and rejectionism toward Israel. The strategic depth Hamas now introduces to the Palestinian political arena and the new found empowerment the Arab uprisings have brought to Arab public opinion increase the prospect of reestablishing the issue of Palestine back into the region-wide context. Furthermore, the domestic policies of Arab states in regards to Israel will now be more considerate of public reaction and providing a relationship with Hamas or any united Palestinian

political front that possesses the ability to wield more influence over decisions, isolating Israel further in the region.

Currently, as the PA's stability is threatened and it struggles to secure and maintain international funds, Hamas seems in a firm position of political strength. Important questions to be asked will now be to what extent Hamas's power contributes to any future consolidated Palestinian political unit, for instance a new PLO. How will their integrated political leverage impact the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Questions such as these necessitate future research. Of course, any new formation of a PLO-like political entity will not reflect the old composition of a PLO that preceded the Oslo Accords, pre-1993. Daoud Kuttab (2012) suggests that "A new PLO with a strong Islamic factor in it will also mean that it can better communicate with the new Islamist leaders in Tunisia, Egypt and possibility other Arab counties." In any case, this study reflects the considerable impact Hamas imposes on unified Palestinian political power. Its growing political strength and outreach reveals the supplementary power Hamas will permeate into any foreseeable center of formal Palestinian political power.

Appendix II Map of the West Bank

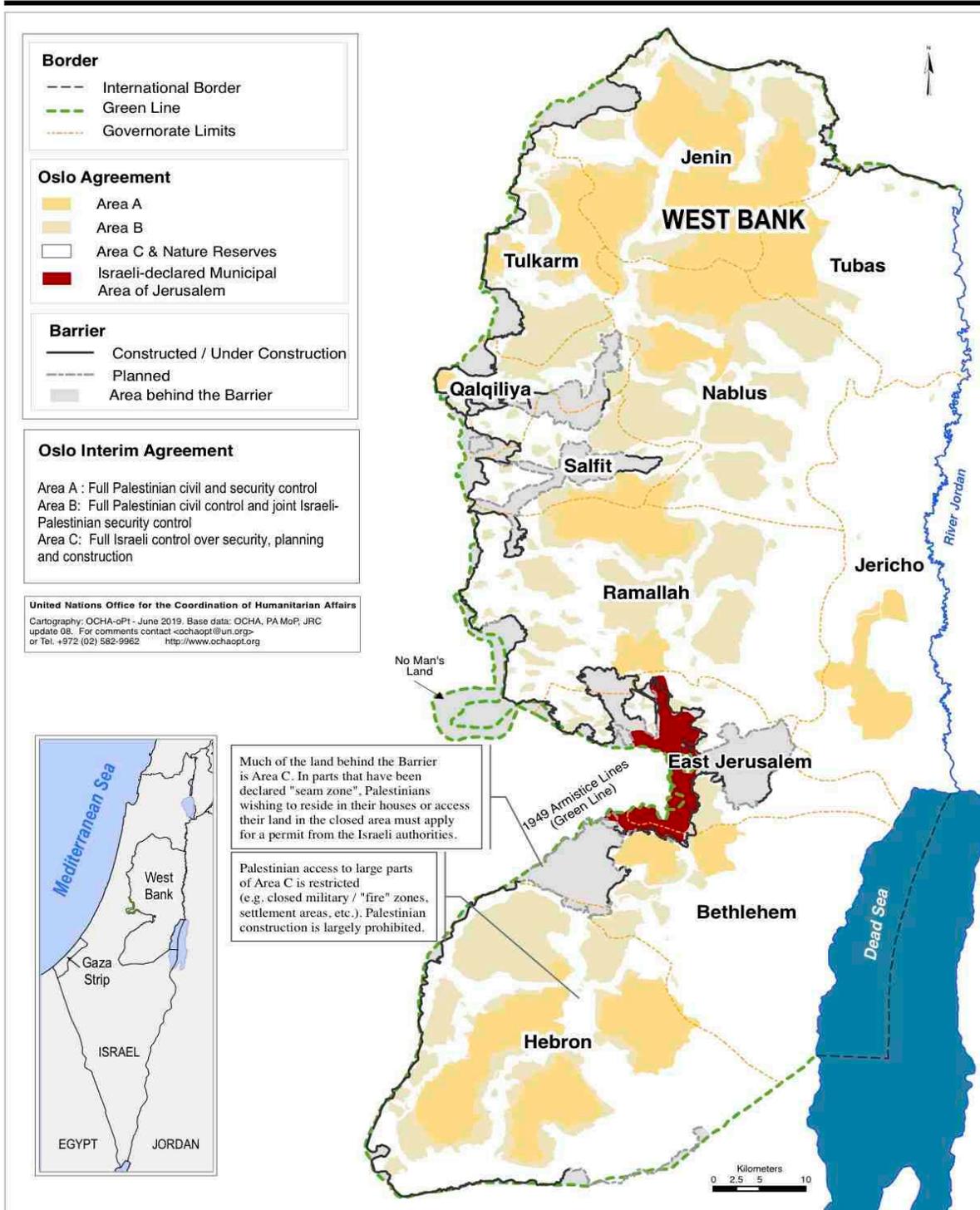


United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Restrictions on Palestinian Access in the West Bank

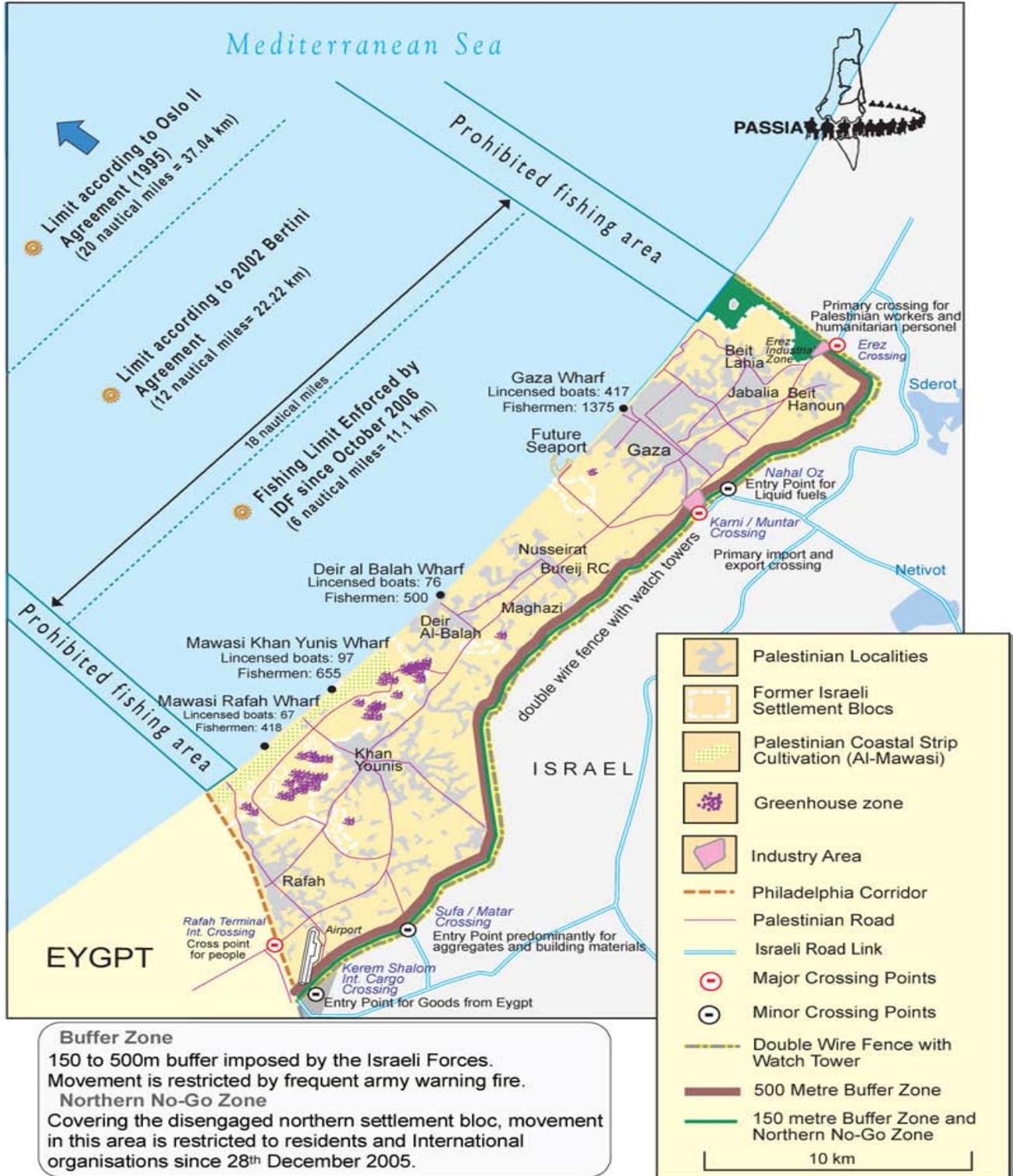
CAP 2010 - Consolidated Appeal Process

June 2010



Appendix III Map of the Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip 2007



Appendix IV Map of Sunni-Shiite Distribution



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