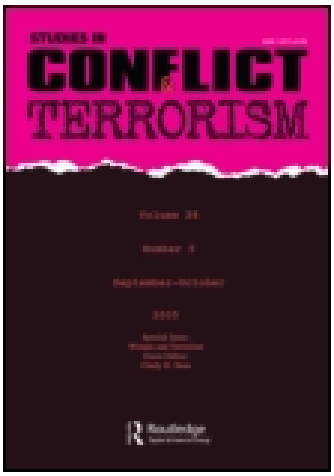

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Review Article

Challenging the "Received View": De-demonizing Hamas

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Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000), 329 pp.

Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 244 pp.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a succession of political events combined to stimulate Western scholars' and analysts' interest in Islam as a political force. Most prominently, the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the activities of the Lebanese Hizb'Allah indicated that politicized Islam was gaining prominence in Middle Eastern affairs.

In every polity, regardless of its ideology and structures, there seems to exist a nexus between the interests and activities of scholars, on the one hand, and the practical concerns of policymakers and politicians, on the other; this applies to Western-style liberal democracies as well as to authoritarian systems.[1] That the early interest of Western scholars in political Islam was predicated in no small measure on the security concerns of Western governments is clear when one considers its foci of interest, and, importantly, what fell outside the same. For instance, the various Jihad groups terrorizing the pro-Western regime in Egypt quickly became objects of intense interest, while the deeply fundamentalist, U.S.-supported *mujahidin* fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan elicited only scant scholarly concern. The self-styled "revolutionary" and "anti-imperialist" Islamic Republic of Iran engrossed analytical imaginations, although the absolutist and

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fundamentalist ethics and practices of the religious–political establishment in Saudi Arabia merited very little interest. The Hizb'Allah's operations in Lebanon—affecting American, Israeli, and other Western forces and interests—attracted legions of political scientists and analysts, whereas the far more comprehensive terrorist campaign waged against the Syrian government by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) went virtually unnoticed. Obviously, the point is not to indict scholars for failing to study all angles of all phenomena all the time, but simply to note that the foci of Western political scientists' earlier work on politicized Islam evidenced a profoundly ethnocentric acuity, which had little to do with Islamism as a social phenomenon and much to do with Islamism as an emergent threat to specifically Western interests and allies. Western studies of political Islam became deeply importuned by exercises in threat assessment and crisis management.[2]

Hamas and Western Scholarship

Although the Movement of Islamic Jihad in Palestine (MIJ) had been founded in Gaza back in 1980, its activities had been too minor to attract much attention. The foundation of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas in late 1987, coinciding with the ignition of the *intifada*, transformed Palestinian Islamism from a marginal issue to a central concern, drawing the attention of scholars and policymakers alike. A substantial body of academic work has since been devoted to dissecting, scrutinizing, analyzing, and explaining Palestinian Islamism in general, and Hamas in particular.

Because of Hamas's very real and ongoing significance in Palestinian politics, and consequently in the larger context of Arab-Israeli relations, much of the analytical effort expended on it has been "applied" and policy oriented in nature. Scholars have been in a position to conduct the sort of research that Western government agencies have craved, and the publication output often appears to reflect an awareness that such agencies constitute a primary audience: Organizational structures have been ferreted out and recruitment and training processes have been surmised. Political implications of theological precepts have been deduced and leading personalities have been described. Threats to the peace process have been assessed. Regrettably, much of the literature has lacked methodological rigor as well as a thorough foundation in historical and sociopolitical realities. The fact that a significant segment of those responsible for major political analyses of Hamas—whether in book form or scholarly articles—speak or read no Arabic have naturally affected the quality of the literature output. The political demonology and mythology constructed in the course of scholarly research on Hamas has nonetheless proved immensely powerful, serving as a baseline from which proceeds the all-too-familiar moralizing, acrimonious, and prescriptive litany of academic works that read more like political propaganda than social science.

So much more welcome, then, are the two contributions under review, Khaled Hroub's *Hamas* and Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela's *The Palestinian Hamas*. Although the two volumes are very different in terms of structure and style, both approach Hamas, not as a terrorist organization beyond the pale of reason and dialogue but as a *bona fide* social and political movement. If there was any doubt that "terrorist organizations" are most fruitfully studied outside the restrictive framework of "terrorism studies," these two contributions attest to that point.

Both contributions seek to contextualize the movement within the larger spheres of Palestinian politics and Islamic political thought and describe both its relatedness to these as well as its idiosyncrasies. Moreover, both volumes take seriously the subtleties

and complexities of Hamas's "methods of controlled violence, negotiated coexistence, and strategic decision making"[3] and are thus able to paint perceptive and multidimensional pictures of Hamas in its various historical stages, and of its members and their motivations. Whereas much of the extant literature on Hamas tends to become obsolete as soon as the Oslo process takes a new turn, these contributions clearly possess the sort of durability that is the hallmark of good scholarship. Written well before the outbreak of the current *intifada*, they nevertheless offer insights into its interfactional dynamics. Neither book is without difficulty, but *Hamas* and *The Palestinian Hamas* are possibly the two finest contributions to the academic study of the Islamic Resistance Movement to date.

Mishal and Sela state that their contribution "seeks to portray Hamas from both discursive and practical perspectives through the prism of its worldview and to examine its conduct since its inception . . . to survey the ideological trends within the movement; analyze the political considerations shaping Hamas's strategies of action; and evaluate its options in the event of a future settlement between Israel and the nascent Palestinian Authority."[4] Hroub's contribution—which is a substantial rewriting of a book he published previously in Arabic[5]—aims "to provide a balanced picture of Hamas by highlighting the various functions and roles that the movement plays. . . . It examines the role of Hamas as a resistance organization, as well as its political and social roles, by delving into its ideology and actual practice. . . ."[6] In effect, Hroub's central effort lies in his examination of the intellectual, philosophical, and ideological aspects of Hamas's development, whereas Mishal and Sela place a greater emphasis on the sociopolitical realities that have surrounded and shaped the movement; the two volumes thus complement each other well.

Mishal and Sela's The Palestinian Hamas

This contribution is divided into six thematic chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect of the movement's development and activities. Although this structure means that each chapter is essentially a self-contained essay, the flipside is a somewhat irritating process of duplication as a number of events and developments are needlessly rehashed in several chapters. The primary material consulted by the authors is mainly textual, with no evidence of personal encounters with Hamas leaders and cadres. The authors were, allegedly, given access to a wealth of Hamas internal documents captured by Israeli security forces, and, although this may not be an ideal way of acquiring information within the context of an ongoing conflict, they have made excellent use of it. The sources have been effortlessly woven into the narrative and the authors are clearly not only good analysts, but also fine writers.

After an introductory section that serves as an overview of the wisdoms (and lack thereof) of extant research on political Islam and Islamic movements, chapter one attempts to retrace the roots and initial circumstances that led to the establishment of Hamas and the emergence of its particular doctrine and ideology. Situating Hamas within the broader context of the Palestinian national movement, the chapter outlines the process whereby the movement eventually adopted an Islamized version of the PLO's original goals and, conversely, infused basic religious precepts with a vibrant Palestinian nationalism. It covers salient dates and events in the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) trajectory from an essentially nonviolent social and educational institution, to the establishment of Hamas—its "combatant arm"—in 1987. The 13-page chapter constitutes a rather cursory and, therefore, somewhat disappointing guide to pre-1987 Islamic

activity in Palestine. The reader who wants a sense of historical depth would do well to consult Beverly Milton-Edwards's unrivaled *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (which is curiously absent from Mishal and Sela's bibliography).[7]

The second chapter discusses the problematique pertaining to "the encounter of dogmas and politics."[8] Situating the discussion within the context of Islamic revival generally, it harks all the way back to Hassan al-Banna and the foundation of the MB in Egypt, dealing at some length with issues that would have sat much better in the preceding historical overview. Even so, the chapter manages to paint an engaging picture of the MB's and Hamas's quest to adapt religious principles to prevailing political realities and possibilities. Particular attention is paid to the movement's relationship with the PLO leadership and, after Oslo, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the various political limbo-acts it has performed in order to remain politically significant, yet untainted by the latter's "corruption and treachery." Elucidating the doctrinal complexities that have faced Hamas's leaders, the chapter reveals the movement as anything but a collection of uncompromising fanatics. Rather, it makes clear that brinkmanship, compromise, and balancing acts are Hamas's forte.

Chapter three "focuses on the development of the movement's violent activities and on the structural implications and considerations deriving from their use."[9] The chapter examines the structures and activities of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Battalions, Hamas's military wing, and provides an interesting account of the process of cost-benefit analysis that the authors convincingly argue determines the efficacy of armed operations at any given point. In the words of Musa Abu Marzouq, head of Hamas's Political Bureau,

> the military activity is a permanent strategy that will not change. The modus operandi, tactics, means, and timing will depend on their benefit. They will change from time to time in order to cause the heaviest damage to the occupation.[10]

The authors' discussion of cost-benefit analysis highlights the planning that has allowed Hamas to remain a major actor in Palestinian politics, and the tradeoff between pursuit of ideals and acceptance of the constraints of reality. Although its agenda and rhetoric has required armed resistance against the occupation, Hamas has found itself in a political environment utterly inhospitable to such activities. In signing the Oslo accords, Arafat effectively allowed himself to become Israel's enforcer in the occupied territories.[11] Knowing that Palestinian internecine violence would only serve Israeli interests, Hamas, the authors demonstrate, has sought to construct "a policy combining continued violence against Israel, a propaganda campaign designed to expose the DOP's [Declaration of Principles] weaknesses and thus bring about its abolition and the avoidance, at almost any price, of violent confrontation with the PA. . . ."[12] The authors describe this balancing act with keen attention to its numerous hazards and obstacles.

One central aspect of Hamas's violent behavior given surprisingly little attention, however, is its justification for the killing of Israeli civilians. How does a movement based on Islamic principles justify the killing of noncombatants? The issue is given no penetrating treatment in this chapter, nor in the preceding discussion of "dogma and politics." There is discussion of the doctrinal defenses of suicide bombings, but such actions are far from always directed against noncombatants. On the issue of killing civilians, the rather unsatisfactory fact is that Hamas has chosen to live, temporarily, with incongruence. "Hamas declared itself in 1987 and it stated clearly that its military action was directed against the military forces of the Zionist enemy," Hamas politburo member 'Imad al-'Alami told the present author during an interview in late 2001, and continued:

> But every day the Zionists were killing our women and children, destroying our houses and cutting down our trees. After the attack against the Ibrahimi Mosque [by settler Baruch Goldstein in February 1994], Hamas decided that it had no choice but repay the Zionists in kind. . . . When the Zionist occupation stops killing civilians and destroying homes, then we will stop also.[13]

Another central aspect of Hamas's internal political dynamics appears misconstrued by Mishal and Sela: The underlying reasons for the militancy of Hamas's "outside leadership," today mostly located in Syria and Lebanon, compared to the relative moderation of the "inside leadership" located in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The worldview of the outside leadership, which oversees the general strategy of the 'Izz al Din al-Qassam Battalions and directs a significant portion of its operations, is an important issue. Mishal and Sela continuously approach the militancy of the outside leadership as a result of its being removed from the sociopolitical realities of everyday politics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In a later chapter they suggest that the outside leaders "do not have to cope with the reality of Israeli occupation, the PA's domination, and the daily hardships of the Palestinian community, which might explain why they can afford to adopt a harder line concerning the armed struggle and the Oslo process."[14] Rather than ascribing the outside leaders' militancy to a defective grasp of reality, it seems that a grasp of a *different* reality may be a better explanation. The outside leaders live and work among Palestinian refugees in neighboring Arab countries, whose profound sense of abandonment and betrayal after Oslo, combined with adverse socioeconomic circumstances, have produced a very different political dynamic compared to that inside Palestine. The outside leaders' relative radicalism may be better understood as a reflection of everyday contact with a more desperate and less mollified outside constituency. However, and rather disappointingly, the very existence of Palestinian refugees—constituting, after all, a majority of the Palestinian people—is almost totally ignored throughout the book, as are any political repercussions their ignominious existence may have.

Chapter four examines Hamas relations with the so-called Palestinian mainstream both prior to, and following the creation of the Palestinian Authority in June 1994. It argues, rather standardly, that Hamas's structural subordination within the PA-centric political system precipitated and sustained its effort at dialogue and coexistence with Arafat's PLO/PA leadership. In this context, the authors explain how Hamas has been able to tamper with and adapt its doctrinal framework for the sake of avoiding confrontation with the PLO/PA.

The chapter makes repeated references to Hamas relations with the PLO, treating the latter as if it were a unified grouping, rather than the hotbed of factionalist strife that it in reality has always been. The authors never make a clear distinction between the PLO *leadership* under Yasser Arafat, and the PLO *resistance*, represented by groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). This carelessness becomes confusing at times because, on the ground, Hamas's relationship with the PLO resistance has been based on wholly different premises than have its relations with the PLO leadership, beginning after the 1988 Palestinian National Council (PNC) in Algiers. The relationship between Hamas and the PLO resistance has essentially been a partnership—opportune, yet awkward—whereas the movement's relationship with Arafat's PLO leadership has always been essentially adversarial and antipathetic. This is not properly explained or accounted for and one occasionally gets the impression that the authors consider all Palestinian factions other than Fateh and Hamas too trivial to merit attention.

The fifth chapter studies "the movement's vacillations and calculations with regard to participation in the political process and the bureaucratic apparatuses under the Palestinian Authority."[15] Following an instructive overview of how other Islamic movements have approached the practicalities of political participation, the authors go on to discuss Hamas's options and choices. Interestingly, they suggest that the prolonged internal debate as to whether the primary instruments of the struggle should be military or political, coinciding roughly with the Madrid negotiations 1991 through 1993

> shows unequivocally that Hamas's paramount concern was to ensure its future as a social and political movement within the framework of a Palestinian self-governing authority. The armed struggle against Israel was therefore not a strategic but a tactical goal, subordinated to the movement's need in the Palestinian arena.[16]

This insight is a radical departure from the received view, but Mishal and Sela make a sound argument in support of their claim; this is the junction at which their use of internal Hamas documents is most effective. The implication of viewing Hamas's armed struggle against Israel as tactical rather than strategic is, of course, that there is room for negotiation and dialogue. The sixth and final chapter examines Hamas's strategies and structures and "the prospects for changes in the movement's modes of action and political prospects."[17] On the issue of dialogue with Israel, Mishal and Sela are prudently noncommittal, neither insisting on, nor excluding the possibility. One may observe that although any dialogue with an overtly Zionist entity is, and in all probability will remain, out of the question, it is a fact that Hamas, including the "hard-line" external leadership, is not averse to dialogue and intercultural exchange with non-Zionist Jewish groups and movements. This is a possible foundation for constructive intercultural dialogue.

Khaled Hroub's *Hamas*

Hroub's contribution is a very carefully and methodically structured study of virtually every aspect of the movement's existence, with a firm foundation in its own hermeneutic, that is, cognitive framework and intellectual preoccupations. This makes it very different from Mishal and Sela's more "sociological" approach. Mishal and Sela cover a lot of ground, but Hroub still manages to cover more ground as well as provide additional detail. Since Hroub's book is more voluminous than Mishal and Sela's, this is only to be expected. Moreover, Hroub is able to use a number of his own interviews with Hamas leaders and cadres, and has also gained access to an excellent range of documents that enable him to examine the movement "from within." The style of Hroub's book is considerably more stilted than Mishal and Sela's, but its content is nonetheless excellent.

Chapter one provides "a critical analysis of the rise and development of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine" and "details on the creation of Hamas."[18] It is, indeed, a relatively detailed exposé of historical Palestinian Islamic activism, and its treatment of the different post-1948 trajectories of the MB in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is highly informative, as is the discussion of MB relations with Fateh in the 1950s and 1960s. Describing Palestinian Islamism's trajectory over the decades, Hroub draws on the delineation of early Hamas leader Khalil al-Qawqa, describing the years 1967 to 1975 as "the phase of mosque building," whereas the period 1975 until the outbreak of

the *intifada* is referred to as "the phase of social institution building."[19] It is on the basis of the MB's persistent efforts in these two fields—advancing religious observance and creating beneficial social networks—that Hamas, once created, was able to easily install itself in the minds and hearts of broad segments of the Palestinian people. The chapter is an adequate introduction to the topic.

Chapter two offers a "detailed reading of Hamas's vision of the struggle over Palestine and its principal elements."[20] The chapter is, in fact, an analytical odyssey that affords the reader an understanding of Hamas presuppositional development from its initial, crude, *anti-Jewish* vitriol (most clearly expressed in the Hamas Charter), to its present multidimensional, anti-colonialist, *anti-Zionist* zeal. Hroub lets the reader understand how, why, and when Hamas intellectual positions evolved and discusses issues pertaining to the movement's strategy, its view of the various parties to the conflict and its view of practical, political, and moral considerations arising from the struggle. Thanks to Hroub's ability to draw on a multitude of primary sources, this discussion of Hamas's intellectual development is possibly the most absorbing and instructive that the present reviewer has ever come across.

The third chapter examines Hamas's relations with other Palestinian groups and, in this context, "how the movement's ideology and theory were translated into practice."[21] An examination of Hamas's relationship with, and attitudes toward "PLO/Fateh" provides an explanation of the friction that arose from the growing significance of Hamas in conjunction with the PLO's need to safeguard its social status. A discussion of Hamas's relations with the PA is followed by an examination of its relations with the PLO resistance. This is possibly the book's weakest point, and clearly manifests what in other sections is an inconspicuous tendency on the author's part—inflating Hamas's importance relative to other political actors. In so doing, Hroub, who should know better, in some measure falls prey to the prevailing Western image of intra-Palestinian politics as, essentially, a contest between Hamas and Arafat (thus his above-mentioned equation of pre-Oslo PLO and Fateh). A case in point is his discussion of the Ten Forces Resistance Organization (TFRO), a forum set up in October 1991 to oppose the Madrid negotiations. It was a collaborative effort comprising leftist–nationalist resistance groups, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas. Hroub tells us that

> From the beginning, the participation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in this alliance of opposition forces had a noticeable impact on the TRO's [sic] political discourse. The language in a significant number of alliance releases had a distinct Islamic tone and expressed the ideas of Hamas. This is particularly apparent in the emphasis placed on the borders of historic Palestine (from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River), the rejection of any peace settlement whatever, and the references to the Islamic dimension of the problem.[22]

Hroub seems to takes a similar view of Hamas's preponderance when it comes to the establishment of the Alliance of Palestinian Forces (APF), set up in 1993 to resist and reject the Oslo process and the PA.[23] This perspective is peculiar: What Hroub refers to as "the ideas of Hamas" had for several decades been part and parcel of the PLO's baseline for its struggle against Israeli occupation. In calling for the liberation of Palestine "from the river to the sea" and rejecting peace with the enemy, the leftist–nationalist factions simply continued to adhere to the PLO National Covenant.[24] Also, although the Islamic flavor of the statements and declarations of both the TFRO and APF reflected the influence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, it is significant that several of the

secular factions, perhaps most notably the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), had begun to Islamize their political discourse already in the early 1980s in order to cash in on the Islamist groundswell at the time. According to PFLP-GC deputy secretary general Talal Naji, Islamization of his faction's discourse reflected "the fact that most of our members are Muslims . . . attracted by the Islamic Revolution in Iran" as well as "appreciation of the activities of the Hizb'Allah. Also, we were very pleased to see the birth of two Islamic factions [Islamic Jihad and Hamas] into a movement that was very conservative."[25]

As Mishal and Sela noted, Hamas Islamized the PLO's political goals, and placed its own Islamist zeal in the service of the Palestinian national cause. This is an important point, because one of the more common Western misperceptions of the Palestinian resistance against the Oslo process and the PA is that it is an essentially Islamist struggle. Traditionally, the proffering of this perspective has served to demonize the Palestinian cause, equating the struggle for legitimate rights with "Islamist terrorism."[26] The fact is that although Hamas is a formidable organization it does not represent the aspirations of a majority of the Palestinian people, nor does it control or direct the collective efforts of the Palestinian resistance. The national movement is a dynamic framework and an interdependent environment, and the factions tend to function together and complement each other within an organic whole. Hroub does not appear to recognize this.

Chapter four analyzes Hamas international relations with Arab, Islamic, and other states, including Israel. The chapter expands on issues such as the movement's commitment to noninterference in the domestic affairs of Arab states and elaborates on its views on a range of Arab issues. The chapter offers an insight into why and how Hamas is able to enjoy constructive relations with a number of Arab governments. Hamas is many things to many governments, and its nationalist zeal appeals to nationalist governments, while its Islamic agenda attracts the support of Islamic governments. This has benefited the movement's political stature as well as its coffers.

The chapter also examines Hamas's views of specific places and conflicts in the wider Islamic world, including Iran, Afghanistan, and Chechnya. In the section on Afghanistan, Hroub refers to the movement's condemnation of the United States's 1998 bombings of Osama bin Laden's bases in that country. Following the atrocities of 11 September, it might be useful to outline Hamas's position on Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaida. The movement refuses to denounce bin Laden as it sees itself as unable for theological reasons—to denounce any Muslim struggling to restore the Holy Places, including al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, to Islamic jurisdiction. This vexatious inability is doubtless part of Hamas's practice of deliberately "sitting on the fence" if so doing is politically beneficial. Also, the United States and United Kingdom's initial failure to make public any credible evidence linking bin Laden to the attacks made Hamas disinclined to simply take Washington's word on the issue of culpability (the various video cassettes that have emerged from Afghanistan since then have substantially ameliorated this problem). Even so, Hamas condemnation of the attacks of 11 September has been categorical. 'Imad al-'Alami has even voiced support for the United States's right to self defense, to track down the perpetrators and bring them to justice.[27]

Chapter five examines the movement's "ideological and practical positions on elections, political pluralism, and social work."[28] The discussion of Hamas's deliberations in connection with elections, particularly the so-called self-rule elections of 1996 is instructive. The subsequent section on Hamas's social work explains the movement's vast infrastructure of social services through which it has become an indispensable element of maintaining Palestinians's quality of life. One of the problems that Arafat is

grappling with as Israel is forcing him to comprehensively confront Hamas is the fact that Hamas is performing many of the social services that the corrupt and inept PA ought to be performing. Shutting down Hamas thus means hurling the Palestinian people further into social deprivation and misery, and unless the PA is assisted (or forced) by the West to replace Hamas's social institutions with efficient and viable ones of its own, the Palestinian people will suffer heavily and militancy will be fed. Often misrepresented as mere terrorism support activities, the bulk of charitable institutions run by, or affiliated with Hamas are in fact bona fide social institutions. They thus pose a problem entirely separate from those arising from military-political confrontation with the movement.

The conclusion wraps up the arguments neatly, looking separately at conclusions to be drawn on the issues of political thought, practice, and, that nebulous realm, the future. One of Hroub's basic, initially stated contentions is that "the increase in popular support for any Palestinian political movement is commensurate, in a very basic sense, with its capacity to serve as an outlet for resistance against the occupation and with its ability to secure a minimally reasonable level of satisfaction of Palestinian rights."[29] His efforts to illustrate this point, and offer a multitude of other insights, are—with few exceptions—outstanding.

Summary

An Arabic play on words contends that "*kull al-wusuliyyin usuliyyin*," ["all fundamentalists are opportunists."] Both contributions under review demonstrate that there is more than a grain of truth to that expression. No matter how badly the West would like to think that Hamas, its leaders, and cadres are simply unthinkingly fanatical, they are not. As both contributions demonstrate, cost-benefit calculations and a host of political subtleties and complexities inform Hamas decision-making processes and the movement's military operations against Israeli targets—military and civilian—are tactical, not strategic measures. The movement's strategic objective, then, has evolved from an initial urge to destroy Israel and expel its Jewish population, to its current aspiration to restore Palestinian rights through the implementation of relevant UN resolutions. "It is with a heavy heart, but I do accept the existence of Israel within its 1967 borders," 'Imad al-'Alami told this author along with several Western diplomats.[30] This, in fact, places Hamas's objectives squarely in the mainstream of the Palestinian national movement, the Arab League, and most Western states. Its violent methods continue to shock and outrage—and rightly so—but if these are merely tactical measures, they can be brought to an end.

Both Hroub and Mishal and Sela explain how Hamas as a political phenomenon is a response to a number of social and political stimuli, as well as underscore the movement's distinctiveness. "Men who injure and oppress the people under their administration provoke them to cry out and complain; and then make that very complaint the foundation for new oppressions and prosecutions."[31] That Andrew Hamilton's words apply to Hamas's activities and agenda should be obvious to anyone who agrees with the dictum that "terrorism does not occur in a vacuum." Hamas is a symptom of the severe conditions under which the Palestinian people find themselves; treat the condition and the symptom will recede.

There is scarcely a greater enemy of scholarly advancement than "the received view," a supposedly unchallengeable truth within a discipline that for reasons of intellectual inertia and political correctness acquires the status of Divine Law and becomes a cornerstone of subsequent research.[32] Conversely, there is hardly a greater service that scholars

can render academia than challenging and destroying received views. The conduct of critical research that calls into question not only conclusions and hypotheses but models, frameworks, and standard, basic "truths" are what ensure intellectual progress. Each in its own way, Hroub's *Hamas* and Mishal and Sela's *The Palestinian Hamas* have accomplished a measure of just that. The reader who wishes to understand Hamas as a social, political, and military organization by avoiding the all-too-common sensationalism and misrepresentations that dominate literature on the movement could do no better than reading these two excellent contributions to scholarship.

Notes

1. For an analysis of the nexus between "terrorism studies" and Western intelligence agencies, see David W. Brannan, Philip F. Esler, and Anders Strindberg, "Talking to 'Terrorists': Towards an Independent Analytical Framework for the Study of Violent Sub-State Activism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 24(1) (January 2001), esp. pp. 10–14.

2. For an overview and critique of early scholarly conceptualization of Islam as a threat to the West and modernity, see. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). For a comprehensive critique of Western intellectual and political approaches to the orient and the process of systematically "othering" it, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995). See also Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

3. Mishal and Sela, p. 3.

4. Ibid., preface.

5. Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa-l-Mumarasa al-Siyasiyya* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996; 2nd edition 1997).

6. Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, pp. 3–4 (all subsequent references to Hroub refer to this volume).

7. Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London and New York: Tauris, 1996).

8. Mishal and Sela, preface.

9. Ibid.

10. *Filastin al-Muslima* (June 1994), as quoted in Mishal and Sela, p. 67.

11. For an elaboration of this perspective, see, for instance the interview with Ilan Pappé in Graham Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), pp. 34–41.

12. Mishal and Sela, p. 68.

13. For an abridged transcript of the interview, see Anders Strindberg, "Interview with 'Imad al-'Alami," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 13(12) (December 2001), p. 56.

14. Mishal and Sela, p. 161.

15. Ibid., preface.

16. Ibid., p. 120.

17. Ibid., preface.

18. Hroub, p. 7.

19. Ibid., p. 31.

20. Ibid., p. 7.

21. Ibid., p. 8.

22. Ibid., p. 119.

23. Ibid., p. 121.

24. For an overview of the foundational rationale of the APF, see Anders Strindberg, "The Damascus-Based Alliance of Palestinian Forces: A Primer," *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXIX/3(115) (Spring 2000), pp. 60–76.

25. Interview with author, Damascus, 30 May 1999.

26. For a critique of this view, see Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), pp. 44–50.

27. Anders Strindberg, "Interview with 'Imad al-'Alami."

28. Hroub, p. 8.

29. Ibid., p. 5.

30. Damascus, November 2000.

31. Andrew Hamilton, 4 August 1735; quoted in Paul M. Angle, ed., *By These Words: Great Documents of American Liberty* (New York et al.: Rand McNally & Company, 1954), p. 29.

32. For an explanation of the "received view," see Bruce J. Malina, "The Received View and What it Cannot Do" in Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 217–241, and the literature he cites.