

## ❖ CHAPTER ONE ❖

### Islamism and Secular Nationalism

**D**URING THE PAST two and a half decades, Palestinian political identities have undergone significant changes in response to war, occupation, uprising, and a failed peace process. These massively destabilizing events have created profound uncertainties that have weakened once dominant forms of secular nationalism and opened up paths for new collective identities, especially resurgent Islamic, or “Islamist,” ones. In this book, I use the terms “secular nationalism,” “secular nationalist,” and “secularist” to refer to a type of political orientation that envisions the national collective as sharing a common language (Arabic), a set of key historical experiences (e.g., the 1948 and 1967 wars, among other significant events), and a territorially bounded space demarcated by the borders of the former British Mandate in Palestine, what is today the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel (see map, fig. 1). For secular nationalists, the nation includes adherents of multiple religions: Muslims and Christians, primarily, but even Jews. Secular nationalism, or secularism, in this sense, bases itself not so much on the repression or restriction of religion, though some left-secularists would demand this, but rather on its integration within a multiconfessional framework. Secular nationalists, generally, seek a nonreligious democratic state, even if this state will make various concessions to the customary legal practices of the different religious communities. This state is seen to encompass members of diverse constituencies, religious and otherwise, who possess the same rights under a single constitution. The Arabic term most commonly used by Palestinians to refer to secularist orientations is *‘almānī* (secular). It is often applied to adherents of the leftist/Marxist factions. Those in the mainstream Fatah movement, which constitutes the core of what I have termed the secular-nationalist sphere, would be careful to distinguish between a strict *‘almānī* secularism that insists on the privatizing or abandoning of religious practices (the leftist variant) and a soft secularism that integrates religion as part of a multiconfessional national identity (the Fathawi alternative).

By “Islamist,” conversely, I mean activists and movements whose orientations align with the ideology of politically resurgent Islam. Such orientations, referred to in the Palestinian setting as *al-tayyār al-islāmī* (the Islamic [political] tendency), draw on key symbols, discourses, and

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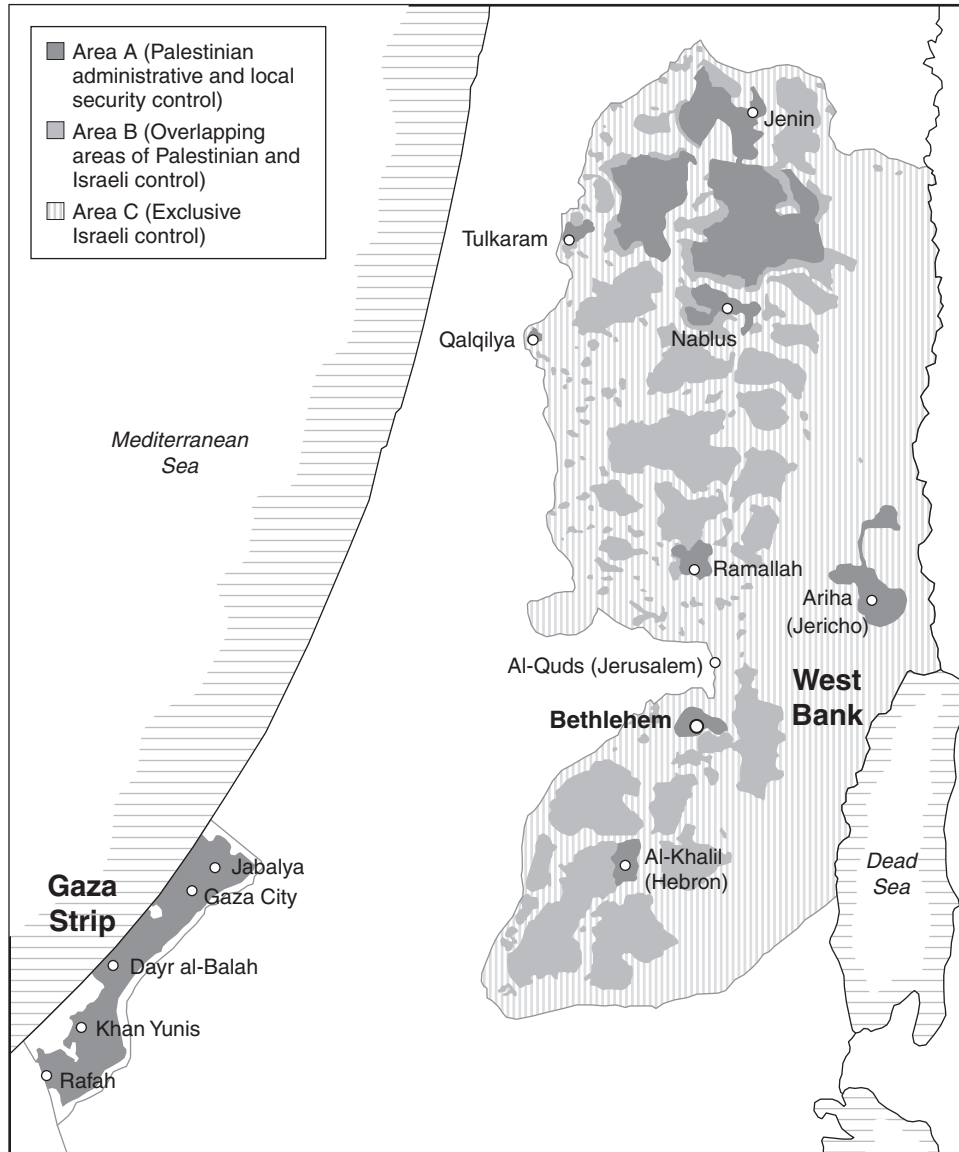


Figure 1. Geopolitical map of the West Bank and Gaza, October 1999. Adapted from Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem, <http://www.arij.org/atlas/maps/Geopolitical%20Map%20of%20the%20West%20Bank%20and%20Gaza,%20October%201999.gif>.

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narratives of the Islamic religion—such as the notions of *jihād* (the “effort” to lead a pious life, establish a society based on the precepts of *sharīʿa*, the “religious law,” and defend and expand the boundaries of Islam, militarily), *umma* (worldwide Islamic community), and *khilāfa* (caliphate), among others—to reinterpret the meaning and goals of national political resistance and solidarity. The objective of Islamists is some form of sharīʿa-based state and society within the boundaries of what is now Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip in their entirety. As Islamists have moved into the political mainstream, by becoming elected representatives on town councils and, in January 2006, gaining an overwhelming majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council, for example, they have modified their objectives, proposing the idea of a long-term *hudna*, or truce, with provisional borders between the yet-to-be-established Palestinian state and present-day Israel as delimited by the 1948 armistice lines. Because ending occupation and achieving a territorially bounded state are its primary objectives, Islamism, in the Palestinian setting, becomes a type of religious-nationalism. By using the term “Islamist,” this book distinguishes between those for whom Islam has come to mean a specific type of religio-political identity and those for whom Islam may instead be a personal religious (*Islamic*) orientation or practice existing alongside, or integrated within, a type of multiconfessional secular nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

The principal struggle within Palestinian society lies between what I am calling the Islamist milieu—at the center of which is the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, literally meaning “Zeal,” the acronym for *ḥarakat al-muqāwama al-islāmiyya* (the Islamic Resistance Movement), principally, but also the much smaller Islamic Jihad movement—and the secular-nationalist milieu anchored primarily by Fatah, meaning “Opening” or “Conquest,” the reverse acronym for *ḥarakat al-taḥrīr al-filastīnī* (the Palestinian Liberation Movement), the dominant faction in the Palestine Liberation Organization. Vying to define and control the collective Palestinian fate, these movements and their associated sociopolitical milieus have so far proven incapable of overtaking or absorbing one another. The consequent competition and division have created the conditions for a multidirectional reformulation and reorganization of political identities. Activists who came of age under these conditions have fashioned new conceptions of collective belonging that selectively integrate elements from both sides of the cultural-political divide. This book documents these new forms of political identity and explores the social processes that have given rise to them.

<sup>1</sup> On the highly debated and complex definitions of secularism and Islamism, see the collection of essays in John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, eds., *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), and Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

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##### SITUATING SECULAR NATIONALISM AND ISLAMISM IN THE PALESTINIAN SETTING

The tension between secular nationalism and Islamism among Palestinians has attracted sustained scrutiny among journalists and scholars specializing in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the politics of the Middle East, generally. Among journalists, the close-to-the-ground perspectives that have typified the work of Graham Usher and Amira Hass have been particularly influential in shaping the analyses of this book. Drawing on extensive interviewing and long experience of living in Gaza and the West Bank, both authors use rich, multilayered analyses to situate the Islamist-secularist dialectic within the vicissitudes of the broader Palestinian struggle against the occupation.<sup>2</sup> In similar fashion, this book utilizes life-history interviews and direct observation to place Islamist-secularist competition within the wider context of Palestinian nationalism, the Israeli occupation, and the self-rule arrangements of the Oslo period. To comprehend Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, one must understand Fatah and the secular-nationalist milieu that it anchors as well as the general dynamics of repression and resistance that have so profoundly shaped Palestinian life under Israeli domination. With Usher and Hass, thus, I argue that Islamism, while it emerges from a very particular cultural-political milieu within Palestinian society, nevertheless must be understood as a dimension of Palestinian nationalism. What distinguishes this book from journalistic accounts such as those of Usher and Hass is its sustained interpretation of the Palestinian situation as an instance of broader processes—particularly, those of generational change—that shape individual and collective political identities in chronically destabilized societies.

Alongside journalistic accounts, several academic studies have explored the history, ideology, organizational structure, and social setting of Islamism and its relationship to Palestinian nationalism. These works have documented the historical background of Islamism, beginning with Muslim Brotherhood political activism in the 1930s and 1940s; the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the following articles by Graham Usher: “What Kind of Nation? The Rise of Hamas in the Occupied Territories,” chap. in *Dispatches from Palestine: The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 18–33; “The Islamist Challenge,” chap. in *Palestine in Crisis: The Struggle for Peace and Political Independence after Oslo* (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 25–34; and, among other pertinent articles, “The Politics of Atrocity”; “Fatah, Hamas, and the Crisis of Oslo: Interviews with Marwan Barghouti and Ibrahim Ghoshah”; and “The Meaning of Sheikh Yassin,” chaps. in *Dispatches from Palestine*, 83–87, 136–144, and 166–168, respectively. Also, Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land under Siege*, trans. Elana Wesley and Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Co., 1996, 1999).

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retrenchment and “culturalist”<sup>3</sup> reorientation of Brotherhood structures during the era of secular pan-Arabism and P.L.O. nationalism in the 1950s through the early 1980s; and the revitalization of a more activist Islamism toward the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s and 1990s. They have also focused on the formation of Islamist networks in the mosques and universities in response to similar mobilization processes in the secular-nationalist milieu. A number of other studies have looked at the ideology of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, its connections to the broader Islamist intellectual currents in the region, and its implications for decision-making processes within the Islamist movements and for Palestinian state-building, in general, during the period of the now defunct Oslo Peace Process. These studies have emphasized the range of ideological tendencies within Hamas, particularly, noting that movement leaders demonstrated an ability to think and act pragmatically when confronted by the prospect that Oslo might succeed. From yet another perspective, there is nearly a decade of survey research on public attitudes toward the various political factions. These valuable data show, not surprisingly, that support for Fatah/P.L.O. relative to Hamas/Jihad fluctuated in accordance with public sentiments toward the peace process and the prospects for achieving meaningful statehood and basic personal and collective security. In periods when the Oslo Process appeared capable of succeeding, especially at the time of the 1996 presidential and Legislative Council elections, support for Fatah tended to increase while that of Hamas remained constant or declined. Conversely, when the Oslo Process began to implode in the late 1990s, collapsing finally under the weight of new violence at the end of 2000, the situation became reversed, with Hamas/Jihad gaining in popularity and the P.L.O. factions, especially Fatah, remaining steady or even losing support.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> By “culturalist” I mean a focus on cultural Islamization and a corresponding de-emphasis of direct political activism. During the 1970s and early to mid-1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood engaged in missionary activities in an effort to reorient Palestinians away from secular nationalism toward an Islamic religious outlook. The sway of secularism within the culture, not the occupation, was identified as the primary threat.

<sup>4</sup> Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996); Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000); Abd al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question, 1928–1947* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998); Glenn E. Robinson, “Hamas and the Islamist Mobilization,” chap. in *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 132–173; Andrea Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998; reprint, London: Routledge Curzon, 2002); Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence,*

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Several key assumptions, some of which I share, underlie these diverse studies. First, Islamism is presumed to comprise a separate sphere with its own unique history and ethos stretching back to the 1930s. Second, the collective commitment to resistance forged during the first Intifada ultimately impelled Islamists to shed their culturalist activism and embrace a more militant, antioccupation posture. The acceptance of Islamism beyond its core constituencies, as the argument goes, resulted from the perception that Islamists were finally contributing to the general *national* struggle against Israel. Third, as Abu-Amr states: “While Islamic groups have had their own appeal, activities, and followings, setbacks of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have translated into additional influence for these Islamic groups.”<sup>5</sup> This latter supposition grounds the sociological and survey analyses that view the changes in the fortunes of Hamas/Jihad as oscillating inversely with those of Fatah. The same presupposition informs the literature on the history of the P.L.O. These works, generally, have interpreted Islamist successes, instrumentally, as the consequence of P.L.O. failures to articulate a coherent positive ideology beyond the lowest-common-denominator commitment to armed struggle and national liberation. The P.L.O.’s extensive use of patronage to co-opt support from diverse constituencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, moreover, worked against building a collective purpose that went beyond the interests of clan, status group, religion, and region. The Islamists filled the gap with a comprehensive ideology dedicated to a transcendent ideal.<sup>6</sup>

This book offers a different vantage point. Drawing on extensive interviews with activists from across the political and social spectrum, I argue that Islamism and P.L.O. nationalism (“secular nationalism”), while analyzable as separate spheres with distinguishable institutions, symbols, and styles of discourse, practice, and sociability, have in reality undergone significant long-term transmutations as individuals across the political continuum have crossed over milieu boundaries and selectively

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*and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Bernd Schoch, *The Islamic Movement: A Challenge for Palestinian State-Building* (Jerusalem: PASSIA, 1999). For Khalil Shikaki’s survey research, see the data and analyses posted at <http://www.pcpsr.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, xv.

<sup>6</sup> For two varying perspectives on the P.L.O. that nevertheless converge on a critique of the limitations of its authority structure and decision-making processes, see, among other studies, Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Barry Rubin, *Revolution until Victory? The Politics and History of the PLO* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). See also the opening chapters of Jamil Hilal, *Al-nizam al-siyasi al-filastini ba’d Oslo: Dirasa tahliliyya naqdiyya* [The Palestinian Political System after Oslo: An Analytical Study] (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1998).

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drawn from both types of orientation to articulate new forms of political-cultural solidarity. These changes reflect a deeper, intrinsic reworking of inherited attitudes in response to the persisting destabilization of political life. With the weakening of the P.L.O. and the rise of the Islamist movements, the collective Palestinian narrative has become unraveled into multiple threads. As a metaphor for the current Palestinian plight, “unraveling” suggests not a neat splitting into opposing blocs but rather a complex process of unwinding and rewinding of narratives into new patterns with new strands of experience.

Palestinian society, as reflected in the perspectives of my interlocutors, does not fall neatly into two camps, Islamist or secular nationalist. This is not to say that these two blocs do not exist as real, competing formations within society; they do exist, and the findings of this book will build on, and deepen, the helpful work of already existing studies that document the history and ethos of the Islamist and secular-nationalist milieus. At the same time, however, what has remained unexamined is how diversely situated individuals at the ground level have negotiated the competing ideological claims of these formations. This missing ethnographic perspective reveals a far more complex picture, one in which individuals adapt and creatively recombine overlapping orientations into novel expressions of collective belonging. Thus, while this book employs the standard categories of “Islamist” and “secular nationalist,” its results point beyond these rubrics toward new trajectories of political identity. The consequent payoff is a much more complex and grounded understanding of the multiple directions in which Palestinian politics are presently moving.

### PALESTINIAN ISLAMIST MOBILIZATION IN REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Palestinian case, as described in this book, also yields new and contrasting perspective at the regional level. Islamic religious revitalization in other parts of the contemporary Middle East occurs not as part of a general national liberation struggle in search of statehood but rather as an expression of a countercultural identity and corresponding politics of protest within already established nation-states. Much like conservative evangelical Christians in the United States, or Jewish fundamentalist movements in Israel, Islamism in these other settings identifies a perceived crisis of values within the nation and attempts to address this crisis through a retrieval of a more “authentic” religious past that is felt to have been elided both by the established bearers of religion (the scholars, or *‘ulamā’*) and contemporary secularized society, generally. This retrieval

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occurs through, among other ways, creation of parallel institutions (separate schools, social service agencies, etc.), deployment of alternative symbols of legitimacy (“Islamic” styles of dress and comportment, Qur’anic references in slogans and discourse, banners colored in green, the Prophet Muhammad’s color, and so on), and direct action through party-political activism. When repressed by the state, as occurred, for instance, in Iran before 1979, in Egypt, and in Algeria, Islamists have often waged violent campaigns against governments. The purported goal of these struggles has been to reorient state and society toward a more thoroughgoing “piety-mindedness,” that is to say, a more profound sense of Islamic identity rooted in the reformation of cultural practices, legal structures, and governing institutions according to the religio-legal ethic of the *sharī‘a*.<sup>7</sup>

The Palestinian case is different. Certainly, Palestinian Islamism, like Islamist movements elsewhere, does constitute an identifiably distinct “subculture,” one that possesses its own networks, symbols, and discourses that separate it from the broader culture imbued with P.L.O. nationalism. Palestinian Islamists also share with other similar movements in the region a sense that the nation is headed in the wrong direction and requires redirection toward a *sharī‘a*-based order. Still, the occupation and the collective struggle against it have been decisive for shaping a distinctive Palestinian variant on Islamism—a point that is often downplayed or passed over in comparative studies. In their book *Muslim Politics*, for instance, Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori emphasize the competition between state and Islamist civil society actors concerning the proper interpretation of key legitimating religious symbols and discourses.<sup>8</sup> The cases to which they refer most frequently—Algeria, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Nigeria, among others—are all instances in which Islamists comprise protest movements within established, postcolonial

<sup>7</sup> The literature on Islamist movements in the Middle East and beyond is immense. A valuable introduction, one that places Islamist activism in relationship to other contending loyalties and broader social-political processes, is Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also the very helpful case studies in Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth: Islam beyond Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). Another useful study that surveys the multiple modes of Islamist activism is John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For a social movement perspective, see the case studies in Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004). On book-centered religio-legal orientations and how they contrast with other forms of religious revitalization, see Martin Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion: The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 15–20. The term “piety-mindedness” comes from Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 247–256 and 315–358.

<sup>8</sup> Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, 18–21.



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nation-states. Islamist movements in these settings thematize a range of grievances among the middle- and lower-middle classes and rural segments of the population. The issues at stake have to do not only with fairer distribution of resources and opportunities but also with cultural values and styles of life that are felt to be threatened or devalued by the secularizing policies of governments and the secularized elites that control them. The authors tend to analyze the tensions between Hamas and the P.L.O. in the Palestinian setting within this framework of postcolonial struggles. They refer, for instance, to Hamas's successes in winning elections against P.L.O.-associated candidates in various professional and student associations during the early 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Their immediate point is that these elections give evidence of the youthfulness of Islamist movements; however, this analysis is set within a wider discussion of transnational similarities in Islamist politics. The implication of this broader context appears to be that the P.L.O. and its successor structure, the Palestinian National Authority, are analogous to established secular governments elsewhere in the Middle East, and that the grievances expressed through Hamas's ideology and activism are parallel to those mobilized by other Islamist movements elsewhere.

This assumption may mislead, however, precisely because the struggle for statehood remains unfinished for the Palestinians. This fact has imposed on Islamist politics in the Palestinian setting the necessity of framing issues in terms of the collective effort to achieve independence. As long as Islamists refused to heed this political reality, they failed to gain the mass support needed to contend effectively against the P.L.O. The emergence of the Islamic Jihad and Hamas just prior to and during the first Intifada transformed Islamism into a viable alternative vehicle for collective Palestinian political identity primarily because these movements, unlike their immediate predecessors, placed priority on liberating the homeland (*al-waṭan*) from Israeli domination. This shift required a reinterpretation of core ideological principles, strategy, and tactics among the new generation of Islamist activists. The most important ideological shift was to subordinate the goal of reviving the umma, the worldwide Islamic community, to a seemingly more limited objective—the retrieval of the nation's patrimony.<sup>10</sup> Granted, the new leaders did continue to speak of the larger effort to revitalize the Islamic

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 112, 172.

<sup>10</sup> In secular-nationalist parlance, the terms “al-waṭan” (homeland) and “al-umma” (nation), the latter term being drawn from the Islamic religious context, indicated a continuum of Arab national solidarity. The “waṭan” referred to the particular national territory of a particular Arab people, while “umma” indicated the collective Arab nation. Among Islamists, a similar continuum existed but with a different valuation. The “waṭan” denoted a particular ethnic/national group within the larger *Islamic* community, i.e., the umma.

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umma, but their principal focus had become the liberation of Palestinian territory and the creation, in that territory, of a territorially bounded Palestinian state as the first and necessary step of the worldwide Islamic revolution. It was this focus, and their demonstrated willingness to sacrifice their lives and treasure for it, that gave Islamists credibility within the wider society. The result: Islamism became “Palestinianized”; and, simultaneously, as Islamists established their nationalist credentials and attracted mass backing, proponents of mainstream Palestinian nationalism increasingly began to integrate Islamist themes into their imaginary.<sup>11</sup>

I would thus nuance Bruce Lawrence’s conclusion that the appeal to jihād has ultimately been self-defeating for Islamist movements, including in the Palestinian case.<sup>12</sup> The Palestinian situation actually shows the opposite: that the turn to violent jihād as a form of *nationalist* resistance succeeds in making Islamism an accepted and successful, if not yet dominant, alternative form of collective *Palestinian* identity. This is not a novel point. Several of the writers mentioned earlier have noted the importance of the first Intifada, or Uprising, in radicalizing the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and definitively reorienting the Islamist milieu, as a whole, toward the nationalist struggle.<sup>13</sup> The question that has received less attention has been the impact of this reorientation on the identities

<sup>11</sup> Olivier Roy has advanced a similar argument about Islamism, generally. In his view, Islamism has everywhere failed to achieve its strategic goal of instituting a transnational political entity, a revived “umma,” and instead has either fragmented into a collection of diverse movements focused on specific national concerns or transmuted into an amorphous and rootless internationalism that attracts alienated youth (e.g., second-generation immigrants in European cities or the newly urbanized in majority Muslim states). He notes the role, in this process, of the failure of Islamist ideologies to adequately and accurately comprehend the factors that have given rise to, and sustain, the nation-state system regionally and internationally; the concomitant Islamist failure to articulate a viable alternative to this system; and the generally successful strategy of states of co-opting Islamist symbols and rhetoric and repressing violent revolutionary groups. While his arguments are generally convincing, Roy nevertheless does not seem to take into sufficient consideration the possibility that the modern nation-state, and the diverse societies in which this political form has become manifest, might be undergoing an internal, bottom-up politico-cultural Islamization even as Islamist movements increasingly become “nationalized.” Whether this internal Islamizing process leads to a new transnational political entity—a kind of Islamic Community similar, say, to the European Community—that replaces or significantly transforms the current nation-state system remains unclear, but it is also too soon to write the obituary of Islamism as a political force. Attempts to take control of, and overthrow, the nation-state system may have failed to date, but Islamization in its multiple political and social forms continues to be a vibrant and evolving phenomenon. See Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth*, 174.

<sup>13</sup> See, among others, Usher, “What Kind of Nation?” 18–20; Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, 145–151, notes the Islamic movement’s lethargic response to the Intifada, initially, but attributes the slowness to Shaykh Yasin’s desire to proceed cautiously;

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of activists in both the Islamist and secular-nationalist settings since that key turning point of the first Uprising.

The period of the Oslo Peace Process, in which a quasi state under the control of the senior P.L.O. leadership came into existence, shifted the context of Islamist activism from the struggle for independence to the dynamics of state building. It was perhaps during this period that Palestinian Islamism came into greater parallel with Islamist movements elsewhere. Under Oslo, Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists began to reinterpret the meaning of their activism in ways that oscillated between preserving the emphasis on national liberation (i.e., the still unfinished struggle with Israel) and becoming a political party that could mobilize the broad discontent of refugees and other groups that felt excluded from influence and power in the new order coming into existence in the form of the Palestinian National Authority. This book explores these shifting circumstances and dynamics, tracing their effects not only on the identities of Islamist activists but also on the orientations of individuals embedded within the more dominant multiconfessional secular-nationalist sphere.

Perhaps the closest regional parallel to the Palestinian type of Islamism is the Hizbullah movement in Lebanon. Although Shi'i in orientation, Hizbullah's successful guerrilla struggle against Israel has served as an inspiration and model for continuing militancy among the Sunni Palestinian Islamists. Many of the younger heads of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the ones leading the current "al-Aqsa Uprising," actually came into direct contact with Hizbullah and its Iranian advisers after the Israeli government, on December 17, 1992, expelled some 408 Islamist activists to Marj al-Zahur, a barren hilltop situated in Israel's former "security zone" in southern Lebanon.<sup>14</sup>

Hizbullah got its start during Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, a campaign that, according to initial Lebanese police reports of the time, left approximately nineteen thousand Lebanese and Palestinians dead, the vast majority of them civilians,<sup>15</sup> and ended in the expulsion of the P.L.O. from Beirut and the setting up of a long-term Israeli occupation in the Shi'i<sup>16</sup> southern part of the country. Like the Palestinian Islamists, Hizbullah's

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she also notes the need to "catch up with the nationalists and Islamic Jihad," 4ff.; Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, 68, also identifies a multiplicity of factors leading to the creation of Hamas, including the desire to wrest initiative and position away from the secular-nationalist factions.

<sup>14</sup> Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, 158.

<sup>15</sup> Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), 223, citing Lebanese police statistics compiled during the invasion.

<sup>16</sup> The term "Shi'i" (Shiite) is the adjective form of "Shi'a," a collective noun referring to the Shi'i community, in general.

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credibility within the wider society rests on the perception that it has acted patriotically on behalf of the Lebanese nation against an external enemy. Israel's unilateral withdrawal from its "security zone" in 2000 greatly amplified the stature of the Shi'i guerrilla movement both nationally and regionally. Like most Arabs in the Middle East, Palestinians viewed Israel's retreat as vindicating Hizbullah's tactics of armed resistance.

While Hizbullah has had multiple influences on Palestinian Islamists, the movement differs from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in at least one crucial respect: in addition to being a guerrilla force fighting Israel, Hizbullah has also become, alongside AMAL (a parallel Shi'i political movement that predated Hizbullah), the primary vehicle for advancing the specific communal interests of the Lebanese Shi'a. As such, it seeks to increase the influence and power of the Shi'a vis-à-vis other non-Shi'a competitors—such as the Maronite Christians, Druze, and urban Sunni Muslim communities—by mobilizing its constituencies through its extensive network of charitable associations and representing them in Parliament. Although pan-Islamist in its ideology, Hizbullah is primarily one political party among many others that advocates the interests of a particular religious-ethnic community within the existing multiconfessional structure of the Lebanese state and its politics. Palestinian Islamism, by contrast, comprises a national movement that contends with the P.L.O. to define the content and direction of the Palestinian collective, as a whole. Its orientations have become diffuse within the society, integrating into Palestinian nationalist sensibilities and, in so doing, transforming, and becoming transformed by, these sensibilities. Such a transformation, largely the consequence of the unique conditions of the Palestinian struggle for statehood against Israel, is absent in the Hizbullah movement. Hizbullah is Shi'a-identified and like all other major political formations in Lebanon remains, as such, communally oriented and sectarian.<sup>17</sup>

A second important regional comparison is with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The connections between Egyptian and Palestinian Islamism are direct and long-standing. Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood missionaries established branches in Palestine during the 1930s. The Brotherhood had mobilized mass discontent against the British occupation in Egypt; its activism in the Palestinian setting was an expression of its pan-Islamic and anticolonialist sympathy with Palestinian nationalists in their struggle against British control and Zionist colonization of the "Holy Land." Traveling up and down the Nile River, the founder of the

<sup>17</sup> On the politicization of the Shi'a of Lebanon, and on Hizbullah specifically, see Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), and Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

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Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, made Palestine a mobilizing cause by preaching to his constituents on the duties of jihād and collecting funds from them to support the purchase of weapons. In 1948, Muslim Brotherhood volunteers fought against Zionist forces in the war that led to the creation of Israel. After the war, Brotherhood cells continued in the Gaza Strip to organize clandestine attacks across the Egypt-Israel armistice lines. The reputation of the Brotherhood as a militant force initially attracted Yasir ‘Arafat and Khalil al-Wazir (“Abu Jihad”), cofounders of the Palestinian Liberation Movement (Fatah), to become members for a brief period. Gradually in the aftermath of 1948, but especially following the 1967 war, in which Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Brotherhood in the Palestinian areas became independent of the parent movement in Egypt; nevertheless, ties of affinity remained. The founders of Hamas (most prominently, the late Shaykh Ahmad Yasin) and of the Islamic Jihad (the late Fathi Shikaki and Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ‘Awda, primarily) were all trained in Egyptian universities at different points in time and during their tenures came into contact with Muslim Brotherhood activists and members of other, more militant Brotherhood spin-off formations in Egypt.<sup>18</sup> The increasing radicalism of Egyptian Islamism during the 1970s, along with the successful revolution in Iran, provided inspiration and a model especially for the Islamic Jihad.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the direct organizational ties in the early period and the ongoing affinities since then, the unique circumstances of the Israeli occupation and the concomitant struggle for independence and statehood have caused Palestinian Islamism to diverge in significant respects from its sister movements in Egypt. Unlike the Egyptian case, Palestinian Islamism, especially after the period of radicalization in the mid- to late 1980s, reversed the logical progression from cultural Islamization to Islamic

<sup>18</sup> Yasin actually encountered Brotherhood activists in the Shati Refugee Camp in Gaza, where he grew up after becoming, at twelve years of age, a refugee with his family during the 1948 war. Yasin never formally studied the classical religious sciences, preferring instead to seek certification as a schoolteacher at the Ain Shams University in Cairo during the 1950s. Following Nasir’s crackdown on the Brotherhood in 1966, he distanced himself from the movement while nevertheless maintaining his basic commitment to its goals. He quietly began to preach and teach at a mosque near his home in Shati, seeking to revitalize the much-marginalized Muslim Brotherhood movement. In 1969–70, he helped form, and became head of, a small committee that spearheaded the revival by focusing on social and cultural work. Gradually, he drew around him a small core of younger activists who resonated with his message of Islamic revival as a response to the post-1967 Palestinian condition. Eighteen years later, this younger nucleus would provide the central leadership of Hamas. Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, 98–102.

<sup>19</sup> Chapter 3 will go into more precise detail concerning the connections between Egyptian Islamism and Palestinian Islamist activism, and the influence of the former on the latter. For references on these issues, see the citations listed therein.

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revolution that Islamist ideologues, such as the influential Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb, had mapped out. Deeming Egyptian state and society to be a new *jāhiliyya*—the period of polytheistic “ignorance” that medieval Muslim scholars thought to have typified human history before the arrival of Islam—Qutb had advocated a spiritual and social withdrawal of “true Muslims” into segregated subcultures as a first step toward creating an Islamized vanguard, a first instantiation of a revived Islamic consciousness. With these vanguard formations in place, a new generation thoroughly imbued with Islam would rise up to lead a mass revolt against the secular state. The Palestinian Islamist movements that appeared in the 1980s, especially the Islamic Jihad, drew on this vanguard idea but redirected the objective of struggle away from internal social transformation and toward the Israeli occupation. In a significant departure from earlier Muslim Brotherhood orientations that, like their Egyptian counterparts, identified a secularizing society as the primary problem, the Islamic Jihad, and later Hamas, argued that the road to a revitalized Islamic umma, the transnational Islamic community, passed through Jerusalem. In making this shift, these movements brought Islamist structures and ideology into direct parallel with P.L.O. nationalism and, in so doing, transformed Islamism into a live option for patriotic activism that could also be construed as genuinely Islamic. The new Palestinian Islamism, in a sense, identified an alternative and more dangerous *jāhiliyya*, that of the Israeli state. The problem of the internal *jāhiliyya*, represented by the P.L.O. and secular nationalism, generally, receded into the background as the new Islamist activists engaged in direct action against the Israeli occupation. Today, Palestinian Islamists seek to represent the entire nation, and, as a consequence, the unfinished business of liberation and state formation has become their primary concern.

### GENERATION DYNAMICS WITHIN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In addition to providing an important typological distinction relative to other forms of Islamism in the Middle East, Palestinian Islamist mobilization raises critical questions for theories of social movements, generally. Social movement theory is only just beginning to be applied to Islamism in the Middle East. The initial attempts look promising, especially in their stress on regional comparisons.<sup>20</sup> These early studies, however, have generally replicated the biases in favor of structural analysis

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Marwan Khawaja, “Resource Mobilization, Hardship, and Popular Collective Action in the West Bank,” *Social Forces* 73, no. 1 (September 1994): 191–220, and the case studies, including the one on Hamas by Glen E. Robinson, in Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*. See also Asaf Bayat, “Revolution without Movement, Movement without

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that have typified much of social movement research as a whole. Consequently, they tend to stress the determinative role of independent external variables such as network formation, institutional process, and event dynamics in shaping individual and collective behavior. Cultural factors—discourses, practices, value orientations, ideologies, for example—are seen, in this approach, to be subsidiary, dependent, or derivative effects of these more basic structural dimensions. Recently, however, this attitude has undergone sustained criticism as sociologists have come to develop a more sophisticated concept of culture as an independent causal factor in the formation of social milieus and movements. A particularly influential corrective reconceptualizes the relation of culture to structure through the metaphors of “toolbox” and “framing.” In this approach, narratives, discourses, symbols, and the other dimensions of culture are viewed as resources that social movement “entrepreneurs” draw upon (i.e., as if from a toolbox) to construe (or “frame”) issues in such a way as to make them resonate with specific constituencies. Achieving such resonance aids the effort to mobilize groups in one direction or another. Cultural factors thus become a part of the causal explanation. Still, the structural bias remains intact in these approaches because cultural resources continue to serve as an annex to institutional processes. Culture is treated as a passive reservoir of meanings, metaphors, signs, and symbols that leaders can draw upon at will to recruit and mobilize followers in response to competition from other movements, the state, and so forth.<sup>21</sup>

I take a different approach in this book. Building on Anne E. Kane’s work, I argue that cultural factors do not merely emerge from, reflect, or serve structural processes (network formation, constituency mobilization, large historical transition) but rather can shape these very processes in their own right. More precisely, I see culture and structure as interrelated. Position within networks, institutions, and events certainly can determine consciousness. But consciousness is also constituted by inherited

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Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 1 (January 1998): 136–169, and David A. Snow and Susan E. Marshall, “Cultural Imperialism, Social Movements, and the Islamic Revival,” *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 7 (1984): 131–152.

<sup>21</sup> The literature on social movements is gigantic. For references to the major works and an important critique of the structural biases in social movement theory, see Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Godwin, “Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 6 (May 1994): 1411–1454. For recent work in the cultural analysis vein, see Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51 (April 1986): 273–286; Anne E. Kane, “Theorizing Meaning Construction in Social Movements: Symbolic Structures and Interpretation during the Irish Land War, 1879–1882,” *Sociological Theory* 15, no. 3 (November 1997): 249–276; and Anne W. Esacove, “Dialogic Framing: The Framing/Counterframing of ‘Partial-Birth’ Abortion,” *Sociological Inquiry* 74, no. 1 (February 2004): 70–101.

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sociopolitical orientations, discursive and symbolic formations, practices, and ideals that possess their own logic and that interact dialectically with institutions and events. Structural processes such as institutional collapse might occasion crises of orientation that then call forth reinterpretations of received attitudes and methods. But this process of reinterpretation is itself subject to the inherited limits on the range and logic of the symbols, discourse, and narratives that have become embedded within a given social context. While new symbols, discourses, and narratives can emerge from critical reflection and recombination, the changes that result will always occur in dialectical relation to what has come before. This process, moreover, is multidirectional, occurring potentially at many different levels of social aggregation. Meanings are not the preserve of a single actor; hence, not just leaders but also followers will engage in the reinterpretation process. The novel forms of affiliation and concomitant new conceptualizations for action that evolve from this multiplex revision are thus the result of tensions and negotiations among leaders and followers. These tensions/negotiations often end in the formation of unforeseen subtendencies and splinter groups. This differentiation can lead either to the emergence of a new, shared narrative through “symbolic fusion” or to the development of multiple narratives through symbolic fragmentation. In either case, cultural processes appear to be partially autonomous and capable of creating the conditions for the emergence of new structures.<sup>22</sup>

Several key questions arise from the methodological starting point that I am elaborating here: How and under what conditions do individuals at different social levels rethink or reappropriate inherited memories and orientations to make sense of the present? What is the relationship between these acts of reappropriation and the forging of new kinds of group memory and solidarity? What role, in particular, do collective symbols and narratives play in creating the cognitive and emotional ties of these new memories/solidarities? Through what social processes are the expectations, sentiments, and moral obligations of solidarity that are embedded within collective symbols and narratives absorbed within the hearts and minds of individuals? And, finally, how do memories/solidarities actualize themselves at different levels of social aggregation and in different situations?

<sup>22</sup> Kane, “Theorizing Meaning Construction in Social Movements,” 249–276. The multilevel, multidirectional process of symbolic/discursive/narrative revision that I outline here receives a much more detailed discussion in Kane’s article. Kane stresses “symbolic fusion” (or “hybridization,” to use the term adopted in this book) as the normal outcome of “discursive tension,” while I view fragmentation to be an equally likely outcome, at least in the Palestinian case.



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Adopting these questions as guideposts, I trace in this book the new discourses and narratives that are emerging among individual Palestinians as they negotiate the polarized terrain of Islamist/secular-nationalist competition. These new forms of sociopolitical consciousness represent fluid reworkings of inherited symbols and interpretations that connect with the key moments of crisis in collective Palestinian experience. These moments have been numerous. Despite a general consensus rooted in basic P.L.O. nationalism, the meanings of these events have always been contested, especially when a new crisis crops up. The importance of crises in generating new interpretations raises additional questions: How do such events produce changes in individual and collective orientations? What is the vehicle through which these changes happen? And what are the effects of these changes in consciousness on how individuals associate with one another?

The answer I propose to these questions rests on the concept of socio-historical generations. Destabilizing events create generations, and it is within the structures of a generation that new forms of meaning and association emerge. But what exactly are “generations,” and what produces them? How does the generational process lead to the production of new cultural meanings? And how do these new meanings give rise to novel forms of solidarity?

In a seminal essay, Karl Mannheim, a Hungarian sociologist who was active between the world wars, suggested that a generation was similar to a socioeconomic class.<sup>23</sup> Class position defined individuals by their common objective location within the economic and sociopolitical structures of their society. Class situation was objective in the sense that it shaped the outlook and mannerisms of individuals regardless of whether or not they were aware of or acknowledged their actual position within the class hierarchy.<sup>24</sup> Like class, the sociohistorical generation was a “location phenomenon.” It shaped the orientations of a broad group of individuals who may or may not have had actual, direct interaction with one another and who might or might not have been aware of their shared position. In contrast to class, however, a generation’s identity was given not by the socioeconomic structure but by a unique combination of demographic and historical factors. Generations came into existence as a social phenomenon through the interaction of the “rhythm of birth and death” with institutionalized modes of socialization that perpetuated shared patterns of speech, movement, thought, and desire. Socialization

<sup>23</sup> Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” chap. in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), 276–320.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

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practices reduced the disruptive effect of birth and death by crystallizing past experience and inculcating it within new members of society, thus creating a sense of intergenerational continuity. Destabilizing historical experiences, however, could undermine this sense of connectedness by causing inherited orientations to appear irrelevant or problematic, thus opening up spaces for the revival of marginalized or “forgotten” discourses and practices.<sup>25</sup>

The shared experience of a moment of social destabilization stamped a generation with its peculiar sense of “fate,” through which all later experience got filtered. Destabilization was the necessary catalyst that initiated the process of forming actual generation identities.<sup>26</sup> Rapid change did not so much wipe the slate clean as it created perceptions of a radical disjunction between inherited attitudes and lived reality. Old ways appeared not to work. In the crisis of orientation that ensued, received ideals and those who supported them faced the possibility of rejection and replacement. The social codes that comprised collective, institutional identities thus could become fluid and reorderable.<sup>27</sup> This work of reordering occurred principally among young adults. Because youth had not yet crystallized a basic life orientation, they were more capable of seeing circumstances as new, critically evaluating inherited narratives, and adopting alternative models in response to conditions of crisis and upheaval.<sup>28</sup>

The experience of upheaval and consequent reevaluation and reconstruction of inherited orientations would then become definitive of the identity of the segment of youth undergoing the process. All later experience of this group would be filtered through the memory of the originating trauma and meanings attached to it. It is the possession of this mem-

<sup>25</sup> As Mannheim puts it: “The continuous emergence of new human beings . . . facilitates reevaluation of our inventory and teaches us both to forget that which is no longer useful and to covet that which has yet to be won.” *Ibid.*, 295. For a fuller discussion of how destabilizing events can undermine inherited orientations and create new ones, see William H. Sewell, Jr., “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (July 1992): 1–29, and “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille,” *Theory and Society* 25, no. 6 (December 1996): 841–881.

<sup>26</sup> Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” 302–304. Mannheim comments in this regard: “We shall therefore speak of a *generation as an actuality* only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization.” Emphasis is in the original.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 299–302.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 296–298; Charlotte Dunham, “Generation Units and the Life Course: A Sociological Perspective on Youth and the Anti-war Movement,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 26, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 137–155; and Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, “Generations and Collective Memories,” *American Sociological Review* 54 (June 1989): 359–381.

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ory, rooted in a shared experience of upheaval, that is most important to the analysis of generations. Beyond merely constituting a statistically identifiable “cohort,” historical generations—or “strategic generations,” to borrow Bryan Turner’s phrase—comprised a self-conscious collective whose actions become socially and politically significant, especially in the creation or revision of national identities. The historical importance of such entities could be measured in the impact they had on subsequent generations. The “Intifada” generation, I argue, constitutes a strategic generation in this sense. Exposure to the Uprising and its aftereffects marks the cohort of youth undergoing the trauma of this period with a distinct set of orientations. These orientations have profoundly revised Palestinian identity in various ways during the subsequent post-Intifada period.<sup>29</sup>

Generations, however, especially in the Palestinian case, were rarely, if ever, homogeneous entities with uniform perspectives. Within generations, conflict could occur when opposing narratives developed of the common historical event that had called a particular generation into existence. The social tendencies that became the vehicles for these conflicting interpretations constituted what Mannheim called “generation units.”<sup>30</sup> At the core of every unit were cultural and political groups that had articulated specific ideological programs. Some groups would have greater institutional strength and thus be more successful in articulating the hopes and fears accompanying an emerging historical moment; these groups would generalize their particular interpretation of events, embedded within the narratives and symbols of distinct sociopolitical milieus, to individuals and groups beyond their immediate sphere. Others not directly affiliated with these groups/milieus would nevertheless absorb their orientations. Generation units became significant historical forces to the extent that they achieved this wider effect. The concept of generation units enables us to develop a more coherent theory of change within social movements by linking structural processes (network formation, institutional location, large historical events) to cultural ones (interpretation of symbols, articulation of discourses, authoring of narratives). Generation units are the vehicles for culturally reimagining and institutionally reconstituting movements and milieus.

<sup>29</sup> Bryan S. Turner, “Strategic Generations: Historical Change, Literary Expression, and Generational Politics,” in *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*, ed. June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 15–18.

<sup>30</sup> On the definition of generation units relative to generations, as a whole, Mannheim writes: “Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units.” Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” 304.

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GENERATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND  
PALESTINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

In the Palestinian case, a series of crises has produced a number of generational shifts. These changes occurred as evolutions and disjunctions within the milieu structures and accompanying narratives and symbols through which Palestinians have formed and expressed their political identities. The process was open-ended, often leading to surprising new departures; but each development grew out of, or in reaction to, the social and political formations and symbolic repertoires of earlier periods. Major social upheaval coincided with the main shifts. These events created structural uncertainty and, in so doing, provided the conditions for the emergence of new networks and orientations. The new forms of organization and consciousness marked the boundaries between generations. Figure 2 provides a flowchart detailing the historical development of the main Palestinian political formations and their opposing milieus.

At least three main generational shifts mark the evolution of the current Palestinian sociopolitical field. The first one occurred after the War of 1948, the event that brought the State of Israel and Palestinian dispossession simultaneously into existence. Prior to 1948, two main groups characterized Palestinian society: landless (tenant) farming peasants and the landowning notable classes.<sup>31</sup> The 1948 war had two main effects on

<sup>31</sup> For background on pre-1948 society in Palestine, see Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Husaynis: The Rise of a Notable Family in 18th Century Palestine," chap. in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 93–108; 'Adil Manna', *A'lam filastin fi awakhir al-'ahd al-'Uthmani, 1800–1918* [The Distinguished Personalities of Palestine of the Late Ottoman Period, 1800–1918] (Jerusalem: Jam'iyyat al-Dirasat al-'Arabiyya, 1986); Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," chap. in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 41–68; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, 1994), 64–123; Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987); Ann Mosely Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917–1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979); Phillip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Yohoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), and Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1929–1939: From Riots to Rebellion* (London: Frank Cass, 1977); and Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

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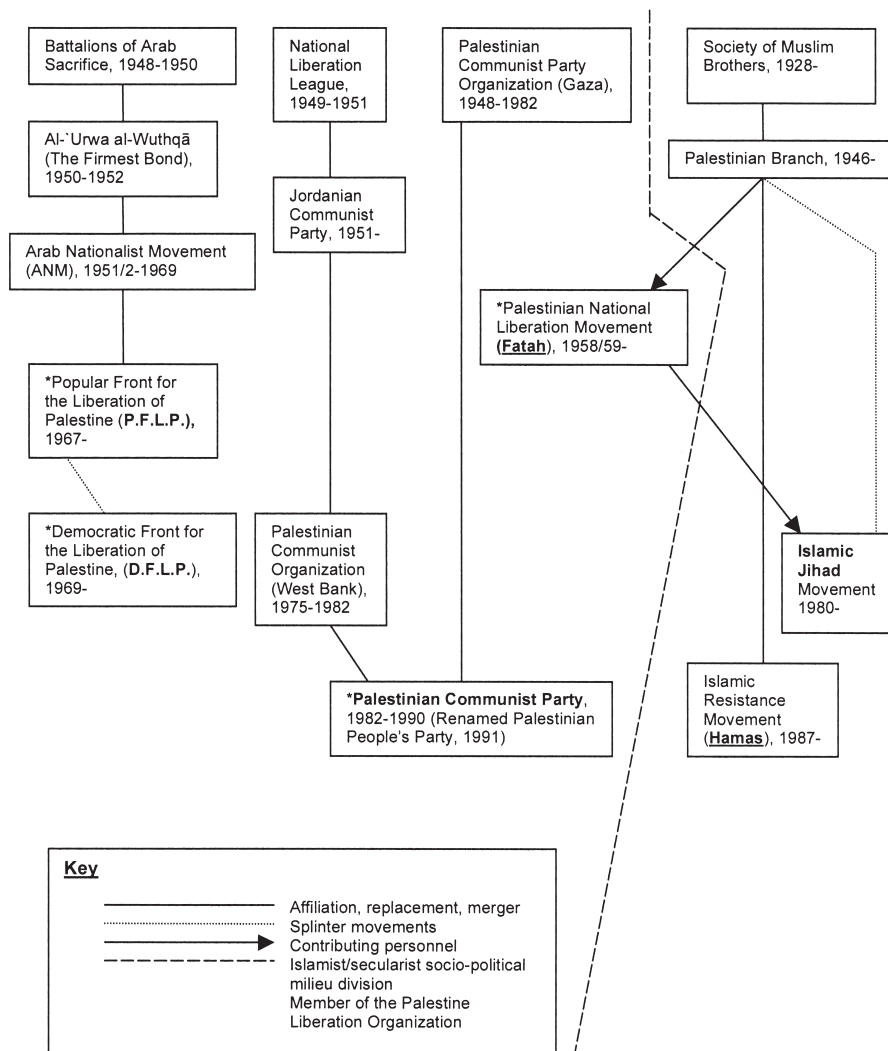


Figure 2. Evolution of secular-nationalist and Islamist factions. Adapted from Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 1999) xlii-xliii.

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these groups. First, it discredited the leadership of the notables. In their place, there arose a new generation of university-educated leaders from the nonlandowning merchant and small-business classes who were forced from their towns and neighborhoods along with the tenant farming communities during the war.<sup>32</sup> Individuals such as the late Yasir ‘Arafat, cofounder of the Fatah movement, and George Habash, cofounder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, represented this trend. Educated at Cairo University and American University of Beirut, respectively, they met other activists on these campuses who had undergone similar experiences. The student organizations they formed became the basis for new political movements that would reforge Palestinian national identity in the exile (*al-ghurba*).

The second effect of the war was the synchronic split within this new generation of nationalists. The main division lay between those who advocated a pluralistic Palestinianism that looked back to the “customs and traditions” of village and town life, and those who called for a secular pan-Arab revolution across the region. The leaders of both tendencies had common social origins in the lower-middle to mid-middle classes; after the 1948 debacle, they all underwent transitions in their social class identities as they entered the universities and became members of the new professional elites.

The founders of the Fatah movement, the core of the first tendency, articulated a form of nationalist consciousness that coincided with the ethos of the lower-middle classes—groups with origins in small towns or villages that had shifted into the business and professional classes (small-shop owners and traders, government employees, teachers, etc.). This ethos stressed the importance of the *‘ādāt wa taqālīd* (the customs and traditions) of the recently lost peasant and village past. Fatah’s founders reflected this orientation in their symbols and discourse. They adopted stylized forms of peasant costume (‘Arafat’s *kūfiyya* scarf, e.g.); invoked the ties of family and religion, Muslim and Christian, as the foundation of national solidarity; and apotheosized the peasant-as-heroic-guerrilla who rose up to avenge and reclaim the land. Unlike the pan-Arabists, they emphasized a strictly Palestinian nationalist orientation, viewing the liberation of the Palestinian homeland as the royal road to Arab unity. At the same time, the founders of Fatah consciously cultivated the image of the Third World revolutionary who had discarded the customs

<sup>32</sup> On the formation of the new national movements after 1948, see Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Kimmerling and Migdal, *Palestinians*; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*; William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973); and Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?*

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and traditions of the peasant past in favor of the “revolution” that would create an up-to-date bureaucratic nation-state; they signaled this orientation by wearing Western-style suits or military fatigues with pens in breast pockets and pistols in hip holsters. Fatah’s and, after 1967, the P.L.O.’s fusion of these different and divergent symbols and discourses into a more or less coherent Palestinianism served ideologically to integrate the diverse constituencies—shop owners, town dwellers, villagers, university students, and the new professionals—that comprised the Palestinian refugee population after the Nakba (Disaster) of 1948.

In contrast to this “right,” hybrid form of nationalism that predominated in Fatah, a second, competing “left” segment among the new generation moved more resolutely in a strictly secularist direction. Drawn to the ideals of pan-Arabism and the rhetoric of Marxist revolution, these members of the emerging professional classes (medical doctors, teachers, writers, and so on), many of them from displaced merchant and landowning families, and many of them Christians, embraced an Arab unity founded on the concept of a desacralized Islamic cultural heritage that all groups shared, the Arabic language, and anticolonialism. They formed the Movement of Arab Nationalists (M.A.N.) and supported Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir’s rise to power in Egypt. The movement’s founders theorized that once “revolutionary” pan-Arab regimes had replaced the “reactionary” pro-West and pro-capitalist kingdoms (e.g., in Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia), a war of liberation against Israel would become possible.

The generation that founded Fatah and M.A.N. created the main structures of what I term the “secular-nationalist milieu.” This milieu underwent two subsequent changes, first in the aftermath of the 1967 war and then in the decade between the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the end of the first Intifada and start of the Oslo Peace Process in 1993. One of the main shifts was the integration of the right and left tendencies that had been institutionally represented in the separate Fatah and M.A.N. structures. The 1967 war ended with the complete defeat of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian forces and the Israeli occupation of the Sinai desert, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and the Syrian Golan Heights. It was a humiliating defeat for Nasir and the pan-Arabist cause. In the aftermath, the Fathawi stress on independent decision-making, armed struggle, and national liberation above all other considerations increasingly resonated among Palestinians. Fatah attracted hundreds of recruits through its highly touted, but largely ineffective, armed actions. The M.A.N. responded by embracing Fatah-type nationalism, carrying out its own spectacular operations (airplane hijackings, guerrilla raids), and renaming itself the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The P.F.L.P. joined the P.L.O.—which Fatah took over in 1968–69—and functioned within it as a counterforce to Fatah.

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These shifts coincided with the creation of an independent P.L.O. base in Lebanon and the concomitant emphasis on guerrilla attacks against Israel launched from the “outside.” The *fidā’ī* (one who sacrifices his or her life), his (sometimes her) face masked in the peasant *kūfiyya* (checkered scarf), became the symbol of this resurgent Palestinian identity. So did the images, captured in poster art, of the militant peasant rising from the ground with rifle in hand or, alternatively, of the peasant woman dressed in a *thawb* (embroidered dress) holding on to her children as she remained rooted to her land. The fighter and militant peasant represented the virulent “outside”; the woman, the passive and steadfast “inside” awaiting liberation. Such symbols tapped into patriarchal notions of honor and the necessity to redeem it when it became violated. These ideas had been part of the ethos of village and small-town life and continued as values within the refugee communities. Religious strictures, Muslim and Christian, reinforced these orientations in various ways. The nationalist reformulation, however, produced a secularized patriarchalism, symbolically linking “honor” to the “people’s revolution” as the P.L.O. incorporated the left and adapted its rhetoric within the context of Fathawi Palestinianism.

Alongside this transfiguration of patriarchal discourse, the P.L.O. also created a meritocracy that empowered refugees and women, in particular, to become educated and pursue careers as movement bureaucrats. The P.L.O. became, in Yezid Sayigh’s terms, a protostate in exile modeled on the single-party bureaucratic states, especially in the Egyptian form, that had come into existence in the Arab world with the demise of colonialism. As such, it sought to fashion new forms of solidarity by prioritizing the creation of “revolutionary consciousness” in the younger generations through education, professionalization, and military training.

The second main effect of the 1967 war was the reconstitution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestinian society.<sup>33</sup> The Brotherhood, as mentioned earlier, had been active as a guerrilla force during and immediately after the 1948 war but then went into abeyance with the rise of Nasir, pan-Arabism, and the Fatah-controlled P.L.O. The activists who undertook to revitalize the Brotherhood after the 1967 war explicitly rejected participation in the P.L.O., insisting that nationalism was contrary to Islam and that Palestinian suffering would end only with a return to religion. Accordingly, they emphasized missionary outreach and charity in an effort to reorient the wider culture. Avoidance of explicit antioccupation activities helped the revitalizing effort steer clear of Israeli repression. In-

<sup>33</sup> The following discussion draws on Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*; Hroub, *Hamas*; Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*; Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*; and Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine*.



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deed, Israel saw the Brotherhood as a potential force for undermining the P.L.O. in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and assisted its reemergence by issuing its charities licenses and allowing it space to organize. The main significance of the efforts of these new Brotherhood activists lay in the formation of an extensive, mosque-based social service network. This base would eventually provide the necessary structural foundation for the Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements. A similar institutionalization process, it should be noted, occurred in the secular-nationalist milieu as P.L.O. factions, principally the left but increasingly Fatah after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, established their own social and political networks. These groups enjoyed greater legitimacy than the Brotherhood because of their basic nationalist orientation. By the 1980s, to identify as Palestinian was to be a supporter, passive or active, of the P.L.O.

In the 1980s, major political upheaval would again play a role in generating structural and ideological shifts in both the Islamist and the secular-nationalist milieus as they had taken form in the post-1967 period. The destruction of the last independent P.L.O. base in Lebanon during Israel's 1982 invasion and the outbreak of the first Intifada some five years later shifted momentum away from the old founding P.L.O. leadership, now in distant exile in Algeria and Tunisia, toward a new generation of activists based in the "inside" (the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip). A diachronic split thus took form within the secular-nationalist milieu, particularly within Fatah, between the outside "old guard" and inside "young guard" leaderships.<sup>34</sup> This split would deepen during the Oslo period (1993–2000), creating the conditions for a resurgent militancy as the young guard attempted to assert control of the secular-nationalist movement as a whole. Among the Islamists, a similar diachronic dynamic emerged; but instead of a split, the older leadership embraced a more militant posture in response to the mass upheaval of the first Uprising and the rise of radicalized younger activists seeking an Islamic-nationalist option. The Islamic Jihad, which appeared in the early 1980s as a small underground armed movement, was a precursor of this shift, serving notice to the wider Islamist movement that a failure to embrace a more militant stance could lead to political irrelevancy for yet another generation. The formation of Hamas indicated that the older leadership had drawn the appropriate conclusions from the rise of the new militants and the spreading mass ethos of resistance that the first Intifada created.

<sup>34</sup> Khalil Shikaki coined these terms. See Khalil Shikaki, "Old Guard, Young Guard: The Palestinian Authority and the Peace Process at a Cross Roads" (Ramallah: The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, November 1, 2001), and, by the same author, "Palestinians Divided," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2002): 89–105.

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The appearance of Hamas also signaled a *synchronic* split within the Intifada generation. The Islamists had finally arrived as an independent political force. By refusing subordination to the P.L.O.-associated United National Leadership of the Uprising, Hamas and Islamic Jihad imposed a fundamental political and cultural divide within Palestinian society. This division took form in the Intifada generation and deepened during the Oslo Peace Process (1993–2000). The progressive installation of the Palestinian National Authority in most of the Gaza Strip and designated areas of the West Bank during the Oslo period was a major factor in the entrenchment of the Islamist-secularist division. The P.N.A. became a vehicle primarily for the old-guard Fatah leadership that had returned from exile under the Oslo arrangement to reestablish dominance over both the secular-nationalist “young guard” and the Islamist groups that had emerged during the first Intifada. While they largely succeeded, at least until the current al-Aqsa Intifada, in co-opting the new guard, the P.N.A.’s leaders failed in either integrating or isolating the Islamists. This is not to say the Islamists escaped Oslo unchanged. Violent repression in the mid-1990s did force Hamas and Islamic Jihad into temporary quiescence, and the 1996 elections did encourage Islamist leaders to consider party-political transformation. Still, these adjustments reflected adaptation to new conditions, not a diminution in Islamist cultural or political strength, *per se*.

By the end of the Oslo period (1999–2000), the secularist-Islamist tensions had created a fluid situation in which the old political identities were up for grabs. Activists across the political spectrum—at least those with whom I interacted—were reinterpreting the inherited symbols, discourses, and narratives of Palestinian nationalism and Islamism in an effort to make sense of, and develop responses toward, the new Oslo order and the dynamics it had set in motion. By 1999–2000, this process had given rise, at least among my interlocutors, to a range of new sociopolitical orientations with the potential for engendering new avenues of affiliation and action. This book is an effort to map the directions in which these emerging orientations were moving and to trace the social processes that had produced them. The result is a complex account that deepens understanding not only of the particular Palestinian context but also of the relationship between events, generations, and the cultural and historical forces that transform social movements and political identities, generally.