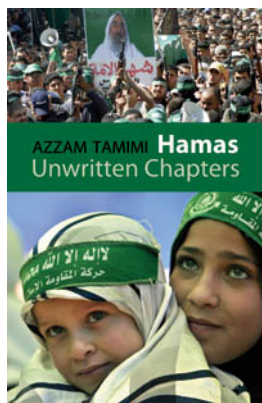




Hamas: More Unwritten Chapters - a critique by Richard Whelan



A recent book by a Hamas-supporting activist offers new insights and information about the inner workings of the revolutionary organisation which now controls Gaza.

Middle East analyst Richard Whelan welcomes “Hamas: Unwritten Chapters” but finds that much still remains unwritten in this account.

What follows is an intensive analysis of the book by Dr Azzam Tamimi published by Hurst & Company, London (2007).

The book

Hamas: Unwritten Chapters by Azzam Tamimi, the Palestinian writer and founder of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London and author of *Rachid Ghannouchi; a Democrat Within Islamism* (2001).

The intention



The author, a London-based activist, says that his book “is an attempt to redress the imbalance in contemporary literature on Hamas. An accurate account of Hamas’s origins will be provided. Analysis of the beliefs and values of Hamas will distinguish between what is essential in its position and what is marginal, with an examination of how the thinking of its leaders and ideologues has evolved over the years ... The difference between this book and most others written about Hamas is that it discusses Hamas in a global context rather than placing it exclusively within the context of Israel.

Hamas is an organisation of Arabs and Muslims who happen to be Palestinian, and who perceive themselves as the immediate victims of a plot hatched by an unjust world order that saw fit to create a Jewish state in the very heart of the Arab and Muslim lands ... While attending primarily to local concerns, the activities of Hamas possess regional as well as global implications and consequences. The struggle against Israel is one of several elements that inform the thinking of the movement and instruct its activism but is by no means the only one. Hamas, which has its origins in Al-Ikhwan-Al-Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood), grew out of a social project motivated by philanthropy and dedicated to charity ... Best characterised by its adherents as a comprehensive reform movement, the Ikhwan was Egyptian in its origins but has since grown into a global network.

The reviews

An Arab expert¹ on Hamas, reviewing **Hamas Unwritten Chapters**, said it; “is as close as possible to an insider’s account of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas]. Venturing to break away from the ‘war on terror’ perspective that has marred recent writings on Hamas, and on political Islam more generally, Azzam Tamimi uses Hamas’s original Arabic documents, long interviews with its leaders outside Palestine and writings of members or people closely associated with the movement. Notwithstanding an evident apologetic tone, Tamimi’s access to first-hand knowledge gives his book a clear edge over many other recent accounts. While some authors travel to Gaza and the West Bank to research Hamas, Tamimi’s destinations were Damascus and Beirut, home to the movement’s ‘external’ leadership”.

Abdel Bari Atwan, chief editor of Al Quds Al-Arabi commented, “Tamimi’s book is the most authoritative account yet published of the origins, rise and impact of Hamas”. His newspaper published in London supports the Palestinian struggle to liberate “Britain’s last remaining colony” [Israel].

Mohamad Nasrin Nasir, a PhD student in Islamic Thought at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in Malaysia, and a sub-editor of Palestine Internationalist says:

“This book is one of a kind. It explains Hamas the movement from its own point of view. The book has been written with the view to explain to the reader what Hamas is, its history and most importantly what it wants. Often in the rush to justify existing power structures that tend to confine a particular group as terrorist etc, the media does not analyze the reasons for the movement to exist in the first place and most important of all its main aim. This is where Tamimi’s book differs from the rest of the literature on Hamas currently available on the shelves of bookshops ...

He concludes that:

“Hamas: Unwritten Chapters is recommended reading for anyone wanting to understand what Hamas stands for and other issues connected to this Islamic movement”.

1. Introduction

The account in Hamas: Unwritten Chapters of one of the most dangerous revolutionary organisations in the world, operating at the worst flashpoint in international relations, Palestine and Israel, is important. It explains in terms that Westerners can understand much that was largely unknown.

The author Palestinian Dr Azzam Tamimi is the founder of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London and the author of *Rachid Ghannouchi: a Democrat within Islam*.

He sets out his stall thus: “In the English speaking world, the story this book seeks to tell has hitherto been little heard. It is the sincere hope of the author that the book will provide the public with a more accurate description of what Hamas is and what it stands for. Those in academia, the media or political authority who are interested in seeing an end to the conflict in the Middle East, or are working for this outcome, will hopefully find here a valuable contribution to this enterprise”.

Tamimi succeeds in his endeavour perhaps even better than he expected. In December 2007 readers of the Guardian newspaper debated an article in it by Tamimi. Those who followed the debate closely noted that in dealing with the Western media and Western audiences he explains Hamas’s case persuasively in moderate academic

tones. However speaking to Muslims at public meetingsⁱⁱ in the UK he changes his tone and vocabulary and comes much closer to a street speaker, expressing himself in a manner which gives considerable comfort to the radicals, while stopping just short of endorsing their tactics. Because of this and his helpful habit of “letting the cat out of the bag” this book in fact is an invaluable help and guide to understanding Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood today.

In deciding to give *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* a more detailed review than is usual, and comparing it with other published texts, I had expected to find some anti-Semitism, driven by Islamic religious zeal and hostility to Israel. Because of my interest in Al-Qaeda, I also wanted to test my assumption that there is a significant gulf between the ideologies of the two groups. And I wanted to consider the developing hope that the West can do business with the Muslim Brotherhood, the larger wider group of which Hamas is an outgrowth, eventually leading to it exercising democratic power in a much-changed Arab world.

Perhaps the most worrying discovery from my detailed review was how much anti-Semitism is part of the Hamas/ Muslim Brotherhood perception of the world.

In my view, the hopes of well-meaning Westerners that Hamas will put its bloody past behind it, once it gets its hands on real power, are misplaced. The reading of Hamas as an over-the-top version of Palestinian nationalism, exacerbated by the foundation of the state of Israel, yet eventually amenable to an externally imposed settlement if it is evenhanded, does not stand up.

Dr Tamimi has not even begun to open that “unwritten chapter”.

Somehow, sometime, the West must engage with Hamas. But first we need to understand it better; Dr Tamimi takes us part of the way there. He may have told us more than he intended. In the story *Silver Blaze* Sherlock Holmes solved the mystery of a stolen racehorse by observing that the stable's guard dog didn't bark—hence, the intruder was not a stranger. *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* contains a suspiciously high quota of mute canines.

My purpose in this extended review is to provide a critical reading of Dr Tamimi's book, acknowledging it where it advances our knowledge of Hamas as he promises, but always listening for the dogs that don't bark.

2. Origins, history and structure of Hamas

Origins and history

Hamas has its origins in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwan-Al-Muslimun). The “mother” organisation was founded in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna, a charismatic preacher in the Egyptian town of Al-Isma’iliyah. Tamimi gives little information about Al-Banna, saying just that “he held the European powers responsible for “dismembering the Islamic Empire and annihilating the Islamic state [the Caliphate] and erasing it from the list of powerful living nations”. His movement’s long-term goals were, first, to free the Islamic homeland from all foreign authority; and second, to establish an Islamic state [Caliphate] within the Islamic homeland. Neither objective could be achieved, however, without initially attending to the more immediate needs of society. Al-Banna’s project was, above all, an endeavour to “rehabilitate” the Ummah [global society of Muslims worldwide], beginning with the individual, then going on to the family and culminating with society as a whole, all through a process of gradual reform.

“These two same goals have been pursued, using the same methodology of gradual reform, by off-shoots of the Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood] across the Arab region, including Palestine, where the Palestinian Ikhwan took root immediately after the end of the Second World War”.

Tamimi says almost nothing about the growth of Palestinian resistance to Jewish immigration to Palestine before and after the Second World War and very little else about Al-Banna.

My research shows that at that time the Muslim Brotherhood was a very tightly-held, secret organisation acting on the leadership principle, demanding the elimination of all political parties and of parliamentary democracy in favour of a state based on Sharia Law and eventually the Caliphate, the Islamic Empire. They then strongly opposed the left, communism and liberalism. Al-Banna at the age of 13 founded a “Society for the Prevention of the Forbidden”. Through his influence the Brothers were infamous in the 1930s and 1940s in Egypt for the practice of periodically reducing to ashes their local nightclubs, brothels and cinemas, often “identified” with Jewish interests and/or Western decadence.

In 1938 in an article called “Industry of Death”, Al-Banna explained his concept of Jihad, as something idealistic and not at all negative or unpleasant. He said “to a nation that perfects the industry of death and which knows how to die nobly, God gives proud life in this world and eternal grace in the life to come”. Hamas spokesman Ismail Haniya said in 2002 that the key weakness of “the Jews” lies in the fact that “they love life more than any other people and prefer not to die”.

In not detailing the development of the Muslim Brotherhood before and after the Second World War years, Tamimi omits the development of its anti-Semitic views (see section 4 below) and the importance of Nazi propagandist Amin al-Husseini who held the office of Mufti of Jerusalem from 1921 onwards.

Against a background of Jewish emigration to Palestine to escape Nazi persecution, in 1936 the Muslim Brotherhood called for a boycott of the business of Egyptian Jews. In 1939 the first bombs were placed in a Cairo synagogue and Jewish private homes. Much of this can be ascribed to the actions and leadership of the Mufti, Amin Al-Husseini, who was a strong Nazi supporter, and whose views and actions in this regard have been widely reported. Some of the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood were funded by the Nazi regime, including distributing copies of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and financing the Arab revolt of 1936-1939. This Arab revolt against the British in Palestine before the Second World War effectively split the Jews and Arabs in Palestine and split the Palestinian side itself. The Mufti himself acknowledged that at that time it was only due to the German funds he received that it had been possible to carry through the Arab uprising in Palestine. From the outset he made huge financial demands which the Nazis met to a great extent .

During the Arab revolt in Palestine the supporters of the Mufti, as well as attacking Jews, attacked those they considered collaborators or just simply clan or tribal enemies of the Mufti. As one commentator put it: "The Palestinian revolt of 1936-1939 was also an assault on the Mufti's opponents. There were more murders and homicides inside the Palestinian camp than were perpetrated against the Jews or British".ⁱⁱⁱ

The Mufti declared the anti-Jewish struggle a religious duty and placed the conflict in Palestine in a broader context. This conflict he said was also a declaration of war on the "invasion of liberal ideas" into Islam. His views are clear from a religious conference he spoke at in 1935 – "The cinema, the theatre and some shameless magazines enter our houses and courtyards like adders, where they kill morality and demolish the foundation of society". Who he blamed is unfortunately clear. "They [the Jews] have also spread here their customs and usages which are opposed to our religion and to our whole way of life. The Jewish girls who run around in shorts demoralise our youth by their mere presence".

The Mufti spent most of the Second World War in Berlin with a staff of 60. A rabid supporter of Nazi Germany he broadcast on the Arabic-language station broadcasting out of Zeesen, south of Berlin.

After the Second World War the Mufti was appointed leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine and deputy to Hassan Al-Banna. The combination of the influence of the Mufti and Al-Banna, together with the very direct Nazi influence in Egypt, during the pre-war years and from the large number of Nazis who escaped there after the Second World War, gave the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and in the region, its revolutionary, mass anti-Semitic views.

Tamimi makes no mention of Amin al-Husseini, but underlines the importance of Al-Banna to Hamas by noting that on the first page of the Hamas Covenant, following a quote from the Qur'an, there is a quotation from Al-Banna, saying "Israel will be created and will continue to exist until Islam sweeps it away, just as it swept away what came before it".

Tamimi further notes that Al-Banna was assassinated in Egypt in 1949, but not that he is widely understood to be a key Al-Qaeda influence.

Another Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader, Sayyid Qutb, was probably the next most important ideologist in terms of the development of the belief system of Hamas in particular and the Muslim Brotherhood in general. His impact on the Brotherhood is widely seen as immense. Tamimi says little about Qutb, just pointing out that the Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin went through considerable difficulties to collect money to reprint the last volume of one of Qutb's most important works, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) is important for two reasons. Firstly Qutb is widely seen as the godfather of Al-Qaeda today. His teaching on military Jihad, martyrdom, a vanguard leading and controlling Islamic movements, and his extraordinary belief that all societies in the world of his day, including all Muslim societies, were Jahiliyya [pagan so enabling Muslims, without any effective approval, to attack them without mercy], has been extraordinarily influential on today's Al Qaeda. Secondly, his hatred of democracy, liberal society and the Jews is a very powerful factor. Qutb, who can be accurately described as the Lenin to the Islamist movement and his writings as their "communist manifesto", clearly had significant problems with women and blamed the West for his difficulties and those of his country and Islam. "How I hate and despise the European civilisation and eulogise humanity which is being tricked by its lustre, noise, and sensual enjoyment in which the soul suffocates and the conscience dies down, while instincts and senses become intoxicated, quarrelsome and excited".

His 1950 paper *Our Struggle with the Jews* blends the hatred that some Muslims derive from passages in the Qur'an quoted out of context and the conspiracy theories of European anti-Semitism. He says "The Jews were enemies of the Muslim community from the first day ... This bitter war which the Jews launched against Islam ... is a war, which has not been extinguished, even for one moment, for close on fourteen centuries, and which continues until this moment, its blaze raging in all corners of the earth ... The Jews also utilised Christianity and idolatry in this comprehensive war ... They attack every foundation of this religion in a Crusader-Zionist war".

In Qutb's eyes Jews invited upon themselves all the evils they have suffered over the centuries. Thus in the modern period "the Jews again returned to evildoing and consequently Allah ... brought Hitler to rule over them ... once again today the Jews

have returned to evil-doing in the form of 'Israel' ... So let Allah bring down upon the Jewish people ... the worst kind of punishment”.

Qutb's anti-Semitism appears to have been more than a response to the foundation of Israel. Modernity, Westernism and what he saw as sexual permissiveness clearly threatened him. Alluding to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Emile Durkheim, Qutb writes “Behind the doctrine of atheistic materialism was a Jew; behind the doctrine of animalistic sexuality was a Jew; and behind the destruction of the family and the shattering of the sacred relationship in society ... was a Jew ... They free the sensual desires from their restraints and they destroy the moral foundation on which the pure Creed rests, in order that the Creed should fold into the filth which they spread so widely on this earth”.

Qutb was particularly angered by Muslim leaders who departed from his “pure” understanding of the Qur'an and the Sharia [Islamic law]. He believed that such leaders can only be Zionist agents: “The tens of personalities who have foisted upon the Muslim community (as conspirators against it) in the guise of ‘heroes’ were manufactured by Zionism, in order that these ‘heroes’ should do for the enemies of Islam what these enemies are themselves not able to do openly ... Anyone who leads this community away from its Religion and its Qur'an can only be a Jewish agent – whether he does this wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or unwillingly”. Qutb turned to some of these points in other writings such as *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* – “for they [the Jews] returned to corruption and so God gave them into the hands of the Muslims, and they [the Muslims] expelled them from the Arabian Peninsula entirely. Then they [the Jews] returned to corruption, and God gave them into the power of other servants, until during our own time he gave them into the power of Hitler. They have returned today to corruption in the form of “Israel”, which has caused the Arabs, the possessors of the land, to taste woes, and God will give them [the Jews] into the power of someone who will impose upon them the worst of torments”.

Tamimi also gives little mention to Dr Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989). He was a Palestinian member of the Muslim Brotherhood and is widely reported as one of the founders of Hamas. He was infamous for his fiery speeches and particularly for his support of global Jihad and militant confrontation. His infamous catchphrase has formed a key part of the approach of Hamas: “Jihad and the rifle alone: No negotiations, no conferences, and no dialogues”. This is repeated in the Hamas Covenant [its charter or founding document], in article 13 - “There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavours”.

Abdullah Azzam saw the struggle in Afghanistan as the prelude to a worldwide struggle to liberate all territory that was originally Muslim and now has been occupied by others, including Palestine and Spain. “Jihad has been a *fard'ain* [individual obligation for Muslims] since the fall of Al-Andalus [Spain], and will remain so until all other lands that were Muslim are returned to us ... Palestine, Bukhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Philippines, Burma, South Yemen, Tashkent and Al-Andulas ... The duty of Jihad is one ... of the most important imposed on us by God

... He has made it incumbent on us, just like prayer, fasting and alms [*zakat*]. Such duties are divine obligations”.

Much of his writings contain the totalitarian concept of the vanguard to lead the masses to their promise land. Azzam is widely seen as one of the key ideologists who has led to the current ideological underpinning of Al-Qaeda. In a video Osama Bin Laden released in November 2001, after the US bombing of Afghanistan had begun, he quoted directly Azzam’s endorsement of terrorism (*Irhab*) against the Soviets: “We are terrorists, and terrorism is our friend and companion. Let the West and East know we are terrorists and that we are terrifying as well. We shall do our best in preparation to terrorise Allah’s enemies and our own. Thus terrorism is an obligation in Allah’s religion”. Azzam’s legacy, picked up by Hamas and by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, particularly with respect to Jihad, martyrdom and the vanguard is clearly totalitarian and anti-democratic.

Tasmini’s book, in skating over three of the most influential ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, and ignoring their inherent nastiness and their importance to Al-Qaeda, fails to live up to his declared intentions. “It is the sincere hope of the author that the book will provide the public with a more accurate description of what Hamas is and what it stands for.”

The charges of systemic anti-Semitism, totalitarianism and Nazi influences, do not have to be confronted because they are simply omitted. Dr Tamimi is no stranger to the concept of “unwritten chapters”.

History and structure of Hamas

Following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood or Ikhwan [Tamimi uses the word Ikhwan in general to discuss both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas] broke into two separate organisations, one in Gaza under Egyptian military rule, and one in the West Bank under Jordanian rule.

Tamimi explains the importance of the Six Day War in 1967. For members of what they saw as the one true religion to have been militarily overcome by the tiny Jewish state was an extraordinarily difficult defeat to accept. It could only have been because Muslims had turned away from their own religion, and because of superpower machinations, and more importantly worldwide conspiracies by Jews. From this point on the focus on religion became paramount. Tamimi explains that for the next 10 years the Brotherhood in Palestine was busy competing with the secular nationalist movement and avoided military resistance to Israel. During this time Palestinian student communities, particularly in Egypt and Kuwait (where many Palestinians were living), continued to help develop the thinking within the movement as a whole.

He takes up the story from 1977 when the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood began to plan the launch of its own military resistance project “which saw the light 10 years later with the outbreak of the Intifada”.

For most of this period, many were unaware that Hamas was making plans to fight the Israel occupation. Tamimi explains this as follows: “The leaders of the Ikhwan in Gaza simply made use of the surge in the frustration and anger of the people of the [Gaza] Strip to bring about the transformation of their organisation into a resistance movement. Few members of the organisation knew that the decision to effect such a transformation had taken place as long as 10 years before. Even fewer people might have been aware that the decision was taken in coordination by the many wings of the Palestinian Ikhwan, in Gaza and the West Bank as well as in Jordan and elsewhere in the Diaspora”.

In the late 1970s two important developments occurred which helped Hamas further its aims. The first was the setting up of a new institution that became known as Al-Mujamma’ Al-Islami (the Islamic Centre). This was an important indicator of the way Hamas was to develop. Tamimi explains: “Initiated around 1976, this project, linked to a mosque, was initially intended to provide social, medical and educational services to the community in Jawrat Al-Shams, to the South of Gaza city”. This eventually spread to other parts of the Palestinian areas.

Tamimi then continues: “Palestinian Islamists may be viewed as pioneers in the way they transformed their intellectual and ideological discourse into practical programmes providing services to the public through voluntary institutions. Their brethren elsewhere in the Arab world had, for decades, been denied such opportunities because the majority of the Arab countries had imposed restrictions on any form of non-governmental activity linking religion and education, or of a voluntary and charitable nature ... The Palestinians were themselves the victims of the same oppressive climate when Gaza was under Egyptian rule and the West Bank under Jordanian rule.

The irony was that the situation changed in the aftermath of the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation. Israel opted to revive certain aspects of Ottoman Law in its administration of the affairs of the Arab populations in the West Bank and Gaza. This permitted the creation of voluntary, or non-governmental organisations such as charitable, educational and other forms of privately funded institutions ... Experience has shown that in a Muslim society, in such a climate of freedom, even if limitations are placed upon it, no political, intellectual or ideological group can compete with the potential ability of religion-based NGOs to serve the community”.

There is no doubt that one of the key attractions of Hamas to the population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is the provision of such services in what appears to be a relatively honest fashion.

It was from this Islamic Centre, set up for social and charitable purposes, that the Islamic Resistance Movement (Harakh al-Muqawawah al-Islamiyah) sprang. The letter A was added before the last letter to form a name meaningful on its own – Hamas which in Arabic means zeal, enthusiasm, or vigour.

A further major development at this time was the development of universities in the Palestinian areas for the significant number of students who had been forced to go abroad to study. This involved a number of universities and eventually the establishment of an Islamic University in the Gaza Strip. This created significant conflict between Hamas and the local Fatah organisation [a secular Palestinian organisation, part of PLO, headed by Yassir Arafat] which was worried about the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza.

Tamimi explains how Hamas dealt with that problem. “To avert the potential threat to their project, the Ikhwan asked the PLO chairman and Fatah leader, Yassir Arafat, to endorse the founding document of the University and to issue a decree appointing a Founding Committee. He may not have been aware that at least half of the membership of the Committee were leading Ikhwan figures from Palestine and Jordan, while the other half consisted of Fatah officials selected for their sympathy toward the Ikhwan ... The Ikhwan leadership, however, was determined to impose its full authority and to maintain total control of the university, even if its only recourse was to respond in kind to intimidation and violence ... It [the university] afford the Islamic movement a unique opportunity to celebrate its significant dates by embodying them in the university calendar to which all students had to adhere. The university attracted thousands of students, both men and women, from around the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and in the years that followed provided a high quality of education combined with an Islamic orientation. This gave Palestinian society an unprecedented preparation for its massive popular uprising against the Israeli occupation”.

A Hamburg political scientist and adviser to the German Green party offers another view of events in Gaza and the Islamic University.ⁱⁱⁱ

Matthias Küntzel puts it thus: “At this point, the Mujama [Islamic Centre] showed little interest in Zionism and the Israeli occupation. They saw the Palestinian left and secular nationalism as their main enemies and from 1980 onwards waged a systematic campaign against them. The most important battlefield was the Islamic University of Gaza, which, with 4,500 students, was the largest in the occupied territories in the mid 1980s. The Mujama systematically turned this university into an Islamist training ground. Small weapons dumps were located in countless cellars. Students and teachers failing to abide by orthodox Islamic practices were assaulted by armed gangs. Among the first victims were men and women not wearing the veil (*Hijab*) or

the body-enveloping garment known as the *thobe*. Next, students were identified and punished for “un-Islamic behaviour” as “drug-dealers” and “prostitutes”. At the same time all teaching content was rigorously Islamised”. One example of this was the attack on Darwin’s theory as being of Jewish origin - “only the Jews could have induced Darwin to link the appearance of humanity with the development of apes. Since, according to the Qur’an, God created human beings, Islamists have no choice but to regard the theory of evolution as false”. The University also seems to have taken a position denying the Holocaust. “Lies have been revealed about murdered Jews and the Holocaust ... Of course, all this is lies and unjustified assertions. No Chelmno, no Dachau, no Auschwitz! This was about disinfection facilities”. [This latter from Dr Issam Sissalem, a history professor at the university in a broadcast on a Palestinian Authority television channel in November 2000].

Tamimi shows that another development leading to the eventual launch of Hamas was the freeing in the early 1970s in Egypt of Muslim Brotherhood members who had been imprisoned because of their opposition to the Egyptian regime or because of terrorist actions against it.

Two other important events in terms of the development of Hamas occurred as the 1970s drew to a close. In 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini led the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

All these developments led to feeling of significant change in the Islamic world, including Palestine. During these years (as I explain in 3 below) the Palestinian Ikhwan or Brotherhood was under pressure from many of its members and other Muslims, because of its competition with the PLO, to get involved in armed resistance against the Israeli occupation. One other important development in the period is well summarised by Tamimi – “The Ikhwan’s predicament deepened further with the founding of Islamic Jihad, an organisation formed in the early 1980s in Gaza by Fatai Al-Shiqaqi”.

Islamic Jihad, which has been involved in some of the worst terror attacks on Israeli civilians, has an interesting relationship with Hamas. From Tamimi’s book it is clear that it is not simply a relationship of opposition but more of militants with a slightly different view of the tactical approach to take to defeating Israel. Islamic Jihad continues to fire rockets from Gaza into Israel at present provoking a predictable response. Hamas has said it has no ability to control it. A close reading of Tamimi’s book suggests that the relationship between Hamas and Islamic Jihad may not be quite as black and white as many would assume, but may be closer to having a helpful, but not fully affiliated terror apparatus for deniable armed attacks.

The first Palestinian Intifada [uprising against Israel] erupted in December 1987. Hamas “officially” came into being when its first communiqué was issued to the press on 14 December 1987. Contrary to Israeli, Palestinian and worldwide opinion, Tamimi hints that the Intifada was not a popular uprising but was effectively ignited by Hamas – “In public, the Sheikh [Yassin] said at this stage that he had learned from recent experience that it was too early to think of military action and that more work was still needed in the field of education and training. In private, he pressed for the reconstruction of the military apparatus, which had been inaugurated, before his imprisonment, setting 17 November 1987 as the date for launching the Jihad campaign. He commissioned ... a new organisation ... this military organisation’s

main mission was to attack Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip. He also commissioned ... to form a security organisation to be called Majd (Glory), whose principal task was to apprehend, prosecute and execute Palestinian collaborators working for Israel. In the event neither organisation achieved much prior to the outbreak of the Intifada, despite some attempts that ended in failure or went unnoticed”.

Hamas is composed of three inter-related wings – a social welfare wing, a political wing, and a military wing. Although some maintain each is totally separate, and funded separately, Tamimi’s book makes very clear that this is not the case – Hamas activities are really fully integrated.

In 1991 the Majd and the military apparatus were incorporated into the current Hamas military wing – Izzaddin al-Qassam Brigades who have since carried out the killing of “collaborators” and the military and terrorist attacks against Israel. Tamimi makes it clear that Hamas has a significant focus on what it calls collaborators with Israel. Like the events that occurred during the Arab revolt in 1936-1939 during which the Mufti, the Palestinian leader, killed a significant number of his Palestinian opponents, in the first Intifada Palestinians were again mainly killed by other Palestinians. As Bassam Tibi has put it “In the Israeli-occupied territories more Muslims were killed by [Hamas’s] fundamentalist Qassam Brigades than by the Israeli occupying troops”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Joint Palestinian and Israeli research on *Collaborators in the Occupied Territories*^{iv} reveals that at least 942 Palestinian men and women were murdered as “collaborators” between 1987 and 1993. This included 130 accused of “moral transgression” (including “drugs”, “prostitution”, “dealing in videos”). Another observer noted that “the execution of collaborators was viewed as a religious obligation and a means of protecting the religion in the face of Israel”.^v

Following the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in January 2006 it is important to see what Tamimi has to say about the structure of Hamas and if the elected representatives of Hamas control the movement, and so could or should be negotiated with. Tamimi notes that following Hamas’s commencement of its terror campaign, Israel cracked down heavily on it arresting wave after wave of leaders and activists and deporting hundreds of them to Lebanon. This “prompted its leadership to transfer all executive powers to the Palestinian Ikhwan outside Palestine. This move was intended primarily to protect the organisation from total collapse under the impact of the Israeli onslaught”.

Although there were many organisational changes within Hamas, much still secret, Tamimi’s book makes it possible to trace some of the more important developments and changes. “In late 1985 the Palestine Committee set up a specialised body, called Jihaz Falastin (the Palestine Apparatus), whose responsibility was to coordinate the activities of the various institutions set up around the world by the Palestinian Ikhwan and oversee the creation of further institutions which might be needed. This “Jihaz” was the nucleus out of which grew the global network that later provided the logistical support for Hamas ... The previous year [1988] had seen a transformation of the Jihaz into the hierarchical leadership structure it now has. At the apex of this is a representative Council, called in Arabic the “Istihari (consultative) Council” [also

called the Shura council]. Below this is an elected [not by popular mandate] executive committee, the Tanfidhi (the executive committee), which in turn supervised several specialised committees whose remit was to provide the logistic support required by Hamas. Despite its representative capacity, the members of the Istihari are not directly elected ...”

“This [Israeli roundup of 1,500 Hamas activists] was a significant turning point of the history of Hamas. The crucial new feature was that, under the new structure, the “inside” [leaders in the Palestinian territories] had now come under the control of the “outside” [leaders in Jordan and Syria], whose role was no longer restricted to providing support. Until mid-1989 the “outside” provided funding, logistics, and advice. Henceforth, however, it became the centre of command and the point of reference”.

The Jihaz Falastin [the Palestine Apparatus] may be equivalent to the Secret Apparatus, which was set up by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1940s and 1950s. It was responsible for numerous assassinations and terror attacks when it organized a campaign against the Egyptian regime. Similarly in the late 1970s and early 1980s the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood also created a similar “Apparatus” which involved itself in a military campaign against the Syrian regime of President Hafez al-Assad. It is unfortunately clear that there is a pattern amongst Muslim Brotherhood organisations of setting up secret groups and “apparatuses”, some of which get involved in military, terror and assassination activities.

Later Tamimi confirms that the Hamas Shura Council [Istihari council] is “the movement’s highest authority” and that it also controls the Ikhwan in Amman, Jordan.

Tamimi later again confirms the transfer of power to the outside, tying it into Yassir Arafat’s ability and desire to make peace with Israel. “This meant that the final say on policy matters and strategic issues lay in the hands of the Jordan-based Political Bureau. [Now based in Damascus and lead by Khalid Mish’al]. In April 1995, Yassir Arafat sent ... to Amman to meet the Hamas leadership and ask them to order an end to all forms of violence in the whole of Palestine so as to give his efforts to make peace a chance of success ... Arafat turned to local Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip. In particular, he wanted to persuade Hamas to take part in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections that had been set up for 20 January 1996”.

Eventually this led to the first meeting in some time between the inside [Palestine-resident] leadership and the outside leadership of Hamas in Khartoum in December 1995. At this meeting “the most pressing issues on the agenda were armed resistance and the forthcoming elections. The Palestinian Authority wanted an end to the fighting, and Hamas’s participation in the elections. Both the Palestinian authority and Israel hoped that when the Hamas delegations from Gaza and the West Bank met their colleagues, they might persuade the outside leaders to call a halt to Hamas’s military activity and participate in the political process ... Some of the delegates from inside Palestine had been strong proponents of both a halt to military activity and participation in the election. They had become convinced that the peace process would bring a solution to their existing problems if given a chance, but that an end to all violence and cooperation with the Palestinian Authority were required before such a chance could exist. Over four days and four nights of discussion, the delegates

reached agreement on two important conclusions, not unanimously but with a comfortable majority. The first of these was that resistance was crucial and should never be abandoned ... Secondly, they agreed not to participate in the PLC [Palestinian Legislative Council] elections”.

Following an invitation from Yassir Arafat to Sheikh Yassin, the head of Hamas in Gaza, to observe a meeting of the PLO Central Council, Tamimi quotes Sheikh Yassin very defensively defending attending this meeting, and his difficulty in contacting the outside Hamas leadership. Tamimi continues his explanation “though the Political Bureau had been known since 1989 to be Hamas’s senior decision-making body ... Sheikh Yassin’s eventual compliance with the Hamas leadership’s decision on this matter represented a final ruling as to who was in charge of the movement”. [He means the outside unelected eventually Damascus-based leadership].

Tamimi also points out that it was agreed by Hamas that following popular elections when a member of the organisation is appointed to a ministerial position he or she must immediately resign all positions and offices within Hamas!

It is clear from this analysis as presented by Tamimi that Hamas is an organisation that for an extended period of time can say one thing publicly, not just to the West but to its own members, and be apparently, per Tamimi’s own admission, planning to do the exact opposite.

Relying on even what it says to its members is therefore clearly not wise. It is also clear that the manner in which decisions are made, which cannot be determined with any accuracy on important matters, may only be described as anything other than what we in the West would accept as normal democratic practice or reasonable norms. That is not to impose Western policy on other cultures but simply to say that Hamas’s decisions are clearly not carried out through a recognisable process of a popular mandate or through one that is anyway transparent or even fully understandable.

Against this background it is clear that if the Quartet, (the UN, EU, Russia and the US), ever negotiates with Hamas, they are wasting time talking to elected Hamas Ministers in the Palestinian territories. Real power lies in the Istihari/Shura Council or perhaps in the Jihaz Filastin – the power, membership, and views of whom are in the main unknown, or with the unelected leader of the Political Bureau (the equivalent of a foreign ministry in exile and fundraising centre), currently resident in Damascus, Syria. Khalid Mish’al may be a key figure in any such negotiations, rather than elected representatives in the Palestinian areas.

3. **Tactics and Propaganda**

Tactics

One of the most surprising aspects of this book is the extent to which Hamas's activities are dominated by tactical improvisation. Perhaps Westerners assume that if people have strong implacable beliefs, this leads to rigidity in the tactics they use to achieve their aims. Not so with Hamas. Similarly, while Al-Qaeda is the ultimate "fixed-belief" organisation, it too has been extraordinarily successful in tactical improvisation to achieve its aims.

A huge amount of Hamas's activities have gone into fighting against the PLO, and in particular Fatah, the organisation originally controlled by Yassir Arafat.

Matthias Küntzel explains this summarising the lead up to and the start of the first Intifada. "In December 1987 anger and frustration at the 20-year long Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank exploded in a spontaneous uprising sparked off by a road accident. Mass demonstrations in Gaza spread swiftly to the West Bank. All Israeli attempts to suppress the uprising only fanned the flames higher. When in January 1988 Hamas made its first public appearance, the struggle for hegemony within the Palestinian camp intensified, with, on the one side, the nationalist "United National Leadership" supported by the PLO and, on the other, Hamas. Now the Islamists cashed in on their network of social institutions."

While at the beginning of the uprising the pro-PLO forces had the upper hand, by Summer 1988 Hamas had already established temporary dominance: "For the first time in the Palestinian movements' history the Islamists had succeeded in imposing their will on the nationalists"ⁱⁱⁱ [This latter comment is from the French Islamist expert Giles Kepel.^{vi} Islamists refers to Hamas while nationalists refer to the PLO].

The battle between the two sides first took the form of a "paper war", with both sides issuing dozens of leaflets. Hamas's first leaflet – in January 1988 - opened with the following words: "Oh all our people, men and women. Oh our children: the Jews - brothers of the apes, assassins of the prophets, bloodsuckers, warmongers – are murdering you, depriving you of life after having plundered your homeland and your homes. Only Islam can break the Jews and destroy their dream ... Liberation will not be completed without sacrifice, blood and Jihad that continues until victory ... Those who deal in betrayal [collaborators] have only themselves to blame. All of you are exposed and known".ⁱⁱⁱ

Tamimi makes it clear that the conflict in the Palestinian areas between Hamas and the PLO was of overwhelming importance and explains most of the tactical improvisation of Hamas. It is notable that the infamous Hamas Covenant [see 4 below] which was issued on 18 August 1988 (at the height of the inter-Palestinian rivalry), with its extreme radicalism, anti-Semitism and even Nazi-like attitude to Jews, was designed to put the 1968 PLO Charter in a poor light in terms of internal Palestinian "competition".

The determining factor at this time is Hamas versus the PLO rather than hatred of Jews or Israeli actions. Hamas's efforts to claim "credit" for the first Intifada and to downplay the role of the PLO and Fatah are extraordinary. Tamimi's various and differing descriptions of the first Intifada are worth quoting in some detail.

"The list of factors that precipitated the December 1987 Intifada (the "uprising") is a long one, but these were not necessarily the same factors that led to the emergence of Hamas, despite the simultaneity of the two occurrences. The leaders of the Ikhwan in Gaza simply made use of the surge in the frustration and anger of the people of the Strip to bring about the transformation of their organisation into a resistance movement. Few members of the organisation knew that the decision to effect such a transformation had taken place as long as 10 years before ... It was ironic that the Ikhwan, who sent hundreds of volunteers to prevent the fall of Palestine to Zionist hands in 1948, had by the early 1970s begun to rationalise their abstention from the Jihad in Palestine. What happened in Palestine, they would argue, was nothing other than a symptom of the sickness that afflicted the Ummah [Muslims worldwide], which had been weakened by the lack of religious observance. The most drastic consequence of wandering away from the path of Islam, they explained, had been the collapse of the project to consolidate Islamic civilisation, which in turn enabled the enemies of Islam to occupy Muslim lands, including Palestine. The solution, it was explained, would be to return to Islam and to establish its laws and standards. Only then would the Ummah be in a position to face its external enemies whether in Palestine or elsewhere ... [Following the 1967 Six Day War, where Israel had a overwhelming victory, there was a significant growth of Islamic consciousness and eventually nationalist (PLO) resistance to Israel] The Palestinian Ikhwan saw that any delay in espousing the cause of liberating their homeland from Israeli occupation might be likely to cost them their credibility and nullify their achievements."

"Students and young people were most influenced by the Islamic revival. This was the generation where the potential for recruitment was greatest, and where competition was at its most intense between the various ideological and political factions ... From 1979 to 1981, throughout the network of Ikhwan organisation inside Gaza and the West Bank, the younger members, ... voiced one persistent question: 'Why are we not involved in the military resistance to occupation?' Little was known at the time about a plan to engage in military action which had already been drawn up, during that same period of soul-searching, by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, as the leader of the Ikhwan in Gaza. Clearly, the Ikhwan, or at least some of its leaders, could no longer withstand the pressure from within their own ranks and the mounting scepticism of Palestinian society as a whole. They had also begun to suffer, perhaps, from a growing sense of guilt on their part over their inaction. The project, which was kept secret to the extent that many Ikhwan leaders in Gaza and the West Bank were caught off guard when news of it broke seems first to have been conceived in 1980, when the official discourse of the Ikhwan still favoured waiting for some outside power to come to the rescue of the Palestinians. The Ikhwan still saw their main task as that of caring for the individual and the community inside Palestine, building whatever civic institutions that might assist in accomplishing that ambition. The liberation of Palestine, it was maintained, was too great a task, which only the power of an Islamic state [a Caliphate] could undertake. The establishment of that Islamic state was the project on which other Ikhwan movements elsewhere in the Arab world had supposedly, been working ...

[Tamimi then describes Hamas's secret plans to begin military action].

“The second trend comprised the younger members of the Ikhwan, who were locally educated. Galvanised by the Iranian Revolution and the Jihad in Afghanistan, they were the ones who were obliged to interact on campus with students from nationalist and leftist trends, arguing and on occasion even fighting with them. The members of this group were discontented with waiting and their patience was exhausted ... At the same time, Al-Shiqaqi's Islamic Jihad was taking the initiative in performing the duty of Jihad, and was consequently winning credibility and respect, while also gaining more ground inside and outside the universities. It appeared to these young members of the Ikhwan that every single political group in Palestine had espoused the cause of Jihad, save their own. As time passed, the position of the Ikhwan, which continued to discourage participation in any form of protest activities, became indefensible. Ikhwan students could find no response to make when bullied or ridiculed by their counterparts in the nationalist and leftist organisations for the inaction of the Islamic movement. Worse still was the feeling that while the nationalist and leftists did battle with the Israelis on the streets of Palestine's towns and camps the Islamists “took the safest route home where they stayed indoors like the Harem” ... In public, the Sheikh [Sheikh Ahmad Yassin] said at this stage that he had learned from the movement's recent experience that it was too early to think of military action ... In private, he pressed for the reconstruction of the military apparatus which had been inaugurated before his imprisonment, setting 17 November 1987 as the date for launching the Jihad campaign”.

Two pages later: “No-one took the decision to ignite the Intifada on 8 December 1987; it was triggered by an accident, which in turn set off the spontaneous explosion of anger by the masses ... The Ikhwan had no option except to seize the occasion. They needed to exploit it to the limit of their ability, in order to reinstate themselves as leaders of the Jihad to liberate Palestine. Had they not done so, it would have meant the demise of their movement ... For the Ikhwan, now acting under the name of Hamas, the Intifada was a gift from heaven. They were determined to end the occupation, and to ensure that this would be only the beginning of a long-term Jihad”.

A significant part of Tamimi's book reflects the competition between Hamas and the PLO, and Hamas's willingness to criticise the PLO and its activities. After the 1974 Arab Summit Conference decided that the PLO was “the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people”, Tamimi spells out some interesting implications. “This meant that whatever the PLO agreed to accept [with Israel] would be accepted by the rest of the Arab world. It should in addition be borne in mind that the PLO, which was created by the Arab League, has never been free from the intervention and manipulation of various Arab governments, and above all that of Egypt. [This surprisingly reflects Israeli commentary stating that the PLO was not a normal national resistance movement, but a weapon designed by Arab states against it] ...”

“Through the 1970s and 1980s, the PLO suffered a series of set-backs, first in Jordan and then in Lebanon. Critics from within the organisation maintain that most of their set-backs were self-inflicted. The PLO leadership became indistinguishable from the other Arab authoritarian regimes of the region. In the absence of transparency and any meaningful measure of accountability, and as corruption spread throughout its

hierarchy, internal feuds and splits became inevitable ... However, it was not until the Intifada gave birth to the Hamas movement that the PLO leadership felt its authority was being seriously threatened. Hamas was perceived as the Ikhwan's bid to supplant the PLO as the sole legitimate representative [of the Palestinians]. Indeed, Hamas's own rhetoric presented it in this light. Its literature, from the first communiqué to the Charter [Hamas Covenant], implicitly or explicitly accused the PLO leadership of abandoning its responsibilities and of compromising the cause”.

Hamas eventually made a major tactical shift to take part in elections, having refused to do so for a lengthy period of time as a matter of principle. Tamimi explains why – “Hamas officials admit in private that one of the motivations for its decision to play a part in the democratic process was to oblige the international community to abandon its boycott of Hamas. They calculated that these officials, once elected, would have to be recognised internationally as the legitimate representatives of at least some parts of the Palestinian community in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Eventually, they conjectured, Hamas could conceivably achieve its removal from the international lists of terrorist organisations, simply because nations would have no option but to deal with it directly”.

Noting that 44.4% of the electorate voted for Hamas against 41.43% for Fatah, which is not quite the overwhelming victory some talk of, Tamimi then explains why the election victory occurred. “The primary reason for casting a vote in favour of Hamas was Hamas's fidelity to the Palestinian dream ... The 1988 Fatah-dominated PLO's decision to recognise Israel's right to exist in exchange for being recognised as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people was the turning point for many Palestinians ... The second reason for preferring Hamas relates to the record of the Muslim Brotherhood, and subsequently of Hamas as its successor, as a provider of services to the population ... The third reason for voting for Hamas was its Islamic ideology, which, unlike the Fatah secular nationalism, was in sympathy with the powerful inclination toward Islam within Palestinian society ... As an increasingly religious community, the Palestinians came more to identify with the moral code espoused by Hamas than with the more liberal agenda of the leaders of Fatah ... The fourth reason concerned the failure of the peace process”.

Almost three chapters in the book (out of 10) describe the Hamas relationship with Jordan and the various twists and turns in it and the tactics of both sides during a difficult and convoluted relationship. This eventually ended with the effective expulsion of Hamas from Jordan and the movement of its political leadership, and particularly Khalid Mish'al, to Damascus, Syria, where it is still located.

An inescapable conclusion from this tactical improvisation, is that Hamas is extraordinarily committed to achieving its objectives. There is little doubt that its short-term objective is power within the Palestinian territories. A short article by Graham Usher who covers Palestine for *Middle East International* and *al-Ahram* weekly in August 2005 throws more light on Hamas's intentions - “Publicly, Hamas claims the “flight” [the unilateral withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip] as a victory for its strategy of armed resistance. Privately, many in the movement understood that disengagement offered an exit from a “war” that had not only brought overpowering Israeli retaliation but was also wrecking Hamas's own aspiration to legitimacy and leadership. Disengagement supplied the long-awaited moment when

Hamas could cash in the kudos it had earned from resistance and welfare and convert them into political and institutional capital”.

Five months later the January 2006 elections in the Palestinian territories proved this evaluation correct.

Propaganda

Propaganda plays a key role in the Palestinian power and armed struggles. Tamimi’s book does not give any detail on the *a’alam* which is the publications or media branch of Hamas, which also has responsibility for propaganda and related activities. Hamas’s propaganda activities can be divided into three: propaganda against the PLO and its affiliated organisations, propaganda vis a vis “the West”, and propaganda activities to minimise the negative impact of what Hamas says and does.

On August 2, 1990 Saddam Hussein sent Iraqi troops into Kuwait. Iraq subsequently annexed Kuwait, the first time a member state of the UN was fully annexed by another. Tamimi covers this catastrophe in both international and Palestinian terms very carefully, for two reasons. Firstly, many Palestinians, including the leadership of the PLO, supported this invasion and annexation. As Tamimi puts it “the Jordanian people did not see Saddam Hussein as an aggressor who had seized a neighbouring country and had torn it apart, but as someone who was defying the United States and its favourite ally in the region, Israel. The Ikhwan of Jordan, empowered by the sizeable share of seats in the Jordanian parliament they had won in the elections of November 1989, led the protests against threats by the US to intervene against Iraq”.

However, a key part of the moral support for the Palestinian cause has been fundamental disagreement with the acquisition of territory by force and the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel. For Palestinians, who had such a clear moral justification for their opposition to Israeli rule and who for decades have drawn attention to UN resolutions in that regard, to have supported this unique occupation and annexation of an independent member state of the UN, is a heavy blow that to some extent the Palestinian people have never fully recovered from. It is widely understood that this decision by the PLO leadership and attitude of the Palestinian people is one of a number of key strategic mistakes made by Yassir Arafat.^{vii} (Yezid Sayigh Arafat *and the anatomy of a revolt*).

The second reason why this invasion was so destructive for the Palestinian cause was that until the Iraqi invasion, Kuwait had been the home for many Palestinian emigres, and had been a source of great moral and intellectual support and a source of significant financial remittances. Following the liberation of Kuwait, the Kuwaitis expelled many Palestinians, some of whom had collaborated with the Iraqi invaders, and the leadership of the PLO and the Ikhwan had to move elsewhere – Jordan initially.

Tamimi makes clear that Hamas used this strategic and tactical defeat for the PLO to gain increased credibility amongst the Palestinian people. At no time does he state what Hamas's view on this invasion and annexation was.

The appendices to Tamimi's book provide further instance of "unwritten chapters" but not those the author had in mind in the title of his book. The message to the Islamic faithful is clearly very different to that being addressed to the West and there is a lesson there for us all.

Three appendices consist of articles published by Hamas members in the Guardian newspaper on 31 January 2006 (although stated in the appendix to have been on 31 March 2006), the Washington Post on 31 January 2006, and the Guardian newspaper on 31 March 2006. Other are documents explaining the Hamas struggle both to Western and to Palestinian audiences. The final appendix is the text of the election manifesto of Hamas for elections held on 25 January 2006.

The newspaper articles show a significant effort to make them "attractive" to Western audiences and to present the conflict as one of occupation, Israeli transgressions, and racist colonialism. The religious aspect of the conflict is downplayed with the Hamas political chief, Khalid Mish'al, stating in the article of 31 March 2006 in the Guardian (Appendix 3) "our conflict with you [the Israelis] is not religious but political". In Appendix 2 which was in Arabic originally and was not addressed to the West, Hamas explains its activities in 2000, just before the eruption of the second Intifada. This includes the following: "At every phase since the Haifa conference of 1947, it was absolutely clear that the Zionist project was absolutely and radically contradictory to our religious beliefs and national interests ... Hamas considers the conflict with the Zionist project a civilisational and existential conflict that cannot be ended without eliminating its cause, which is the establishment of the racist colonial Zionist entity in the land of Palestine ... It is of concern to every Muslim on the face of the earth because Palestine is an Islamic endowment land that embraces within it the first of the two Qiblas and the third most important mosque, which the Prophet, peace be upon him, visited during his night journey to the Upper Heavens. All Muslims, both as individuals as well as communities, shoulder the duty of contributing whatever they can afford to the task of liberating Palestine. The Islamic Ummah is considered the strategic depth and the reserve to which the Palestinian people and the Arab Ummah will resort in their endeavour to liberate Palestine and remove the Zionist entity from it ... Hamas believes that living in the light of Islam is the ideal climate for co-existence among affiliates of the divine religions". [Islam, Judaism and Christianity].

Finally Appendix 6, Hamas's election manifesto, issued in late 2005/early 2006, has the following comments. "Islam and its civilisational achievements constitute our frame of reference and a way of life with all its political, economic, social and legal dimensions. Historic Palestine is part of the Arab and Islamic land; this is the right of Palestinian people that never vanishes with the progression of time and no military or alleged legal procedures alter this fact ... Establish Islamic Shari'ah as the main source of legislation in Palestine ... Reinforce the culture of dialogue and respect for all opinions that do not contradict the peoples faith or their civilisational heritage ... Improve the efficiency of preachers and religious guides, equate their status with that of their peers in other ministries, provide them rewarding incentives and formulate the

rules and guidelines that achieve fairness ... [Hamas conclude this election manifesto as follows] However, together we aim to proceed toward the achievement of our national project along the path towards our greater goals; a single, free and guided Ummah”.

4. Religious beliefs, liberation ideology and conspiracy theories – the Hamas Covenant

The Covenant of Hamas – Mithaq Hamas - was issued on 18 August 1988. It begins with the words “IN THE NAME OF THE MOST MERCIFUL ALLAH”. The Oxford Dictionary definition of such a covenant is “An agreement held to be the basis of a relationship of commitment with God”. This is therefore an extraordinarily important religious document. [Tamimi does not include it in an appendix but it is widely available on the internet.^{viii}

The Hamas covenant is central to understanding the organisation. The contents clearly reflects the views of Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Abdullah Azzam. These three, who are key ideologists to Al-Qaeda, bring their particular views on Jihad, militant Islam, martyrdom, the importance of a tiny vanguard leading the masses in the “right” direction, and a deep-seated belief in worldwide conspiracies, especially against the one true religion, Islam, into that document.

Their views pervade the Hamas covenant. The second paragraph contains a quotation from Hassan al-Banna – “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it”.

Tamimi states that the Hamas covenant is somewhat of an embarrassment to them and that some members would like to change it. However as it is still in force with no sign of a change occurring, and as Tamimi, as I show below, makes clear that any change would be for tactical purposes only, it is important to understand exactly what this covenant [to God] says.

In its **introduction** the covenant refers to the other people of the Book [of Scriptures, i.e. Christians and Jews], “And if they who have received the scriptures had believed, it had surely been the better for them: there are believers among them, but the greater part of them are transgressors ... They are smitten with vileness wherever they are found; unless they obtain security by entering into a treaty with Allah and a treaty with men; and they draw on themselves indignation from Allah, and they are inflicted with poverty. This they suffer, because they disbelieved the signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets unjustly; this, because they were rebellious and transgressed”.

This is saying that Jews and Christians cannot expect anything but bad luck and suffering unless they convert to Islam or sign a treaty with it – which in Islamic history means a treaty giving the upper hand to Islam.

The **introduction** of the covenant continues “Thus it was that the nucleus (of the movement) [Hamas] was formed and started to pave its way through the tempestuous sea of hopes and expectations, of wishes and yearnings, of troubles and obstacles, of pain and challenges, both inside and outside”. [This refers to the vanguard of the movement – the totalitarian idea coming principally from Sayyid Qutb].

It continues, “The spirits of its fighters meet with the spirits of all the fighters who have sacrificed their lives on the soil of Palestine, ever since it was conquered by the companions of the Prophet”. [The companions of the Prophet refer to Muslims in the early period of Islam. This comment indicates that there were others in Palestine before the arrival of Islam. Muslims were therefore not the original inhabitants of Palestine].

The covenant then makes the first of many **anti-semitic** comments – “Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious”. Subsequent comments include – “in the face of the oppressors, so that they would rid the land and the people of their uncleanness, vileness and evils ... [Quoting the Prophet Mohammed] The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews, (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Muslims, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him. Only the Gharkad tree, would not do that because it is one of the trees of the Jews ... But the Jews will not be pleased with thee, neither the Christians, until thou follow their religion; say, The direction of Allah is the true direction. And verily if thou follow their desires, after the knowledge which hath been given thee, thou shall find no patron or protector against Allah ...

They consider that if they are able to direct and bring her up the way they wish, far from Islam, they would have won the battle. That is why you find them giving these attempts constant attention through information campaigns, films, and the school curriculum, using for that purpose their lackies who infiltrated through Zionist organisations under various names and shapes, such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, espionage groups and others, which are all nothing more than cells of subversion and saboteurs. These organisations have ample resources enabling them to play their role in societies for the purpose of achieving the Zionist targets and to deepen the concepts that would serve the enemy ... The day Islam is in control of guiding the affairs of life, these organisations, hostile to humanity and Islam, will be obliterated ...”

[The Jewish “world conspiracy” is explained in article 22] “For a long time, the enemies have been planning, skilfully and with precision, for the achievement of what they have attained. They took into consideration the causes affecting the current of events. They strived to amass great and substantive material wealth which they devoted to the realisation of their dream. With their money, they took control of the world media, news agencies, the press, publishing houses, broadcasting stations, and others. With their money they stirred revolutions in various parts of the world with the purpose of achieving their interest and reaping the fruit therein. They were behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution, and most of the revolutions we heard and hear about, here and there. With their money they formed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, The Lions and others in different parts of the world for the purpose of sabotaging societies and achieving Zionist interests. With their money they were able to control imperialistic countries and instigate them to

colonise many countries in order to enable them to exploit their resources and spread corruption there.”

“You may speak as much as you want about regional and world wars. They were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate, making financial gains and controlling resources. They obtained the Balfour Declaration, formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments and paved the way for the establishment of their state. It was they who instigated the replacement of the League of Nations with the United Nations and the Security Council to enable them to rule the world through them. There is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it ... “

“The imperialistic forces in the Capitalist West and Communist East support the enemy with all their might, in money and in men. These forces take turns in doing that. The day Islam appears the force of infidelity would unite to challenge it, for the infidels are of one nation ... [Article 28 again talking of all these secret organisations] They aim at undermining societies, destroying values, corrupting consciences, deteriorating character and annihilating Islam. It is behind the drug trade and alcoholism in all its kinds so to facilitate its control and expansion ... [Continuing the Zionist conspiracies against Palestine it goes on to say in article 32] Today it is Palestine, tomorrow it will be one country or another. The Zionist plan is limitless. After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. When they will have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion, and so on. “

“Their plan is embodied in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and their present conduct is the best proof of what we are saying ... [But why the supposed Zionist world conspiracy focus on Palestine? Article 34 explains] Palestine is the navel of the globe and crossroad of the continents. Since the dawn of history, it has been the target of expansionists ... Expansionists have more than once put their eyes on Palestine which they attacked with their armies to fulfil their designs on it. Thus it was that the Crusaders came with their armies, bringing with them their creed and carrying their Cross. They were able to defeat the Muslims for a while, but the Muslims were able to retrieve the land only when they stood under the wing of their religious banner ... They fought for almost 20 years and at the end the Crusaders were defeated and Palestine was liberated ... This is the only way to liberate Palestine. There is no doubt about the testimony of history. It is one of the laws of the universe and one of the rules of existence. Nothing can overcome iron except iron. Their false futile creed can only be defeated by the righteous Islamic creed. A creed could not be fought except by a creed, and in the last analysis, victory is for the just, for justice is certainly victorious... The present Zionist onslaught has been preceded by Crusading raids from the West and other Tatar raids from the East”.

In defining the Hamas movement and in particular its ideological starting-points, the covenant is very clear. “The Islamic Resistance Movement: The Movement’s program is Islam. From it, it draws its ideas, ways of thinking, and understanding of the universe, life and man. It resorts to it for judgment in all its conduct, and it is inspired by it for guidance of its steps”. Most of the covenant, which is a document of commitment to God, continues this important religious underpinning of Hamas in all

its activities. “The basic structure of the Islamic Resistance Movement consists of Muslims who have given their allegiance to Allah ... The movement goes back to the time of the birth of the Islamic message, of the righteous ancestors, for Allah is its target, the Prophet is its example and the Qur’an is its Constitution ... It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam followers of all religions can coexist in security and safety where their lives, possessions and rights are concerned” ... [To further emphasize this point – Article 8 says] “Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Qur’an its constitution; Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes”.

The Hamas position on the likelihood of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue, Article 11 sets out the concept that **Palestine is an Islamic Waqf** [inalienable right]. “The Islamic Resistance Movement believe that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, any part of it, should not be given up. Neither a single Arab country nor all Arab countries, neither any king or president, nor all the kings and presidents, neither any organisation, nor all of them, be they Palestinian or Arab, possess the right to do that. Palestine is an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Muslim generations until Judgement Day. This being so, who could claim to have the right to represent Muslim generations till Judgement Day?”

“This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Muslims have conquered by force, because during the times of (Islamic) conquests, the Muslims consecrated these lands to Muslim generations till the Day of Judgement.” [This means that significant parts of Spain, southern Italy including Sicily, major parts of Central and Eastern Europe and many other countries worldwide share the same characteristics as Palestine and so are seen as occupied land which should be “reconquered” by Muslims].

It happened like this: “When the leaders of the Islamic armies conquered Syria and Iraq, they sent to the Caliph of the Muslims, Umar bin-el-Khatab, asking for his advice concerning the conquered land - whether they should divide it among the soldiers, or leave it for the owners, or what? After consultations and discussions between the Caliph of the Muslims, Umar bin-el-Khatab, and companions of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, it was decided the land should be left with its owners who could benefit by its fruit. As for the real ownership of the land and the land itself, it should be consecrated for Muslim generations to Judgement Day. Those who are on the land, and there only to benefit from its fruit. This Waqf remains as long as earth and heaven remain. Any procedure in contradiction to Islamic Sharia, where Palestine is concerned, is null and void”.

[Article 12] “**Nationalism**, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas], is part of the religious creed. Nothing in nationalism is more significant or deeper than in the case when an enemy should tread Muslim land. Resisting and quelling the enemy become the individual duty of every Muslim, male or female. A woman can go out to fight the enemy without her husband’s permission, and so does the slave: without his master’s permission. Nothing of this sort is found on any other regime”. [Both these key points are straight from the ideology of Al-Qaeda. The point on Jihad being an individual obligation is widely contested within

the Muslim community – only Al-Qaeda and its adherents accept the point that it is an individual obligation – Hamas clearly agrees with Al-Qaeda here].

Article 13 is headed **Peaceful Solutions, Initiatives and International Conferences** and clearly draws from Abdullah Azzam's [key ideologist to both Hamas and Al-Qaeda and said to be a founder of Hamas] dogmatic, warlike beliefs. "Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas]. Abusing any part of Palestine is abuse directed against part of religion. Nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its religion. Its members have been fed on that. For the sake of hoisting the banner of Allah over their homeland they fight "Allah will be prominent, but most people do not know" ... These [peace] conferences are only ways of setting the infidels in the land of the Muslims as arbitrators. When did the infidels do justice to the believers? ... There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavours".

In Article 14 **The Three Circles** are explained. "The question of the liberation of Palestine is bound to three circles: the Palestinian circle, the Arab circle and the Islamic circle. Each of these circles has its role in the struggle against Zionism ... Palestine is an Islamic land Since this is the case, liberation of Palestine is then an individual duty for every Muslim wherever he may be ... [Article 15] The day that enemies usurp part of Muslim land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Muslim. In face of the Jews' usurpation of Palestine, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised. To do this requires the diffusion of Islamic consciousness among the masses, both on the regional, Arab and Islamic levels. It is necessary to install the spirit of Jihad in the heart of the nation so that they would confront the enemies and join the ranks of the fighters ... It is important that basic changes be made in the school curriculum, to cleanse it of the traces of ideological invasion that affected it as a result of the orientalist and the missionaries who infiltrated the region following the defeat of the Crusaders ... The Crusaders realised it was impossible to defeat the Muslims without first having ideological invasion pave the way by upsetting their thoughts, disfiguring their heritage and violating their ideals. Only then could they invade with soldiers ... It is necessary to instill in the minds of the Muslim generations that the Palestinian problem is a religious problem, and should be dealt with on this basis".

The Role of the Muslim Woman is covered in articles 17 and 18. The presumed conspiracies against Muslim women are already mentioned above. In Palestine any woman expressing divergent views can thus be held out as an agent of the Jewish World Conspiracy. "Woman in the home of the fighting family, whether she is a mother or a sister, plays the most important role in looking after the family, rearing the children and imbuing them with moral values and thoughts derived from Islam. She has to teach them to perform the religious duties in preparation for the role of fighting awaiting them ... She has to be of sufficient knowledge and understanding where the performance of housekeeping matters are concerned ... she should put before her eyes the fact that the money available to her is just like blood".

Hamas holds a strong view on **The Role of Islamic Art in the Battle of Liberation**. Article 19 includes “The book, the article, the bulletin, the sermon, the thesis, the popular poem, the poetic ode, the song, the play and others, contain the characteristics of Islamic art, and these are among the requirements of ideological mobilization, renewed food for the journey and recreation for the soul”. “All this is utterly serious and no jest, for those who are fighters do not jest”.

Talking about **nationalist movements** in the Palestinian arena and in particular the PLO, the covenant is clear. “It encourages them as long as they do not give their allegiance to the Communist East or the Crusading West ... The PLO is the closest to the heart of the Islamic Resistance Movement. It contains the father and the brother, the next of kin and the friend. The Muslim does not estrange himself from his father, brother, next of kin or friend. Our homeland is one, our situation is one, our fate is one and the enemy is a joint enemy to all of us. Because of this situations surrounding the formation of the Organisation [PLO], of the ideological confusion prevailing in the Arab world as a result of the ideological invasion under whose influence the Arab world has fallen since the defeat of the Crusaders and which was and still is, intensified through orientalists, missionaries, and imperialists, the Organisation adopted the idea of the secular state. And that is how we view it.”ⁱⁱ

“That is why, with all our appreciation for the PLO – and what it can develop into – and without belittling its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, we are unable to exchange the present or future Islamic Palestine with the secular idea. The Islamic nature of Palestine is part of our religion and whoever takes his religion lightly is a loser”.

The importance of religion in all the decision-making of Hamas, and its fundamental opposition to secularism, is clear.

Article 31 talks about **Other Religions**. “The Islamic Resistance movement is a humanistic movement ... Under the wing of Islam, is it possible for the followers of the three religions - Islam, Christianity and Judaism – to coexist in peace and quiet with each other. Peace and quiet would not be possible except under the wing of Islam. Past and present history are the best witness to that.

It is the duty of the followers of other religions to stop disputing the sovereignty of Islam in this region”. [This section is clearly setting out the role that is expected of the other two religions of the book – Christianity and Judaism. If they defer to Islam, then they can live in peace and harmony. This is a point made frequently by Tamimi in his book – where he neglects to point out that in Islamic history, Judaism and Christianity could live in peace once they were under Muslim control and accepted their status as second-class citizens].

So how does Tamimi handle this racist, conspiracy-ridden document that is the Hamas covenant?

Firstly, he gives little detail from the covenant itself. The quotations above are taken from the original document, not from Tamimi’s book.

Then he tries to put it in context, explaining: “When it was drafted, the charter [Tamimi is using wordplay – covenant is the word used in the document, carrying religious obligations, charter sounds less binding and less religious, more secular for Western tastes] was an honest representation of the ideological and political position of Hamas at that moment in time. Hamas had emerged from the Ikhwan (the Muslim Brotherhood), and the charter was a reflection of how the Ikhwan perceived the conflict in Palestine and how they viewed the world. On the first page of the Hamas Charter, following a quotation from the Qur’an ... there is a quotation from Hassan Al-Banna, who founded the Ikhwan in Egypt in 1928. Banna says: “Israel will be created and will continue to exist until Islam sweeps it away, just as it swept away that came before it.” [The covenant actually uses the word obliterate twice here – not sweep away]. While the Hamas leaders of today would not necessarily wish to revise phraseology of this kind, they are increasingly convinced that the charter as a whole is more of a hindrance than a help” ...

Tamimi then points out some of the problems with the charter as I have set out above but with significantly less detail. “Until the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2000, very little debate had taken place within Hamas on this issue, despite the fact that much of the criticism levelled against the movement has involved references to the Charter ... A series of consultations conducted in Beirut and Damascus from early 2003 until the end of 2005 reinforced the feeling of a number of senior Hamas Political Bureau officials that the time had come for the Charter to be re-written. A process of consultation culminated in the commissioning of a draft for a new Charter. However, in the aftermath of the Palestinian legislative elections of 25 January 2006, in which Hamas won a majority, the project was put on hold until further notice, lest the new charter be seen as a measure in response to outside pressure”.

Some observers feel that the mooted and unspecified changes in the Hamas covenant may owe more to propaganda tactics than ideological considerations. In any case they are on the back boiler for now.

Tamimi explains some of the thinking behind the covenant/charter from his perspective. “The current charter is written in a language that no longer appeals to well-educated Muslims ... Instead of justifying its statements in religious terms, which may mean little to those who do not share the same faith or the same vision, a new charter should refer to the historical basis of the Palestinian cause ... It should trace the roots of the problem to Europe in the 19th century, showing how the Palestinians had been the victims of a European plan conceived more than a century ago to resolve Europe’s own Jewish problem ... Such an argument would be more universally acceptable than the idea that Palestine is a *Waqf* (endowment) consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgement Day. As Article 11 explains, the lands conquered by the Muslims from the time of the second Caliph Omar onwards were all assigned as *Waqfs* in order not to be distributed among the conquering troops. The same consideration applies equally to Iraq, Persia, Egypt, North Africa and even Spain.”[It is staggering that Tamimi actually says this – but he does on page 151. Spanish supporters of the Palestinian cause will be delighted to know that when they are finished in that endeavour they can then help “the Muslims” “free” Spain.]

“It is widely accepted today within Hamas that this is strictly a matter of Islamic jurisprudence and that the charter is not the best place in which to address it”.

In other words, this key issue affecting Palestine, the Jews and Islamic territory conquered at any time in the past is not mis-stated in the covenant of Hamas, just that the covenant is not the right place for it. This is an amazing acknowledgement of an extraordinary belief.

Helpfully Tamimi shows where some of this type of thinking came from. Explaining a key paper that inspired Hamas he goes on - “this trend that derived its inspiration from a paper authored by a Syrian post-graduate student by the name of Tawfiq Al-Tayyib. Entitled “The Islamic Solution After The Two Catastrophes”, this came to students in Egypt from Germany where Al-Tayyib was preparing his doctorate in philosophy. Within its 21 A4 pages, including endnotes, was embodied a revolution in Islamic thinking. In his introduction, the author starts with the question of the significance of 5 June 1967 in the history of Islam. On this date, Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan, including East Jerusalem, where Al-Aqsa, Islam’s third holiest mosque, is located. The 1967 war dealt a fatal blow to Arab nationalism and triggered an Islamic resurgence. Al-Tayyib goes on to consider the loss of Jerusalem as a consequence of the Arab defeat. Should it be equated with the fall of Jerusalem to the crusaders in 1099, or with the loss of Cordova to the Spaniards in 1237, or the ransacking of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1285? None of these major past events are seen by Al-Tayyib as having had a significant impact on the world of Islam. In contrast, the fall of Jerusalem in 1967 represented the pinnacle of a profound and continuing onslaught on Muslims and Islamic civilisation, so that this event can be seen as more catastrophic than all previous disasters”.

Tamimi’s explanation continues: “According to Al-Tayyib, the course of events on 5 June 1967 “has brought our Ummah and our faith face to face with their fate, which will be either existence or extinction. This Ummah will either live or die; our culture will either live or vanish. Islam as a faith and the Arabs as a people are facing their destiny, and the decisive factor is Palestine” ... The fate of Islam and that of the Islamic movement, the writer [Al-Tayyib] asserts are inseparable from the fate of Palestine.

Meanwhile, Islamic political thought had come to be dominated by an excessive emphasis on the Islamic state [the Caliphate], whose re-establishment was seen as the main priority. The Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood and eventually Hamas] subscribed to this conviction and argued that Palestine could only be liberated from the Zionists by a strong Islamic state, but they also insisted that this was conditional upon a strong Islamic society, which in turn must consist of conscientious, enlightened, observant and well- trained Muslim individuals. The loss of Palestine was seen as a symptom, or a consequence, of the loss of the Islamic Caliphate, which itself has been the victim of Muslim decline and of the departure of the Muslims from the true path of Islam. The Caliphate, therefore, had to be reinstated for the symptoms of Islam’s sickness to disappear, but this could only be achieved through a gradual and long-term process of reform, of the individual, the family, and the inter-community”.

Put in this context by Tamimi this crucial first step in the development of Hamas's ideology raises many important questions. One is why the Israeli victory in 1967 is seen by Hamas and its adherents as more important than the attack of the Crusaders, the loss of Spain, or the Mongol attack on Baghdad? Perhaps, as I have considered elsewhere^{ix}, it is because of the current dismal position, in their own eyes, of Islam in the modern world. The defeats in 1099, 1237 and 1285 in Jerusalem, Spain and Baghdad respectively occurred when Islam was at the pinnacle of its glory. Its decline started shortly thereafter. Perhaps it is because the Jews were involved. It is unclear, but very important to understand the significance of the Israeli presence to Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and many Muslims generally. To all these Muslims, as reflected in the above quotes, it seems to be a life or death issue for Islam itself which is either a complete nonsense, or more likely, our understanding of what is going on here is somewhat flawed.

An important question arises. Are the views set out in the covenant the current views of Hamas?

If there are any doubts, Tamimi's Appendix VI sets out the Hamas election manifesto for the Palestinian January 2006 election.

“Our List (The Change and Reform List) adopts a number of essential principles that stem from the Islamic frame of reference ... Islam and its civilisational achievements constitute our frame of reference and way of life with all its political, economic, social and legal dimensions ... Historic Palestine is part of the Arab and Islamic land; it is the right of the Palestinian people that never vanishes with the progression of time and no military or alleged legal procedures alter this fact ... Security collaboration, or the so-called security coordination, with the occupation is a crime against the homeland and against religion; it should be severely punishable ... to establish a just world peace that is based on ridding the world of all forms of occupation and of the remnants of colonialism and preventing foreign intervention in peoples' internal affairs ... Establish Islamic Shariah [Islamic Qur'an based law] as the main source of legislation in Palestine ... Reinforce the cultural dialogue and respect for all opinions that do not contradict the peoples faith or their civilisational heritage ... Observe the foundations on which the philosophy of education in Palestine is based. These include the principle that Islam is a comprehensive system that attends to all our aspects of life ... Protect the citizens, especially growing young people, against corruption, Westernisation and intellectual invasion and combat cultural normalisation ... Shield women with Islamic education and through making them aware of their legitimate rights and affirm the woman's independent personality that is based on chastity, decency and observance ... [and concluding] However, together we aim and proceed towards the achievement of our national project along the path towards our greater goals; a single, free and guided Ummah”.

Thus it is clear that nothing has changed in the belief system of Hamas in these important areas. If the covenant is eventually changed it will be for tactical purposes only not because of a change of heart. The Caliphate [Islamic Empire] and Islamic control of it, including Palestine and all other “occupied” territory such as Spain, is seen as vital not only by Al-Qaeda but by Hamas and groups like it.

As Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamic group set up to agitate, supposedly by peaceful means, for the reestablishment of the Caliphate, and a group which Tamimi indicates has views close to Hamas has put it and whom he quotes: “The Islamic state embodied in the Caliphate ... is neither democratic or dictatorial ... At no time has the construction of this state ... been “invented” by the Muslims, so that it might be said that this form of state is not obligatory for us, since it is the product only of fallible human beings. Rather, every word of these institutions has its origin in an action by the Prophet. This state structure is therefore by its nature not a matter of free choice for us, but represents an Islamic precept which we must follow in this form”.

Finally, Hassan Al-Banna, who is quoted at the beginning of the Hamas covenant, has this to say about the Qur’an and Muslims: “The noble Qur’an appoints the Muslims as guardians over humanity and grants them the right of suzerainty and dominion over the world in order to carry out this sublime commission”.

5. Views on Israel, Jews, the West and peace

Hamas sees the existence of Israel as a result of a conspiracy by the Jews, which commenced when the Prophet Mohammed was on earth 1400 years ago, continued with the Crusades and Western imperialism and culminated in the establishment of the state of Israel under the auspices of the UN, which itself is seen as a Jewish conspiracy. Conspiracy thinking is still rampant in much of the Arab world today and is reflected quite consistently throughout this book. Just two examples – “The financial crisis has revived suspicions that the Jordanians have been directly involved in what Hamas officials perceive as a global conspiracy against their movement”. Four pages later: “Some of these disgruntled individuals leaked reports depicting aspects of the conspiracy that was being mounted against Hamas by certain Fatah leaders, in collaboration with their friends in Jordan, Israel, the USA and the EU”. Then follows a page and a half which leave the independent reader somewhat bemused and anything but convinced of any such conspiracy.

Hamas has long opposed the Oslo Peace Process, signed between Israel and the PLO on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993, saying it is an act of betrayal of fundamental Palestinian rights. Their opposition to that peace process and the subsequent “Road Map” has continued. Tamimi explains some of that opposition thus - “Within Hamas, some are convinced that Fatah had made peace with Israel primarily in order to undermine Hamas. Their view was that Fatah wished to appropriate the gains made by the Intifada by conspiring with the US and Israel to abort the project of Islamic resistance against Zionism”.

Tamimi notes the difficulty Hamas experiences in the everyday world.

Talking about the practice of Palestinians working in Israel or in the occupied territories for Israeli employers after the 1967 Six Day War, he says “Above all, the Islamic leaders were concerned that workers would inevitably come under the influence of what they saw as the lax and promiscuous customs of Israeli society”.

Tamimi is clear that it is much better, tactically and for other reasons, for the Hamas Covenant not to focus on conspiracy theories, but on a view of the Jews/Israel that appeals more widely worldwide. He goes on to say “the problem of Palestine is today seen by many Islamists, including leaders and members of Hamas, simply as the outcome of a colonial project. The conflict with Zionism should therefore be explained more in political, social or economic terms than in terms of religion. There is a growing realisation today that such explanations have more explanatory power”.

Most Jews and many independent observers hold the view that the state of Israel was not a colonial endeavour, but was the project of Jewish people, after thousands of years, returning to the homeland that they had been expelled from and one that they had ruled over thousands of years earlier. The only reference I can find to this viewpoint in this book or in the appendices is the following comment. Talking about Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Tamimi says “Just a stone’s throw away, at his former home in Al-Jurah, Jewish immigrants from Europe had settled, claiming to have returned to the land their ancestors had allegedly left two thousand years earlier”.

What are the facts about a Jewish presence in Israel/Palestine in ancient times?

The Bible records the existence of Jews and a Jewish kingdom in these areas but is not seen as a precisely accurate historical document. The first Jewish temple appears to have been built in Jerusalem under King Solomon around 965 B.C. Historical records indicate that within the borders of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah at the end of the Persian period the population was about 3 million. Around 520 B.C. the second Jewish temple was completed in Jerusalem, while in 66AD the first Jewish-Roman war broke out, lasting until the year 73AD. By the year 70AD the Romans had occupied Jerusalem and destroyed the second Jewish temple. Over a hundred thousand Jews died during this conflict and nearly a hundred thousand were taken to Rome as slaves. Many fled to other countries. In 132AD a Jewish revolt was led by Simon Bar Kokhba and an independent state in Israel declared. In the year 135 this was crushed again by Rome.

There is evidence of a Jewish presence in this area in ancient times.

However as, I set out in my book on the ideology of Al-Qaeda^{ix} once Islam has conquered any territory there is a widespread belief amongst many Muslims that previous occupation or ownership is irrelevant and that that territory is Muslim and should stay Muslim until Judgement Day. This is the meaning of the term Waqf as set out in section 4 above. Thus significant parts of Southern Italy, and major parts of Eastern Europe and North Africa and the rest of the world, are colonial outposts due to revert to Islamic ownership in the course of time.

While criticising Western colonial activities, many Arabs in particular do not recognise the previous “owners” of lands, such as Spain, Italy, North Africa, or Israel as their legitimate “owners”. They therefore ignore what independent observers would see as very ancient colonial activities on the part of Muslims. Even more recent Muslim colonial projects are frequently ignored in this Arab discourse, despite the fact that many others including Persians, Indians, Black Africans, Berbers etc.

would have seen Muslim Arabs as imperialists and colonialists in exactly the same fashion as some Arabs see the West.

Tamimi presents Hamas's views on "the right of return". This is the right that Palestinian refugees from what is now Israel proper [not occupied territories or Palestinian-controlled areas] have claimed since they were expelled from Israel or left at the request of Arab or Palestinian leaders during the conflict with Israel in 1947-1948, before Israel was declared an independent state.

"In December 1988, Yassir Arafat declared to the world that the PLO has accepted Israel's right to exist, will participate in an international peace conference on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 and 328, and rejects terrorism in all its forms'. The explicit implications of this concession on the part of the PLO leadership was the forfeiture of the right of return of the Palestinian refugees. By forfeiting this right, the PLO immediately gained the recognition of the United States and its Western allies, but lost its credibility in the eyes of millions of Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestine who have been waiting for half a century to return home. The PLO's loss, clearly, was Hamas's gain".

Tamimi is clearly stating here that Israel's right to exist means that the Palestinian refugees' right of return is lost if they cannot return to Israel itself rather than the Palestinian territories as the Israelis and many Western leaders would prefer. "One thing that will remain unchanged in a new Hamas charter is the movement's opposition to the state of Israel. If Hamas remains loyal to its founding principles it will not recognise Israel's right to exist. Born out of the Intifada [uprising] of 1987, Hamas declared that it had emerged "in order to liberate the whole of Palestine, all of it" ...

Hamas regards Israel as nothing but a colonial enclave planted in the heart of the Muslim world whose effect is to obstruct the revival of the Ummah, the global Muslim community and to perpetuate Western hegemony in the region. Another consideration is that Palestine is an Islamic land [Waqf] that has been invaded and occupied by foreign power. It would contravene the principles of Hamas's Islamic faith to recognise the legitimacy of the foreign occupation of any Muslim land".

Tamimi is making clear here that religion is in fact at the core of this conflict, that Hamas does not in any way accept Jewish entitlement to live in freedom in land that was occupied in ancient times by it, and that the key issue is the revival of the Islam global community and the recapturing of occupied land (that means land that was once upon a time occupied by Muslims) whether Palestine, Spain, Italy, Eastern Europe, North Africa or Asia as part of the long-term objective of re-establishing the global Islamic empire or caliphate.

What is the likelihood then of a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinian territories either led by or with a very strong Hamas presence?

Tamimi is helpfully clear in this regard. "Muslim scholars, with a few exceptions, have never ceased to express their absolute opposition to any recognition of the legitimacy of the creation of a "Jewish state" in Palestine. Over the past century Muslim scholars and jurists have issued numerous "Fatwas", or religious edicts

declaring null and void any agreement that legitimatised the occupation of any part of Palestine ... Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, one of the most authoritative scholars of contemporary times, frequently reiterated this position ... He explained that the Fatwa which prohibited the recognition of Israel was based on the consideration that “Palestine is an Islamic land [Waqf] that cannot be forfeited voluntarily.

However, this doctrinal consideration does not deny the right of the Jews to live in Palestine, provided their presence there is not the outcome of invasion or military occupation. Nor does it prevent Muslims, including the Hamas movement, from negotiating a cease-fire agreement with the Israeli state ... The founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin ... made the first reference of the idea of a *Hudnah*, [truce] when he proposed such a truce as an interim solution to the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis ...

Hudnah is recognised in Islamic jurisprudence as a legitimate and binding contract with the objective to end fighting with an enemy for an agreed period of time. The truce may be short or long depending on mutual needs or interests ... The difference [that of a truce compared to the Oslo peace accords] is that under the terms of *Hudnah* the issue of recognition [of Israel] will not arise. This is because Hamas cannot, as a matter of principle, accept that lands seized by Israel from the Palestinians has become Israel's. Hamas has no authority to renounce the right of the Palestinians to return to the lands and the homes from which they were forced out in 1948 or at any later time. It can however say that under the present circumstances the best it can do is regain some of the land lost, and secure the release of prisoners, in exchange for a cessation of hostilities.

In their justification of *Hudnah*, Hamas leaders point to the example of what happened between the Muslims and the Crusaders in the last decade of the 12th century ... Of particular interest to Hamas in this regard is the Remlah Treaty concluded by Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi (Saladin) with Richard the Lionheart on 1 September 1192 ... In addition, references is also frequently made to the first *Hudnah* ever in the history of Islam. Known as Al-Hudaybiyah, the name of the location on the outskirts of Mecca ... between the Muslim community under the Prophet's leadership and the Meccan tribe of Quraysh. The duration of the *Hudnah* agreed to by both sides was 10 years. However, it came to an end less than two years later when the Quraysh breached it”.

What happens when the truce ends? Tamimi explains. “Hamas is silent about what happens when a notional long-term *Hudnah* signed with the Israelis comes to its appointed end ... Their general philosophy is that the future should be left for future generations ... Should the *Hudnah* last till the prescribed date, one scenario is that those in charge then will simply negotiate a renewal.”

Another scenario prevalent with Hamas intellectuals is that the world situation will change so much that “Israel, as a Zionist entity, may not wish, or may not have the ability, to continue to exist ... What Islamists initially have in mind here is [an emerging Islamic state, a] Caliphate, which it is envisaged would encompass much of the Middle East. This would reverse the fragmentation which the region underwent as a result of 19th century colonialism, and of the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 ... The Jews could easily be accommodated as legitimate citizens of a multi-faith and multi-racial state governed by Islam”.

Tamimi has earlier in his book blamed the outbreak of the first Intifada on a traffic accident involving the Israeli military. He also treated the massacre by an Israeli civilian, Baruch Goldstein, in a mosque in Hebron, as equivalent to Israeli military activities. It is therefore very easy to see how Hamas could claim that Israel had breached any such *Hudnah*, in future at a time that suited Hamas to again attack Israel. A *Hudnah*, a truce that only lasts as long as the Islamic partner wishes is unlikely to hold many attractions for Israel.

Tamimi addresses this as follows – “Those who are sceptical about the concept of *Hudnah* may argue that in reality it signifies nothing but a prelude to the process of destroying Israel entirely. However, without *Hudnah*, the Palestinians will continue to struggle for the freedom of Palestine until the right to return to their homes is restored, pursuing that end using whatever means are at their disposal, however violent. The advantage of the *Hudnah* is that it brings to an end the bloodshed and the suffering because of the commitment to maintain it for a specific time. There will be a breathing space, in which each side can dream its dreams on how the future may look, while keeping the door open to all options. Under normal circumstances, the best option is always that which involves least cost”.

To understand what may be going on here one needs to understand a debate within Islam as to whether Israel is mentioned in the Qur’an (on the basis that as the Qur’an is the word of God it really must be – as Israel is so important to Muslims today) and the Muslim apocalyptic thinking in this regard and generally. A useful analysis of these topics is a book by David Cook – *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature* published by Syracuse University Press.

Cook points out that the term *Banu Isra’il* [Children of Israel] appears frequently in the Qur’an. This term has been interpreted in a different ways by Muslim scholars over the centuries. The Qur’an points out that Banu Isra’il became corrupted and was punished for it and will be corrupted again, a second time, and punished again for it. Cook draws from the writings of a modern Islamic apocalyptic commentator, Abd al-Karim al-Khatib, and goes on to explain that this commentator “does not shy away from the total identification of Banu Isra’il with Israel”. Cook says “In light of the discovery that the verses [in the Qur’an] concerning the second corruption are part of the future of the Muslims, his [Al-Khatib’s] conclusions are startling: “*Thus the Banu Isra’il who will have come for the promise of the end and are gathering today in Palestine, and who established the present state under the decree of God (who foreordained about them that the day of their end would come) - these Banu Isra’il have come from every one of the horizons [and are] being led to their deaths, called to their predestined fate according to the word of God most high*”.

Cook continues: “This understanding of the God-ordained nature of the state of Israel, albeit with the shadow of God’s righteous judgement hanging over, is a new theme in Muslim apocalyptic interpretation of these verses. It has been proved to be a very useful line of discourse because the wars with Israel consistently have not favoured the Arab interpretation of the Prophecy.

The Egyptian radical leader, Sayyid Qutb [described in 2 above as a key ideologist to Hamas], likewise felt that these verses had relevance to the Arab-Israeli conflict and that God has had to punish the Jews continually throughout history:

“For they [the Jews] returned to corruption and so God gave them into the power of the Muslims, and they [the Muslims] expelled them from the Arabian peninsula entirely. Then they [the Jews] returned to corruption, and God gave them into the power of other servants, until during our own time he gave them into the power of Hitler. They have returned today to corruption in the form of “Israel”, which has caused the Arabs, the possessors of the land, to taste woes, and God will give them [the Jews] into the power of someone who will impose upon them the worst of torments””.

So what, you might say.

Cook explains that despite the Qur’an’s prohibition on doing so, many Muslim scholars have tried to predict the end of the world. A Palestinian Hamas leader Bassam Jirar read the Qur’an in “geometrical fashion” and found that God ordained that Israel will exist for 76 years with break points at 1967, 1986, 2003 with the end occurring in 2022.

Cook continues: “In recent years Jirar’s predictions have been modified somewhat by Hamas leaders. Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, has stated on a number of occasions that the true date of the end of the state of Israel is either 2026 or 2027, basing his predictions on a modified version of Jirar’s exegesis. Most recently the daily *al-Bayan* (based in the United Arab Emirates) cited him as saying that “the *Hudnah* (truce) is just a tactical move ... Hamas still believes that Israel will disappear by 2027””^x.

One is left with the choice that Hamas, making peace with Israel through a *Hudnah* is either a tactical move knowing that any Jewish “transgression” in Israel or the Palestinian territories can be deemed a breach, or that Hamas will sign a truce believing that Israel will vanish in the next two decades anyway, or Hamas is signing a *Hudnah* as the only way that it can get such an agreement through its “constituents” at the moment. This latter option of course leaves the other two options open to Hamas, and is therefore perhaps the most likely explanation for its attraction to them. One can understand why Israel would be cautious in this regard.

It is also clear from the above analysis that when Hamas, through Tamimi, say they do not believe in a Jewish conspiracy, they still do believe in a colonial global conspiracy against them. It has to be noted that many Muslims believe that such a conspiracy is Jewish-dominated, that the Jews are behind all such machinations, that the Holocaust never occurred, and that Israel is a colonial outpost set up by the West.

It is interesting to see a comment on such thinking from the great 20th century anti-Western colonialist, the Soviet Union. Matthias Küntzel points out: “On May 1947 the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, also laid down the Soviet “Balfour Doctrine” in a speech to the UN. “Past experience, particularly during the Second World War, shows that no Western European state was able to provide adequate assistance for the Jewish people in defending its rights and its very existence from the violence of the Hitlerites and their allies ... [this] explains the aspirations of the Jews to establish their own State. It would be unjust not to take this into consideration and to deny the right of the Jewish people to realize these aspirations. It would be unjustifiable to deny this right to the Jewish people, particularly in view of all it has undergone during the Second World War”.ⁱⁱⁱ

On November 26, 1947 Gromyko disagreed with the Arab view that the partition of Palestine was a historic injustice. This “view on the case is unacceptable, if only because, after all, the Jewish people has been closely linked with Palestine for a considerable period in history ... [Moreover], it may not be amiss to remind my listeners again that, as a result of the war which was unleashed by Hitlerite Germany, the Jews, as a people, have suffered more than any other people”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Considering Hamas’s focus on imperialism, colonialism and Western machinations, it is important to understand exactly what they really mean when they talk about Western imperialism and colonialism.

The use of human reason and logic and the process of scientific challenge and questioning, key traits of the enlightenment, are seen by some fundamentalist Muslims, including Hamas, as Western cultural imperialism and part of the colonial heritage that must be shaken off. Some of this is set out in section 4 above, for example in the Hamas covenant and other documents issued by it. Küntzel explains: “Even the apparent banal claim that human reason is the basic source of knowledge and scientific progress is considered sacrilegious by orthodox [I would say some fundamentalist] Muslims. According to their doctrine, human beings are incapable of producing knowledge. In their strive for knowledge they are merely granted the privilege of more accurately discerning God’s will – the only real source of knowledge – through study of the holy texts in order to bring their own behaviour into accordance with it ...

No Islamist [I would say radical fundamentalist] is therefore doubtful that the statement in the Qur’an that Allah changed Jews into apes and pigs (Sura 5 verse 60) is to be taken literally, since the Qur’an is no more or less than the truth itself. “The transformation was actual” we read for example in *Falastin Al-Muslima*, the monthly magazine of Hamas, “as it is not impossible that the Omnipotent Allah, who created man in his human form, would not be capable of changing the Jew from human into animal” ...

Western science, based on doubt and individual cognition, cannot match this God-given “knowledge”. On the contrary. Its fatal flaw consists precisely in the fact that it “splits the view of the world”, while only the “Islamic *Tawhid* (theocentrism – God is one) restores the unity of the God-ruled Cosmos”. In this discourse, then, the term “Western imperialism” refers not so much to economic and social aggression, but first and foremost to an “intellectual invasion” of the world of Islam. In the words of the

Islamist Syed al-Attas, “The contemporary challenge of Western civilisation ... is the challenge of knowledge ... which promotes scepticism, which has elevated doubt and conjecture to “scientific status” in its methodology”. The primary goal of academic Islamism is to “de-Westernise” the sciences, i.e. to free them from the principles of doubt and conjecture”.ⁱⁱⁱ

We have seen this type of thinking in the analysis of the Hamas covenant and other of its Arab-focused documents.

Cook explains the threat to such thinking of the Western concept of freedom itself. “One can see how and why they have focused on the concept of freedom as being the enemy, because for them it is the *true* enemy denying them their power over their audience ... Moreover, the entire idea of “freedom” offends ‘Abdallah [a famous Muslim apocalyptic writer]: “The proclaimed and practiced freedom in America especially and in the Western world in general is not freedom from slavery of a man to a man ... but it is freedom from the worship a human being owes to the Lord of Worlds”. For this reason, freedom in the American sense cannot be accepted, indeed it must be fought against at all costs, because it is essentially against the nature of man as God created him. (For Muslims, man has not fallen by nature but is a Muslim by nature; it is a man’s environment that changes him for the worse). In a later passage ‘Abdallah, expands on this idea, contending that the entire new world order is an attempt to nullify the *Sunna* [teachings of God]”.

Cook explains the strong negative view on European civilisation expressed by Sayyid Qutb, the key ideologist to Hamas and Al-Qaeda, who said: “How I hate and despise this European civilisation and eulogise humanity which is being tricked by its lustre, noise, and sensual enjoyment in which the soul suffocates and the conscience dies down, while instincts and senses become intoxicated, quarrelsome and excited”.^x

In summary the full separation of church and state, freedom as we know it in the West, and the use of reason are rejected by not only Al-Qaeda, but also by Hamas itself.

6. Jihad, suicide attacks and martyrdom

Tamimi goes into some detail explaining Jihad and putting it in context in an Islamic sense. He introduces the concept of Qital (fighting or combat) which many analysing Jihad do not cover. The distinction between Jihad and Qital he makes is vital. Qital is direct military struggle – really just fighting or combat. Jihad is much broader, embracing Qital but also self-restraint, struggle with the self, the ego, the struggle to practice the religion etc. He makes the point, completely in contradiction to the beliefs of Al-Qaeda, that “however, there is nothing whatsoever in the Islamic sources that describes war as holy”. He gives a good analysis on the restrictions on Qital and Jihad and concludes this part of the discussion as follows “The Algerian thinker Malik Bennabi had earlier asserted that the Islamic faith accomplishes two objectives: first it liberates man from servitude and render him impossible to enslave; and secondly, it prohibits him from enslaving others. Many contemporary Islamic scholars and thinkers agree, explaining that this is precisely what the modern idea of “Jihad” is about. For this reason it is not only on the battlefield that a believer is expected to perform Jihad, which may be seen as the constant endeavour to struggle against all forms of political or economic tyranny whether domestic or foreign”.

This is the type of commentary that one would expect from liberal or progressive Islamic thinkers or those talking to the West from that perspective. Unfortunately Tamimi does not present the other side of the coin, represented not only by Al-Qaeda but also by others in the Muslim community, who believe to one extent or another, that Jihad against non-Muslims is frequently permissible with few limitations on tactics etc. He does not go into any detail on the extensive teachings by Sayyid Qutb (a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood) and others indicating that Jihad against fellow Muslims and Muslim rulers is permissible without restraint, if they are not “proper” Muslims. His commentary here is in essence “Western tailored”.

Then Tamimi moves on to suicide attacks.

Perhaps the most important issue to deal with right away here is the belief, sometimes explicitly stated but frequently implicitly assumed, that suicide (martyrdom) attacks are provoked by the conditions the Palestinians are forced to live in and the appalling treatment they are getting from the Israelis. Tamimi makes very clear, I believe unintentionally, that that is anything but the case. “It is very likely that Hamas was persuaded to use suicide bombers when it became clear that the tactic was delivering results in Lebanon. It could not have been a coincidence that the first martyrdom operation was carried out in Palestine in the year after the return of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad deportees from South Lebanon ...”

“There has been much debate about whether the tactic of suicide bombing arises from the dire economic conditions suffered by the Palestinians, or if it is simply part of the strategy aimed at the achievement of particular political objectives. It would be wrong to suggest that either explanation necessarily excludes the other ... But it is simply wrong to say that such operations are a reaction to the grave economic crisis caused by occupation, though they are occasionally presented as such. They have a

strategic purpose, and are seen as the only means of pressurising the Israelis, both the government and individuals, to recognise the rights of the Palestinians”.

He then discusses the pros and cons of martyrdom operations, and concludes: “Meanwhile, both the supporters of martyrdom operations, and their opponents, justify their positions, which in essence are entirely political, on the basis of contentions drawn from Islamic sources and Islamic historical precedent”.

Tamimi’s analysis of martyrdom, and his explanation of it is useful, sometimes defensive and very informative in a number of areas. Amongst the latter include - “By choosing to offer his or her life in the Cause of God, a believer who is a would-be martyr, enters into a transaction with his Lord Allah. Such a covenant [i.e. similar to the Hamas covenant with God] is mentioned at least twice in the Qur’an ... Those who defend that tactic believe it would not be right to designate the protagonist as having properly committed suicide, because suicide is strictly forbidden in Islam ... In fact only a fine line separates suicide from sacrifice. Which is which is determined by the intention of the actor. In contrast to suicide, the sacrifice of ones life for a noble cause is something Islam enjoins and for which it promises the highest of rewards ... Defenders of martyrdom operations argue that the Islamic code of war applies only in conventional warfare, and refuse to accept that it should apply in the case of Palestine, where the situation is far from conventional. Palestine in such a view, is an exception. The unarmed and defenceless people of Palestine have been invaded and oppressed by a power that is heavily armed with the most modern weapons, which enable them to kill, maim and destroy while well out of the reach of retaliation on the part of their victims. From this viewpoint, whatever the Palestinians do to defend themselves and deter their oppressors is legitimate. It is often argued that only when the Palestinians have access to the sort of weapons possessed by the Israelis will it be illegitimate for them to resort to unconventional means of self-defence ... Few Muslim scholars, if any, in Palestine today subscribe to the opinion that self-immolation of this kind is an act of suicide” ...

Tamimi continues: “However, a number of establishment scholars, representing government-controlled religious institutions in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, have argued that martyrdom operations are illegitimate. Some of these deem such actions to be acts of suicide because of the certainty of death. Others oppose them because they violate the Islamic code of war, through the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians including children ... most independent scholars have opted to regard suicide bombings inside Palestine as martyrdom operations ... [in justifying why such attacks are legitimate] The Palestinians have been given no other choice since their enemy is heavily armed while they lack even the basic means of self-defence. As long as this situation continues, the Palestinians are not culpable for engaging in such attacks. Therefore, the Palestinians are exempt from the Islamic code of war ... [a Muslim Brotherhood senior religious scholar, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, has supported the view that martyrdom attacks in Palestine are legitimate but everywhere else illegitimate] ... When four Muslim men carried out a suicide bombing in London on 7 July 2005, Sheikh Al-Qaradawi condemned the attack, both in his individual capacity and in the name of the International Union of Muslim Scholars. He refused to equate it with what he insisted were legitimate martyrdom operations in Palestine. He said at the time that unlike the Palestinians, whose land is occupied and who suffer

because of Israeli occupation day and night, these young men had no justification whatever to attack Londoners as they did”.

Al-Qaeda believes that all suicide attacks (martyrdom operations) are legitimate. This is because the West is supposed to be very strong and Islam very weak. It is also because the West supposedly has been involved in a Zionist conspiracy against Islam since the inception of Islam 1400 years ago. It further believes that all lands once occupied by Muslims no matter how long ago are Muslim territory, and if not controlled by Muslims at the moment are “occupied territories”. For that reason Al-Qaeda can justify martyrdom operations in Palestine, Israel, but also in Spain, the United States, Britain, Indonesia, in fact any country in the world be it governed by Muslims or non-Muslims. This is because they believe that every country in the world today is illegitimate because it is not controlled by proper Muslims who eliminate the separation between church and state and let God rule supreme.

From the above analysis it is clear that Hamas’s ideology also sees countries such as Spain as occupied territory and therefore martyrdom operations in same should be as legitimate in their eyes as they are in Israel. It is therefore simply a matter of tactical choice by Hamas to declare martyrdom operations in Israel today as legitimate and martyrdom operations in - say Spain - illegitimate. This of course does not preclude them, at a later date, in seeking the re-establishment of the Caliphate (which Al-Qaeda also seeks as its key objective) to decide that martyrdom operations in Spain and other “occupied countries” such as Italy, Eastern Europe, India etc are also martyrdom operations and completely legitimate. This is clearly an appalling and unacceptable vista – but that is what Hamas believes as we have seen in section 4 above.

The defence of martyrdom operations by Tamimi and Hamas also is at least partly contingent on defining the struggle with Israel as a non-conventional conflict and therefore the laws of war within Islam do not apply. It is clear however that the struggle by Al-Qaeda against the West in general and the US in particular is also not a conventional struggle, therefore, logically the practice of martyrdom operations should be legitimate in those countries also. Finally the key justification that Al-Qaeda uses for suicide, terror attacks, and martyrdom operations is that Islam is weak and the West is strong. That justification is also utilised by Tamimi with respect to Israel and clearly can be applied to any struggle you want. Logically this argument allows a tiny minority to determine that it is weak while the vast majority is strong, and therefore any tactics are allowable. Such an analysis is clearly a nonsense and ignores the prohibitions in the Qur’an and the Islamic teachings on militant Jihad, martyrdom operations, and indiscriminate killing and destruction. It is also of note that Tamimi makes no explicit reference to the UN, human rights conventions and international norms in this area – for obvious reasons.

Because he knows he is on very weak ground, Tamimi goes to some lengths to show that when Hamas instigated the terrible tactic of suicide attacks (martyrdom operations) as part of the Intifada it was only in reaction to Israeli actions – this although as I have shown above Hamas claims it planned the first Intifada for ten years in advance. “Hamas had launched a series of devastating suicide bomb attacks in April 1994 in retaliation for the massacre perpetrated on 25 February 1994 in Al-

Haram al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron by an American-born Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein”. He repeats this assertion later, so important is it.

It is however factually incorrect. As pointed out by Joseph Croitoru in his book *Hamas*^{xi} the first suicide bombing took place on April 16, 1993 – nearly a year earlier. On that day a suicide car bomb attack took place outside a roadside café near the Mehola settlement in the West Bank. The attack killed only the driver and an innocent Arab worker, the bomber having pulled up alongside two Israeli buses, from which the civilians had just disembarked. Notably the Hamas Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for this attack.

Continuing in defensive mode, Tamimi puts the Hamas case that their suicide attacks (martyrdom operations) which obviously can be very carefully targeted, unlike conventional weapons, only attack military targets. He points out the Hamas document in appendix 1, “This is what we struggle for”, as support for this. Unfortunately that is not what that document says: “These operations are in principle directed against military targets. Targeting civilians is considered an aberration from Hamas’s fundamental position of hitting only military targets. It represents an exception necessitated by Israel’s insistence on targeting Palestinian civilians ... It is worth recalling that the first martyrdom operation was a response to the massacre of Muslim worshippers as they kneeled in prayer ...

“Sheikh Yassin, ... explains that Hamas does not endorse the killing of civilians. It is nevertheless sometimes the only option open to Hamas as a response to the murder of Palestinian civilians and the cold-blooded assassination of Palestinian activists”.

It is really fairly clear from this that even in theory civilians can be a target by Hamas. This was made clear in an interview by Khalid Mish’al, head of the Hamas Political Bureau in Damascus, with a Canadian TV production company in 2004. “Martyrdom operations are acts of legitimate self-defence forced on us because the battle between us and Israel is not between equal sides ... [He acknowledges that many people, even supporters of the Palestinian cause, will have major problems with this] However, we ask, ‘what is the alternative?’ There is no alternative. Had the Palestinian people found the alternative they would have done without the resistance and without the martyrdom operations”.

Throughout his book Tamimi refers to military targets when Hamas successfully attacks them, and when Hamas attacks civilians he refers to “Israelis” not civilians. Any reasonable analysis of the damage done by Hamas during its attacks makes it clear that the majority of those attacks have been on civilians. This information is widely available, particularly as the bulk of their targets have been buses or public markets, the latter of which are certainly not military concentration points. Two examples prove the point. The Hamas suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya on Passover eve, March 27, 2002, killed 29 and wounded 154. This attack was on a major Jewish holiday in a hotel dining room mainly occupied by elderly people, some of them Holocaust survivors. The suicide bomber used an explosives-laden vest strapped to his torso, disguised himself as a woman, and set off the bomb quite deliberately in the middle of the hotel dining room.

On October 29, 1998 a Hamas suicide bomber targeted a school bus carrying children to a regional school. The suicide bomber tried to drive his explosives-laden vehicle head on into the bus but was prevented by an escorting military jeep. In both these cases the deliberate targeting of civilians/children by a suicide bomber who had every choice of whom to target is obvious and instructive.

Matthias Küntzel interprets this as follows: “In 2000, suicide murder became the defining feature of the second Intifada. It was a coolly calculated instrument of policy whose tactical rationale is set out in the Hamas Charter [Covenant]: to blow to smithereens even the most tentative attempts at Israeli-Arab dialogue. But above and beyond their tactical purpose, the anti-Jewish massacres have a programmatic significance. The *way* in which Jews are killed indicates *why* they are being killed. The targets of the attacks are not senior politicians or military personnel, but crowds of civilians, regardless of whether they are religious or secular, young or old, supporters or opponents of [Israeli leader] Sharon. The more innocent people are killed, mutilated and injured, the greater the attack’s success. The sharper the edges of the metal splinters and nails in the bomb, the more valuable it is. Anyone who kills in this way is translating a specific Islamist-fascist worldview into action. This worldview’s anti-Semitism, in which the Jews are demonised as absolute evil, inevitably produces the intention of destroying this evil across the globe”.ⁱⁱⁱ

There is no doubt based on what Tamimi says, that Küntzel is correct. Hamas uses suicide attacks as a calculated and internally rational instrument of policy, which fit neatly into their anti-Semitic conspiracy worldview.

7. **Towards Intifada III**

The final chapter of this book is entitled “Towards Intifada III” and it takes the reader from the aftermath of Yassir Arafat’s death in November 2004, through the Hamas victory in the legislative elections of January 2006 and the consequences of same. As the author explains it himself: “The chapter provides readers with an insight into the steps taken by Hamas’s opponents, including the Israelis, the Americans, and some of the leaders of Fatah, to attempt to oblige it to abandon the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, which it had democratically inherited from Fatah. The title of the chapter suggests that were such measures to bring down Hamas to succeed, the results would be counter-productive, conceivably initiating a third Intifada which may in all likelihood be more violent than any of its predecessors”.

As is known following these elections significant conflict occurred between the PLO and particularly Fatah and Hamas with both jockeying for position and power, and the international community refusing to deal with Hamas until it agreed to recognise Israel’s right to exist, respect previous Palestinian agreements with Israel and the international community, and reject the use or support of terrorism.

During this period a running sore was the firing by Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants of rockets from Hamas-controlled Gaza into nearby Israeli towns and villages. These rocket attacks were widely reported. Tamimi describes that situation as follows “For many weeks, as the row between Hamas and Fatah continued, the Israelis had pursued

the tactic of firing shells into Gaza, allegedly to deter Palestinian rocket attacks ... One of several artillery shells ... hit a crowd of Palestinian civilians picnicking on a North Gaza beach wiping out almost an entire family ... It would not be too much to presume that the Israelis had planned a widening of the conflict, which they triggered with the shelling of the beach that devastated the Ghalai family ... Less than 24 hours later, the Izzadin al-Qassam Brigades, [Hamas militant group] together with the Popular Resistance Committees, and a new group called the Islamic Army raided an Israeli army outpost near the ... border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Seven Palestinian commandos infiltrated across the border via a hundred metre tunnel that was dug under the terminal in the Rafah area. Two Israeli soldiers were killed, four were wounded and one, a 19 year old corporal, Gilad Shalit, was captured and taken back to Gaza ... On the basis of information derived apparently from sources within the Fatah organisation, the Israelis pointed the finger of blame at the Hamas Political Bureau Chief, Khalid Mish'al, and his host country Syria.

On 25 June, the *Jerusalem Post* quoted Fatah officials, including the former Palestinian Authority Minister for Prisoners Affairs Sufian Abu Zaidi, who accused Mish'al of orchestrating the kidnap operation in order to destroy the prospects of an agreement between Fatah and Hamas [the point was being made that "outsiders" in Hamas, in Syria were calling the shots] ... However, the tactics used to force Israel to release prisoners and withdraw from occupied land are local choices. The fact that Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyiah [an "insider" in Gaza] and his other cabinet members knew nothing about the kidnap operation should not have been surprising. It was agreed within Hamas before the legislative elections were held that members of the movement who were elected to the PLC or appointed to the cabinet should forfeit their leadership position within the movement ... There has been much speculation about the existence of two tendencies or two points of view within Hamas on this particular issue. This, however, is nothing but a myth; it is a figment of the imagination or perhaps the result of wishful thinking. It is not true to say that Haniyiah is a moderate, while Mish'al is a radical or an extremist. While it is only natural that different individuals have different ways of expressing or conducting themselves, when it comes to policy or strategy both Haniyiah and Mish'al abide by the decisions of the collective leadership of the movement, based on *Shura* (*consultation*)".

It is clear from this chapter of the book the considerable disagreement if not hatred between the PLO (particularly Fatah) and Hamas, and the fact that elected representatives of Hamas appointed to cabinet or the PLC have no real power in Hamas. Such power resides elsewhere, possibly at least in part in the Political Bureau chief Khalid Mish'al, based in Damascus, Syria.

As the final lines of the book were being written by Tamimi in August/September 2006, Hizbollah in Lebanon captured two Israeli soldiers and killed eight others.

Subsequently, in June 2007, Hamas staged a military takeover in Gaza which was followed by the dismissal by President Abbas of the National Unity Government which had included Hamas and the PLO.

As the International Crisis Group [an independent conflict resolution NGO] put it this represents a “watershed in the Palestinian national movement’s history”. The Crisis Group went on to say “The events in Gaza have given rise to wholly conflicting accounts. For Fatah and those close to Abbas, they [Hamas] were a murderous, illegitimate coup that exposed the Islamists’ [Hamas] true face. The plan, they say, was premeditated and carried out with Iranian backing. They claim to have video proof of a Hamas-led plot to assassinate Abbas. Hamas, too, denounces an attempted coup, though one planned by Fatah elements determined to rob the Islamists of their electoral victory and overturn the Mecca agreement between the two rival organisations. They say those elements were fostering lawlessness in the Gaza Strip and that the US, Israel and several Arab countries conspired to isolate Hamas as well as arm and train loyalists to Fatah strongman Muhammad Dahlan in anticipation of a showdown. Hamas’s actions, they insist, were pre-emptive.

There is truth to both accounts. Evidence and eye-witness stories collected by Crisis Group suggest Hamas’s armed forces ... were strengthening their arsenal and taking steps in preparation for a fight. Their brutality and disregard for human life at the height of the confrontation also is beyond doubt ... But Fatah cannot escape blame. From the moment the Mecca Agreement was signed, several of its officials and presidential advisers undercut it ... But the Islamist takeover of virtually all PA institutions, the curtailment of basic freedoms and harassment of Fatah members bodes ill ... Hamas owes the Palestinian people answers as to its ultimate political goals and how it wants the national movement to achieve them” .^{xii}

This independent commentary, which ignores Hamas’s onslaught on the private sector in Gaza, unfortunately suggests that Hamas’s talk in its covenant about its desire for Palestinian unity, and brotherhood amongst all Palestinians, and its respect for diversity and basic human rights, appears to be pious words that carry little weight in practice when it gets the opportunity. Since the Hamas takeover in Gaza, reports, somewhat muted interestingly, have come out of attacks on internet cafes, cinemas, video clubs and other secular outlets. Unfortunately this is very much in line with the Hamas perception that such “non-religious” activities are Western imports which will only corrupt proper Muslims.

In 1980 in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip a demonstration organised by the forerunner of Hamas, (Al-Mujamma Al-Islami) occurred. Following this it was reported that “Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets, shouting ‘Allah Akbar’ [God is great], ‘down with Communism’, ‘long live Islam’. During the demonstration the ... militants attacked cafes, video shops and liqueur stores ... Two days later the offices of the secular al-Quds newspaper was set on fire, and a cinema, billiard hall and bar in Gaza was closed”.

Unfortunately 27 years later some things do not change for the better and the assumption that Hamas will change its core beliefs is - in my view – unfounded.

8. Conclusions

The position of the author of this book, his close relationship with Hamas, his access to many original Hamas Arabic documents and long interviews with Hamas leaders inside and outside Palestine, make this an extremely valuable and informative book. It is one of those books that will significantly reward a second reading. There is a huge amount of information, directly and indirectly available in it and surrounding it, on this crucial topic in relation to the Middle East and Gulf.

In reading it however it is important to appreciate that the very brief reference it makes to Ibn Taymiyya (the name of a university camp in Lebanon which the Hamas members expelled there by Israel chose) is extraordinarily important. Taymiyya (1268-1328) is widely understood to be the Islamic ideologist who provides the crucial justification to Al-Qaeda for its indiscriminate terror attacks mainly on Muslims but also on Westerners. The founder of the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt, out of which Hamas grew, and the patron of Hamas, Hassan Al-Banna, was significantly influenced by Ibn Taymiyya, as were Abdullah Azzam and Sayyid Qutb. These three ideologists were centrally involved in the development of the ideology underlying Al-Qaeda and, to my considerable surprise, to the development of the ideology underlying Hamas.

Reading this book I noted a pattern I have seen over the years when reading books, press releases, or detailed papers written by Al-Qaedaists. That is that the UN is rarely mentioned, unless it is to attack it as a Western/Zionist or Jewish conspiracy. I saw the same approach adopted in this book and in the Hamas documents attached in the appendices and referred to in it. This of course is based on the conspiracy theory that the West in general and the US and the UN in particular, are at heart manipulated by Jewish conspirators. That belief in such Nazi influenced, anti-semitic conspiracies pervades this book and the documentation of Hamas, other than press releases or letters addressed to Western audiences, where they are much more “careful” about their wording.

It is illuminating to see what this book does *not* cover. The dogs that don't bark include no detail whatsoever about the relationship between Hamas and the regimes in Iran and Syria, both widely known to have supplied it with weapons, training, and significant material and financial support. Tamimi refers to such supposed relationships fairly dismissively referring to “alleged links with Damascus and Tehran”. In view of the fact that the Hamas Political Bureau Chief, Khalid Mish'al is located in Damascus, this is a significant and telling omission. The difficult balancing acts that Hamas has had to maintain between the Sunni (majority) community of Islam that it belongs to and the Shia (minority) community, represented by Iran and sometimes Syria, within Islam is not really covered, nor is the balancing act between the axis of moderation (most Arab states in the region) and the axis of resistance (Iran and Syria in particular, both of whom oppose the peace process and peace with Israel or recognition of it). Tamimi also gives no information on what a final settlement would look like or even what the post-*Hudnah* (truce) phase would be like if Hamas was to sign a truce with Israel at some future date.

He therefore does not cover the nature or possibilities of a two-state solution (a separate state for Israel and the Palestinians) or a three-state solution even (separate states for Israel, the PLO and its supporters in the West Bank, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip) which is effectively occurring at present. Needless to say, much more understandably, he gives no information on what the Islamic Caliphate would look like if it was ever achieved. This is an important omission in view of the fact that most Hamas documents including its covenant and its 2006 election manifesto make clear that the settlement or termination of the problem in Palestine is only one stage on the road to the final Islamic Caliphate. They share this final objective fully with Al-Qaeda.

When you have Tamimi and Hamas stating verbally and acting as though the defeat by Israel of the Arab states in the Six Day War was the second greatest catastrophe that ever happened to Muslims since the dawn of history (the first catastrophe being the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948) you are left asking why? That question continually occurred to me while reading this book. Why is the tiny state of Israel of such extraordinary importance to Hamas?

Is it simply anti-Semitism?

Unfortunately there is a strong possibility that anti-Semitism is a major part of the answer.

Pew Global Attitude Surveys over recent years have shown that negative perceptions of Jews by Muslims are extraordinarily high. For example unfavourable views of Jews held by Egyptians and Jordanians, where information on such attitudes is available, are approximately 98% - with most of those in the very unfavourable category.

Matthias Küntzel puts it thus. "Firstly, it should be emphasised that the rise of Nazism and Islamism took place in the same period. This was no accident, for both movements represented attempts to answer the crisis of capitalism. However different their answers may have been, they shared a crucial central feature; in both cases the sense of belonging to a homogenous community had been created through mobilising for war and pogrom against the Jews."

"Neither the Mufti [el-Husseini, the first leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, which later became Hamas] nor the founders of the Muslim Brothers were creations of European Fascism. However, both were strengthened by it ...

Secondly, we have learned that the escalation of the Palestine conflict did not have "natural" or "historically determined" roots, but was and is the result of a purposeful campaign. While Jewish fundamentalism has throughout been a minority force within Zionism, in the Arab camp the radical anti-Jewish current lead by el-Husseini and al-Banna [founder of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Patron of Hamas] prevailed in bloody battles with its opponents. Their "holy war" never aimed to achieve a better life or individual happiness, but served a "higher" mission; the enforcement of an exclusive religious identity which eliminated everything foreign and ostracised even the hesitant as deserters".

Küntzel further states his opinion that the history of the Muslim Brotherhood shows that revolutionary anti-Semitism is no mere supplementary feature of modern Jihadism, it is at its core ... [He continues] “As a result, the delusion suppressed in Germany after May 8, 1945, showed its most fruitful exile in the Arab world, where the Muslim Brothers now disposed of a million followers”.

He is not alone in these views. Talking of the Hamas covenant, Sari Nusseibeh, the former PLO representative in Jerusalem, said that it “sounds as if it were copied out from the pages of *Der Sturmer*”. [This was the anti-semitic and anti-Western paper of the Nazi regime in Nazi Germany]. In January 2006 the Tunisian philosopher, Mezri Haddad, drew attention to the fact that Arab public opinion “has found in anti-Semitism, the perfect catalyst for all its narcissitic wounds and social, economic, and political frustrations”. Fundamentalism has “reduced the Qur’an to a case of nauseating anti-Semitism”, while admitting “that some Qur’anic verses, intentionally isolated from their historical context, have contributed even more to the anchoring of anti-semitic stereotypes in Arab-Muslim mentalities”. This “petrification” of the Arab-Muslim mentality can be reversed but would require “intellectual audacity” on the part of Islamic scholars.

Küntzel concludes – “Thus suicide terrorism, which Westerners find completely incomprehensible, is rationalised as an act of despair. [As seen above, Tamimi has made clear it is anything but]. Here too; following the principle of “the more barbaric the anti-Jewish terror, the greater the Israeli guilt”, the victims of the attacks become the source and scapegoat for global terrorism. Willingly or not, the old stereotype of “the Jew is guilty” is thus amplified in contemporary form – a development that only strengthens the terrorists’ determination. “The absence of clarity is the beginning of complicity””.

Küntzel finishes “But how can the West successfully fight against its foes if it feels obliged to explain terrorism as a result of its own behaviour? The “blind struggle” has a doubly counter-productive effect: it plays into the hands of the Islamists, who want to divide the West, and it stymies any Western offensive for enlightenment and self-determination, which is the only way to split the majority of Muslims from the Islamists. If we do not challenge the ideological roots of Islamism, it will be impossible to confront the Muslim world with the real alternative: will it choose an orientation towards life or towards death? Will it stand up for individual and social self-determination or submit to the program of uniformity of a death-obsessed clique of Mullahs and its integral Jew-hatred?”ⁱⁱⁱ

In attempting to answer that question and to understand why the focus on Israel the impact of its own apocalyptic thinking on contemporary Muslim opinion and views needs to be considered. David Cook following his survey in his book summarises the current position as he sees it. “The hostility towards Jews is greatly magnified beyond what the classical apocalyptic sources [Islamic] would allow, where Jews appear only incidentally. This magnification is based on Western anti-Semitic sources, which are accepted uncritically by the overwhelming majority of these authors. This is the principal difference between the radical school and the neo-conservatives. The former are perfectly willing to use (and abuse) the texts of other faiths to prove a point, and make use of a grand Jewish conspiracy (*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) throughout history to show the truth of their scenario ...

One also cannot help but notice that the centrality of the establishment of the state of Israel is one of the things that Muslim and Christian apocalypticists have in common, although its meaning is diametrically opposed in the traditions ... One can fairly say, for example, that the identification of the Jews-expected Messiah with the Antichrist is so firmly routed in Muslim apocalyptic that it even appears in certain conservative works, as well as appearing in all radical ones. This identification enables them to see the Arab-Israeli conflict in its entirety as an apocalyptic event and one in which the Arabs are destined to be victorious, despite the present gloomy situation. Of course, for many of these authors, the Arab-Israeli conflict is simply part of a greater conflict between Islam and the West, which must also be resolved in favour of the former before the end of the world ... All the writers surveyed believe that they are living in the last days, and in order to prove their point to an already sympathetic audience, the material about corruption, fornication, and so forth at the end of time is rehashed ...

Modern Muslim apocalyptic literature, therefore, combines reinterpretations of classical sources and biblical apocalyptic materials with expositions of a “Western and Jewish conspiracy”. A radical change in the direction of this writing took place in the 1980s and early 1990s. Rejecting the traditional, conservative approach to the sources, the Muslim apocalyptic increasingly emphasized the coming apocalypse in order to give their texts life ... allowing the Muslim apocalyptic to explain away (at least to himself) the frustrating and enraging events of the modern world, which he sees as attacking his values and those of his fellow believers at every juncture. There is a limited tendency to promise a glorious future; the more prominent necessity is to explain the present. However, because of the negative effects of the apocalyptic scenario, it is very likely that it will result in self-fulfilment and prolong that dismal present beyond what would be strictly necessary”.^x

From the analysis set out above, it is therefore very clear that German Nazi thinking, Western anti-semitic beliefs, and Muslim apocalyptic views, have all had a strong impact on the worldview and beliefs of Hamas.

But have these views changed recently?

The author, Azzam Tamimi, published a Conflicts Forum Monograph entitled *The Political Implications of the Hamas Electoral Victory from the Islamist perspective* in November 2007. The views expressed in it are therefore quite current.

On the recognition of Israel – “Hamas has always insisted that it would never recognise Israel’s right to exist on the land of the Palestinians”.

On the existence of Western and Jewish conspiracies – quoting Fathi Yakan, former leader of the Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood – “Since the West and the Zionist lobby brought down the Caliphate, regardless of how weak it was or how committed to Islam it was ... The Sykes-Picot arrangement [supposed Western Colonial plot] fearing the Islamic world – aimed to separate politics from religion and substitute nationalism to replace Islam. What was intended was to confine Islam to the practice of worship, religious rituals, and the administration of cemeteries ... The US and Israel, viewed the democratic success of Islamist movements, including Hamas, as an

alarming development, since these movements constitute an impediment to their plans for the Middle East and pose a threat to the existence of Israel in the region”.

Finally and most importantly the fact that Palestine is an Islamic Waqf that cannot be “given away” to Israel, [or Spain, I might add, given to non-Muslim Spaniards] – “ Hamas ... reiterated its position that Palestine was Islamic endowment land [Waqf] and that no-one could concede any part of it ... Hamas will never recognise Israel”.

The only possible redeeming feature in this very negative scenario is the history of tactical improvisation on the part of Hamas. Will it, like Sinn Fein/IRA in the Irish peace process oppose every agreement until it is directly involved in same itself and acquires power?

Following an extraordinary difficult debate within Hamas and the wider Islamist movement, Hamas took part in the 2006 Palestinian elections and eventually took power. I believe, based on this precedent, that it may eventually “settle” at least temporarily with Israel in some shape or fashion. With the background of its own conspiracy beliefs, its anti-Semitism, and taking account of its virulent religious beliefs and long-term objectives, squaring that circle by it appears to be almost an insurmountable obstacle. The alternative approach of the Quartet (the UN, EU, Russia and the US) of effectively excluding Hamas, assumes that support for it has totally collapsed and its ability to wreck any peace process or agreement is minimal. These assumptions appear incorrect at this time.

But how appropriate is it to use *Hamas Unwritten Chapters* by Azzam Tamimi to draw substantive conclusions?

The independent International Institute for Strategic Studies, a centre for research, information and debate on the problems of conflict, reviewed this book in its Winter 2007/8 Quarterly, *Survival*. The reviewer, Khaled Hroub, is a director of the Cambridge Arab Media Project and the author of a number of books on Hamas. He describes the book as “as close as possible to an ‘insider’s account’ of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement”. His review was positive, which was why I chose this book to develop my knowledge and understanding of Hamas.

In reading it, it became clear to me, that Germany, and its Nazi period in particular, had some influence on the development of the “mother” organisation of Hamas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. For that reason it appeared appropriate to obtain a German view on these matters, particularly one that focused on that time and on the development of Islamism. Matthias Kuntzel’s book met that requirement quite well.ⁱⁱⁱ From my detailed knowledge of the development of the ideology underlying Al-Qaeda, I was aware that contemporary Muslim apocalyptic thinking had a bearing on both its thinking and on the thinking of Islamists generally. David Cook’s book on that subject helped in that regard.^x

Overall my personal conclusion is that Hamas is much closer to Al-Qaeda in ideology and objectives than I had expected. It is going to be extraordinarily difficult for Israel, the PLO, and the quartet of the UN, EU, Russia and the US to deal with it. It may however still form a part of any solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis.

With respect to the broader question of the Muslim Brotherhood organisations themselves, it is clear that they are not democratic organisations as we in the West would understand, and with their secret structures and (frequently) military wings, will be difficult partners in the development of democracy in the Middle East and Gulf. However, there is I believe no alternative to that development – but it is a development that must be carefully managed over a period of 20 to 25 years.

Any democratic experiment that leaves the relevant voters with a choice of the existing, usually highly corrupt and inefficient, regime and the only body that is “allowed” to be active in such states, religious ones such as the Muslim Brotherhood, is a false choice. It behoves those who wish to see the Middle East/Gulf region develop in a positive fashion in terms of basic human and civil rights, and the practice of pluralism, to encourage the development of “third forces” that are somewhat more secular than the Muslim Brotherhood, and to encourage the Muslim Brotherhood to move in a more open, democratic and plural fashion.

Hamas, inaccurately, might be described as the acceptable, nationalist, face of Al-Qaeda. Inaccurately – because when one fully understands what they believe and the real meaning of those beliefs, they are clearly the antithesis of pluralism. Inaccurately – as the struggle in Palestine is clearly to them only a major step on the way to a unified, guided Ummah (Islamic Empire) with all that entails.

Hamas see themselves as in direct competition with Al-Qaeda – a fact I was well aware of. What I did not know is that they both share the same final objective – the Islamic Caliphate – differing only in the tactics of achieving it.

At this time all the parties in the Middle East conflict need outside support to end that long running struggle. In that endeavour the Quartet (the UN, EU, Russia and the US) should ensure that that effort, that process, is carried out under “our” rules (in essence pluralism with all its trappings) and confront the racist, exclusionist, conspiracy-laden beliefs of Hamas. To conform to their belief system would be the ultimate betrayal, not only of our own beliefs, but of the vast majority of Muslims. Poll after poll, and attitude survey after attitude survey shows that the vast majority of Muslims want democracy, pluralism, and the separation of powers, with an Islamic tinge to same and not a Sharia-driven Islamic Caliphate.

Confronting Hamas and insisting that it clarifies its own objectives and tactics once and for all to the Quartet, and to the long suffering Palestinian people, is essential.

Richard Whelan, March 2008.

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Footnotes

ⁱ Khaled Hroub, Director of the Cambridge Arab Media Project and author of *Hamas: A Beginners Guide* (2006), *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (2000), in *Survival*, Winter 2007/08 the quarterly of The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

ⁱⁱ www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/story/0,,2205375,00.htmlwww.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/story/0,,2205375,00.html, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh6q02J6dJk

ⁱⁱⁱ *Jihad and Jew Hatred Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11* by Matthias Kuntzel, Telos Press Publishing

^{iv} Published by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Jerusalem 1994

^v Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996)

^{vi} French writer, author of *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, Harvard University Press, 2004

^{vii} Sayigh, Yezid. *Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt*. *Survival* 43:47-60 Autumn 2001

^{viii} www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm

^{ix} *Al-Qaedaism The Threat to Islam The Threat to the World*, published by Ashfield Press in Ireland and Platin in Turkey

^x David Cook, *Comtemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, Syracuse University Press, 2005

^{xi} Joseph Croitoru: *Hamas. Der islamische Kampf um Palastina*. C.H. Beck 2007

^{xii} International Crisis Group – Middle East Report Number 68 – 2 August 2007.