Introduction

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the League of Nations imposed a mandate over the property of the Empire, which included Palestine. As a result, British forces took over Palestine in 1920. Since then, many political, societal, economic and intellectual movements have emerged to stand against British policies that favoured the non-indigenous people of Palestine and the mass immigration of Jews.

Considering the complexity of the Palestinian political situation and in light of the emergence of political parties with different goals, a political division between the Palestinian leadership emerged. At the beginning, the conflict was between two bourgeoisie, egalitarian families that had links to the Ottoman empire. The political and social conflicts began to rise between the *Husayni* and *Nashashibi* families, with the crisis breaking out over the leadership of *Dar Al-Ifta* and the Supreme Muslim Council. As is argued in this paper, the early stages of the Palestinian division greatly contributed to both the loss of historic Palestine and the loss of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, putting the rest of Palestine (West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) under Egyptian and Jordanian administrations.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) emerged to reflect Palestinians' aspirations in a troubling time and region. The PLO tried to gather all of the existing Palestinian factions and movements, attempting to maintain a united national movement even within a limited framework. However, for all factions, it left a margin of freedom to manoeuvre according to their objectives, regional and international allies, and ideologies. Despite this freedom, many conflicts and divisions emerged within the PLO itself as well as other parties, many of which ended either in violent conflict or the formation of new parties.

Later, following the defeat of 1967, the fall of all Palestine under Israeli occupation, and the 1982 Beirut siege, the Islamic movement emerged with the founding of the Islamic Jihad movement, followed by *Hamas*, which is regarded as Palestine's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Since then, conflict has arisen between *Hamas*, representing the Islamic movement, and Fatah, representing the secular and socialist movements under the PLO. After the signing of the Oslo Accords between the PLO and Israel, the inner conflict surged in the form of internal divisions that affected the Palestinian political system. Therefore, the transformation of the Palestinian national movements into a semi-state entity has contributed to the emergence of the real and tangible Palestinian division which began after the signing of the Oslo Accords, having been rejected by many Palestinians.

In 2006, *Hamas* chose to join *Fatah* in the political scene by partaking in parliamentary elections for the first time, winning by a sweeping majority and forming the tenth government of the Palestinian Authority. During this time, a multitude of obstacles and conflicts emerged within the Palestinian political system. The outcome was an internal conflict that turned homicidal, taking the lives of hundreds. It came to a halt through the absolute military control of *Hamas*'s forces over the Gaza Strip. Consequently, the Palestinian national movement

reached its most critical turning point in modern history. After 2011 and the Arab uprisings, the Palestinian cause has been losing ground amid regional and international balances that encouraged both Fatah and *Hamas* to maintain the status-quo of the division.

Palestinian political life prior to 1948 was influenced and dominated by tribal leadership. The political leadership worked as per their tribal agenda rather than in accordance with a national agenda. Therefore, there were no strategies that would work for the tribal politicians. The lack of strategies led to change in the political opinions of the leadership, shifting their positions towards national issues but still relying on personal interests and judgments, and lacking clarity as to the issues. The arbitrary decisions and positions of the Palestinian leadership during that period provided a vacuum to the British mandate to influence the different parties, manipulating them to serve the mandate's authorities. Despite the fact that tribalism dominated the political scene, at the beginning of the British mandate, the *Husayni* family was closer to the national demands. The external pressure by the Arab leadership, tribalism and the struggle over power in Palestine tempted them to change their positions far from the will of the people. The *Nashashibi* family took moderate positions towards national demands. They were lenient on many national issues in order to appease the British mandate.[1]

Tribalism and the Palestinian Division in Mandate Palestine

One of the most prominent reasons behind the Palestinian division during the British mandate was the social structure of Palestinian society, which was divided into three social strata: the urban population, the Bedouin, and the peasantry. The dominating group was comprised of the agricultural peasantry; villages formed the socio-economic basis for the majority of Palestinians. The feudal class mostly controlled society and the peasantry were subjugated by powerful urban families in villages and rural areas. That period witnessed the remarkable power of the bourgeoisie and their extended families in Palestine, as well as the Levantine in general that dominated political and economic life. The powerful families managed to control the political and economic spheres through working in governmental jobs which they secured through their educations overseas, primarily in Turkey or Europe. The power of these families was crystallised during the fall of the Ottoman Empire in major Palestinian cities such as Jerusalem, Haifa, Hebron, and Gaza.

Tribal extremism developed in Palestine. This essentially comprised of a gathering of Arab ethnic nomadic families led by a Sheikh. These tribes were subjected to various complications and divisions, the most prominent of which was the intervention of the Ottoman military forces to settle the conflict between different tribes and the urban population. This conflict led to social alienation and division among tribes and urban families.[2] The most well-known example

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[1] Dawas, Rafee (2014) P27; Ibid.
[2] Abdelhadi, Noman (2012). "Palestinian division during the British Mandate under the

was the *Husayni* and *Nashashibi* conflict. The competition between the *Husayni* and *Nashashibi* families led to conflict and division among Palestinian elites, which can be described as the most notable division during that period. It reached all aspects of managerial and governmental positions and was called "the Conflict of Interests and Influence."[3]

The British Role and the fuelling of the Internal Palestinian Division

The British authorities, using a strategy of divide and conquer, fuelled the conflict between families and ignited the strife among the different classes in Palestinian society in order to break up Palestinian unity and deepen internal divisions.[4]

The political antagonism and power struggle between families began at the beginning of the 20th century between the *Khalidis* and *Husaynis* and, later between the *Husaynis* and *Nashashibis*, due to a change in the leadership positions in the bureaucratic and religious administrative apparatus in Jerusalem. The main positions that had significant value to the Palestinian population included *Dar al-Ifta*, the Supreme Muslim Council and the Municipality.[5] The race for these positions was open, considering that the Palestinian people saw *Hajj Amin Husayni* as the head of the national movement. In 1920, a serious shift in the path of the national movement occurred when the movement abandoned the national interest in favour of prioritising marginal and personal interests. This was evident due to the conflict that arose between the *Husayni* and *Nashashibi* families over the presidency of the Jerusalem municipality and the Supreme Muslim and Fatwa Council. Many of the Palestinian families and tribes were involved in this political rivalry, either supporting the *Husaynis* or siding with the *Nashashibis*. The conflict between the families was reflected in the political agenda of both sides.

The *Husaynis*, represented by the national movement, announced their opposition to the High Commissioner, arguing that the Palestinian people never recognise Zionist leaders. They called for the boycott of the official inauguration of Samuel as the High Commissioner. Additionally, the Executive Committee of the Fourth Conference of the National Movement approved the election of a delegation headed by *Mousi Kazem Al-Husseini* to explain the Palestinian issue in the UK. The committee headed an Arab Boycott Movement of the first draft of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), leading to its failure. The *Husaynis* refused the draft on the establishment of an Arab Agency in 1923 and insisted on the independence of Palestine. The Arab Party rejected the PLC in 1935 due to its incompatibility with national demands, its contradiction with

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Palestinian Authority", comparative study, Gaza, Al-Azhar University.

[3] Khela, Mahmoud (1982). "Palestine and the British Mandate: 1922-1939", Tripoli, the General Establishment for Publishing, Distribution and Advertising.

[4] Qumsiyeh, M. B. (2011). *Popular resistance in Palestine: A history of hope and empowerment* (p. 208). London: Pluto Press.

[5] al-Hoot, Bayan (1981). "Political leaders and institutions in Palestine 1917-1948", Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1.

the principles of democracy, and even the Charter of the League of Nations. They called for a representative parliament with greater power. However, at the beginning of the 1935 revolution, *Hajj Amin Husayni* was against *Al-Qassam*, arguing, "we are working to resolve the issue peacefully." In contrast to his position in the 1935 revolution, *Husayni* encouraged the strike this time. Headed by the Mufti, the Arab Higher Committee was formed by Palestinian parties. When the strike got out of control, the leadership sought to join it in order to protect their power.

In 1936, the Arab Higher Committee decided to boycott the Peel Commission; however, changed its decision for two reasons: to avoid internal division that could dissolve the Committee; and because of the strong pressure they were under from the Arabs. However, they rejected and denounced the Peel's draft, as well as the White Paper (1939) because it did not fulfil the Arab demands for full and immediate independence. Opposing the *Husayni* family was the *Nashashibi* family, who held their own beliefs towards national issues. Samuel's appointment as the High Commissioner of Palestine was met with satisfaction from the *Nashashibis'* alliances. At the inauguration ceremony, *Asim al-Said* and *Ragheb al-Nashashibi* gave welcome speeches. They alleged that the delegation of the national movement to London in 1921 did not represent the Palestinian people and stated their full willingness to readjust to the new status quo, co-operating with the UK's mandate government. The *Nashashibis* and their allies accepted the draft on the PLC (1922). The draft failed to get people's approval. Samuel appointed a few opposition leaders instead of those who had been proposed for election. Later, they were forced to resign under grass-roots pressure.

In 1923, the *Nashashibi* family welcomed the draft of the founding of the Arab agency following the Jewish model. Similarly, to the *Husayni* family and their allies, they rejected the *Al-Qassam* revolution and showed resistance to any armed struggle in all its appearances. In 1936, following uncertainties and reluctance, Raghib *Nashashibi* joined the Arab Higher Committee to avoid dispute with the revolutionary groups and to maintain their power. They were uninterested in revolting against the British.

Contrary to the position of the *Husaynis*, the *Nashahsibis* argued that there was a need to deal positively with the Peel Commission. Hassan Sidqi *Dajani*, one of the *Nashashibis'* allies, agreed to deal with the Commission. The *Nashashibis* and their allies renounced the draft of the Peel Committee resolution after its first approval. In contrast to the *Husaynis*, the *Nashashibi* family and the national defence party accepted the White Paper and showed their readiness to cooperate with the British mandate[6].

After 1948, the Palestinian Political division continued to be influenced by the Jordanian regime who aimed at taking over the West Bank, considering it as

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[6] 6 Abdelhadi, Noman (2012) P. 97-98.

part of the Hashemite Kingdom, and Egypt, who sought to keep the Palestinian cause under its umbrella and influence as Pan-Arab regime.

The Establishment of the PLO

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was established in 1964 to represent Palestine in international forums. It included several Palestinian movements and parties. The chairman of the PLO executive committee was considered to be the president of Palestine. Prior to the establishment of the PLO, the Palestinians had been represented at the Arab League since its establishment in 1945, despite being under the British mandate. The delegates for Palestine in that period were *Musa Al-Alami*, *Ahmed Hilmi Abdul* Baqi, and *Ahmad Al-Shukairy*.[7]

On the first Arab Summit in 1964, under the patronage of the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the PLO was established as the official political body to express the will and demands of the Palestinian people, from self-determination to liberation. The summit called on the Palestinian representative, *Ahmed Al-Shuqairi*, to contact Palestinians from both around the world and in Palestine itself, reporting to the summit the year after. Subsequently, *Al-Shuqairi* toured the Arab countries. During his tour, he drafted the national charter and the statutes of the PLO. Later on, *Al-Shuqairi* and his colleagues decided that a national conference needed to be organised. As such, *Al-Shuqairi* chose preparatory committees for the conference, who prepared the lists of the candidates for the first Palestinian Conference held in Jerusalem between 28th May and 2nd June 1964. The conference elected *Al-Shuqairi* as the chairman. Here, he announced the establishment of the PLO, ratified the national charter and the statutes of the organisation, and entrusted the *Shura* Council with the selection of 15 permanent members of the Committee. The Conference also decided to prepare the Palestinian people militarily and establish the Palestinian National Fund, yet without setting out concrete steps.[8]

The Palestinian Parties and the PLO

The establishment of the PLO and *Al-Shuqairi* correspondences for the National Conference triggered different reactions among the different Palestinian parties. Despite the participation of some leaders of the parties in the first National Conference, *Al-Shuqairi* asserted that the leaders' participation in the conference was down to personal preference. The establishment of the PLO was received differently. One party supported the PLO, arguing that PLO would represent the Palestinians in Palestine and Diaspora as well as work to establish a Palestinian state. A second group reacted differently. The Arab Higher Committee opposed the declaration of the PLO because *Hajj Amin Husayni* considered himself the historical leader and the most deserving representative of Palestine. He believed

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[7] Saleh, Mohsen (2008). "Methodological studies in the Palestinian case", Dar Al-Furqan Publishing, Jordan P.320.

[8] Abd al-Rahman, As'ad (1987). "The Palestine Liberation Organisation, Its Foundations, Founding, Its Path", Cyprus, Palestinian Research Center". P.43.

that there was no need to establish any organisation in the presence of the Arab Higher Committee.

The Palestinian National Liberation Movement, Fatah, had a different opinion. They wanted a revolutionary organisation to be a base for the armed struggle. For Fatah, a military organisation should be the basis of any Palestinian entity. The Ba'ath Party of Palestine stated that the PLO was not the struggling body that would be able to take responsibility for the liberation of Palestine.

The Arab Nationalist Movement, in a joint statement with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Palestinian Students' Union, and the Palestinian Arab Youth in Lebanon, called for free and fair elections within the PLO. They allied with the Arab Higher Committee, who called for fair elections of the leadership. The Islamic Liberation Party showed opposition to the PLO based on the need for the establishment of the Islamic state and the Jihad in order to liberate Palestine.9 The only political group that decided to join the PLO after an internal debate was the General Union of Palestinian Students. Following their general conference in Gaza in 1964, they decided to be part of the PLO.

The Palestinian factions which called for armed struggle joined the debates with Fatah to unify the positions of different parties, agreeing on one national programme. Accordingly, Fatah created the slogan, "*Al Kifah fi Ard Al Ma'raka*", meaning, "the struggle is in the battlefield". By this, they meant that Palestinian unity would be achieved through fighting with the enemy (Israel) and not through negotiations.10 Following this, *Fatah* became the leader of the PLO and created political changes in its organisational structure, with the PLO becoming the umbrella organisation for the Palestinian movements, organisations, associations, and individuals. In the PLO charter, every Palestinian is a member of the PLO. The armed factions, led by Fatah, dominated the political decisions within the PLO, including the fundamental issues related to Palestinian unity. The domination of the armed factions over the PLO's decision-making mechanism led to a "calls-for-dialogue" mantra at every critical turning point.

The PLO factions tended to negotiate national unity through consensus among the leaders, avoiding negotiations and political divisions at a social level between members of the different factions. The belief among the faction's leaders is that national unity is guaranteed at a popular level among the Palestinians. This shows the misunderstanding of the leadership regarding the complexities of the relationship between the political powers and the society and its individuals, as well as negligence of the role of independent political and social actors and parties among the Palestinians.[11]

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[9] Almoqatel(2019). The Establishment of PLO. Accessed 03/08/2019: http://www.moqatel.com/openshare/Behoth/Monzmat3/Monazma-Ta/sec03.doc_cvt.htm

[10] Sale, Mohsen et al. "The Palestine Liberation Organisation Evaluation of Experience and Reconstruction", Al Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations – Beirut. P.98.

[11] Shafiq, Moneer (2007). "The Palestine Liberation Organisation and the national unity experience", the Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations – Beirut. P.99.

Although the main factor displaying national unity was membership of the PLO and its councils, there were always conflicts within PLO and its main charter. The "*Barnamij Al-Hadd Al-Adna*" (literally 'the minimal programme') introduced a minimum level of agreements on core national issues within the Palestinian factions. This programme was not only criticised by many factions and parties, but many lobbied against it. Almost all factions under the umbrella of the PLO had their own charter that went beyond the PLO charter. For example, the PLO and Fatah adapted the Democratic State of Palestine, which was rejected by the leftist parties, suggesting the Socialist State of Palestine was headed by the proletariat.

The Palestinian national unity was not about a real commitment to a specific charter (PLO or a party/faction) in terms of the strict meaning of commitment with an adherence to the national and party ideology and values, for example, in the cases of Algeria and Vietnam. In the Palestinian case, there was contradiction within the parties' charters and the behaviour of its members, and between the party and its counter partners in the Palestinian arena. There existed Palestinian exceptionalism, where each political party believed that their particular party carried the truth and their agenda/charter will liberate Palestine and represent the Palestinians.

Palestinian exceptionalism is a result of the nature of Palestinian society in Palestine and in its diaspora, as well as the fragmentation and disintegration of the Arab countries and regimes who exert huge influence on the Palestinian factions. As a result, all models that were borrowed from the resolution of other nations' struggles failed utterly whenever the Palestinians used them. The Palestinians lived in a mess and became masters of a political life where contradictions created sensitive and difficult relationships amongst Palestinians.

For example, there was always a charter, and there were always recommendations issued by the National Council. Yet, each party had an independent strategy, which varied in accordance with their differing ideologies. Meanwhile, a dialogue was present between the parties, as well as continued participation in the National Council, Executive Committee and the Joint Leadership.

In 1974, the *Fatah* leadership, in agreement with the Democratic Front for the Liberation (DFLP) of Palestine, agreed on what has been called the 10-point interim programme. The DFLP announced the programme, under the request of *Arafat* as a trial balloon in front of all other parties, including *Fatah*. The programme contradicted *Fatah* principles, the national charter, the previous decisions of the National Council, and many Arab countries/regimes' public decisions.

This experience outlined the characteristics of intra-Palestinian dialogues, Palestinian unity, the extent of adherence to the charter, and a possibility of agreeing to a single Palestinian programme. The announcement of the programme led to the establishment of the Opposition Front and the withdrawal of its representatives from the different PLO's Committees. Many parties, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), froze their membership but did not leave the PLO. The Opposition Front remained within the

framework of Palestinian unity under the umbrella of the PLO. *Fatah*'s leadership tried to convince the Opposition Front and other parties to return to the PLO and the executive committee and oppose the 10-point programme; some parties accepted the proposal during the 1970s and 1980s[12]. *Arafat* and *Fatah* were trying to demonstrate national unity, albeit that unity in reality was minimal or merely a formality to strengthen their positions internationally and regionally.

The Islamic Movements in Palestine

The emergence of the Islamic movements in Palestine at the time was a result of several crises within Palestinian society. Some of these movements tend to employ religious ideology as a form of resistance.[13]

This coincided with the decline of Pan-Arabism in general and the shattered Arabian positions towards Israel, especially after Sadat's visit to Israel and the signing of the Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt. It coincided with the failure of all of the struggling national projects adopted by the PLO. The Islamic movements came as a result of the decline in influence after the Beirut siege and the PLO's exit from Beirut in 1982. It also coincided with the ending of the Palestinian military existence in Lebanon. All of these factors reinforced the role of religious factors within Palestinian society, especially after crystallising the active tendencies of the Muslim Brotherhood, which considered the Palestinian issue to be the central issue of the region.

The Division of the Islamic Party in Palestine

The dispute between the *Al Jihad Al-Islami* (AA) movement and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is not based on ideological or epistemological grounds, but rather on the concept of the "right understanding" of Islam, and how to behave under its guidance. It is important to note that the disagreements between the Islamic Jihad movement and the MB began to emerge when tackling issues related to the details of major goals and the ways to paths to achieve them, starting from the liberation of Palestine, as the heart of the Islamic world, to establish the Islamic State. Thus, for both groups, Palestine's liberation is a religious duty before being a national and human rights issue. Both parties practice and educate others in this belief.

With the start of the AA movement in the early 1980s, their dispute with the MB arose. The Brotherhood viewed the AA as a rival and wanted "to pull the rug out from under their feet."[14] Another major distinction between the MB and AA is the intellectual discourse of the jihadists (or those who were then called "independent Islamists," "Islamic student movement," and the "Islamic revolutionary party"). These parties focused on the search for national independence,

[12] Al-Hoot, Shafiq (2007). "Between the homeland and the exile from Jaffa began the journey", Riyad Al Rayes Publishing, Amman. P.248.

[13] Al-Barghooti, Samir (2008). "Features of the Palestinian political elites: before and after the Palestinian Authority", Beirut, Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations. P.151.

[14] Interview, Islamic Jihad activist from 1980, Gaza (via telephone, February 2019).

far from a religious identity. They saw the Arab-Palestinian identity as an additional identity, coming after the national identity. This constituted an additional difference compared to other Islamic parties in the region.[15]

The AA movement differs in many key points to *Hamas*, which represent MB in Palestine. The AA movement criticised *Hamas* for their absence from the field of *Jihad* and military struggle. According to *Fathi Shikaki*, "if the absence of *Jihad* in the Islamic movement was understandable and justified in the fifties and sixties because the battle had not yet resolved in favour of Islam as a single choice. It is impossible to understand or justify this astonishing absence of the Islamic movement now (i.e. the 1980s) from taking its real position in the fronts, directing the course of the struggle, and controlling its variants."[16] AA, in some of its members' writings, blame MB thinkers for what was instilled in the youth of the Islamic movement. They accused the MB of creating 'inaction' because the training methods adopted by the MB were mostly static, social, political, economic, and intellectual which are far from reality and society.

AA believes that finding solutions to the problems in Arab society cannot be resolved gradually. Thus, on the face of it, they reject the ideas of the MB about the slow spread of ideas and traditional practice in all aspects of daily life. The alternative is revolutionary action by a capable Islamic vanguard to impose an Islamic regime that will liberate Palestine. While the MB sees the essential problem of the nation as being the absence of a single Islamic state represented by the *Khilafa*, and that the Palestine issue is one of the sub-problems in light of this absence, AA sees the Palestine issue as the central issue of the Islamic world. The focus of the MB was on education and preparation to oppose the nationalists, emphasising armed struggle. According to AA's literature, "the Brotherhood chose the path of education and guidance and not the path of *Jihad*, while the nationalists chose the path of *Jihad*." Moreover, it emphasised the uniqueness of Islamic Jihad in focusing on the dialectical relationship between the path of jihad and the path of guidance.

Overall, the relationship between the two parties was certainly characterised by rivalry, hostility, and mutual defamation, especially during the 1980s. This view is based on the Brotherhood's view of the *Jihad* movement as a splinter group from the parent organisation; one that is reluctant to face the Israeli occupation in the armed struggle.

The accusations of AA towards the MB could be summarised as the failure to act, receiving funds from Saudi Arabia and Jordan, intellectual backwardness and organisational stagnation. The MB represented by Hamas accused AA of Shi'ism, representing a bridge for Iran in the region by receiving support from the Iranian government. MB also accused AA of working to block the Islamic movement in Palestine, as well as lacking creditability by claiming other

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Beit Almaqdis(1989)The Path of the Islamic Jihad in Palestine, Beit Al Maqdis for Publishing 1989. Beirut.

factions' military operations as their own. One of the major accusations that has been used, and is still being used today, is that AA is forming an alliance with secular forces against the MB.

Historically, the clashes between AA and *Hamas* were in areas that both of them had large numbers of activists and activities. The clashes were never at the Gaza Strip level. They were smaller, and some of the differences between the two movements were reflected at mosques in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For example, the banners and flags of each movement were found in front of different mosques in close proximity, some of them, the green banners of *Hamas*, and others black for the jihad movement. Thus, mosques were divided, and individual mosques were known as either belonging to *Hamas* or AA.

Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PLO and the Peace Process

According to the charter of *Hamas*, the organisation respects the Palestinian National Movement and the PLO and appreciates their efforts. However, *Hamas* rejects the idea of secularism because it believes that this will not lead to the liberation of Palestine. *Hamas* stressed the rule of national unity, the inviolability of Palestinian blood, and the avoidance of any Palestinian-Palestinian fighting. However, when Arafat and Abbas made the offer for *Hamas* to join PLO, prior to 2003, *Hamas* rejected the idea. *Hamas* agreed at a later stage, but with conditions, including, rejecting political solutions, refusing to recognise Israeli and UN resolutions, and demanding 40 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly. The PLO refused these conditions.[17]

AA refused to join the PLO and the peace process. It refuses all varieties of alliances with secular movements. It also did not participate in the membership of the unified leadership of the First Palestinian Intifada, which was formed by the nationalists. Moreover, it continued its opposition in the first and second legislative elections. AA is a member of the coalition of the Palestinian Forces that oppose any peaceful settlement (the ten factions).[18]

AA was able to enter the political arena because of the fragmentation of the nationalist movements and the decline of the left-wing camp as the collapse of the Soviet Union looked more likely. The power of the PLO was declining, and it became bankrupt. Islamic movements were able to impose their influence in the occupied territories to fill the gap of PLO and the nationalists. They used the Islamic factor in society, firstly mobilising people through mosques and then through the Intifada.

Palestinian Division and the Palestinian Authority

After the PLO made an error in assessing the situation in the Gulf crisis and did not take a clear stand against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, its relationship with all the Gulf States, Egypt, and Syria became strained, and it clashed with the United States and Europe. It was besieged financially and lived in a state of

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[17] Nofal, Mamdouh (1996). "The Solicitation of the Negotiations of the Palestinian-Israeli Track in Madrid", Dar Al Shorouk, Jordan. P.149.
[18] Abdelhadi, Noman (2012). Ibid. P.148.

turmoil and worry. Under difficult circumstances regionally and internationally in the aftermath of the joint alliance victory in the Gulf War, and under the emergence of a global unipolar system, the USA announced an initiative where it gathered all the Arab parties, including the PLO, at the Madrid Peace Conference. Meanwhile, a Norwegian-sponsored secret channel was opened in Oslo, which later led to the Oslo peace agreement between the PLO and the Israeli entity. The signing of the Oslo Accords was in complete contradiction to the *Hamas* guidelines, which were based on the fact that the land of Palestine was an Islamic nation which should not be neglected. *Hamas* therefore adopted a line of opposition to any peaceful solutions, considered the signing of the Oslo agreement to be a national betrayal, and refused to participate in the Palestinian Authority or to join the first legislative elections.[19]

Palestinian Dialogue and Yasser Arafat:
Arafat's internal policies towards *Hamas* and other factions relied on direct discussion between him and these factions. Arafat recognised that in order to be respected by your opponents, you must respect and recognise them. He went face to face, avoiding divergence from the first moment of rivalry or disagreement.[20] In light of the differences of views and the different ideologies between the Palestinian Authority, the *Fatah* movement, and the opposition led by *Hamas*, internal dialogues were needed to reach any kind of commonality between different political factions. Therefore, Arafat invited many activists and leaders to meet in Sudan prior to the deployment of the PA forces in the Gaza strip.

The first official meeting of the dialogue between the Palestinian Authority and *Hamas* after the decision of the Council of Ministers was on November 2, 1996, and it took place in the office of General Amin al-Hindi, head of the General Intelligence Service and under the chairmanship of the Secretary General of the Presidency *Tayeb Abdel Rahim*. The meeting included *Tariq Aborbaj*, *Rashid Abu-Qabq*, *Mohammed al-Masri*, and *Emad Falouji* from the Palestinian Authority, and *Mahmoud al-Zahar*, Ismail Haniyeh and *Ismail Abu-Shanab* from *Hamas*. Both parties agreed that *Hamas* must stop its military action in order to enable the Authority to implement peace process agreements while subsequently re-evaluating the situation together. They also agreed that "wanted fighters" from *Hamas* would be surrendered to PA forces with full guarantee of protection. They also agreed to prevent incitement against Israel and the PA. Lastly, they agreed that *Hamas* had the right to exercise its political activities based on the principle of political pluralism.[21]

Following this meeting, another expanded meeting was held in July 1997 at the headquarters of the PLC in Gaza. Both parties agreed on developing a new strategy and plan for the national dialogue secretariat, establishing a specialised

[19] Saleh, Mohsen (2008). Ibid. P.160.
[20] Nafez Alwan: Why did not Hamas coup against Yasser Arafat?, the site of civilized dialogue. http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=328157
[21] Al-Falouji, Emad (2008). "From the heart of power: President, Ministry, Legislative", Yazji Library, Gaza. P.226.

committee that assisted in encouraging dialogue between the parties, and lastly, meeting periodically to follow up on timely issues and meeting with Arafat.[22]

These meetings cultivated a general meeting called "the National Unity Conference to meet the challenges" on July 20, 1997 in Gaza. The conference was a breakthrough in the internal Palestinian dialogue in the presence of President *Yasser Arafat*. Several key issues were discussed at the conference, including negotiations with the Israeli occupation, the issue of political prisoners, the consolidation of the concept of national unity as a practice on the ground, the promotion of the concept of resistance, accountability, corruption, and the promotion of democracy.

During this period, the meetings of the Committee of the Secretariat, consisting of *Tayeb Abdel Rahim*, *Rawhi Fattouh*, *Ibrahim Aboulnja* and *Emad Falouji*, took place with all factions as a practical interpretation of the resolutions and recommendations of the National Unity Conference.[23] President Yasser Arafat was able to embrace *Hamas*, containing it as much as possible, and open the doors of dialogue with its leaders despite the divergence of political and ideological ideas and policies between the two parties. During this period, *Yasser Arafat* managed to control the political arena with minimal losses. On the other hand, *Hamas* dealt with the new political reality.

The Reign of Abbas
On September 9, 2005, Mahmoud Abbas, *Fatah*'s candidate, assumed the presidency of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in a dangerous period of time, namely, the ongoing Palestinian Second Intifada which began in September 2000.

In *Abbas'* first year as the president, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon proposed his plan of unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip settlements. The PA demanded that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza be an agreement between the parties instead of unilateral decision and plans. This new reality forced President Abbas to work on holding a conference for national dialogue with all Palestinian factions to discuss the upcoming new reality and how to deal with it.[24]

Cairo Declaration 2005
The Arab Republic of Egypt called on the Palestinian factions to hold a wider national dialogue in Cairo with the participation of President Mahmoud Abbas and another ten factions and organisations which declared a commitment to a cease-fire in exchange for Israel's cessation of hostilities in the Palestinian territories. The Cairo declaration stressed commitment to the "Palestinian Red Lines", and the right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation, establishing a sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Moreover, they stressed upholding the rights of refugees to return to their homes and

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[22] Ibid. P.227.

[23] Ibid. P.227.

[24] National Dialogue Conference: The Way to the State, the Foundation for Cooperation to Resolve the Conflict, 31-10-2010.

properties. The declaration included what has been called the "2005 programme" which is based on the commitment to the continuation of the current status-quo of the ceasefire in exchange for an Israeli commitment to stop all forms of attacks on the Palestinians, as well as the release of all political prisoners and detainees.

The most important elements of the Cairo declaration focus on the internal political situation. The declaration called for a comprehensive political and administrative reform in sectors, support of the democratic transitions, and the holding of local and legislative elections in a timely manner in accordance with the agreed electoral law. However, the conference recommended that the Legislative Council should amend the electoral law. According to the declaration, the new electoral system had to be a mixed system, and for the local councils, a proportional system. Besides that, the factions engaged in the Cairo dialogue agreed to revitalise and develop the PLO and its institutions, agreeing the PLO to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Therefore, a new committee was established to lay down the main principles of the PLO's development and revitalisation. However, neither *Hamas* and AA showed willingness to be part of the PLO nor agreed on its charter. Lastly, and crucially, the conference resolutions stressed that dialogue is the only way to achieve national unity amongst the factions, and a dialogue where they affirmed the prohibition of resorting to weapons in internal divisions and fragmentations.[25]

Hamas in 2006

Hamas won the legislative elections in January 2006, and became the ruling party while *Fatah*, for the first time, had to sit in the opposition seats. A democratic situation could have occurred if there was a real dialogue and a true democratic transition. The absence of democratic practices on both sides led to catastrophic consequences. In 2006, the reality of the real division began due to a lack of the basic fundamentals of a democratic and peaceful transition of power after the political coup.[26] For the first time in modern Palestinian history, a non-member of the PLO and an Islamist faction – one that is hostile to the PLO, nationalists and secular parties – had to share power with the PLO.

The electoral results contradicted expectations, surprising everyone in the region as well as the international community. Despite that, President Abbas announced his acceptance of the results and delivered his speech to the Palestinian people, reminding *Hamas* of several political points. He asserted that this was a true election by the Palestinian people according to a programme based on negotiations and peaceful resolution to the conflict. He urged the next government to win the confidence of the international community.

Hamas succeeded in forming the tenth government alone, headed by *Ismail Haniyeh*, who swore an oath before President *Mahmoud Abbas*, assuming his

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[25] The literal text of the Cairo Declaration issued by the Palestinian factions on 17-3-2005, Information Center http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=4894
[26] Al-Falooji, Emad (2010). "Palestinian Dialogue", Yazji Library, Gaza. P.158.

duties as a prime minister. Nevertheless, Israel announced that it would not deal with the new government and imposed a blockade on Gaza. Internal divisions started to surface, especially the relationship between *Hamas*'s prime minister and the security services controlled entirely by *Fatah*, such as the intelligence services and preventative security. The contradiction became clear and *Abbas* was unable to resolve a lot of issues. The security unrest actually preceded *Hamas*'s victory, which pushed the Interior Minister, *Said Siyam* (assassinated by Israel in 2009), to make a decision to form the Executive Force (EF), which were a special security unit associated with him personally, to carry out the required security tasks.[27]

Amid the political and security tensions, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails issued their national dialogue document, the "Prisoner's document" in May 2006. As a result, *Fatah*, *Hamas*, and Palestinian factions held several dialogue meetings to break the deadlock and form a national unity government. From 2006 to June 2007, dozens of Palestinians were killed in the clashes between *Fatah* and *Hamas*. The tension continued, which caused Saudi Arabia to invite *Fatah* and *Hamas* to Mecca. The dialogues ended in the signing of the Mecca agreement between *Fatah* and *Hamas* and the government of national unity headed by *Ismail Haniyeh* was formed. However, the government failed to address the security situation on the ground. This led to the resignation of Interior Minister *Qawasmi* in May 2007. In June 2007, *Hamas* took over the Gaza Strip, killing dozens of *Fatah* and PA personal, and declaring sovereignty of the Gaza Strip. As a result, the president dismissed the Haniyeh government and declared a state of emergency, marking the beginning of a dark phase in the history of the Palestinian people. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank became geographically, politically, and socially divided with *Hamas* controlling the Gaza Strip with an iron fist, and *Fatah* controlling the West Bank.[28]

The Contemporary Palestinian Division

Palestinian political scientist, *Ibrahim Ibrash*, argues that what happened in June 2007 (he referred to it as a coup d'état) can be traced back to the beginning of *Hamas* activities in 1987. According to him, what happened occurred due to a culmination of differences and ideological collisions over time. The conflict between *Hamas* and the PLO began with the establishment of *Hamas* in late 1987 and gradually deepened until they were able to undermine the pillars of the Palestinian national project.[29]

The parties were unable to reach an agreement in the 1980s or during the first Intifada. When the PLO moved to Gaza, a sensitive, yet crucial dialogue took place. From 1994 until 2002, the PA dealt with *Hamas* from a security

[27] Ibid. P.159.

[28] Eitany, Maryam (2008). "Conflict of Powers between Fatah and Hamas in the Administration of the Palestinian Authority 2006-2007", Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations – Beirut. P.51.

[29] Ibraash, Ibrahim (2008). "The roots of the Palestinian division and its dangers on the national project", Journal of Palestinian Studies, Beirut, Issue 78. P.1.

perspective and not as a political party. It tightened its iron fist upon *Hamas* and its activists until the beginning of the Second Intifada. After *Al-Aqsa* Intifada, the balance of power changed. After much dialogue, and many meetings and conferences, the two parties (together with all the Palestinian factions) reached the Cairo Agreement in March 2005. The agreement included clear articles that municipal and legislative elections should be held on time, and on the reconstruction of the PLO and reform of the Palestinian Authority. The objective of the agreement was to unite the shattered Palestinian forces.[30]

Despite the fact that there were some obstacles in the implementation of the agreement, the general trend in 2005 pointed towards a new political era of partnership and democracy. However, as soon as the legislative elections came about, the whole situation changed, and the conflict returned with vigour. Consequently, the conflict escalated until division became a reality.

The Palestinian division, and the reality of the PLO and PA in terms of bureaucracy and democracy, can be described as a multi-level division. The Palestinian political system from which the Palestinian Authority forms its main pillar is too small to accommodate all of the political powers in Palestinian society. The PA system is designed and established to fit only forces and factions who are linked to the peace process. Therefore, the great majority of the leaders who were associated with and participated in the peace process rejected the results of the legislative elections.

Just before *Hamas* assumed their term in the PLC, the *Fatah* dominated council changed many laws and regulations to create barriers and obstacles for the incoming *Hamas* council. All political parties refused to be part of *Hamas*'s national unity government. It was clear from the beginning through media incitement that *Fatah* leaders had decided to hinder *Hamas*'s government work. Many of those leaders issued childish statements, threatening *Hamas* leaders, *Hamas* activists and the public, accusing *Hamas* of not doing its job as a government. The unstable, chaotic security situation manifested itself in the multitude of shootings and the security/military conflict between *Fatah* and *Hamas*. Besides, *Hamas* did not expect their political victory, as their leaders stated on many occasions, nor did they expect *Fatah*'s reaction, including the siege from the Arab States and the international community.[31]

As soon as *Hamas* won the elections, Israel mobilised the international community and many Arab States to impose a siege on the Palestinian government formed by *Hamas*. They requested that *Hamas* recognise Israel, and all the accords signed between the PLO and Israel, as well as that *Hamas* ensured the security of Israel. With these conditions in place, many *Fatah* leaders felt assured that *Hamas* would fall. Therefore, they escalated the security unrest by funding and tolerating tribal militias, rejecting *Hamas*'s ministers' orders and

[30] Palestinian Strategic Report 2006, Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, Beirut, Lebanon, 2006. P. 23-48.

[31] Abdul Sattar Qassem: Gaza between the lamentations and the movement of history http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/B1808688-EA40-49DC-9D9F.htm

using the media to incite against *Hamas*, under the slogan of "No Hope for Reform and Change" under *Hamas* rule.

In addition to that, Hamas had misread the local, regional and international political spectrum. They claimed that the Gaza Strip was a liberated area, assuming that there was a possibility to establish a political entity where they can (*Hamas*) rely on the Arabs through the Egyptian borders. According to *Mahmoud Zahar* "We are relying on our Arab and Muslim Brothers". After that, *Hamas* made an erroneous decision by establishing a *Hamas*-only government, insisting that they were able to break the siege. A third grave mistake was taking the responsibility of Gaza after 2007 by establishing their own de-facto government. In reality, *Hamas*'s leadership was in no way prepared for the enormous challenges ahead of them.

Remarks on the Contemporary Palestinian Division
Since its formal engagement in the Palestinian political scene and winning the elections, *Hamas* dealt with the political situation using a 'piece-by-piece' model, meaning that they did not have a complete vision of the political reality and the challenges that faced them as a government. In the beginning of the governance crisis, *Hamas* was unable to pay public sector employees' salaries. When *Hamas* was able to collect the part of these salaries through cash donations from around the world, they were surprised that they could not transfer them via the international system of banks as well as locally. Therefore, they had to carry millions of dollars in cash in bags and suitcases. They were also surprised at the huge shortage of goods. This was a result of the Israeli siege and the international community's measures taken to deal with *Hamas*, as well as the refusal of *Hamas* to end the military control over the Gaza Strip. The general belief was that the siege would end. In fact, the siege was partially left over after the Arab Spring and the election of Mohamed Morsi as the Egyptian president.

Hamas was subjected to a blackmailing strategy from the very beginning of its electoral victory. The process of bringing *Hamas* closer to the political programme adopted by Mahmoud Abbas and his circle of *Fatah* leaders started from the beginning of the national dialogue. The process of establishing the tenth PA government led by *Hamas*, Abbas threatening to invite a national referendum to repeat the elections, the Mecca agreement, and the armed conflict forced *Hamas* members and leadership to not trust the *Fatah* leadership, and to ensure that many *Fatah* leaders would be unwilling to reach a political agreement based on sharing the power, or as has been known in Gaza, "dividing the cake".

Many try to portray the conflict between *Hamas* and *Fatah* in 2006 and 2007 as if it was a conflict of power (which it has later become). The observations on the ground suggest more strongly that the conflict was between two sides of the *Fatah* party. The first camp represented the legacy of Yasser Arafat, who tried to learn from their mistakes after the Oslo Accord, mainly not turning the PA and *Fatah* into a security agent ensuring Israel security. The second camp represented Mahmoud Abbas and his allies, who saw security coordination with

Israel to be an unquestionable strategy at any cost. Abbas's camp believed that the Palestinian militarisation of the Second Intifada as being reason behind the deadlock in the peace process. As soon as Arafat was removed from the political scene, *Abbas*'s camp found *Hamas* and its military force to be the only power that could constitute a barrier towards complete control of the Palestinians in an autocratic regime. *Their* attempts to tame *Hamas* came after their attempt to take control over *Fatah* in a brutal way that included armed conflict and political assassinations.

As *Hamas*'s political, military and social power was at its peak, Abbas's camp was confused with how to deal with Hamas. They questioned whether they should eradicate *Hamas* militarily or contain *Hamas* politically. As the costs of a military conflict were too great, they opted to give *Hamas* a chance to be part of the political system by giving them few seats in parliament. During that time, the majority of the *Fatah* leadership was almost sure that *Hamas* would take a maximum of 20 per cent of the seats.

The results of the elections represented a political earthquake that forced many *Fatah* leaders to vow to topple *Hamas*. However, *Hamas* struggled to the end until they took over the Gaza Strip by force in June 2007. *Hamas*'s decision to take over the Gaza Strip and put an end to the *Fatah* leadership control over the Gaza Strip was the result of a strong belief that Abbas forces were about to take strong measures against them. According to many *Hamas* members, "we were not ready to give up. We could not tolerate to be back in the PA prisons with daily torture. We wanted revenge and also take over". For *Hamas*, the end of their success in elections and power was sacred. They see it as the first Islamic experience after the change of the international system (West Vs. USSR), and the Algerian civil war. According to *Hamas*'s leader, "The end of our governance, was a death sentence for us and for any Islamist party in the region who would win the elections or assume power".

The fundamental reason for the contemporary Palestinian division is ideological. The *Fatah* movement believes that diplomacy and the peace process is the only way to deal with the Palestinian problem. *Fatah* addresses the conflict through negotiations and through international organisations. *Fatah* sees the future of Palestine as a democratic and secular state. *Fatah* and the PLO believe that the two states solution is the only feasible one based on UNSC resolutions 338, and 242. On the contrary, *Hamas* believes that the armed struggle with Israel is the only possible option. It may believe in a temporary solution, such as signing a time-limited truce, but it refuses to recognise Israel. *Hamas* believes that an independent Palestinian state must be based on Islamic laws, and therefore rejects the option of a secular state.

Another reason for the division between *Fatah* and *Hamas* is that *Hamas*'s aim is to take full control of all of the Palestinian territories in order to prevent any secular or leftist ideology. Therefore, the success of *Hamas*'s project depends primarily on its ability to control the land and the people. *Fatah*'s view reflects that *Hamas*'s control of the territories means a Palestinian State in Gaza only. Therefore, *Hamas*'s control of Gaza alone significantly hinders the goals

and visions of the PLO and the nationalists' project to create a secular and democratic state in accordance with the 1967 borders.

The political division between *Hamas* and *Fatah* had very hazardous consequences politically, socially and economically, both strategically and in the short-term. It has emphasised the geographical separation between the West Bank and the Gaza strip that has been separated by Israeli restrictions. It has also led to the decline of the international and regional interest in the Palestinian issue. Moreover, the Arab Uprising in 2011 contributed greatly to the Arab disinterest in the Palestinian issue.

The absence of a unified Palestinian leadership and political program, and the willingness of *Hamas* to continue its control over the Gaza Strip, has opened the gates for regional intervention and greater external influence on the Palestinian cause, such as Qatar and Iran's suspicious role in Gaza, which sustains the division.

Besides that, the political division provided a pretext to the continuity of a political, economic, and social blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli occupation and Egypt. Egypt sees *Hamas* as a security threat to its northern borders, considering that the Muslim Brotherhood is listed as a terrorist organisation in Egypt and many *Hamas* activists joined the Islamic State in Sinai, killing hundreds of the Egyptian army personnel. Moreover, the social fabric has been disrupted, where the political division has been linked to a low level of trust amongst Palestinians[32]. There has also emerged a neo-bourgeoisie class benefiting from the continued separation and political division, originating mainly from *Hamas* elite and tunnel smugglers, amongst other illegal practices. Lastly, the economic situation has deteriorated, with rocketing levels of unemployment among youth, rising suicide rates, and an authoritarian iron fist ruling both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Tales of the Past: *Hamas-Fatah* Division:
This section examines the political division between *Hamas* and *Fatah* from 2007 up to today. It is based on a virtual focus group division and round tables with more than 25 Palestinian academics, researchers, activists and civil society professionals.[33]

The current Palestinian division (2007-2019) is a continuous division within Palestinian society and its political system. There was also political division from 1994 to 2007. In 1995, the Palestinian forces of *Fatah* killed more than eight of *Hamas*'s activists in one day. The persecution and arrests of members of *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad continued from 1994 until 2006. At the same time, *Hamas* worked hard to undermine *Fatah*'s authority and power within

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[32] Alijla, A. (2019). Political Division and Social Destruction: Generalized Trust in Palestine. Contemporary Arab Affairs, 12 (2), 81-104.

[33] We would like to thank the following individuals for their participation on the virtual FGD and round table: Jehad Abu Salim, Majed Hudaib, Amer Daher, AbdelAziz Almasrti, Mohamed Hijazi, Iyad Abu Hujaier, Wael Al Moybayed, Sami Abu Salem, Omar Shaheen, Maher Issa, Mohamed Hajj Mohamed, Bader Musleh and Ibrahim Hosh.

Palestinian society, as well as launching attacks against Israel in an attempt to undermine the peace process. The political conflict between *Hamas* and *Fatah* represented by the Palestinian Authority was not solved democratically, which led to a wave of political arrests by PA forces, as well as a counter wave of denouncing *Fatah* members, PA, and Arafat by *Hamas*. The Palestinian political system and its apparatuses were not democratic and contained different ideologies and political parties with different programmes and agendas. In contrast to the early years of the PLO, *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad have vastly different political programmes and agendas. Neither are members of the PLO, and they do not agree with its main programme. Therefore, *Hamas* was not part of what Arafat called the "Democracy of Guns", which meant to engage *Hamas* on the bases of the PLO constitution.

In addition to that, the current political division came as both Hamas and *Fatah* were competing over the political power of semi-political institutions (PA ministries). The conflict mounted over political interests as well as any advantage one party had over another. A major difference between the current division and the PLO factions' divisions is their administrative portfolios, such as security, foreign affairs and the economy. The new version of the Palestinian division includes bureaucratic apparatuses which make it difficult for *Fatah* and Hamas to agree. Both parties have different political regional allies, and political agendas, as well as political, economic and nepotistic interests.

Most participants in the virtual round tables and FGD stressed the fact that the current political division is empowered by regional powers such as Qatar, Iran, the USA and Israel. Both *Fatah* and Hamas have their own regional allies and agendas. *Hamas*, besides being the solo rebel government in Gaza, have sustained their power by relying on Qatar, and previously Syria and Iran as its allies. Any attempt for Hamas to move away from their allies means that they face being replaced in the PA, which has created continuous distrust between *Fatah* and *Hamas*. For example, Qatar has been funding the Hamas de-facto government with $15 million in cash monthly since the beginning of 2019, which has allowed Hamas to sustain its political and administrative mandate over the Gaza Strip. Regional powers who are hostile to each other, mainly Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Israel and Egypt, have used the Palestinian division as a political tool amid their own conflicts.

Besides that, the absence of a charismatic leader like *Yasser Arafat* has led to further division. Arafat was seen as the leader of the Palestinian people and his authority is indisputable. When Arafat passed away in 2004, no Palestinian leader was able to replace him, and thus political division deepened by an eruption of Palestinian leaders who wanted to inherit Arafat's position.

The Israeli right-wing government also benefits from the current political division. The Israeli government aims to maintain the status-quo of "no war, no peace" to implement its own agenda where neither *Hamas* nor the PLO (West Bank) will have an independent Palestinian state, rather, they will both have security and bureaucratic apparatuses with semi-state functions.

The geographical division between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has contributed to the political division which had been previously sustained through the social division led by divisive Israeli politics. Since 1990, Israel has imposed new rules on the Gaza Strip which have not permitted Gazans to move to or work in the West Bank.

Conclusion

The Palestinian political division is not new. It has been part of the Palestinian struggle for liberation since the early years of the 20th century. This paper explored the history of the Palestinian political division from the end of the Ottomans' control over Palestine in 1916. Since the beginning of the British mandate in Palestine, the Palestinian struggle was characterised by tribal conflict and conflict between elitist families, leading to the failure of the Palestinian attempts for independence. Prior to 1948, Palestinians were divided into two camps; one represented by the *Nashashibi* family and the other by the *Husayni* family. Each family had their allies and formed their own political parties that represented their ideologies. However, both were engaged directly or indirectly with the British authorities in order to maximise their shares of power.

In 1936, the Palestinians embarked on their first revolution, which lasted for years. However, it failed as a result of the political divisions among the Palestinians. The division was a result of the conflicts in Jerusalem between the *Husaynis* and *Nashashibis*. While the *Nashashibi* family tended to cooperate with the British and believed in the potential for settlement and coexistence with the Jews, the *Husayni* family, led by *Hajj Amin*, was reluctant to deal with the British government, enabling the Zionist movement to tighten its grip on Palestine.

After 1948, the Palestinians were persecuted and prevented from forming any political power outside the influence of the Egyptian and the Jordanian regime. Therefore, the deep division in Palestine continued until the formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, which at first was met with suspicion. After the PLO was established as a political umbrella for all Palestinian factions, there was, for the first time in modern history for the Palestinians, a political body with a charter. The PLO charter formed the constitution, where all factions shared its main guidelines, and no faction withdrew completely from the PLO over any issues of conflict. The powerful and charismatic Arafat and other leaders, such as George *Habash*, manoeuvred skilfully within the political division, where the use of weapons did not occur until regional power (for example, Syria) mobilised a few Palestinian factions and leaders to stand against Arafat and his control over the PLO. Despite those difficulties, from the 1960s to 2006, there was no serious division among the Palestinians. This was the case even when the Palestinians were on a Palestinian land (1994-2006).

The *Hamas-Fatah* division is an ideological division where *Hamas*, as an Islamist party, does not tolerate a secular party, or a society with secular principles, therefore, since 2007, they have attempted on many occasions to enforce an Islamic code in the Gaza Strip. Besides that, *Hamas* is not part of the PLO, and does not recognise PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians. It sees

itself as a rival to the PLO, with a different political programme and path. *Hamas*, in contrast to all PLO factions, does not agree with the Palestinian charter despite almost all Palestinian factions adopting its main guidelines and principles alongside their own programmes and charters.

It seems that the objective of allowing *Hamas* to take power was to tame and transform its political position. The rules of the game, from 2005, was to put *Hamas* in a political corner. This was a success in that respect, yet the price was Palestinian political and social division.

Several other factors have contributed to and sustained the recent political division among Palestinians; primarily, the intervention of regional political powers, Israel's willingness to sustain the division, geographical separation, and the absence of a charismatic leader.

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