

ISLAMIC RHETORIC OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

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SEPTEMBER 2006

ISLAMIC RHETORIC OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

CEREN GÜRSELER

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2006

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ABSTRACT

ISLAMIC RHETORIC OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

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September 2006, 132 pages

This thesis aims to analyze Islamic rhetoric of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its underlying objectives and reasons by examining policies, speeches and declarations of the PLO, Fateh and Yasser Arafat. It is widely accepted that the PLO functions according to secular rules; perceives Israel, Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian question on Palestinian nationalist and Third worldist grounds. However in spite of its secular functioning and goals, the PLO since its inception has referred to Islamic rhetoric on national struggle of Palestine's liberation. Henceforth it is argued that the PLO has chosen a pragmatist and instrumentalist language in referring to Islamic symbols and discourses. Islamic rhetoric of the PLO has aimed primarily to mobilize the Palestinians for national goals and to legitimize the PLO against rising power of political Islam headed by Hamas. Furthermore the thesis also demonstrates that the PLO's Islamic rhetoric was affected by Palestinian society's shift along Islamic lines and Islamic component of Palestinian nationalism and culture. The PLO seemed to intensify its resort to Islamic rhetoric with every crisis that decreased the PLO's authority and power. It is concluded that content of the PLO's pragmatic Islamic rhetoric was never related with making Islam as normative and legal basis of Palestinian society, rather it was related with mobilization and legitimating.

Key Words: Political Islam, Palestinian Nationalism, PLO, Fateh, Yasser Arafat

ÖZ

FİLİSTİN KURTULUŞ ÖRGÜTÜ'NÜN İSLAMİ SÖYLEMİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof.Dr. İhsan D. DAĞI

Eylül 2006, 132 sayfa

Bu tez Filistin Kurtuluş Örgütü'nün (FKÖ) İslami söylemini, bu söylemi kullanmadaki başlıca nedenlerini ve amaçlarını FKÖ'nün, el-Fetih'in ve Yaser Arafat'ın politikalarını, konuşmalarını ve beyanatlarını inceleyerek araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Genel olarak FKÖ seküler kurallara göre hareket eden ve İsrail'i, Filistin'i ve Filistin-İsrail sorununu Filistin milliyetçiliğine ve Üçüncü Dünya söylemine göre tanımlayan bir örgüt olarak kabul edilmektedir. Fakat seküler yapısına ve amaçlarına rağmen FKÖ kurulduğundan beri İslami söylemi Filistin milli kurtuluşunda kullanmaktadır. Bu nedenle FKÖ İslami sembollere ve söylemlere başvurmada pragmatist ve işlevsel bir dil seçmiştir. FKÖ'nün İslami söylemi milli politikaları üzerinde Filistinlilerin desteğini sağlamayı ve Hamas'ın temsil ettiği yükselen siyasal İslam karşısında FKÖ'nün meşruluğunu arttırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca Filistin toplumunda yaşanan İslami yöndeki değişimin ve İslam'ın Filistin milliyetçiliğindeki ve kimliğindeki önemli yerinin FKÖ'nün İslami söyleme başvurmasını etkilemesi de bu tezde değinilmiştir. FKÖ karşılaştığı her siyasal krizde azalan meşruluğu ve gücü nedeniyle İslami söylemi kullanmayı arttırdığı görülmektedir. Bu tezde FKÖ'nün pragmatist İslami söyleminin içeriğinin İslam'ı Filistin toplumunun siyasal ve etik temeli yapmakla ilgisi olmadığı, aksine söylemin destek kazanma ve meşrulaştırmayla ilgisi olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasal İslam, Filistin Milliyetçiliği, FKÖ, el-Fetih, Yaser Arafat

To My Family and to Melih Adnan SAYAR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express her deepest gratitude to her supervisor İhsan D. DAĞI for his advice, criticism, support, and patience throughout the research.

The author is most grateful to her family and her friends especially to Melih Adnan SAYAR for their support, patience, understanding, and encouragement they have shown throughout the research.

Finally, the author would also thank for the help and support of the graduate students' advisors of the International Relations Department.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) established in 1964 has been a widely accepted as secular nationalist organization. The PLO's secular-nationalist credentials derive from the fact that it has been functioning according to non-religious principles. The second article of the PLO Constitution states that the PLO functions and exercises its responsibilities in accordance with the Palestinian National Charter, with the PLO Constitution, and with the rules, provisions and resolutions issued in conformity with these principles and provisions¹. The Palestinian National Charter of 1968 had been planned, debated, argued, amended, and repeatedly voted before² its adoption by the PNC. Thus the Charter is a "man-made" document that entails the clause for its amendment³. Furthermore, the PLO functions in such a way that organizations, identities, and ideologies have "distinct paradigms, dynamics and determinants that differ from those pertaining to religious field while most Palestinians have been and still are religious"⁴. The PLO's self-conception, its modes of organizations and programs are directed by secular political culture⁵ and its resolutions, meetings and other organs are formulated, argued and articulated in a secular discourse. Furthermore, between the PLO factions, there have been no differences of opinion based on religious grounds or pretexts. The PLO's advocacy for secular democratic state of Palestine where Jews, Muslims and Christians would enjoy full citizenship is another indication of the PLO's secularism.

¹ Palestinian National Information Center, "The Constitution of the PLO", http://www.pnic.gov.ps/english/gover/plo/plo_Constitution.html, accessed on 16 March 2006.

² Raphael Israeli, "State and Religion in the Emerging Palestinian Entity", *Journal of Church and State*, Vol.44, No.2, Spring 2002, p.240

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jamil Hilal, "Secularism in Palestinian Political Culture: A Tentative Discourse", *HAGAR: International Social Science Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2002, p.103

⁵ Ibid., p.114

Yet it is rather obvious that the PLO and its leaders have increasingly used Islamic rhetoric and discourse especially since the First Intifada. This thesis, in this context, attempts to understand and analyze the reasons for the PLO's increasing usage of Islamic language while still maintaining itself as a secular/nationalist organization. In so doing the thesis while underlining secular elements in the PLO's overall political strategy and organizational principles; documents, the issues and cases on which an Islamic rhetoric has been developed.

Though religion has importance for the Palestinian-Israeli question, it remains territorially, state-centered, and nationalist oriented⁶. For instance albeit the PLO officials have mentioned the holiness of Palestine for Islam the PLO has not recognized Palestine as an Islamic trust, holy endowment (*waqf*) that belongs to all Muslim generations till the Day of Judgment and not recognize Israel as infidel ruler. Furthermore, both on Israeli and Palestinian sides the dominant actors that had the international recognition did not recognize the conflict "as being essentially religious in nature"⁷. These actors such as the PLO focused on issues of sovereignty, self-determination and security rather than creating the Islamic state, which was a "theocracy where the ruler is a pious Muslim who applies *Shari'a* or Islamic law as the sole law in force and where Islamic institutions prevail in civic and social life"⁸.

The PLO in its definition of the Palestine-Israeli conflict, Israel and Palestine has relied on the Third World revolutionary rhetoric and on Palestinian based territorial nationalism since its foundation. An ideology based on theocratic thought has not affected such definitions of the PLO. According to the PLO the conflict has been between two nations that have aimed to establish their states on same territory. For example at the 8th session of the PNC convened in February 1971 after the Jordanian conflict, it was stated that the Palestinians' armed struggle was not a racial or a religious struggle directed against the Jews⁹. Henceforth, unlike political Islamist

⁶ Hillel Frisch, "Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat's Rhetoric", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.41, No.3, May 2005, p.322

⁷ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, "Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *International Political Science Review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2004, p.78

⁸ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, "Liberalism, Moderation, or Extremism: The Future of the State in Muslim Societies", in *Islamic Societies in Practice*, (ed.), (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), p.199

⁹ Jamil Hilal, op.cit., p.112

movements, the PLO has not recognized the conflict between Jews and Muslims or between good and evil. Moreover the PLO was set up with nationalist and state-centered goals which were acquiring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; the right of self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, the right of the Palestinians to return their homes and property, ceasing establishment of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. In defining and choosing the goals, the PLO has relied on the secular, i.e. not directed by religion and religious principles, and state oriented principles. Moreover resolutions decided by the United Nations were the PLO's another reliance on formulating its goals, namely it has relied on international legitimacy.

The PLO has functioned according to secular rules specified in the documents such as in the PLO Charter, in the PNC decisions articulated by the Palestinians, and international agreements. The PLO has recognized the conflict on secular, national terms and it has secular goals, and has functioned according to secular principles. Religion and religious principles have not guided the PLO. However the thesis argues that it has used the Islamic rhetoric in response to the growth of political Islam headed by Hamas, to Islamic component of Palestinian nationalism and identity. The PLO leaders explicitly late President Yasser Arafat, the PLO factions such as Fatah in their statements, communiqués, have referred to the Koran, to verses from the Koran, to heroes and events of Islamic history, and to Islamic allusions such as *jihad* and martyr in spite the secular-national character of the PLO. The PLO has had Islamic instrumental and pragmatic language used to achieve its goals in a way that its Islamic rhetoric has not affected its national policies and its recognition of Palestine, Israel and the conflict on secular-national grounds. Henceforth the PLO has been a semi-secular and pragmatist organization.

The content of the PLO's Islamic discourse has never been aimed to make Islam as the normative and legal basis for the Palestinian society. Rather, the PLO has a pragmatic and instrumental usage in its reference to Islamic discourse due to the fact that it has been used strategically to strengthen, justify the PLO's nationalist goals and to mobilize the Palestinians. Therefore the PLO's Islamic rhetoric is composed of conflict categories such as martyr, *jihad* and *mujahid*. It has used Islamic allusions that are related to ethnicity, historical struggles and identity

definition for the Palestinians. Then the PLO's Islamic rhetoric is not related with theological arguments, religious reform, or with personal ethics

The PLO since its inception has referred to Islamic rhetoric, however, with every crisis it faced, the PLO increased its resort to Islamic discourse due to its decreasing legitimacy and authority. For instance with rise of political Islam in second decade of the Israeli occupation (1977-1987) and after the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon in 1983 the PLO increased its usage of Islamic rhetoric. Also with the further rise of political Islam headed by Hamas during the First Intifada the PLO's usage of Islamic rhetoric was intensified. Moreover, with the PLO's returning to the Occupied Territories through signing the Oslo Accords, it focused on building state that meant leaving cultural and social dimensions of the Palestinian life to Hamas' re-Islamization of the Palestinian society. Thus the PA's state-building efforts resulted in intensification of the PLO's Islamic rhetoric. Lastly, the eruption of the Second Intifada and decreasing legitimacy of the PLO with its stress on the al-Aqsa Mosque led to increase in the PLO's usage of Islamic rhetoric.

This thesis outlines and explores five underlying reasons for the PLO's resorting to use an Islamic language. Firstly, it has referred to Islamic rhetoric to mobilize the Palestinian community due to influence of Islam in Arab culture and society since "religion has provided powerful emotional symbols of group identity which have bound people together in opposition to foreign rulers"¹⁰. Then in the Palestinian case Islam provided emotional symbols against Israeli occupation. For instance, to justify and strengthen the PLO policies, late leader Yasser Arafat referred to verses from the Koran, which were strategically chosen and were compatible with the Palestinians' conditions and the PLO arguments about Palestinian victory. Also to strengthen the claim of victory, the claim of patience, and steadfastness the PLO leaders have referred to the events and heroes of Islamic history. The officials have made parallels between Islamic history and the contemporary Palestinian politics. To Beverly Milton-Edwards, it was not "rare for

¹⁰ Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion, Politics, and Social Change in the Third World*, (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p.95

nationalism to embrace religion to legitimate certain political perspectives and arguments”¹¹.

Secondly, the PLO used Islamic rhetoric to maintain its legitimacy, authority, and control in the Palestinian politics as Arab states have done because religion became a device for political legitimacy in the Third World, in the traditional polity, and in the pre-modern West¹². The difficult living conditions, the impasse of the peace process, the continuation of the Israeli occupation, the economic problems, the PA’s authoritarianism, the growing strength of the political Islamist opposition, foreign and domestic demands of reform for the PA and its institutions, and the corruption charges have given damage to the authority and legitimacy of the PLO and resulted in the rise of political Islam. Even the PA’s legitimacy and identity crisis resulted in crisis of the Palestinian identity¹³ due to the fact that “Islamic discourses have introduced the even more amorphous Islamic context of Palestinian nationalism”¹⁴.

Therefore the Islamic discourse has become a device for the PLO in its struggle for its legitimacy, for its recognition as the sole representative of the Palestinians and for solution of the Palestine-Israeli conflict, and an answer to the shift in the Palestinian political discourse along the Islamic lines. The growth of political Islam, the Islamic component of Palestinian nationalism and identity together with Israeli policies on Palestine and its religious arguments shifted the Palestinian political discourse then the PLO’s Islamic rhetoric became a device to respond this shift. For instance, from time to time usage of Islamic discourse has facilitated the PLO’s alliance with the political Islamists against leftists who have been critical of the PLO leadership. Apart from intensified Islamic discourse, the growing strength of political Islam, like in other Arab states was reflected in the PA’s giving Islamic character to the Palestinian state. To Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban “the strength of Hamas can be seen in the construction of a new Palestinian constitution in

¹¹ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p. 196

¹² Donald Eugene Smith, op.cit., p.11

¹³ Salim Tamari, “Fading Flags: The Crisis of Palestinian Legitimacy”, *Middle East Report*, May-June/July-August 1995, p.10

¹⁴ Ibid., p.11

which *Shari'a* forms the basis of legal system”¹⁵. The Palestinian society faced several waves of Islamization such as in the late 1970s, early 1980s, with the First Intifada, with the formation of the Palestinian Authority and finally with the Second Intifada.

Thirdly, the PLO has used Islamic rhetoric because Islam has been one of the basic elements of Palestinian identity and Palestinian nationalism, it has deep roots in the population, and because Islamic history and issues have been part of the historical identity of Palestinians who can draw parallels between these issues and present. Like the Palestinian society, for the PLO leadership especially for the Fateh leadership Islam has been a crucial feature of their identity. Therefore, in the Palestinian political discourse the Islamic symbols were used by all Muslim Palestinians whether they were nationalist or Islamist¹⁶. The PLO’s Islamic rhetoric is one of the indications of “continued existence of Islamic concepts in Palestinian nationalism”¹⁷. The Islamic symbols and allusions such as *jihad* have been used in different periods of the Palestinian nationalism under different circumstances. For instance, during the British mandate, the major irregular Palestinian forces were called *al-Jihad al-Muqaddas*, or the Holy Jihad¹⁸. Henceforth, these symbols represent major components in Palestinian nationalism. The Islamic references used in the Palestinian political discourse “has become closely interwoven into the fabric of the wider ideological domains of national consciousness and struggle rather than forming a coherent indigenous theory of the Palestinian movement”¹⁹. For example, the Islamic references such as terms *jihad*, martyr used in the PLO’s rhetoric are ambiguous in a way that they can be used and interpreted as a part of both secular field and religious field²⁰. Also, in the Palestinian nationalism “the Islamic and non-

¹⁵ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, op.cit., p.222

¹⁶ Beverly Milton-Edwards, “Political Islam in Palestine in an environment of peace?”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.2, 1996, p.211

¹⁷ Nels Johnson, *Islam and The Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: KPI Limited, 1983), p.94

¹⁸ Frisch and Sandler, op.cit., p.85

¹⁹ Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.65

²⁰ Ibid

Islamic conceptual fields have interpenetrated”²¹. In other words, in the Palestinian political discourse, some of the Islamic ideas are frequently interpreted in a secular-nationalist terms. For example, the Crusaders that are one of the historical wars with importance for Islam sometimes are interpreted in a nationalist way to evoke national aspirations and historical continuities²².

Fourthly, the PLO has used the Islamic rhetoric to have support of the Arab and Islamic community. Such support might help the PLO to maintain or upgrade the Palestinian conflict’s place on Arab, Islamic politics and on international politics. Furthermore having support against Israel would facilitate, albeit in a limited way, Israel’s sitting on the negotiation table.

Fifthly, Islamic discourse has been used because of Zionism, which has been “the contemporary ideology and state most heavily dependent on religious legitimation”²³. For example, Israel’s Basic Law expresses the claim of Jewishness on the Land of Israel. Also with the Law of Return and with the Nationality Law, any Jew can immigrate to Israel and can acquire Israeli citizenship or nationality unlike the Palestinian Israelis who had generations of family resident in Palestine²⁴. Furthermore the PLO’s Islamic rhetoric was response to rise in religiosity in Israel and its religious claims over Palestine as seen with Israeli invasion of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem with the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The Israeli society faced rise in religiosity such as growth of Jewish radicalism and fundamentalist movements. Also the rise continued with rising power of the Likud Party with its religious arguments used to legitimize Israeli permanent control over West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Even Israeli political discourse over the occupied Palestinian territories with the help of Likud and its Jewish messianic ideology began to recognize the conflict as a religious one instead of a national conflict between two competing nationalisms. Then the PLO’s became a device to assert the Palestinian identity and connection to Palestine against Israeli religious claims.

²¹ Ibid., p.92

²² Ibid., p.93

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), p.86

To give as an example, the extremist movement Gush Emunim that meant the Bloc of the Faithful was devoted to Jerusalem. They believed that the Jews needed to have historical Palestine. Henceforth they built illegal Jewish settlements in the Israeli occupied Palestinian territories with the 1967 war. According to Gush Emunim's ideology through such settlements they would speed up the advent of Messiah and the redemption of the whole world. According to the Bloc, the Palestinian nationalism must be eliminated and Arabs were the manifestations of evil. Then they believed that the evil had to be destructed to establish God's will and declare Jewish sovereignty over Israel²⁵. Also the late Likud leaders such as Menachem Begin perceived West Bank and Gaza as "integral part of the biblical land of Israel"²⁶ and claimed that the Jews had inalienable right to settle anywhere within it.

Also Israeli policies such as changing the nature of Jerusalem and claiming solely Israeli sovereignty over the city have been another reasons for the PLO's resort to Islamic rhetoric. Building Israeli settlements also has been based on ideological, defensive, and territorial reasons. Thus the Islamic rhetoric has become a way to assert the Palestinian identity and sovereignty over the land, and to challenge the Israeli claims on the land. With the 1967 War and so with the rise of radical religiosity Israelis attributed new centrality to holiness of Jerusalem and both secular and religious became more attached to Israeli sovereignty over the City. For instance since 1967 Jewish extremist movement, Temple Mount Faithful, has called for Israeli control over the Haram al-Sharif and for rebuilding the Temple on the site of the Dome of Rock. Such callings were heard by some Israelis as a 1996 poll revealed that more than 30 percent of the respondents supported them²⁷.

As a result, the PLO has developed Islamic rhetoric on Palestine. On the other hand at the international level the PLO's Islamic rhetoric, most of the time, has been replaced by the Third World revolutionary rhetoric and nationalist principles. The

²⁵ John L. Esposito, Mohammed A. Muqtedar Khan, and Jillian Schwedler, "Religion and Politics in the Middle East", in *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, Deborah J. Gerner and Jillian Schwedler (eds.), (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), p.377

²⁶ Emile F. Sahliyeh, "The West Bank and Gaza Strip", in *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity*, Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.90

²⁷ Karen Armstrong, "The Holiness of Jerusalem: Asset or Burden?", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No.3, Spring 1998, p.8

PLO's using of Third World revolutionary rhetoric was so successful that especially in the 1970s, the PLO attracted many international revolutionaries such as the Turkish ones who went to the PLO's guerilla camps such as Fateh's camps, got training and participated to the Palestinian revolution against imperialism and its collaborators in the Middle East. Henceforth, the PLO strategically articulated and performed Islamic rhetoric in a way that it did not overwhelm its Third World revolutionary rhetoric that gave most of the PLO's international support.

To sum up, this thesis aims to analyze the Islamic rhetoric of the PLO and its underlying objectives and reasons. The thesis consists of six chapters including introduction and conclusion. Following the first chapter, which sets the general framework, research questions and parameters of this study in the second chapter political Islam in Palestine is analyzed through explaining Islam's role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, reasons for political Islam's rise in Palestine, and the political Islamist movements in Palestine in order to see if these have anything to do with the PLO's resort to Islamic rhetoric.

The third chapter concentrates on Fateh's Islamic rhetoric because as the PLO's most powerful organization Fateh directs the PLO and the PLO policies. It is aimed to explain Fateh's Islamic rhetoric through examining its ideology, Constitution and its relation with the several Palestinian political Islamists movements. Moreover the most frequent used symbols of Fateh such as revolution and imperialism are discussed to analyze its Islamic rhetoric. The last heading of the third chapter addresses the rise in Fateh's Islamic rhetoric through examining the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and its Islamic rhetoric.

After presenting Fateh and its Islamic rhetoric, the study concentrates on the PLO and its Islamic rhetoric. The PLO's foundation and ideology, its relations with the political Islamist movements are subjects to be dealt with in the fourth chapter. The intensification of the PLO's Islamic rhetoric is discussed through examining the PLO's declarations of the First Intifada period such as its communiqués.

Having presented the PLO's Islamic rhetoric, the study examines the late PLO and Fateh leader, and late PA president Yasser Arafat's Islamic rhetoric as he was the most powerful and important figure on Palestine. His Islamic rhetoric is examined through analyzing his becoming of leader, through analyzing his references to Islamic symbols and allusions. Lastly Arafat's perception of Palestine,

the Palestinian conflict, and East Jerusalem are addressed to examine his Islamic rhetoric.

It is seen in this study that the PLO's Islamic rhetoric is aimed primarily to mobilize the Palestinians and strengthen its legitimacy in the face of rising power of political Islam that shifts the Palestinian political discourse along the Islamic way. This rhetoric is also an outcome of Islam's basic and important place in Palestinian nationalism, identity and culture. Such rhetoric does not reflect any change in the PLO's ideology along the political Islamists line. Henceforth the PLO's reference to the Islamic rhetoric was an instrumental and pragmatic usage. The PLO has used the Islamic references and symbols that are related with conflict categories of Palestinian nationalism while continuing to use Third world revolutionary rhetoric. The study concludes with limits of the PLO's Islamic rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL ISLAM IN PALESTINE

2.1. Islam's Role in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict:

Palestine is a holy land for three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. By the seventh century's Islamic conquests, Palestine's Arabic and Islamic character was established. Throughout the ages Palestine had experienced foreign interventions. In the early medieval period, it had faced Crusader intervention, in the nineteenth century imperialism had intervened and lastly it faced Zionism in the twentieth century. But it "remained Arab and, of course, Islamic in its culture, but with a unique and important Christian Arab presence"¹. Thus Islam had always a role in the Palestinian nationalism, in the Palestinian political discourse, and in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For instance, the first Arab riots against the Jews in the British Mandate Palestine were erupted in April 1920 after participants returned to Jerusalem from the burial site of al-Nabi Musa (Moses the Prophet)².

The Wailing Wall Riots that were second clash between the Zionists and the Arabs took place in the summer of 1929 because of disagreements on the status of the Wailing Wall. The Jews, who massed along the Wall on the fast day to commemorate the destruction of the Second Temple, brought with them an ark for the Torah scrolls and seats for the worshippers. Hajj Amin al-Husayni who was the president of the Supreme Muslim Council and headed the Palestinians tried to mobilize the Arab population against this Jewish commemoration. Al-Husayni recognized such move as an attempt to have the control of the Temple Mount³. After the riots, al-Husayni again referred to Jewish attempts to change the status quo in an attempt to destroy the Muslim sites on Haram al-Sharif and rebuild the Temple. He tried to rally the Muslim world through calling for saving al-Aqsa Mosque. In a way,

¹ Samih K. Farsoun and Christina G. Zacharia, *Palestine and Palestinians*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p.171.

² Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, "Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No.1, 2004, p.80

³ Ibid.

he referred the Islamic symbolism of Palestine and “moved to turn Jerusalem into a center for the pan-Islamic movement”⁴. Despite this fact his callings did not represent the Arab society’s political articulations and demands⁵. Even though religion had some role in these clashes, nationalism was the dominant factor in these riots as seen in the Arab Rebellion of 1936-39. According to the report of the Peel Commission that investigated the reasons of the Rebellion, the problem was a national one between two national communities rather than between two religions or civilizations⁶.

2.1.1. Rise of political Islam in Palestine in late 1970s:

Unlike the rest of the Arab world that embraced political Islam after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, most Palestinians both in diaspora and in the Occupied Territories supported the PLO that had a secular agenda and adhered to “secular national response”⁷. In that period, the Palestinian national movement became increasingly secularized and avoided any sectarian debate and the PLO declared itself as a secular, non-sectarian movement that aimed the liberation of Palestine⁸. In other words, during the first decade of the Israeli occupation (1967-1977), the strength of the Palestinian nationalism represented by the PLO prevented the rise of political Islam. The PLO, which became the dominant power in the occupied Palestinian territories, held authority similar to that of a state⁹. Also economic changes such as the rise in the personal income as a result of working in Israel further secularized the Palestinian society and weakened the political Islamists’ appeal¹⁰. In spite of these circumstances, the PLO always referred to Islamic figures and symbols. For instance, the late PLO leader Yasser Arafat appointed an Islamic scholar who was a former

⁴ Basheer M. Nafi, “In Pursuit of a Loss Ideal: Rise and Decline of pan-Islamism”, in *Arabism, Islamism and the Palestine Question 1908-1941: A Political History*, (ed.), (Readdig: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1998), p.89

⁵ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, op.cit.,p 84

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p.7

⁸ Ibid., p.78

⁹ Iyad Barghouti, “Islamic Movements in Historical Palestine”, in *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushrivan Ehteshami (eds.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p.166

¹⁰ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.79

senior official in the Jordanian Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs to the presidency of the Palestinian National Council (PNC). According to Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, such appointment was stemmed from containing the power of the radical leftist organizations as well as appeasing political Islamists¹¹.

With the second decade of the Israeli occupation the crises in the Palestinian national movement made the Palestinians more amenable to alternative political and ideological choices¹². Because the PLO could not realize its declared objectives rather it changed its political positions, it was expelled from Jordan and faced troubles in Lebanon, and its institutions were attributed as corrupt and inefficient. Beverly Milton-Edwards claims that the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 by Israel and political competition among Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) were the primary reasons for the political Islam's rise in Palestine due to the fact that they revealed weakness within the PLO¹³. The expulsion from Lebanon resulted in the disorder and internal conflict in the PLO and it was forced to move its headquarters to Tunis far away from Palestine. Especially Fateh's legitimacy and authority were challenged by these internal factional disputes. Even, one Fateh founder, Salah Khalaf admitted the negative effects of the Lebanese expulsion and internal disputes on Fateh: "Had it not been for the cohesion of the historic leadership...the divisions and dissensions that plagued the movement in the wake of the Israeli invasion of 1982 would have torn Fateh apart and finished it off"¹⁴. Henceforth the PLO's influence decreased and the Islamists' increased their appeal in Palestine¹⁵.

Then some Palestinians started to embrace Islam that was integral part of the society as an alternative to the PLO. For instance, in a field study conducted between 1971 and 1973, 55 percent of the respondents mentioned that they preferred to have

¹¹ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, op.cit., p.86

¹² Ziad Abu-Amr, "Hamas: A Historical and Political Background", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.22, No.4, Summer 1993, p.7

¹³ Beverly Milton-Edwards, , *Islamic Politics in Palestine* op.cit., p.8

¹⁴ Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory? : The Politics and History of the PLO*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.153.

¹⁵ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.xv

religion incorporated into social life. To 76 percent of the respondents, Islam was the frame of reference¹⁶. Some Palestinians thought that Arab or Palestinian nationalism could not give an end to the Israeli occupation and restore their national rights, thus Islam and Islamic interpretation of the Palestine question were recognized as solutions. To Hamas' late spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin political Islam increased its strength in Palestine because "when all doors are closed in the face of man, he will discover that God's doors are open to him. Islam is the refuge for the people in Palestine. After the defeat in 1967, people felt a great need for God"¹⁷.

The Iranian Islamic Revolution also influenced the rise of political Islam because it indicated the Palestinians that Islam could be a device to topple a 'Westernized, American supported, alien, corrupt, oppressive, and un-Islamic regime'¹⁸. Henceforth some Palestinians thought that through adopting Islam as a way of life they could give an end to the Israeli occupation. Furthermore, with the Iranian Revolution some political Islamist groups undermined the PLO's hegemony¹⁹. The assassination of Anwar Sadat by an Islamist group, guerilla attacks of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon against Israeli army also affected the rise of political Islam. Some Palestinians recognized these events as the success of Islam thus to such Palestinians solely Islam can change the Palestinian politics and liberate Palestine from the Israeli occupation²⁰. In addition to this, Israel's policies towards political Islamist groups facilitated their challenges against the PLO. The Islamists unlike the nationalists supporting the PLO were not repressed by the Israeli authorities thus for the Islamists continuing their political activities was easier comparing with the PLO. Even Israel encouraged the political Islamist groups to

¹⁶ Ibid., p.19.

¹⁷ Sa'id al Ghazali, "Islamic Movement versus National Liberation", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.17, No.2, Winter 1988, p.179.

¹⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p.135

¹⁹ Chris P. Ioannides, "The PLO and the Islamic Revolution in Iran", in *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, Augustus Richard Norton and Martin H. Greenberg (eds.), (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p.101.

²⁰ Emile F. Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), p.140.

grow such as the Muslim Brotherhood²¹. Jordan also encouraged Islamist tendency to form alternative authorities to the PLO²². Jordan provided political and financial support to the Islamists when several associations, institutions and other mass organizations came under the leadership of pro-PLO and communist groups²³. Moreover, Saudi Arabia financed several Islamic institutions such as the Islamic Center in Gaza.

The secularization of the Palestinian lifestyles also affected the revival of political Islam²⁴. Some Palestinians who were uncomfortable with the secular lifestyle started to adopt Islam as a response against effects of secularization. More and more Palestinians were dressed 'Islamic dress' and behaved according to 'the Islamic codes of behavior'. The dress and behavior were part of the ideology of the political Islamist groups that encouraged a religio-cultural revival of Islam²⁵. Also people who did not behave or dress according to political Islamists' teachings faced public hate campaigns, public beatings and even acid attacks²⁶. Henceforth, in the 1980s, political Islam was consolidated through having a new dimension with foundation of Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

2. 2 Islamization of the Palestinian Society:

2.2.1 Islamization of the Palestinian society in the 1980s:

In 1982 Hanna Nasser who was a PLO Executive Committee member, accepted that political Islamist movements diminished support for the PLO and acknowledged that the trend towards Islam was growing in Palestine among youth "who feel that no answer to the occupation has been found by traditional nationalist groups"²⁷. Thus in the early 1980s, the Palestinian national movement recognized the growth of the political Islam as a threat.

²¹ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.97.

²² Rashid Khalidi, "The PLO as Representative of the Palestinian People", in *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, Augustus Richard Norton and Martin H. Greenberg (eds.), (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Press, 1989), p.66.

²³ Emile F. Sahliyeh, *In Search for Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967*, op.cit., p.143

²⁴ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.8

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p.104

²⁷ Ibid., p.141

The growing influence of political Islam during the 1980s could be seen in several levels such as institutions, polls, university elections, and social practices. In terms of social practices the number of women especially young women who began to wear 'Islamic dress' increased. Glenn E Robinson claims that a generation earlier in the Palestinian society such dress could not be seen²⁸. Furthermore, observance of other Islamic practices such as daily prayer, quotations from the Koran, and fasting increased²⁹. The mosques were increased, for example between 1967 and 1987 the number of mosques in Gaza was doubled. In the West Bank, forty new mosques were built annually³⁰. The establishment of such Islamic institutions was a response to the PLO, which also established its own nationalist organizations to deepen the resistance against the occupation. Thus, the political Islamists aimed to have an Islamic alternative to the PLO "through a process of religiopolitical socialization at all levels of society"³¹.

The increase of power of the Islamist bloc in the universities was another indication of Islamization of the Palestinian community. The PLO's alliance with the leftist movements helped it to retain the control of the universities in the West Bank; on the other hand it was the political Islamist bloc that controlled Gaza's universities. For example, at the Islamic University in Gaza, it won every student elections in the 1980s³². On the other hand, in the West Bank's Bir Zeit University Fateh retained its control while the Islamic bloc that get one third of the votes was second force after Fateh. The only university where the political Islamists could not increase their power was the Bethlehem University that had large Christian minority, and relations with Vatican. This success of the political Islam in the universities was based its movements' success on social services, grassroots organizing, and their messages concerning individual and moral change³³. Nevertheless, the PLO remained as the

²⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.136

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p.137

³² Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.138

³³ Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of A People*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.271.

most powerful political group at the Palestinians universities followed by the Islamists who were powerful opposition.

Moreover, the public opinion polls conducted in the 1980s reflected the Islamization of the society. In a poll conducted in 1986, to the 30 percent of the respondents the future Palestinian state should be based exclusively on the *Shari'a*. A similar percentage of the respondents said that the future state should be based on principles of *Shari'a* and Arab nationalism. Whereas 10 percent of those the poll conducted said that the state would be a secular democratic state while 21 percent of the respondents were opted for a democratic (but not necessarily secular) Palestinian state³⁴. However the choice for the Islamic direction of state was not reflected in the choice for preferred leadership because the majority of the respondents chose the secular and nationalist PLO for leadership: Arafat got support of 79 percent of the respondents. To Robinson the contradiction in supporting Islamic solutions for the state and supporting the PLO lied in the difficulty of asking questions under occupation. The asked Palestinians often viewed the interviewers as representatives of Israel or the PLO therefore they might want to answer the questions according the party that asked questions³⁵. This contradiction can also be explained through Fateh and its showing of Islamic credentials due to the fact that some Islamists supported Fateh for many reasons.

2.2.2 Islamization of the Palestinian Society since the formation of the Palestinian Authority:

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) focus on building state institutions led Hamas to take the social and cultural fields under its influence as a result of its compromise with the PA. Hamas would have these fields whereas the PA would have the sole authority on security and governance. Thus Hamas intensified its Islamization project then the PA increased its reference to the Islamic discourse. Furthermore, economic and social problems of the Palestinians together with the PA's decreasing legitimacy and authority in the face of continuing Israeli occupation led to rise in usage of the PA's Islamic discourse. The PA faced legitimacy and authority problems because it was recognized as corrupt, authoritarian, and repressive authority; also it functioned according to the clan system, it had economic

³⁴ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.138

³⁵ Ibid., p.139

monopolies, it had problems in judicial fairness also it had “disdain for democratic processes”³⁶.

Moreover the Second Intifada erupted in September 2000 not only led to rise of political Islam and but also led to rise in number of supporters of political Islamist movements. The Second Intifada was fueled with Israeli claim of shared sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif in the Camp David Summit of 2000 that also increased power of political Islam. Also then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Haram al-Sharif with Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s granting police permit and protection for Sharon further intensified political Islam’s power. Then it became convenient that the protests would have religious character³⁷. Naming this Intifada as the al-Aqsa Intifada also demonstrated the importance of religion³⁸. Even Arafat claimed that Sharon’s visit to the Haram al-Sharif created a new dimension that was religious dimension in the Palestine conflict. To Arafat such Israeli policies would lead region into religious wars with untold consequences³⁹.

Moreover since the eruption of the Second Intifada the arguments of the changing nature of the Palestinian question increased. It was argued that the Palestinians’ popular culture changed into a popular culture of ‘martyrdom operations’ celebrated in posters, graffiti, popular music, and song that “significantly challenge the secular nationalist culture that developed during the 1990s”⁴⁰. However rise of Islamic nature of the conflict and increasing support of political Islam did not entail supporters’ strict adherence to Islamist movements’ ideology. For instance, according to polls albeit the number of Hamas supporters increased, they were less committed to its ideology due to the fact that many supporters were supportive to

³⁶ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search for a Just Peace*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), p.241

³⁷ Rema Hammami and Salim Tamari, “Anatomy of Another Rebellion”, *Middle East Report*, No.217, Vol.30, No.4, Winter 2000, p.7

³⁸ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, op.cit., p.78

³⁹ Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, “Speech by Yasser Arafat at the Arab Summit in Cairo on 21 October 2000”, <http://www.aijac.org.au/updates/Oct-00/241000-1.html> , accessed on 31 January 2006

⁴⁰ Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg, “Popular Culture, Relational History, and the Question of Power in Palestine and Israel”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No.4, Summer 2004, p.13

peace agreement based on two-state solution⁴¹. And lastly, rise in Islamism has led to an electoral victory for Hamas in the last legislative elections on January 2006. Hamas got the majority of votes and majority of the seats at the Parliament whereas Fateh for the first time ever became the second party in Palestine. So the PLO leaders and the PA officials responded to rise of the political Islam through increasing their quotations from the Koran's verses, increasing their mentioning the word of God and the holiness of Palestine especially Jerusalem's importance for Islam and Christianity.

2.3. Reasons of Political Islam's Rise and Strength in Palestine:

2.3.1. East Jerusalem and Israeli claims on Palestine:

East Jerusalem was a crucial factor in the Palestinian question with its holy sites such as the Haram al-Sharif encompassing the al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock; the Church of the Holy Sculpture and the Wailing Wall, which was the site "where the Prophet tethered his mysterious mount *Al-Buraq*, by whose name Muslims refer to the Wall"⁴². Moreover, Jerusalem as being the cradle of Jesus Christ was important for Christianity. It was one of the cities' for the Christian pilgrimage along with Nazareth and Bethlehem. Also, the City contained the Church of Holy Sculpture where Jesus Christ died. Not only political Islamists but also the national movement referred to the city to mobilize the Palestinians. Especially after the 1967 War, the secularists could not give up Jerusalem and its holiness that had a new central with the 1967 War⁴³.

It had special place in the Arab-Islamic tradition that maintained the religious character of the conflict because of the Prophet Muhammad's nocturnal journey from *al-Masjid al-Haram* in Mecca to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and because of his ascension to heaven and return to Medina. So for Islam, Jerusalem was the third sacred city after Mecca and Medina. It was the first direction of prayer, second of the two sanctuaries. One of the *hadiths* of the Prophet Muhammad mentioned the importance of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque: "You shall only set out

⁴¹ Khalil Shikaki, "Future of Palestine", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.83, No.6, November/December 2004, p. 59

⁴² Nels Johnson, *Islam and Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: KPI Limited, 1982), p.71

⁴³ Karen Armstrong, "The Holiness of Jerusalem: Asset or Burden?", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XXVII, No.3, Spring 1998, p.6

for three mosques: The Sacred Mosque [in Mecca], my mosque [in Medina], and al-Aqsa Mosque”⁴⁴. Before the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, he was accompanied by the angel Gabriel, met with other prophets and prayed in a cave underneath the Cave of the Prophets, in which the Dome of the Rock stands⁴⁵. Moreover, in Islam, together with Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem was a place of pilgrimage. It was the destination of *ziyara*, which was a pious visit without a particular time fixed to it⁴⁶. Also to the Muslim eschatology Jerusalem would be God’s site for final judgment and the Rock would be God’s throne in the Muslim⁴⁷. Furthermore, during the Judgment Day, all mosques in the world would move to Jerusalem.

For Palestine Jerusalem’s importance for Islam was an important asset for arguments based on *jihad* because Jerusalem with its important Islamic sites was under foreign occupation⁴⁸. For instance, according to a Palestinian editorial, this Islamic depth influenced the Palestine question “with the inspiration of sacred faith and spirit of *jihad* when one single inch of Muslim land is occupied let alone when the first *qiblah* and the third holiest shrine on this land”⁴⁹.

Apart from the religious importance, Jerusalem had the centrality for Palestinian self-definition as well⁵⁰. In other words, it was a crucial national symbol because it was central to the Palestinian political life and to the viability of a future Palestinian state. Its exclusion from the state would mean that the northern and southern districts of the West Bank would be cut off from each other. Also for the

⁴⁴ Angelika Neuwirth, “The Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem”, in *A City of the Great King*, Nitza Rosovsky (ed.), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.107

⁴⁵ Muhammad Muslih, “Palestinian Images of Jerusalem”, in *A City of the Great King*, Nitza Rosovsky (ed.), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.179

⁴⁶ Angelika Neuwirth, *op.cit.*, p.107

⁴⁷ Nels Johnson, *op.cit.*, p.72

⁴⁸ Beverly Milton-Edwards, “The Concept of Jihad and the Palestinian Islamic Movement: A Comparison of Ideas and Techniques”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.19, No.1, 1992, p.51

⁴⁹ Dialog, “Palestinian Paper Optimistic Over Outcome of Islamic Summit”, *Al-Hayah Al-Jadidah*, 13 November 2000, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=125400859,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 28 April 2005.

⁵⁰ Muhammad Muslih, “Palestinian Images of Jerusalem”, *op.cit.*, p.188

Palestinians, it was a symbol of their political renaissance⁵¹. During the British mandate, the most important Palestinian authorities such as the Supreme Muslim Council and the Arab Higher Committee had been based in Jerusalem. Moreover, the General Islamic Congress of late 1930s that had aimed to create a united Arab-Muslim front against Zionists had been convened in Jerusalem.

The Palestinian people had a special and indissoluble link with Jerusalem. Because they thought that a Palestinian's allegiance and loyalty to Jerusalem and to its Arab-Islamic character were foremost duties of the Palestinians to the country⁵². For instance in a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center in West Bank and Gaza in 1999, according to 45.2% of those polled Jerusalem was the most important component of the peace process. Whereas 30.8% of respondent mentioned that the settlements and the rest mentioned that the refugees were the most salient features of the Palestinian question⁵³.

Moreover Israel's Jerusalem policies and Israeli threats to holy sites led to further rise in the Palestinians' attachment to the sovereignty goal over the city and led to the rise of political Islam. To give an example, Israel most of the time forbade access to Jerusalem and its holy places to about 95 percent of the Palestinians⁵⁴. Israel in addition to controlling Islamic religious life by censoring sermons, arresting preachers also prevented the Palestinians worshippers from entering the Haram al-Sharif. These policies triggered the tension between Israel and Palestine, and in a way they maintained the ground for political Islam⁵⁵. Moreover, in September 1996, Israel opened a sightseeing tunnel that ran along foundations of the Haram al-Sharif's western wall. The PA's security organs together with Hamas and Islamic Jihad acted violently to the opening. They accused Israel with the aim of undermining the foundations of the Haram al-Sharif in order to destroy the Islamic

⁵¹ Marshall J. Breger, "Religion and Politics in Jerusalem", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.50, No.1, Summer 1996, p.91

⁵² Muhammad Muslih, "Palestinian Images of Jerusalem", op.cit., p.199

⁵³ Dialog, "Palestinian Poll: On Palestinian Attitudes Towards Politics", *Al-Quds*, 09 April 1999, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=96250835,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 08 October 2005

⁵⁴ Glenn E. Robinson, "Israel and the Palestinians: The Bitter Fruits of Hegemonic Peace", *Current History*, Vol. 100, No. 642, January 2001, p.16

⁵⁵ Beverly Milton-Edwards, "The Concept of Jihad and the Palestinian Islamic Movement", op.cit., p.48

holy sites⁵⁶. Lastly, after the Israeli claims of sovereignty over Haram al-Sharif in Camp David of 2000, then-Israeli opposition leader Sharon's visit to the holy site on 28 September 2000, led to eruption of the Second Intifada. Apart from threatening religious sites, Israel's killing of worshippers also affected the rise of political Islam. On October 8, 1990, 17 Palestinians were killed in the al-Haram al-Sharif during Ramadan after throwing stones to the Jewish worshippers at the Wailing Wall.

Also Israel continued to build Jewish settlements in Jerusalem. For instance, Ariel Sharon who was a supporter of settlements and an opponent of the Oslo process established a residence in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem⁵⁷. Moreover, during his election campaign in 2001, Sharon mentioned that the unified Jerusalem would be under Israeli sovereignty. He asserted that one of the conditions for peace was the Israeli sovereignty over entire Jerusalem including al Haram al-Sharif⁵⁸.

Then East Jerusalem's occupation by Israel, its threats to the City's Islamic holy places and the continued Jewish settlements and with the city's religious and nationalist importance fueled the rise of political Islam and Muslim fundamentalist sentiments not only in Palestine but also in the rest of the Muslim world⁵⁹. Also the city retained its role as unifying and mobilizing factor for the Palestinian community, used both by the PLO and political Islamist movement.

2.3.2 Islam's place in the Palestinian culture:

Islam had a basic and central role in the Palestinian society, in its collective and in its personal identity. In a way, Islam served more than a religious function. Henceforth apart from fostering the rise of political Islam, Islam's basic and central role made the nationalists' using of religious symbols convenient as a means in the struggle to achieve their national or state-centered goals⁶⁰. To Emile F. Sahliyah Islam's basic role "reinforced the revitalization of religious ideas in political

⁵⁶ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, op.cit., p.81

⁵⁷ Glenn E. Robinson, "Israel and the Palestinians: The Bitter Fruits of Hegemonic Peace", op.cit, p.17

⁵⁸ Dialog, "Israel's Sharon Says to Maintain Sovereignty over 'Entire' Jerusalem", *El-Mundo*, 01 February 2001, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018PRESENT=DB=985,AN=129401145,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.Generic Search>, accessed on 31 March 2005

⁵⁹ Ziad Abu-Amr, "Critical Issues in Arab Islamic Fundamentalism", in *Religion, Ethnicity and Self-Identity: Nations in Turmoil*, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds), (London: University Press of New England, 1997), p.39

⁶⁰ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, op.cit., p.77

realm”⁶¹. He argues that Islam can also provide the Palestinians the reaffirmation of their historic claim on Palestine. Moreover, through Islam they not only had a connection with Palestine but also they reasserted “their ethnic national identity and cultural purity in the face of mounting Israeli challenges and threats”⁶². Henceforth, the Palestinian society’s recognition of the Israeli occupation as a threat not only to the Arab national identity but also to the Islamic identity of Palestine especially occupation of Jerusalem affected the rise of political Islam.

The polls indicated the Palestinian peoples’ attachment to Islam. For instance, in 1995 poll of the Center for Palestine Research and Studies 77 percent of the West Bankers polled and 85 percent of the Gazans polled, and in total 80 percent of the respondents highly agreed with the need to promote God’s word. In three sections, those who thought that Islam was the solution for the Palestine Question rated 66 percent however the majority did not support political Islamist parties because in total 35 percent of those polled supported such parties. Extreme policies of these Islamist parties such as opposing to recognize Israel in its permanence within its pre-1967 borders and destructing Israel could be reasons for this low support for political Islamist parties in spite of crucial place of Islam in the society. Furthermore, 38 percent of the respondents recognized the politician’s religiosity as an important characteristic⁶³. Moreover, in the Bir Zeit University’s poll conducted in 2000, to the Palestinians polled the most important quality of the leader was the capability of confronting Israel. The second important quality was the president’s commitment to Islam⁶⁴.

The place of Islam for the Palestinians can be revealed by their opinions for character of the future Palestinian state. In the poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center in the West Bank and Gaza in 1999, 63.5% of the respondents wanted to have an Islamic state all across Palestine if the peace

⁶¹ Emile F. Sahliyah, *In Search for Leadership: West Bank Politics Since 1967*, op.cit., p.141

⁶² Ibid., p.160

⁶³ Fadwa Labadi, Penny Johnson, Rema Hammami, and Lynn Welchman, *Islamic Family Law and the Transition to Palestinian Statehood: Constraints and Opportunities for Legal Reform*, <http://www.law.emory.edu/IFL/cases/Palestine.html>, accessed on 09 March 2005

⁶⁴ Dialog, “Bir Zeit University Poll Reveals Support for State Declaration”, *Al-Quds*, 07 September 2000, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB0985,AN=122050748,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 28 April 2005.

process failed and reached a deadlock. Whereas 18.3% of the respondents chose a bi-national state on all Palestinian territories. According to 79.8% of those poll conducted, in the event that a Palestinian state was established, it should be governed according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence. Whereas 15.8% of those polled, wanted that the state should be administered according to civil laws. Moreover the majority of the respondents (63.9%) mentioned that their support to the PA would increase if it applies the laws of *Shari'a*. On the other hand, 4.3% of those respondents mentioned that the application would undermine their support and so they opposed to this application⁶⁵.

Moreover in the poll conducted by the Panorama Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development in July 2004, the majority of the Palestinians polled, 63.2 percent indicated that they wanted an Islamic religious direction for character of state whereas 19.8 of those polled wanted democratic secular direction⁶⁶.

2.3.3 Conservative and traditional structure of the Palestinian society:

The conservative and traditional structure of Palestinian society was another cause for the rise of political Islam. For instance, in Gaza this conservative nature in addition to living in rural areas together with large population in the refugee camps prepared the ground for growth of political Islam. So in the Gaza Strip Hamas had the utmost power. To Khalil Shikaki, although Fateh used Islamic symbols “the bottom line is that Palestinian traditionalism provides a deep wellspring of support for Hamas”⁶⁷, while the Palestinian traditionalism “limits the appeal of the DFLP and PFLP”⁶⁸.

Even though the Palestinians were politically advanced they were socially traditional so the structure of the Palestinian society, affected the liberation struggle

⁶⁵ Dialog, “Palestinian Poll: On Palestinian Attitudes Towards Politics”, *Al-Quds*, 09 April 1999, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=96250835,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 08 October 2005

⁶⁶ Dialog, “Palestinian Poll on Leadership, Intifada, Peace Process”, *Al-Ayyam*, 01 July 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1159528, accessed on 25 April 2005

⁶⁷ Khalil Shikaki, “Peace Now or Hamas Later”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.77, No.4, July/August 1998, p.32

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.42

in a way that it was unable to distance itself completely from the Islamic traditional practices, which governed day-to-day life⁶⁹. For instance, the political Islamists had more support among those who opposed to women's participation into politics whereas the political Islamists had less support among the feminists⁷⁰. The Palestinians who opposed reinterpreting Islamic law to make it applicable to the conditions of daily life supported Hamas while support for the mainstream and left rose among Palestinians who favored a more modern form of Islam⁷¹.

Conservative nature of the Palestinian society can also be understood by construction of the Jericho Casino in 1998 that erupted controversy among the society. Some Palestinians supported the Casino for economic reasons whereas some opposed like Fateh Central Committee member, Sakr Habash, for moral reasons. He used Islamic rhetoric in declaring his opposition to the Casino⁷². In his article in Fateh Central Committee's bulletin he argued that the Casino established for closing the deficit in the PA's budget, was a Zionist policy to create tensions and opposition between the PA and Muslim and Christian Palestinians. To Habash, people had to oppose to Casino by saying that "No to investment in prostitution"⁷³. To strengthen his argument he referred to a verse from the Koran: "Like the prostitute who feeds orphans from the proceeds of her work, do not sin and do not give alms"⁷⁴. He called the PA to close the casino⁷⁵. Despite such opposition, the Casino was opened but closed with eruption of the Second Intifada.

2.3.4 The Palestinian Authority's Authoritarian politics:

The PLO's internal politics gave damage to the PA's legitimacy and then affected the rise of political Islam. By the PA's foundation, the Palestinian society

⁶⁹ Maria Holt, "Second Part of Palestine Women, Islam and Resistance", <http://www.jerusalemities.org/memoirs/women/13.htm>, accessed on 21 March 2005

⁷⁰ Khalil Shikaki, "Peace Now or Hamas Later", op.cit., p. 32.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Dialog, "West Bank and Gaza Strip: Jericho Casino Stirs Controversy Among Palestinians", *Al-Nahar*, 29 September 1998, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=86650471,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 13 October 2005

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

faced a new circumstance as Israel was withdrawing from some Palestinian lands and gave the authority to govern to the PLO members who returned to the Occupied Territories from exile. Henceforth the Palestinian society expected from its leadership to improve living conditions, to replace the Israeli military authorities' oppression with democracy. Despite this fact, like in the rest of the Middle East, politics in Palestine was rooted in party politics or in involving allegiance to the ruling party on clan and tribal grounds. The PA's services and policies were formulated and articulated according to the rules of patriarchy and authoritarianism. To Rex Brynen Palestinian politics were "neopatrimonial where informal social structures of patrimonialism were combined with the formal and legal structures of the quasi- or protostate"⁷⁶. In neopatrimonial system, the responsibilities were given according to patronage and clientalism, and the public office became a mechanism for private profit⁷⁷. State resources such as foreign aid from donor countries or taxes from citizens were used to maintain patron-client networks⁷⁸. Furthermore, it was claimed that under PA's conservative nature, traditional patriarchy within Palestinian political culture was solidified⁷⁹.

Under Arafat's leadership, the PA was like the rule of one person. Because as president Arafat headed the Executive Authority and controlled the ministries of interior, exterior, security and police. For example, Arafat's security services in the PA closed opposition newspapers and forced political censorship. According to Amnesty International's September 2000 report the PA detained dozens of persons from religious figures to writers because of their criticisms of the PA policies or criticisms of conducting peace negotiations with Israel. According to the report, the PA held prisoners of conscience without respect to due process, an arrest warrant was not shown and they did not bring before a court⁸⁰.

Henceforth the Palestinian society perceived leadership's attitude towards democracy as poor. For instance, in a 2004 poll, 54.4 percent of the polled believed

⁷⁶ Cherly A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search for A Just Peace*, op.cit., p.252

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.253

⁷⁹ Nahla Abdo, "Gender and Politics Under the Palestinian Authority", op.cit., p.40

⁸⁰ Cherly A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search for A Just Peace*, op.cit., p.270

that the PA did not give democracy and its implementation any importance in its decisions and policies⁸¹. To the majority of respondents (66.8 percent) the official institutions were not adopting the mechanism of democratic administration in their work. Thus, with the authoritarian pattern of governance, political Islamists were increasing their power as seen in the rest of the Middle East.

2.3.5 The Corruption charges against the Palestinian Authority:

The charges of the official corruption against the PA and the PLO were other reasons for the rise of political Islam. The charges were increased when the 'outside' leadership used luxury vehicles, built themselves villas in opposition to majority of the Palestinians who believed that corruption existed in the Palestinian bureaucracy. In a poll conducted in 1998, the majority of the respondents (77.5 percent) thought that there was corruption in the PA⁸², and according to a survey conducted in 2004, 87 percent of the respondents believed that corruption existed in the PA⁸³. Furthermore, in another poll conducted in 2004, 78.4 percent believed that the PA did not deal with corruption in a practical manner⁸⁴. The corruption charges created both domestic opposition such as from Hamas and within Fateh itself, and international opposition especially from George W. Bush government that conditioned the U.S. support for the establishment of the Palestinian state in conjunction with the U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 on reforming the PA, and on removal of Arafat from the PA leadership, and on the Palestinians' declaring a total ceasefire⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Dialog, "Panorama Poll: Palestinians Indicate Need for Democracy to Promote Reforms", *Al-Ayyam*, 26 August 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories?UID=1213727, accessed on 06 August 2005

⁸² Dialog, "West Bank Gaza Strip: Poll Examines Public's Attitude Toward Cabinet Reshuffle", *Al-Quds*, 11 August 1998, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=84200533,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 13 October 2005

⁸³ Khalil Shikaki, "The Future of Palestine", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 6, November/December 2004, p.47

⁸⁴ Dialog, "PA Poll: Majority Indicate Need for Reform, Reject Attack on PLC's Amr", *Al-Hayah al-Jadidah*, 22 September 2004, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=195851019,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 19 September 2005

⁸⁵ Menachem Klein, "By Conviction, Not By Infliction: The Internal Debate Over Reforming the Palestinian Authority", *Middle East Journal*, Volume 57, No.2, Spring 2003, p.195

The corruption charges included misusing of funds and state resources. For example in 1994 there was a debate between Arafat and international donors about misusing of funds. The donors wanted to inspect whether funds were used for infrastructure building but Arafat resisted conducting such inspection. Moreover several top PA officials including Mahmoud Abbas were believed to have monopolies in areas such as steel, meat, building materials, cigarettes, and cars⁸⁶. Henceforth these officials through monopolies controlled the essential sectors of the economy. Also the monopolies' revenues transferred the income from poor Palestinians to the political elite "which used the profits for personal gain or to buy political loyalty"⁸⁷.

2.3.6 Social and economic conditions of daily life:

To Yezid Sayigh the same social conditions, economic deprivation that led to emergence of the "militant forms of political Islam in other Arab and Muslim societies caused a religious-nationalist convergence, and potentially a fusion, in Palestine"⁸⁸. The power of political Islam was based on the extreme poverty and isolation of the Occupied Territories. Moreover political Islam's growth was attached to the continuation of Palestinian society's hopelessness for deterioration of living conditions, and to the failure of nationalist movement to achieve political resolution of conflict and to the failure in ending occupation. The Palestinians' dissatisfaction with the PA was still rising due to the fact that it has been unable to provide many Palestinians with basic requirements like employment, housing, transportation, security, water, healthcare, electricity, and education.

Comparing Jericho with Gaza demonstrated the connection between economic problems, poor living conditions and the rise of political Islam. Jericho like Gaza Strip had faced the occupation however its much thinner population, better economy, lower rate of unemployment, and better living conditions than Gaza resulted in low popularity of political Islam. On the other hand in Gaza where socially disadvantaged families and refugees were majority of the dwellers the political Islamist opposition was more powerful because of the economic problems

⁸⁶ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: In Search for A Just Peace*, op.cit., p.258

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.257

⁸⁸ Yezid Sayigh, "Palestine's Prospects", *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Winter 2000-01, p.9

and poor living conditions⁸⁹. However before, Marxist PLO groups had been the most powerful ones in Gaza⁹⁰. In a survey conducted between 1983 and 1984, the rate of religiosity of Gaza's dwellers was revealed in the degree of Islamic observance as 57.8 percent whereas in the West Bank it was 48.7 percent⁹¹.

Israeli policies, unemployment, low level of income and low level of funding were several reasons for economic problems and poor living conditions in Palestine. From time to time, Israel cut off its commercial trade with the PA. As a result, nearly 120,000 Palestinians lost their jobs in Israel⁹². Also Israel sometimes halted its deliveries in basic goods that resulted in shortages in food and cooking fuel. Furthermore unemployment was increasing in Palestine. In 2000, it was above 40 percent whereas in 1980s it had averaged just 5 percent⁹³. Together with the unemployment, the low level income compared with Israeli income, also triggered the growth of political Islam: Israel's per capita income was \$ 17,000, whereas the Palestinians' income was less than \$ 2,000⁹⁴. Low level of funding which was not enough to sustain even daily needs of the Palestinians undermined Arafat headed PA's legitimacy and popularity *vis-à-vis* Hamas that provided the basic social services and basic needs of the society. The poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion in 2003, revealed the Palestinian community's evaluation of the PA in the economic problems. To the majority of the respondents (45.6 percent) it had no program. 27.4 percent of respondents evaluated the PA performance as 'not good', 17.9 percent as 'very bad' and 15.2 percent as 'bad'⁹⁵.

⁸⁹ Muhammad Muslih, "Jericho and Its Meaning: A New Strategy for the Palestinians", *Current History*, Vol. 93, No. 580, February 1994, p. 76

⁹⁰ Barry Rubin, "The PLO and the Palestinians: A Revolution Institutionalized", in *The Politics of Change in the Middle East*, Robert B. Satloof (ed.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), p.157

⁹¹ Helena Cobban, "The PLO and the Intifada", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 2, Spring 1990, p.213

⁹² Chris Hedges, "The New Palestinian Revolt", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 1, January/February 2001, p.129

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.135

⁹⁵ Dialog, "Poll Shows 50.3 Percent pf Palestinian 'Support' Truce With Israel", *Al-Quds*, 18 December 2003, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=181950763,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 16 August 2005

2.3.7 The PLO's failure in ending the occupation:

The most crucial reason for political Islam's rise in Palestine was the PA's powerlessness *vis-à-vis* Israel, in other words its failure in ending the occupation and establishing the Palestinian state. Through transforming from an umbrella guerilla organization in exile to a state-like authority by negotiating with the USA and Israel, the PA and the PLO became dependent on Israel. This dependence and the PA's weakness were another criticism made by the Palestinian society to the Palestinian national movement. In the Palestinian Public Opinion Center's poll of 2001, to the majority of the respondents (33.1 percent) the PA could not confront the Israeli threats such as military incursion, military siege, or the entry of the Israeli forces into PA-ruled areas whereas to the 26.7 percent it could confront⁹⁶.

2.4. Political Islamist Movements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories:

There were four political Islamist movements in Palestine; the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Liberation Party, Islamic Jihad and Hamas. Although they had different methods, they had ultimate and common aim of transforming the society along Islamic lines and establishing an Islamic state.

2.4.1 The Muslim Brotherhood (MB):

The MB was the oldest political Islamist movement in the Middle East. Its involvement in the Palestine question went back to 1935 when Abd-al-Rahman al-Banna, brother of the MB leader Hasan al-Banna, visited Palestine and met with Hajj Amin al-Huseini. In the Palestinian Revolt of 1936, the MB did propaganda activities on behalf of the Palestinians and some members fought with the Palestinians against the Jewish installations. The MB formed the General Central Committee to Aid Palestine to protest Britain and defend the Palestinians⁹⁷. After the Second World War, some Brotherhood members from Egypt were sent to Palestine for calling the Palestinians to Islam, to help their training, and to resist the Zionists. The first branch of the MB was opened in Jerusalem in 1945 and by 1947 there were twenty-five

⁹⁶ Dialog, "Report on Palestinian Public Opinion Poll on First Anniversary of Intifada", *Al-Quds*, 30 September 2001, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=141450467,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 31 March 2005

⁹⁷ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.1

branches with a membership ranged from twelve thousand to twenty thousand⁹⁸. The MB members' fighting in the 1948 War against Israel increased its popularity in Palestine because it was the sole movement that participated in the fighting. During the Jordanian rule (1948-1967) over West Bank, it was the sole legal political organization in Palestine. At that period, it focused on re-Islamization of the Palestinian society through education and adherence to Islamic principles. The MB set up Islamic charity organizations, nursery schools, kindergartens, and sport clubs. To undermine the PLO Israel continued to its attacks on the PLO and encouraged the growth of the MB⁹⁹.

The MB established *al-Mujamma al-Islami* (the Islamic Center) in 1973 as a mosque but *Mujamma* also had medical clinic, a youth sports club, a nursing school, an Islamic festival hall, a *zakat* committee, and a center for women's activities and for training young girls. Its most prominent leaders were Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, Abd-al-Aziz al-Rantisi and Mahmoud al-Zahhar who would be leaders of Hamas. *Mujamma's* declared intention was to teach Palestinian youth according to Islamist view and so to prepare the ideological foundation for an Islamist state¹⁰⁰. It followed the MB's criticisms on the secular life and on the secular nationalists. For example the *Mujamma* supporters claimed that the PLO was a coalition of atheists and that the Islamic worldview was more important than Arafat¹⁰¹. Moreover, in 1980s one slogan of *Mujamma* was: "How can uncovered women and men with Beatle haircuts liberate our holy places?"¹⁰². It spread its Islamic dress campaign into the Islamic University in Gaza where the women were obliged to wear *hijab*, i.e.veil. Also because the owners and managers could not resist the *Mujamma's* Islamist pressures and its Islamization project, they closed the cinemas, liquor stores, restaurants selling alcohol and casinos¹⁰³. Furthermore, it declared the playing of music as forbidden and its supporters attacked and disrupted the weddings that they recognized as

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.3

⁹⁹ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.97

¹⁰⁰ Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), p.5

¹⁰¹ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.112

¹⁰² Ibid., p.111

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.115

inconsistent with their Islamic traditions¹⁰⁴. Israel as it did for the MB, also supported the *Mujamma*¹⁰⁵.

According to the MB, the Palestine question erupted because God punished Muslims who turned away from Islam. It recognized the Israeli occupation as a curse, punishment from God because of the Palestinians' abandonment of 'the true path of Islam'¹⁰⁶. So to the Brotherhood when the Palestinians re-adopted Islam as a way of life, Israel would be defeated collectively. According to the MB's understanding, without transformation of the Palestinian society along the Islamic lines even *jihad* could not succeed in destroying Israel. To the MB Israel was a Western tool to spread its influence, corruption with its plots against Islam. The MB claimed that Palestine was rescued from the Crusaders by Islam so the secularism had to be abandoned for liberating Palestine. Moreover it rejected the PLO's secular nationalism on the ground that it delayed the Palestinians' adoption of Islam and to the MB such delay would result in delay for liberation and reclamation of the land. It asserted that the PLO's adoption of Western structures and ideologies such as nationalism "only undermined the larger struggle between *dar al-Islam*, the abode of Islam, and *dar al-harb*, the house of war-incontext, the West"¹⁰⁷ because to the MB nationalism had no Islamic justification. Thus before launching *jihad* against Israel, the MB during the Islamization of the Palestinian society struggled against the secular and modernization forces that prevented its Islamization project.

It made harsh criticism against the leftist forces like the PFLP and the DFLP because to MB, these two organizations tried to undermine Fateh leadership over the PLO. It was against communism because to the Brotherhood, communism worked for international powers and served to American interests, Israeli interests thus it disaffected Palestinian politics. Also, to the MB communism contained actual

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.116

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.101

¹⁰⁶ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.19

¹⁰⁷ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.144

blasphemy and in their private lives, and in their relationship with Palestinian society the communists did not have any Islamic moral values and obligations¹⁰⁸.

2.4.2 The Islamic Liberation Party:

Sheikh Taqi ad-Din an-Nabahani who formed the party in 1952, had been former member of the MB, but due to ideological differences he left the MB and established his own movement. Its ideology was primarily pan-Islamic and anti-colonialist¹⁰⁹. Even though the Palestinian question was among the issues of the Party, its main focus was overthrowing the Arab regimes whose leaders, according to the Islamic Liberation Party, had departed from the Islamic path. Its ultimate aim was the revival of an Islamic way of life that required the return of Muslims to an Islamic society in the *dar al-Islam*¹¹⁰. It advocated the revival of the Caliphate and believed that the Caliph through adopting *Shari'a* would lead Muslims and “spread the word of Islam through the world”¹¹¹. To the Party, the PLO was atheistic and heretical. It claimed the PLO supporters disobeyed Allah and his messenger¹¹² thus it forbade any Muslim to join, work with, or provide financial support to the PLO¹¹³. According to the Islamic Liberation Party the PLO surrendered Palestine. It recognized an agreement with Israel as “treason to Allah, to His Messenger, His religion, and to the believers”¹¹⁴. Instead on agreeing with Israel, to the Party, Palestine could continue to be under Israeli occupation for several more decades¹¹⁵. Furthermore it promoted the idea that when the Palestinians ‘returned to Islam’, Israel would fall due to the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a war of beliefs¹¹⁶.

¹⁰⁸ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.28

¹⁰⁹ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.64

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.67

¹¹¹ Iyad Barghouti, “Islamic Movements in Historical Palestine”, op.cit., p.166

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ali al-Jarbawi, “The Position of Palestinian Islamists on the Palestine-Israeli Accord”, *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXIV, No.1-2, January-April, 1994, p.129.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Beverly Milton-Edwards, “Political Islam in Palestine in an environment of peace?”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.2, 1996, p.202

2.4.3 Islamic Jihad:

Islamic Jihad, which was another offshoot of the MB, was established in Gaza in the early 1980s by Sheikh Abd al-Aziz Awda and Fathi al-Shaqqi. It left the MB because these two movements could not agree on timing of launching armed resistance against Israel. Even before the eruption of the First Intifada, Jihad criticized the Brotherhood for its inaction against the occupation and its rhetorical and physical attacks against the Palestinian nationalists¹¹⁷. Islamic Jihad advocated immediate action against Israeli occupation that would be done simultaneously with the Islamization of the Palestinian society. Thus Jihad left the MB to attack Israel while continuing on Islamizing the Palestinian society.

It contained four groups: Islamic Jihad (Shqaqi-Auda faction) that was the main faction, Islamic Jihad Jerusalem Brigade, Islamic Jihad Battalions, and Islamic Jihad Palestine (Amar faction). The Islamic Jihad Battalion established in 1985 by Bassam Sutlan who had close links with Fateh¹¹⁸. There were controversial arguments that the establishment of the Islamic Jihad Battalion was encouraged by Fateh's second man, Khalil al-Wazir, as a counter response against the growing strength of Shqaqi-Auda faction¹¹⁹. Moreover, Islamic Jihad Palestine was led by Jamal Amar who was a former member of Fateh. Furthermore some Jihad leaders had worked under the PLO. For instance, Jabr Ammar and Ahmad Mahanna were former officers of the Popular Liberation Forces in the Palestine Liberation Army¹²⁰. Furthermore, one of the leading figures of Islamic Jihad, Muhammad al-Jamal was former member of the PFLP¹²¹.

The Islamic Jihad aimed to create an Islamic state and apply Islamic principles in an Islamic society. It recognized Israel as a threat to the Islamic *umma* because according to the Islamic Jihad Israel aimed to Westernize and to divide the

¹¹⁷ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.146

¹¹⁸ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, op.cit., p.117

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.94

¹²¹ Ibid., p.95

Islamic *umma*¹²². It recognized Israel as a threat to Palestine because to Jihad Palestine was a part of '*dar al-Islam*'. Therefore it recognized the Palestinian conflict as a religious issue that concerned the entire Islamic world. Furthermore it did not agree with secular orientation of the PLO groups especially the Marxist ones. However its attacks against Israel during the First Intifada led Jihad to have recruits from the Islamic community and support from Palestinian leftists and nationalists¹²³. During the Intifada, it cooperated with the PLO's United National Command.

2.4.4 Hamas:

Hamas was the most powerful opposition in the Palestinian politics against the PLO. Some MB members who were dissatisfied with the MB's inaction against the Israeli occupation established Hamas during the First Intifada. When the First Intifada erupted and Islamic Jihad continued to its attack against Israel, the Brotherhood continued to its society based policies, to its campaigns of "reform for proper Muslim social behavior"¹²⁴ instead of participating to the Intifada. Some MB members discussed whether it should wait for the foundation of an Islamic state to attack Israel or whether it should participate to the armed confrontation against Israel¹²⁵. These members decided on confronting Israel so they established Hamas, a new organization not to threaten the MB's future because the outcomes and the future of the Intifada were not certain at that time. By creating Hamas, the MB aimed to stand as a rival against the PLO, which claimed to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Moreover, the MB aimed to eliminate the PLO from the Palestinian politics. Such policy would lead to take leadership of the resistance and establishment an Islamic state in Palestine.

Hamas did not participate to the Intifada firstly by military actions. Rather it started by fasting and praying later it participated through military actions such as kidnapping and killing Israeli soldiers¹²⁶. It started to its armed attacks against

¹²² Ibid., p.102

¹²³ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.146

¹²⁴ Helena Cobban, "The PLO and the Intifada", op.cit., p.215

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Iyad Barghouti, "The Islamists in Jordan and the Palestinian Occupied Territories", in *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movement in the Contemporary World*, Laura Guazzone (ed.), (Berkshire: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1995), p.48

Israelis in 1989¹²⁷. Hamas participated to the Palestinian armed struggle to “capitalize on the nationalistic sentiments of the Palestinian people, with the ultimate goal of furthering its religious mission”¹²⁸. To its founders Hamas was a blessed step and the only one to defend the ‘real aspirations’ of the Palestinian people¹²⁹. Also in its first leaflet, Hamas recognized the Intifada as a blessed Islamic uprising¹³⁰ and as “a new creation of the Islamic *umma* and of the Muslim generation that carries the banner of Islam”¹³¹.

With its establishment, Hamas became a powerful opposition in the Palestinian politics. Its social and cultural services, its armed attacks against Israel increased Hamas’ support and popularity among the Palestinian society. As one of the wing of the MB, Hamas gave importance to social and cultural activities to re-Islamize the society. Such activities included employment, education, health service that the PLO could not provide to the Palestinians. Thus Hamas, through filling “the void left by a death of state-sponsored social services”¹³² retained its power *vis-à-vis* the PLO. To put it in another way, the Intifada created Hamas, and the Palestinians’ living conditions consolidated its power. Without the Intifada, it was not clear that Hamas could be powerful in the Palestinian society that had a “strong secular tradition”¹³³ and for whom the “Islamist alternative remained unacceptable”¹³⁴. But the continuation of the Palestinians’ subjugation, humiliation, deterioration of their

¹²⁷ Rema Hammami, “From Modesty to Collaboration: Hamas, the Women’s Movement, and the National Identity in the Intifada”, in *Political Islam: Essays from the Middle East Report*, Joel Beinin and Joe Stock (eds.), (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1997), p.198

¹²⁸ Zvika Krieger, “Hamas’ Identity Crisis”, *Yale Israel Journal*, No.5, Winter 2005, p.12, <http://www.yaleisraeljournal.com/wintr2005/hamas.pfd>, accessed on 14 April 2005

¹²⁹ Andrea Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), p.63

¹³⁰ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, op.cit., p.149

¹³¹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.59

¹³² Haim Malka, “Forcing Choices: Testing the Transformation of Hamas”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.4, Autumn 2005, p.38

¹³³ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.128

¹³⁴ Sara Roy, “Hamas and the Transformation(s) of Political Islam in Palestine”, *Current History*, Vol.102, No.660, January 2003, p.13

quality of life and the Israeli occupation, and above all Fateh's affiliation with corruption resulted in Hamas' consolidating its power as seen in its victory over Fateh in the last legislative elections of 2006. Even the top PA officials were aware of the relation between Hamas' rise and the impasse of peace process, and living conditions for instance when former Prime Minister Ahmed Quray could not travel from Gaza to the West Bank due to Israeli soldiers' prevention, said that "Soon, I too will join Hamas"¹³⁵.

According to Mahmood Monshipouri, apart from the PLO's failure in ending the occupation, Israel was another factor for Hamas' rise because Israel fostered Hamas like it did for the MB and *Mujamma* as a counter to the PLO, and Israel supported Hamas by financial means¹³⁶. Israel did nothing against Islamist activities in Palestine because to Israel such activities would undermine the PLO's influence. In 1989, Israel for the first time declared that Hamas was a terrorist organization. Furthermore, repressive environment of the Israeli occupation also increased Hamas' power¹³⁷.

Hamas issued its own charter in 1988. According to Hamas, the PLO's Charter was null and void so it had to be replaced by a true charter, which confirmed to Palestinian national principles and Islamic values and beliefs¹³⁸. The 27th Article of Hamas' Charter recognized the PLO as the closest movement composed of relatives, friends, brothers and fathers because their homeland, destiny and enemy

¹³⁵ Henry Munson, "Islam, Nationalism and Resentment of Foreign Domination", *Middle East Policy*, Vol.X, No.2, Summer 2003, p.46

¹³⁶ Mahmood Monshipouri, "The PLO Rivalry with Hamas: The Challenge of Peace, Democratization and Islamic Radicalism", *Middle East Policy*, Vol.IV, No.3, March 1996, p.89. See also Beverly Milton-Edwards "The Concept of Jihad and the Palestinian Islamic Movement: A Comparison of Ideas and Techniques", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.19, No.1, 1992; Wendy Kristianasen, "Challenge and Counterchallenge: Hamas's Response to Oslo", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.28, No.3, Spring 1999; Augustus Richard Norton, "The Challenge of Inclusion in the Middle East", *Current History*, Vol.94, No.588, January 1995; Rema Hammami, "Women, Hijab and the Intifada", *Middle East Report*, No: 164/165, Intifada Year Three, May-August 1990; Emile F. Sahliyeh, *In Search for Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988); Joshua Teitelbaum and Joseph Kostiner, "The West Bank and Gaza: The PLO and the Intifada", in *Revolutions of the late Twentieth Century*, Jack A. Goldstone, Ted Robert Gurr, Farrokh Moshiri (eds.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1991)

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p.43

were one and common¹³⁹. However due to the PLO's idea of secular state, Hamas could not participate into the PLO. The Charter mentioned that it could only cooperate with the PLO if it accepted three main principles: establishing an Islamic state on all Palestine, rejecting Jewish entity in any part of Palestine and *jihad* as the only way for the goal¹⁴⁰. According to Hamas, the PLO adopted secular state because of ideological invasion of the Crusaders and imperialists. The Charter maintained that secular thought was entirely contradictory to religious one. Thus to Hamas it could not use secular thought for the current and future Islamic nature of Palestine.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.192

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.185

CHAPTER 3

FATEH AND ITS ISLAMIC RHETORIC

3.1. Foundation of Fateh and Ideology of Fateh

It was founded by the Palestinian refugees in 1959 through uniting of various Palestinian nationalist groups that were active in refugee camps, uniting of the Palestinian communities in Gulf states, and through uniting of diaspora groupings of Palestinian students. Fateh started to its military operations in January 1965. By the eruption of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, its military wing *Al-Asifah* committed approximately 100 acts of sabotage in Israel, killed eleven Israelis and wounded sixty-two.

Fateh was the largest and most important movement in the Palestinian politics. Its success in the Palestinian politics was stemmed from four reasons. Firstly its leadership composed of a group of nationalists who had worked together over a decade in 1950s¹. Secondly it had broad nationalist appeal that could attract various supporters and recruits from all ideological parameters. Thirdly, this nationalist ideology entailed simple national goals that could be easy for the Palestinian masses to understand. Whereas other groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) dealt with complicated ideological issues that the Palestinians had little interest in². The basis of Fateh's argument was that the liberation of Palestine primarily belonged to the Palestinians' armed struggle and could not be entrusted to the Arab states. One Fateh founder, Salah Khalaf, mentioned that they could expect nothing from Arab states because for the most part they were corrupt and tied to imperialism³. Its distinctive Palestinian identity and focus on Palestinian liberation resulted in the criticisms of some Arab states to which Fateh was a Western agent

¹ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: University of California Press, 1973), p.55

² Ibid.

³ Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation: People, Power and Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.22

that did not cooperate with them and put Palestinian interests above Pan-Arab nationalism⁴. Finally, Fateh had the principle of not intervening in the Arab politics that enabled it to receive aid and arms from varying states such as from Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Syria and Egypt. However Fateh leaders' relation with the Gulf States resulted in criticisms of some left wing Palestinians who accused them as being "the creatures of the (generally very conservative) rulers there"⁵. But to remain as an independent organization, Fateh had to be moderate and non-ideological movement. Because the Arab states would interfere in its politics and it might find itself in inter-Arab quarrel.

Fateh was a pragmatist organization whose members agreed to ignore their ideological and other differences for focusing and pursuing the common goal⁶. So its members ranged from communists to far rightists who worked together without creating an ideological debate. According to Fateh spokesman, Hani al-Hassan, Fateh did not belong to right or left, rather it was a movement, which progressed the Arab right and Arab left⁷. Represented by the PFLP and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Marxist-Leninist ideology influenced Fateh like other groups in the PLO, so that Fateh moved to leftward from conservative wing⁸ and even encouraged an alliance with the Soviet Union. Since then Fateh's concept for Palestine's liberation was equivalent to that used by other twentieth-century anti-colonialist liberation movements because to Fateh the land would be liberated from foreign oppression and colonialism. However, Marxism's appeal and popularity diminished before the collapse of the Soviet Union due to the fact that the majority of the Palestinians recognized it as alien doctrine that was divisive and anti-Islamic⁹ however Fateh continued to its reliance on Third World revolutionary rhetoric.

⁴ Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory? The Politics and History of the PLO*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.11

⁵ Ibid., p.23

⁶ Ibid., p.25

⁷ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, op.cit. p. 98

⁸ Don Peretz, *The Middle East Today*, (New York: Prager Publishers, 1983), p.152

⁹ Barry Rubin, "The PLO and the Palestinians: A Revolution Institutionalized", in *Politics of Change in the Middle East*, Robert B. Satloof (ed.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), p.153

3.2. Fateh's Constitution:

Fateh's Constitution appeared on the main Fateh Web site¹⁰. The first Article defined Palestine as a part of the Arab world, and the Palestinians as part of the Arab nation, and the Palestinian struggle as part of Arab nation's struggle thus it did not use any Islamic references in defining the land, its people, and the struggle. The 4th Article asserted that the Palestinian struggle was part of the worldwide struggle against Zionism, colonialism and international imperialism. So to Fateh, apart from the Arab dimension, the struggle had anti-colonial and Third World revolutionary dimension. The Article 7 defined the Zionist movement as racial, colonial and aggressive in ideology, goals, organization and method. The 8th Article recognized Israel as a Zionist invasion with a colonial expansive base, which was a natural ally to colonialism and international imperialism. Fateh's opposition to Zionist movement and to the Israeli existence in Palestine was articulated through nationalist and Third Worldist revolutionary language rather than any Islamic references or principles.

In the Article 5 liberating Palestine was recognized as national obligation that needed support of the Arab world. To the Article 9 liberating Palestine and protecting its holy places was an Arab, religious and human obligation. Henceforth, Fateh recognized the liberation of Palestine as national, Arab, human, and religious obligation. In mentioning the religious obligation, Fateh did not state any peculiar religion. It added the protecting of the holy places in Palestine to the liberation and it did not mention any specific holy sites.

To the Article 14 setting up a progressive Palestinian society that guaranteed people's rights and their public freedom was another goal of Fateh. To the 16th Article Fateh's another goal was supporting all oppressed people in their liberation and self-determination struggle to build a just, international peace. These goals were articulated by reference to the revolutionary and nationalist rhetoric instead of Islamic rhetoric.

The Article 13 indicated that Fateh aimed to establish an independent democratic state with complete sovereignty on all Palestinian lands, with Jerusalem as its capital, and it aimed to protect the citizens' legal and equal rights without any racial or religious discrimination. In the Fateh Constitution, Islam was not mentioned

¹⁰ Fateh, "Fateh Constitution", <http://www.fateh.net/e-public/constitution.htm>, accessed on 17 December 2005

rather the term used was religion, which was a universal reference and in the Palestinian political discourse it also referred to Christianity as well. The sole articles related with religion were the 9th and 13th Articles, which did not specify Islam and did not give any role to any religion in liberating Palestine and in establishing the state.

Fateh recognized Palestine, Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict according to Palestinian nationalism and Third World revolutionary rhetoric. Then Islam had no role and affect in Fateh's articulation of the land, the enemy and conflict. Furthermore Islam did not affect or guide Fateh's goals rather they were formulated according to Palestinian national principles and to the international resolutions. Henceforth Fateh was not an Islamist movement.

3.3. Fateh's Institutions:

Fateh's policies were conducted according to secular rules through leaving religion and its principles aside. Fateh's most important institution was the Central Committee (CC) into which "the Fateh founders constituted themselves"¹¹. Another body, the General Conference elected the members of the CC. According to Fateh provision, a General Conference was designed to meet on a regular basis and to represent the movement's leadership. It was constituted to be the source of ultimate decision-making power but it convened rarely. Henceforth most of Fateh's power was given to the CC. Another Fateh body was the Revolutionary Council, which had less constitutional power within movement but had "only slightly more effective power in practice than the Conference"¹². Fateh also had several armed units such as Tanzim, Force 17, *al-Asifah*, and the Brigades of al-Aqsa Martyrs.

Moreover Fateh formed popular committees such as for road maintenance, it set up schools for children in refugee camps, and it provided social services such as health to refugees. In Fateh camps boys and girls together were taught its aims, the Palestinian history, simple physical training and the symbols of Palestinian nationalism. Fateh as a movement claimed to head 'the Palestinian revolution', taught its youth groups "revolutionary culture"¹³ that emphasized the difference

¹¹ Helena Cobban, op.cit., p.25

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of A People*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.133

between “the assertive revolutionary generation and the desolate, humiliating identities of the children’s parents”¹⁴. For instance, it established a youth group called *Ashbal* (Young Lions) to “instill patriotic sentiment and military training among youngsters in grade school”¹⁵. William B.Quandt claims that the promotion of the ideas of secular nationalism, equality between the sexes and self-reliance at an early age were one of the most revolutionary consequences of Palestinian actions since 1967¹⁶. On the other hand Fateh used every opportunity to indicate its Islamic credentials. Its sensitivity to Islam was reflected in the organizational pattern of some of its institutions. For instance in the late 1970s Fateh’s youth movement in the West Bank and in Gaza, Youth Committees for Social Action (*Lijan al-Shabib lil-Amal al-Ijtimal*), organized separate structures for boys and girls¹⁷. Moreover, Fateh’s student movement acknowledged the importance of religion by organizing events on important commemoration dates in the Islamic calendar with traditional Islamic content¹⁸. Even though Fateh functioned according to secular principles, it gave importance to Islam as a part of cultural identity and as an appeasement for the political Islamists.

3.4. Fateh’s Relations with the Political Islamists Movements

Some Fateh leaders supported the political Islamist movements to control them and to prevent them from challenging the PLO. These leaders thought that alliance with the political Islamists might counterbalance the competing alliances especially the communists¹⁹. For example, Fateh made alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) to contain Marxist forces in the Occupied Territories. It also tried to recruit the Islamists to curtail the power of the Palestine Communist Party’s power

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Don Peretz, “The Historical Background of Arab Nationalism in Palestine”, in *The Palestinian State: A Rational Approach*, Richard J. Ward, Don Peretz, Eavn M. Wilson (eds.), (New York: Kennikat Press, 1977), p.47

¹⁶ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, op.cit., p.110

¹⁷ Hillel Frisch, “Has the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Become Islamic? Fatah, Islam, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.17, 2005, p.395

¹⁸ Ibid., p.396

¹⁹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.xv

in grassroots organizations due to the fact that the Party was the major source behind the grassroots organizations²⁰. But such alliances were short lived due to Fateh's exclusion of Islam from the PLO's doctrine. Furthermore, albeit Fateh's Islamic rhetoric facilitated formation of these alliances; Fateh's Islamic rhetoric was not changed by such alliances.

3.4.1 Fateh's relation with the MB:

Some Fateh leaders had been previous members of the MB and the Islamic Liberation Party in Palestine. They continued to be sympathetic to these movements²¹. To Yezid Sayigh, although Arafat's status as supporter or member remains uncertain²² membership in the MB was one of the common bonds for Fateh leaders²³. Moreover Ziad Abu-Amr claims that "there is no doubt whatsoever that the founding elements emerged from the womb of the Muslim Brotherhood"²⁴. It was argued that the reason for the cordial relationship between two moments' leaders was the ideological sympathy between Fateh founders and the Muslim Brotherhood leaders²⁵. The MB saw "in Fateh a legitimate son"²⁶ but its gradual abandonment of its Islamic leanings made the Brotherhood "feeling alarmed"²⁷. Fateh's formation in a way contributed to the weakness of the MB due to the fact that several MB members joined Fateh, which became the main and principal challenge to the

²⁰ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p.135

²¹ Ziad Abu-Amr, op.cit., p.xv

²² Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State. The Palestinian National Movement: 1949-1993*, (Washington D.C.: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.81

²³ Ibid., p.80

²⁴ Hillel Frisch, "Has the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Become Islamic? Fatah, Islam, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades", op.cit., p.394

²⁵ Ziad Abu-Amr, op.cit., p.46

²⁶ Ibid., p.28

²⁷ Ibid.

Islamist movement in Palestine²⁸. Then the establishment of the PLO in 1964 was “the final nail in the coffin for the Brotherhood”²⁹.

Khalil al-Wazir, who was one of the founding fathers of Fateh, joined the MB in 1951. He was a member of the *Katibat al-Haq* (Battalion of Right), which was one of the MB’s two military bodies³⁰. To Wazir the MB’s preparing and educating armed struggle in Gaza Strip and the existence of the Palestinians who fought in the 1948 War in the MB ranks were the primary factors for his relationship with the MB before Fateh’s foundation. He acknowledged that the MB attracted them because the Brotherhood and communists were the sole political forces in Gaza³¹. To Wazir, they did not choose the communists because they were few and they supported arguments such as coexistence with Israel that did not conform to the feelings of the society at that time³². The MB’s secretive character, its reputation as highly organized and militant political movement were other reasons attractive as Islam for the Palestinian activists however they were more interested in handling weapons rather than piety. On the other hand the MB did not have the same desire as these Palestinians to attack Israel because it was concerned about not give damage to its relation with the Revolutionary Command Council in Egypt. Wazir wanted from the MB to establish an organization that would not appear outwardly Islamist, but would promote the slogan of liberating Palestine through armed struggle. The Brotherhood rejected the proposal and prepared the ground for participation of its members to Fateh such as Salah Khalaf who was in the *Shabab al-Tha’r* (Revenge Youth) that was the other military body of the MB³³.

Fateh’s journal *Filastinuna*’s title was owned by Tawfiq al-Huri who was a former member of the Lebanese branch of the MB³⁴. In the late 1950s and early 60s,

²⁸ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p.55

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Yezid Sayigh, op.cit., p.82

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p.81

³³ Ibid., p.84

³⁴ Ibid.

the journal spread the support for Fateh and brought new members from the MB to Fateh such as Ahmad Quray who would become member of the Fateh Central Committee. Hani al-Hasan formed *Shabab al-Aqsa* (Young of the Aqsa Mosque) that was an Islamic movement before participating to Fateh. Like Hani al-Hasan, Mahmoud Abbas who became a founding member of Fateh, was one of the Palestinians who joined the MB in Syria in the early 1950s³⁵.

3.4.2 Fateh's relation with the Islamic Jihad:

Fateh had a special relation with the Islamic Jihad. According to this political Islamist movement, Fateh was established with an Islamic attempt to respond to the crisis of the Islamic movements in 1955-58³⁶. It recognized Arafat, Khalil al-Wazir, Salah Khalaf, and Mahmoud Abbas as “the sons of the Islamic movement”³⁷. To further demonstrate Fateh's Islamic roots, Jihad gave Fateh's military wing *al-Asifa*'s first communiqué as an example, and indicated that it started with mentioning the word of God and followed by a verse from the Koran³⁸. Despite this fact, later it started to recognize Fateh as “a mixture of Islam, nationalism, liberalism, and finally leftist ideas”³⁹. Henceforth, for the Islamic Jihad, Fateh became a national leadership like the other liberation movements of the Third World countries through fluctuating between nationalism and Islam, and finally to the Islamic Jihad Fateh “turned away from its Islamic essence”⁴⁰.

In the mid-1980s, to meet the challenge of the Islamist opposition, Fateh helped to set up a branch of the Islamic Jihad called the *Saraya al-Jihad al-Islami*. Fateh also sponsored a group known as *Surayya al-Islam* (Companies of Islam) to support its Islamic credentials⁴¹. Later it sponsored another organization called *al-*

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ziad Abu-Amr, op.cit, p.109

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Barry Rubin, “The Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinians: A Revolution Institutionalized”, op.cit, p.155

*Jihad al-Islami-Kata'ib al-Aqsa*⁴². The Islamic Jihad's *Beit al-Maqdis* faction headed by Sheikh Asad Bayyud Tamimi had special relation with Fateh. Arafat supported him and appointed his son Nadir Tamimi as Fateh's deputy religious advisor⁴³. Arafat asked Sheikh Tamimi and his followers to attend the twentieth session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) that discussed the PLO's participation to the peace process. They participated and with the Madrid negotiations, Sheikh Tamimi and five of his supporters became members of the PNC. Furthermore, the Islamic Jihad Movement *Beit al-Maqdis* hold three seats in the Central Council of the PLO. According to Ali Jarbawi, these memberships and seats gave Arafat "a measure of Islamic 'legitimacy', which, despite its limited nature, was essential for the head of the PLO to have"⁴⁴.

But the signing of the Oslo Accords led Tamimi to withdraw his organization from the PLO and resulted in the resignation of the organization from the PNC and the Central Council. Moreover, Nadir Tamimi who was the Mufti of the Palestine Liberation Army and one of the representatives of the Islamic Jihad Movement *Beit al-Maqdis* in the PNC, issued a *fatwa* on the day of signing of the Oslo Accords stating that: "... any surrender of even a square foot of Palestinian land may be considered disbelief, *kufir*, and perfidy for the reason that the land of Palestine is both sacred and blessed"⁴⁵. According to Ali Jarbawi protesting the agreement with resignations and *fatwas*, and withdrawals from the PLO "represented a major embarrassment"⁴⁶ for the PLO leadership. Thus through these policies, "the PLO lost the last remnant of any Islamic 'cover'"⁴⁷. However Tamimi's faction that "enjoyed

⁴² Hillel Frisch, op.cit, p.396

⁴³ Barry Rubin, "The Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinians: A Revolution Institutionalized", op.cit, p.154

⁴⁴ Ali Al-Jarbawi, "The Position of Palestinian Islamists on the Palestine-Israel Accord", *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 1-2, January-April, 1994, p.134

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

strong alliance with Fateh”⁴⁸ left Islamic Jihad Shqaqi-Auda faction and since the signing of the Oslo accords it did not attack Israel unlike other Jihadi factions.

3.5. Fateh’s Islamic Rhetoric

Fateh was an acronym for *Harakat al-tahrir al-Filastiniyya* that meant Palestinian Liberation movement⁴⁹. When it was read, it would mean sudden death. Hence the ordering of the letters was reversed to produce *Fat’h* that meant conquest⁵⁰. Also there were arguments that the term meant conquest for the cause of Islam⁵¹. It was argued that the name had echoes in historic Arab-Islamic symbolism. For instance, Arab-Islamic historians used ‘the fateh of the regions of al-sham (Syria) or al-Iraq’ to refer to the conquest or the opening for Islamization and Arabization of the Middle East⁵².

Like the PLO, Fateh used the Islamic rhetoric mainly to mobilize the Palestinians in addition to make alliances with the political Islamists. It also used Islamic rhetoric because Islam had a special place in the Palestinian culture and in the identity of the Palestinians including Fateh leaders. Moreover Fateh referred to such discourse to increase its legitimacy against the rising power of Hamas and its threats to Fateh’s legitimacy and authority. Lastly, Zionist claims on Palestine and its policies together with Palestine’s importance for Islam also prepared the ground for Fateh’s Islamic discourse.

Fateh used Islamic belief and symbols on two levels: instrumental level and in the realm of ideas. The instrumental level entailed using Islamic rhetoric for mobilizing the Palestinians on behalf of nationalist goals⁵³. Fateh’s creation of the Al-Aqsa Matyrs’ Brigades during the Second Intifada was an example of instrumental level. In the realm of ideas, Fateh recognized Islam’s central place in

⁴⁸ Beverly Milton-Edwards, ‘Political Islam in Palestine in an environment of peace?’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vo.17, No.2, 1996, p.214

⁴⁹ Helena Cobban, op.cit., p.6

⁵⁰ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, op.cit., p.55

⁵¹ Raphael Israeli, “From Oslo to Bethlehem: Arafat’s Islamic Message”, *Journal of Church and State*, Vol.43, No.3, Summer 2001, p.442

⁵² Samih K. Farsoun and Christina G. Zacharia, *Palestine and Palestinians*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p.176

⁵³ Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.398

the identity, culture and nationalism of the Palestinians most of whom were either traditional or devout Muslims⁵⁴.

William B. Quandt claims that Fateh was reluctant to press for secularism for three reasons⁵⁵. Firstly some Fateh leaders had religious attachments. Secondly, Islam's power in mobilizing the Palestinians in a way led its leaders to subordinate secularism in favor of Islamic discourse. Thirdly to Quandt Fateh's religious supporters such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait prevented its pressing for secularism. Such conservative parties' importance heightened with Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. And after the 1973 War, these conservative states took the lead in Arab world⁵⁶.

Fateh used both secular and Islamic languages in its political discourse that centered on liberation of Palestine. Emile F. Sahliyah argues that when secular nationalism came to be the official ideology of Fateh, the influence of Islam began to draw away⁵⁷. Barry Rubin claims that the revolutionary doctrine formulated by Arafat and Fateh mixed Islam, Marxism-Leninism, Arab nationalism and Third World radicalism⁵⁸. Marxism affected Fateh especially in regarding the United States as an imperialist enemy⁵⁹.

Fateh's basic conception of Islam and Islamic things were nationalist, in other words it used Islamic allusions to represent nationalist terms. Moreover Islam was part of both Palestinian nationalism and Arab nationalism that the Palestinian nationalism was linked to⁶⁰. Palestinian nationalism was based on national liberation of the usurped land, on political institutions and on a national unity, on a common

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, op.cit., p.89

⁵⁶ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, "The Structural and Political Context of the PLO's Changing Objectives in the Post-1967 Period", in *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Two Decades of Change*, Yehuda Lukacs and Abdalla M. Batfah (eds.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), p.100

⁵⁷ Emile F. Sahliyah, *West Bank Politics since 1967: In Search for Leadership*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), p.153

⁵⁸ Barry Rubin, "The Terror and the Pity: Yasser Arafat and the Second Loss of Palestine", *MERIA: Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 6, No.1, March 2002, p.80

⁵⁹ Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory? The Politics and History of the PLO*, op.cit., p. 148

⁶⁰ Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.396

national belonging between the Palestinian Christians and Muslims. The terms used in Fateh's Islamic rhetoric were cultural "in the context of a secular, though by no means antireligious, nationalism"⁶¹ because Fateh articulated nationalism on ethnic terms. Then in Fateh's ideology Islam was not construed as the normative and legal basis for Palestinian society. Also it did not engage in ideological debates about the character of the regime of the liberated state at the present stage because such debates could divide the Palestinians and take their focus from the struggle against Israel⁶². To Khalil Shikaki, Fateh was a semi-secular nationalist and pragmatist organization that placed some emphasis on traditional values. It "says little about personal behavior, but it rejects political Islam and embraces some democratic values"⁶³.

Fateh's reference to both secular-nationalist discourse and religious discourse can be analyzed in its early communiqués concerned with the start of the Palestinian armed resistance. For example its first communiqué dated 7 January 1965, recognized as the first public statement of the Palestinian nationalism and Fateh, demonstrated the content of Fateh's Islamic rhetoric and its gestures to Islamic credentials:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent. Our trust is in God and our faith is in the right of our people to fight for the recovery of their usurped homeland, our faith is in the obligation of holy war [*bi-wajib al-jihad al-muqaddas*], and our faith is in the attitude of the revolutionary Arab from the Atlantic to the Gulf⁶⁴

The date 07 January 1965 was important for the Palestinians because they recognized the date as the beginning of their 'revolution'. Because unlike the preceding fifty years, this date represented the beginning of an autonomous Palestinian resistance after its dependence on Arab states. So the chosen words indicated the content of the movement and its goals. The communiqué explained that Fateh in its struggle for recovery of Palestine believed in God and in divine help. It

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, op.cit., p.239

⁶³ Khalil Shikaki, "Peace Now or Hamas Later", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.77, No. 4, July/August 1998, p.30

⁶⁴ Nels Johnson, *Islam and the Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: KPI Limited, 1982), p.75

mentioned that the battle was fought for recovering the usurped land. It acknowledged the only device to liberate was armed struggle. But it used the term *jihad* to signify the armed struggle. To Nels Johnson, Fateh referred to term *jihad* for religious use to indicate holy war⁶⁵.

The term *jihad* was derived from the verb that meant to struggle violently, or to wage war, and especially war or struggle for the sake of Islam⁶⁶. In Arabic, *jihad* was frequently linked with the phrase *fi sabil Allah* translated as ‘struggle or endeavor in the Path of God’⁶⁷. The term also meant personal struggle to be righteous. For instance the Prophet Mohammad said, “The greatest *jihad* is the struggle against the evil passions of oneself”⁶⁸. In other words, the term might mean an “intellectual striving and by extension, also a physical striving for a cause”⁶⁹.

Nels Johnson argues that the Palestinian political discourse’s reference to *jihad* was ambiguous in a way that *jihad* can be both part of religious field and the secular-nationalist field due to the fact that it can be linked to secular terms such as revolution and imperialism⁷⁰. Some Christian Palestinians recognized it as neutral term struggle and as a non-religious synonym for revolution. To these Palestinian Christians *jihad* was a term used to signify the Palestinian revolution⁷¹. Its religious meaning was accepted but they argued that the Palestinians did not use it for religious meaning⁷². On the other hand one Muslim Palestinian argued that *jihad* had no religious meaning for him and said that he was proud to be a Muslim “but *jihad* to me means to fight strongly for something- it isn’t part of religion to me... I know that many Muslims understand it this way, but this is not correct”⁷³. Henceforth the ambiguity of the term provided flexible and interpretive utility.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.68

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.69

⁶⁹ Raphael Israeli, op.cit., p.437

⁷⁰ Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.74

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid., p.76

⁷³ Ibid

To sum up Fateh in its first communiqué mentioned its Islamic credentials through referring to Islamic salutation and mentioning its belief in God. The communiqué reflected Fateh argument that the armed struggle was an obligation for rescuing Palestine. The term *jihad* was used to reflect the ‘holy war’ articulated as national struggle aimed to eradicate Israel, which usurped the land. Also the communiqué defined the Palestinians who committed to liberate Palestine as the revolutionary Arab.

On the other hand, *al-Asifa*’s first communiqué of 1 January 1965, concerned with the launching of the Palestinian armed struggle was lack of any Islamic allusions. The language was primarily Third World revolutionary one:

To our great people... to our struggling Arab nation...to liberators everywhere. From our people, steadfast to the limit, and from the conscience of our battling homeland, our revolutionary vanguards burst out, believing in the armed revolution as the way to Return and to Liberty, in order to stress to the colonialists and their henchmen, and to world Zionism and its financiers, that the Palestinian people remains in the field; that it has not died and will not die⁷⁴.

Al-Asifah, which meant storm, was the military force of Fateh. In *al-Asifa*’s first communiqué the symbols and rhetoric used were secular-nationalist. The ethnic identity of the Palestinians was mentioned and it appealed to the international community especially to the ones who struggled for liberation. The device and goals were secular-nationalist, as *al-Asifa* revealed as returning to the usurped land and liberating it from colonialism and imperialism.

Fateh’s usage of both secular and Islamic languages was also seen in its statements concerning the Battle of Karameh. At the Battle of Karameh, the Palestinian guerillas fought together with the Jordanian army against a large Israeli army force in Jordan’s refugee camp Karameh. The guerillas killed 25 Israeli soldiers while the Palestinians had more losses. Despite this fact, Israeli army could not evacuate the guerillas from the refugee camp. Henceforth to the Palestinians especially to the national movement the Battle was an indication of their capability to confront Israel. After the Karameh Battle, within two days, 5,000 new recruits applied to join Fateh⁷⁵. The Battle was recognized especially by Fateh leadership as retaking the Arab world’s honor undermined with the 1967 Defeat thus it became an

⁷⁴ Helena Cobban, op.cit., p.33

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.42

important component of the resurrection claim of the Palestinian identity. This national event was used through secular-nationalist and religious references.

In terms of religious usage, historical parallels were made between the Islamic history and the Battle of Karamah. In a short report of Fateh it was asserted that the Battle ushered “a new day to be added to the Days of the Arabs alongside Dhu Qar, Yarmuk, Qadisiyah and Hattin”⁷⁶. It drew parallels between the Palestinian guerillas and figures in the Islamic history; the report stated that “that night the heroes brought to mind Khalid bin al-Walid, Sad bin Abi Qas, Akramah and Jafar, and all the Arab heroes”⁷⁷. Although the Battle was a secular-nationalist event, Fateh referred to Islamic themes to describe its victory. By referring to Islamic symbols and history, Fateh tried to strengthen its place in Palestinian and intra-Arab politics against the 1967 defeat recognized as the most shocking and humiliating event of Arab history.

Fateh’s this short report ended by stating that the Palestinian revolution would not end “until Bilal ascends the walls of Jerusalem in order to proclaim [yu’adhdhin] that the corruption has passed away”⁷⁸. Bilal was the first *mu’adhdhin*, i.e. the person who called to prayer, chosen by the Prophet, and the verb *yu’adhdhin* in modern Arabic was used with the meaning of ‘to call to prayer’⁷⁹. Although referring to Bilal who would call to prayer in Jerusalem after the destruction of Israel had national meaning, which was the Palestinian sovereignty, it also had Islamic usage because of taking Jerusalem and calling to prayer in Islamic way so the city would be Palestinian and Islamic in character through excluding Christianity.

On the other hand, in another Fateh pronouncement on the Karamah Battle, the Islamic symbols were not used. Rather, the language was secular-nationalist and the Battle again was recognized as a decisive step on the road to the return to Palestine:

The Day of Al-Karamah... is the beginning of similar days to come- the day is coming soon when we will hear of the Day of Nablus, then the Day of Ramallah and then the day of Jerusalem...and the end of the lines of

⁷⁶ Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.91

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.92

⁷⁹ Ibid.

refugees receiving their monthly ration from the international aid agencies- a bitter morsel for the begging lines in lieu of a good mouthful for the legions of redemption⁸⁰.

Like the previous texts with clear Islamic references, this pronouncement argued that the battle of Karameh was the victory meant the beginning of liberating the land from the occupation and return of the Palestinian refugees though it did not result in any liberation of Palestinian land from the Israeli occupation.

3.6. Fateh's Symbols:

The most frequent terms that Fateh referred in Palestinian political discourse were revolution, Zionism, imperialism and *fedayeen*. Some of these symbols were used both in secular and religious meanings.

3.6.1. Revolution (*Thawrah*):

Thawrah's most frequent meaning was difficult or violently political struggle. Hisham Sharabi asserted that revolution was a good word in Arabic political vocabulary due to the fact that it had "a sense of inner liberation and restoration of self-respect associated with it regardless of the actual reality of any particular revolution in the Arab world"⁸¹. Its formal lexicographic sense was political struggle defined as mass movement whose one of the main objectives was fighting against imperialism that belonged to the secular-nationalist field⁸². The term revolution was used in the Palestinian political discourse to describe the Palestinian national movement whose enemy was Israel. For instance in the Commentary of the tenth Anniversary of Fateh that was typical commentary of Fateh anniversaries, the Palestinians were articulated as revolutionaries:

The anniversary of Fateh is an anniversary of Palestine. It is a celebration of the Arab revolutionary and the revolutionary everywhere a celebration of the lover of justice who refuses to submit to tyranny... This is our anniversary, an anniversary of Fateh and Palestine, a celebration of the revolutionary wherever he is... A man is born but once and but once he dies. A people is not born, nor does it die, but it slumbers and is resurrected time and time again. In early 1965, there occurred a new resurrection of the Palestinian people⁸³.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.91

⁸¹ Ibid, p.72

⁸² Ibid., p.73

⁸³ Ibid., p.82

In this commentary revolution was used as a general redemptive characterization of the Palestinian national movement. The anti-colonial, the Third Worldist character of Fateh was mentioned because the Palestinian conflict was presented as a revolution and as a struggle of justice that was open to any participant regardless of religion, race or gender against tyranny. It recognized the first Fateh attack against Israel as the resurrection of the Palestinians in other words it recognized the existence and survival of the Palestinian people on nationalist terms. The commentary lacked any Islamic allusions, which instead were replaced by Palestinian nationalism and Third Worldist rhetoric.

On the other hand in the official Fateh commentary on the first communiqué dated 1968, Fateh referred to religious concepts. The term revolution was used with Islamic references however the message given was primarily nationalist:

The first communiqué was the birth of the revolution, whose holy torch was raised on high...and under the feet of the holy torch fell all those who tried to extinguish its light...[this was] the noblest of battles and the holiest of *jihads*...a battle we were determined to pursue until the final communiqué announcing the fall of the Zionist entity, and a *jihad* in which we resolved to shed every drop of blood in our veins⁸⁴.

Therefore in this communiqué, the term revolution and the redemptive motif were used together with Islamic allusion *jihad*. The term revolution was recognized as the holiest of *jihads* and it was articulated as a ‘holy war’ committed against the Zionist entity⁸⁵. *Jihad* was used for a secular-national goal because the end of the holy war was recognized as the fall of Israel not the establishment of an Islamic state on historical Palestine.

3.6.2. Zionism:

Zionism referred to the Judaic revivalist movement in whose name the Israeli state was established. It was included into secular-nationalist field because Zionism was the primary target of the Palestinian ‘revolution’ and it was considered as a major manifestation of imperialism⁸⁶. Fateh like the PLO recognized and defined Zionism on secular-national grounds. In Fateh’s ideology Zionism was a colonial raid of Palestine. According to Fateh political platform adopted by the Fourth Fateh

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.83

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.73

Conference in May 1980, Palestine throughout the ages was faced colonial raids, the last of which was the colonial Zionist raid of Palestine⁸⁷. To Fateh these raids took place due to the Palestine's historical strategic importance, which "increased in modern times, when international capitalism entered the imperialistic stage"⁸⁸. So the creation of 'the Zionist entity' became another device of the colonial European powers for Arab land's partition and fragmentation. To Fateh, the Zionist movement was outcome of two historical progresses⁸⁹. The first one was the collapse of the European feudal system and the "consequent threat of dissolution for the Jewish ghetto"⁹⁰. The second process to Fateh was the imperialist expansionist movement⁹¹. Apart from Palestinians' usurpation, Fateh recognized Zionism as the cause of all problems faced in the Arab world and as an impediment to all the aspirations for the Arab world's new beginning. In Fateh's ideology Zionism would be eliminated with the liberation of Palestine⁹². Moreover, Fateh referred Zionism as racist entity in its statements in conformity with the U.N. General Assembly 3379 Resolution of 10 November 1975 that recognized Zionism as a form of racism.

3.6.3 Fedayyen:

It was derived from the root *FDA*, signifying 'sacrifice', and 'redeeming' and meant self-sacrifice for a cause⁹³. It had both secular-nationalist and religious references. *Fedayeen* could be recognized as a fighter or guerilla in a national war of liberation and as *mujahid*, which meant the person who was in the course of a holy war⁹⁴. Fateh always recognized its fighters as *fedayeen*. This Fateh definition led the international community especially the European community, to use the term *fedayeen* for the Palestinians who fought against Israel.

⁸⁷ "Fatah Political Platform", in *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents*, Raphael Israeli (ed.), (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Limited, 1983), p.12

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.86

⁹³ Ibid., p.74

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.86

3.6.4 Imperialism (*Istimar*):

In the Arabic language imperialism was recognized as “all that is hateful and repugnant to Arab nationalism”⁹⁵ and its aim was articulated as dominating the Arab world to establish political control⁹⁶. Fateh used the term both in secular-nationalist and in Islamic meanings. In terms of secular usage based on nationalist principles, Fateh recognized Israel as a tool of Western imperialism that aimed to damage Arab unity.

In terms of religious usage of imperialism, Fateh several times made analogues to the Crusaders and to the Islamic *ummah*. For instance in *Filastin al-Thawrah* dated 20 February 1979 imperialism was defined, as “an enemy of the Islamic *ummah*, and the greatest manifestation of this is the Zionist occupation of the Holy Places of Islam”⁹⁷. Moreover in its statements concerning the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Fateh referred to imperialism as old enemy of Islam and it used the term as “form of analogues between the present age and that of the Crusades, and contemporary leaders with those who fought the Crusaders for the freedom of the Holy Land”⁹⁸. For instance, an article on the Iranian Revolution in the *Filastin al-Thawrah* of 20 February 1979 mentioned:

The new age of Islam...is an age of the liberation of the East from imperialism, and we do not exaggerate when we say that the Zionist attack is a continuation of the Crusaders’ attack on the East. The expulsion of the Crusaders’ threat came from on the East at the hand of Nuri al-Din Zangi and Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, and today begins a new age in which the Zionist threat is being repulsed⁹⁹.

Fateh, through the editorial, recognized the Iranian revolution as the new age for Islam, and recognized imperialism as the enemy of East and Islam. It articulated Israel as tool of imperialism and continuation of the Crusaders. So that to Fateh the Islamic Iranian Revolution through opening a new age for Islam would liberate Palestine from imperialism and from Zionism.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.73

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.90

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.89

⁹⁹ Ibid.

3.7. The Rise in the Islamic Rhetoric: For Mobilizing the Palestinians:

3.7.1 Fateh's establishment of military wing: Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades

As mentioned before, because of several reasons such as temporary alliances with the political Islamists Fateh since its foundation used Islamic rhetoric, and it intensified its resort to the Islamic rhetoric with every crisis it faced such as in the Second Intifada. With its decreasing legitimacy and increasing Islamic content of the Second Intifada, Fateh increased its resort to Islamic rhetoric. Fateh's creation of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades with an Islamic content during the Second Intifada was an example of Fateh's Islamic rhetoric used on the instrumental level to mobilize the Palestinian society on behalf of national goals¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, naming Fateh's this new nationalist fighting organization as the Martyrs of al-Aqsa Brigades indicated the growing Islamist challenge to the national movement¹⁰¹. Whereas during the First Intifada, for its fighting arms Fateh chose different names such as from Western and Third World revolutionary and nationalist legacies¹⁰². For instance, Black Panthers might come from the African-Americans' movement called Black Panthers that fought against the racism and discrimination in the USA. In addition to this, 'Red Eagle' might come from the Marxist revolutionary tradition.

Fateh's creation of the Brigades with an Islamic content instead of Islamizing itself was rooted in support for the political Islamist groups in the Occupied Territories. Frisch and Sandler assert that through establishing the Brigades with an Islamic content, Fateh answered to popular pressure for example in a poll conducted in March 2000, the majority (85.8 percent) of the respondents felt that the PA should be more religious than it was¹⁰³. So Fateh members and its institutions used "a broader, if not more secular and nationalist, narrative"¹⁰⁴ in their interviews or in

¹⁰⁰ Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.398

¹⁰¹ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, "Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *International Political Science Review*, Vol.25, No.1, 2004, p.90

¹⁰² Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.399

¹⁰³ Hillel Frisch and Shmuel Sandler, op.cit., p.90

¹⁰⁴ Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.401

their formal announcements while leaving Islamic references to the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Furthermore the articles in the Fateh web site, Fateh's serial publications, and its announcements were generally free of any Islamic allusions¹⁰⁵. Fateh's giving most of the usage of Islamic symbols and verses of the Koran to the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades demonstrated Fateh's operational use of Islam. In other words, Fateh used Islam for mobilizing and recruiting the Palestinians. Its reference to Islam did not represent a change in the character and ideology of Fateh. The Islamic symbols and allusions were designed to mobilize the public against Israel and to prevent the expansion of political Islamists groups in domestic politics rather than to affect the character of the Palestinian political entity.

3.7.2 Islamic Rhetoric in the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades'

Statements:

As its name indicated, the Islamic content in the Brigades' documents and in its preamble was richer than the commentaries and documents of Fateh's other branches¹⁰⁶. The Brigades referred to Islamic symbols to describe itself. Its preamble started with the traditional Islamic salutation 'In the Name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate' followed by a verse of the Koran together with three more verses appeared each at the end of a subchapter¹⁰⁷. Its logo was the al-Aqsa Mosque combined with a verse from the Koran. In the Brigades' training camp in Gaza, its members told to reporters they were all sacrificing their lives for al-Aqsa Mosque¹⁰⁸. Its suicide bombers' video clips featured 'would-be martyrs' with a gun in one hand and the Koran on the other hand¹⁰⁹. Like in the video clips, religious symbols and verses from the Koran were used in its announcements. In majority of those announcements, the focus was given to attacks against Israelis and to tribute to 'the martyrs' who were responsible for these attacks¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.399.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.398

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades' all statements or declarations did not contain Islamic references. Some of the Brigades' declarations were free from any Islamic references and allusions. The reason for such variance can be stemmed from the content of event, and from the community that the Brigades addressed. For instance, after an Israeli air strike against one of its offices in Gaza, the Brigades issued a leaflet that opposed Israeli policies on nationalist grounds. The leaflet mentioned that Israeli decision of demolishing Palestinians' houses and targeting Palestinian institutions indicated that Israel had no peace intention and that "it wants to establish a Zionist project on then expanses of the Palestinian people and lands"¹¹¹.

Moreover all the Brigades' documents or announcements were not filled with same amount of Islamic slogans. The changes in the Islamic content of the announcements from incident to incident or from one suicide bomber to another indicated a pragmatic usage of Islam. If the suicide bomber was a devout Muslim the Brigades gave emphasis to Islamic rhetoric, whereas if the guerilla or suicide bomber was less devout then the Brigades' statements had more nationalist tenor¹¹². For instance, the press release of the 'martyrdom' of Abd al-Salam Sadiq Mari Hasuna on 17 November 2002 did not contain anything Islamic except a secondary heading with the phrase "Allah is Great" repeated three times¹¹³.

On the other hand, the announcement commemorating the 'martyrdom' of Wafa Ali Adris had more Islamic tenor. After Adris' suicide operation in Jerusalem 2001, the Brigades established "squads of willing female suicide bombers named after Wafa Idris"¹¹⁴. The announcement began with the prelude 'In the name of God the Compassionate and Merciful' followed by the 105th verse of the Chapter of the Repentance (*sura* 9) from the Koran: "Say: Work; and God will surely see your work and His Messenger, and the believers"¹¹⁵. This verse was strategically chosen in the

¹¹¹ Dialog, "Fatah Armed Wing Vows Revenge After Israeli Shelling of Gaza Office", *Xinhua News Agency*, 17 May 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1101403, accessed on 23 April 2005

¹¹² Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.400

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Gal Luft, "The Palestinian H-Bomb: Terror's Winning Strategy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.81 No.4, July/August 2002, p.5

¹¹⁵ Hillel Frisch, op.cit., p.400.

announcement of the death of its guerilla because through quoting this verse, the Brigades wanted to acclaim that Wafa Ali Adris did something for Palestine and died for the sake of Palestine's liberation. Adris' 'work' would not be in vain because in the end Palestine would be liberated. Also through such quotation, Brigades wanted to strengthen the PLO goal of Palestinian independence. The Brigades introduced for the first time the motto that subsequently appeared at the end of most of the announcements: "'The Martyrs' of al-Aqsa Brigades, who do what they say and fulfill what they promised'"¹¹⁶. The slogan was a modern secular one¹¹⁷.

In spite of the Brigades' quotations from the Koran and its Islamic references in its logo, in its posters and in statements these allusions did not affect the legal and political institutions and norms of the Palestinian political system and did not affect the Palestinian national movement's perception of Israel, the Palestinian conflict and the land to be liberated. Rather as stated above such references were used to mobilize the Palestinians on behalf of the PLO's national goals.

To sum up Fateh was a semi-secular and pragmatist organization dedicated to the liberation of Palestine and to establishment of a Palestinian state on the territories occupied by Israel with the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It was semi-secular because it was not religiously neutral in a way that Islamic rhetoric was part of its political discourse whereas it excluded Christianity from Fateh's rhetoric in spite of the Palestinian Christians. It was semi-secular due to the fact that in its Constitution or policies Islam was not a decisive factor rather Fateh functioned according to the secular rules. Islam had absolutely no role in shaping and in directing Fateh's domestic policies, Israeli policies and its policies concerning the peace process. Also Fateh articulated the Palestinian identity on ethnic grounds.

Fateh since its foundation referred to the Islamic rhetoric composed of conflict categories. Fateh with every crisis of the Palestinian national movement increased its resort to Islamic rhetoric as seen in its creation of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades during the Second Intifada. However its Islamic rhetoric was never equivalent to the rhetoric of the political Islamist movement although the tone and content of Fateh's rhetoric of late 1960s resulted in the political Islamists' recognition of Fateh as an Islamic attempt to respond the Islamic crisis and

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

recognition of Fateh leaders as 'the sons of the Islamic movement'. But with the effects of the PLO left wing and the relation with the Soviet Union Marxism-Leninism affected Fateh ideology so its Islamic tone decreased. Then Fateh's Islamic rhetoric did never provide the ground for the political Islamists to participate Fateh.

Fateh was a pragmatist organization whose Islamic rhetoric changed according to the political context it addressed and to the community whose help and support were sought. For instance in an Islamic context Fateh recognized Israel as an enemy of the Islamic *ummah* that occupied Muslim sanctities. Then the Palestinian struggle was reduced to liberation of Islam's holy sites. On the other hand, if Fateh addressed to Third World countries the Palestinian struggle became a struggle against racism, colonialism, a part of world revolution against imperialism.

CHAPTER 4

THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) AND ITS ISLAMIC RHETORIC

4. 1. The Foundation of the PLO and Ideology of the PLO:

On 13 January 1964, the Arab League decided to organize the Palestinians to enable them to take their role in the liberation of their homeland and self-determination. The Arab League mandated Ahmed Shuqayri to contact the Palestinians and the Arab states with the aim of establishment of a Palestinian entity. The League especially Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt aimed to establish an organization to decrease influence of the Palestinian guerilla groups such as Fateh and to direct their attacks against Israel. In other words, Nasser through the PLO aimed to direct the Palestinian cause in his own way. Soon after its establishment, the PLO faced internal crisis because of Shuqayri's autocratic style and his reliance on Egypt¹. Unlike the guerillas, he did not support armed attacks against Israel and his dependence on Egypt was recognized as the reason for his opposition to the armed attacks against Israel. Then by its foundation the PLO faced criticisms both from the Palestinians and Arab masses. It was recognized as a puppet of Arab states to manage their Israeli policies. Furthermore the 1967 War resulted in the PLO's big loss of confidence. The Arab states and so the PLO could not realize their aim of taking the land lost in the 1948 War. Instead, they were defeated by Israel and lost more land; Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula.

The 1967 defeat was the final event that prepared the Palestinian guerillas' takeover of the PLO. Nearly all guerillas were Palestinian refugees living in neighboring Arab states or in the Israeli occupied Palestine. Thus right of return and establishing an independent Palestinian state were their primary goals. To the guerillas armed struggle against Israel was the sole device to retake the lost territories. They aimed to recapture the land and to establish the Palestinian state in

¹ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: University of California Press, 1973), p.68

the historical Palestine. The PLO took Palestinian refugees' culture of right of return that was imbued with injustice, humiliation and dispossession, and transformed it to a broader national movement and articulated it in the Palestinian nationalism. Henceforth the PLO led to the Palestinians' more attachment to their national feeling and identity and it became a "source for political aspiration for the population, both as the embodiment of national aspirations for Palestinian sovereignty and as an ideological guide"² in inter-Arab and Palestinian politics.

4.1.1 The PLO Charter of 1968:

The Palestinian National Charter of 1968³ was important to understand place and content of Islamic rhetoric in the PLO's policies and strategies. The PLO Charter was formed through balancing the Palestinian nationalism and Arab nationalism⁴. The first Article defined Palestine as the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people who were integral and indivisible part of the Arab nation. The Article did neither refer to religious peculiarity of Palestine nor recognize Palestine as an Islamic territory. Furthermore, it did not define Palestinians as Muslim or Christian people and it did not say that the Palestinians were integral part of the Islamic nation.

In Article 3, it was mentioned that the Palestinian Arab people had the legal right to their homeland and the right of determining the future of their country in accordance with their wishes, their own accord and will after liberating it. This article asserted that the Palestinians' connection to their land was based on legality, not in religious principles.

The 5th Article asserted that the Arab nationals who had resided in Palestine until 1947 that was the beginning of Zionist occupation were Palestinians. Also, the Jews who had resided in Palestine till the Zionist invasion were considered as Palestinians. So the PLO did not have any religious explicitly Islamic criteria to decide on who was Palestinian.

² Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), p.25

³ Palestinian National Council: The Palestinian National Charter (July 1968), in *The Arab-Israeli Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), p.117

⁴ Hillel Frisch and Samuel Sandler, "Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2004, p.85

In the seventh Article, to nullify the Israeli claims that had denied Palestinians' existence and their connection to their land, the Charter asserted that the Palestinian community had material, spiritual, and historical connection with the land of Palestine. To the PLO, it was national duty to bring up individual Palestinians in an Arab revolutionary manner, and to win back homeland and bring about its liberation. Unlike the previous articles, through this article, the PLO referred to the Palestinians' spiritual connection to their land while it did not mention any peculiar religion. Also, the PLO recognized Palestinians' fighting against Israel as a national duty; it did not make any connection between Islam and the armed struggle. It demanded sacrifices from its people on behalf of the national goals not for a war between good and evil or Islam and its enemies.

The 8th Article stated that the Palestinians were under the national struggle for the liberation of Palestine⁵. This national struggle, in the PLO's definition, was a basic conflict that existed between the forces of Zionism and of imperialism on the one hand, and the Palestinian Arab people on the other. The PLO did not define the struggle as a religious one, the aim of struggle was not related with religion and the Palestinians did not struggle for the sake of religion. Moreover, the PLO did not use any Islamic rhetoric in defining its enemies because it used the word Zionism instead of Jews. Actually it was the PLO that placed the differentiation between Jews and Israelis and between Israelis and Zionists into the Palestinian political discourse. Before the PLO there were little differentiation between Israel, Zionism and Jews⁶. Also, it recognized imperialism as another enemy of the Palestinians. The PLO's main discourse according to this article was infused with Third World rhetoric.

According to Article 9, the only way to liberate Palestine and to return to Palestine was armed struggle. Also, it asserted that the Palestinians claimed their right to normal life in Palestine and to exercise their right to self-determination and sovereignty over it. Unlike the political Islamists organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the PLO did not label the armed struggle as *jihad*. It used the Third World revolutionary rhetoric through referring to the concept of armed popular

⁵ Palestinian National Council: The Palestinian National Charter (July 1968), op.cit., p.117

⁶ Jamil Hilal, "Secularism in Palestinian Political Culture: A Tentative Discourse", *HAGAR: International Social Science Review*, Vol. 13, No.1, 2002, p.109

revolution. Also, it did not use any Islamic reference to describe the Palestinian sovereignty and the character of the Palestinians' normal life in Palestine.

The 16th Article was the sole article that was related with religion in the Palestinian National Charter:

The liberation of Palestine, from a spiritual point of view, will provide the Holy Land with an atmosphere of safety and tranquility, which in turn will safeguard the country's religious sanctuaries and freedom of worship and of visit to all, without discrimination of race, color, language, or religion. Accordingly, the people of Palestine look to all spiritual forces in the world for support⁷.

This article asserted that Palestine's liberation had a spiritual dimension based on the PLO's giving primacy to international norms such as freedom of worship and visit to over any theocratic claims. In asserting the spiritual dimension it did not specify any religion. It articulated the liberation of Palestine from a spiritual point of view for protecting religious sides and freedom of worship not for establishing Islam's rule. The Charter gave equal access to holy sites to members of all religions and called for the help of all spiritual forces. Also Jerusalem's importance for Islam and Christianity was not mentioned.

The Article 17 revealed that liberation of Palestine would restore to the Palestinian his pride and freedom. Thus according to the PLO Charter the Palestinians "look forward to the support of all those who believe in the dignity of man and his freedom in the world"⁸. Like other articles of the Charter, it did not mention Islam in describing the identity of the Palestinians.

The Article 19 of the Charter recognized United Nations' Security Council's partition resolution of 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel as illegal⁹. According to the PLO understanding both were illegal because they did not present will of the Palestinians and were contrary to their natural right in their homeland. In addition to this, the PLO opposed these resolutions because it recognized them as breaching the U.N. Charter especially its self-determination principle. This article was important to understand the place and content of Islamic rhetoric for the PLO. Because in this article, the PLO exposed its *raison d'être* based on nationalist clauses

⁷ Palestinian National Council: The Palestinian National Charter (July 1968), op.cit., p.119

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

and international acceptance. It opposed Israel's existence on the ground of nationalist and international norms not on Islamic reasons or rights. It did not use the argument that Palestine was an indivisible Islamic territory subjected to *Shari'a* in opposing the partition of Palestine and creation of Israel.

The 20th Article maintained that the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the Mandate for Palestine and everything based on them were recognized as null and void because to the PLO they had relied on Jewish claims concerning historical and religious ties to Palestine that were incompatible with the facts of history and true conception of what constituted statehood¹⁰. To the PLO Judaism was a religion not an independent nationality and the Jews did not constitute a single nation with an identity of its own rather they were the citizens of the states to which they belonged. It challenged Zionism especially its religious claims on Palestine and its claims of nationhood. Moreover, it did not mention any Islamic or Christian references to Palestine.

The 22nd Article of the Palestinian National Charter claimed that Zionism was associated with international imperialism that was against to all liberation movements in the world¹¹. It was claimed that Zionism was racist and fanatic; its aims were expansionist and colonial. The PLO perceived Israel as the cause of Middle East conflict and an instrument of Zionism. Israel, in the PLO's ideology, was a geographical base for imperialism to prevent the unity and liberation of Arab nation. The Charter mentioned that when Palestine would be liberated then Israel and Zionism would be eliminated. The PLO did not use the terms 'infidel or unbeliever' for Zionists. Rather the language and content were infused with Third World revolutionary rhetoric.

4.2. The PLO'S Islamic Rhetoric:

The ideology of the PLO's armed struggle was secular in content because the Palestinians "were asked to take up arms not as part of *jihad* against the infidel but to free the oppressed from the Zionist colonial regime. The vocabulary of liberation was distinctly secular"¹². The PLO functioned according to secular that was man-made

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p.96

rules of its Charter and Constitution. Thus the PLO was not an Islamist movement albeit Islam influenced the Palestinian political culture. Chris P. Ioannides argues that the PLO developed a distinct secular orientation with a leftist ambience¹³. Moreover, Emile F. Sahliyah mentions that the PLO, which excluded Islam from politics, had secular orientation and its focus was solely on Palestinian nationalism because it had little claim on Islam and religious authority¹⁴. Jamil Hilal claims that “the dynamics of Palestinian identity formation, the role of the main political groups, and the nationalist visions that have dominated the PLO were predominantly secular”¹⁵.

However, since its inception in the Palestinian politics in addition to its Third World revolutionary rhetoric the PLO referred to Islamic discourse. And with every crisis it faced, the PLO increased its resort to Islamic rhetoric because of several reasons such as Islam’s central role in the Palestinian culture¹⁶, the PLO’s decreasing legitimacy and authority, and political Islam’s growing strength. The PLO used Islamic rhetoric also because Islam could be a more powerful and justifying device for mobilization of the Palestinians due to the fact that it provided “a mystical and universal realization for the correctness of the people’s cause and their indisputable right to land”¹⁷. The growing strength of the political Islamist groups, whose ideas were shared by some Fateh members, also affected the PLO to show its loyalty to Islam. However, such indication was limited by the PLO leadership’s secular orientation and its aim to not to alienate the Palestinian Christians¹⁸. The PLO’s transformation from a secular organization to an Islamic one, would lead to emergence of sectarian questions. For instance in an Islamic PLO, Christian

¹³ Chris P. Ioannides, “The PLO and the Islamic Revolution in Iran”, in *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, Augustus Richard Norton and Martin H. Greenberg (eds.), (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p.76

¹⁴ Emile F. Sahliyah, *In Search for Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), p.151

¹⁵ Jamil Hilal, “Secularism in Palestinian Political Culture: A Tentative Discourse”, *HAGAR: International Social Science Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2002, p.103

¹⁶ Raphael Israeli, “From Oslo to Bethlehem: Arafat’s Islamic Message”, *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 43, No. 3, Summer 2001, p.428

¹⁷ Emile F. Sahliyah, *In Search for Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967*, op.cit., p.161

¹⁸ Ibid.

Palestinians who were driving force of the PLO would have as the Jews the same rights specified in the Koran for the ‘people of the Book’¹⁹.

Thus for such reasons it became convenient for the PLO to resort to the Islamic rhetoric and to give role to Islamic figures in politics. Even before the rise of political Islam in Palestine in the late 1970s, the PLO had used Islamic allusions in its institutions such as in its naming of the battalions of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA). The PLO named the PLA’s four battalions with four wars that had importance for Islamization and Arabization of Palestine and the Middle East due to the fact they had preserved the Arabic and Islamic character of Palestine and the Middle East. These famous wars frequently used in the Palestinian culture were Hattin, Yarmuk, Qadisiyah and Ayn Jalut. The PLA named its four battalions as Yarmuk Brigade, the Hittin Division, the Ayn Jalut Forces, and the Qadisiyah Division²⁰. Although these wars had Islamic content, they also had national and ethnic implications for the Palestinians therefore they were also interpreted by some as secular events²¹. For instance, to some Christian Palestinians these battles belonged to all Palestinians not solely the Muslim ones because the Christian Palestinians had fought in some of these battles. Albeit these wars’ religious meaning was accepted, they were used to indicate fighting against imperialism because to some Christian Palestinians the Palestinians always had to fight against imperialism whether it came from the West, or from the Mongols or from the Zionists²². The PLO, through naming the PLA’s battalions with these four wars, committed to fight against Israel with the legitimacy of these four wars. Moreover it wanted to strengthen the PLA’s power, and to strengthen its goal of destruction of Israel and establishing an independent Palestinian state through drawing historical parallels between the PLA battalions and these four wars.

¹⁹ Chris P. Ioannides, op.cit., p.78

²⁰ Samih K. Farsoun and Christina G. Zacharia, *Palestine and Palestinians*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p.187

²¹ Nels Johnson, *Islam and the Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: KPI Limited, 1982), p.81

²² Ibid.

4.2.1 The Criticisms of political Islam against the PLO:

Since its establishment, the PLO faced strong criticisms from the political Islamist opposition. However these criticisms did not change the PLO's goals, policies and recognition of Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict along Islamic principles. Especially after the 1967 War, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) increased its calls for re-Islamization of the Palestinian society to challenge the PLO's secularism and to diminish the strength of the left parties recognized by the MB as purveyor of atheism and immorality²³. It recognized the PLO as an organization that did not serve God²⁴. The MB conditioned its support for Yasser Arafat on his support for the Islamic idea²⁵. It opposed the PLO articulation of Palestine as Arab and Palestinian land due to the fact that to the MB the land was either a land of atheism or land of Islam. It also rejected holiness of the land on the ground that "holiness is only characteristic of Allah, so how can we sanctify and even worship a very small geographical area rather than Allah, as the so-called nationalist do?"²⁶.

The political Islamists accused the PLO as being too secular and compromising. For instance, to the Islamic Liberation Party, the PLO was atheistic and heretical. The political Islamists persisted that the PLO must be based on Islam and its goal must be creation of an Islamic state. For instance, in 1989, late spiritual leader of Hamas Sheikh Ahmed Yassin claimed, that the sole true Palestinian state was an Islamic state²⁷ where Islam ought to be state's religion and constitution. Furthermore, Imad Saluji, one of Hamas leaders, claimed in 1995 "Palestine is not completely free until it is an Islamic state"²⁸. To Yassin, the PLO was secularist thus it could not be accepted as sole representative of the Palestinians unless it became

²³ Musa K. Budeiri, "The Nationalist Dimension of Islamic Movements in Palestinian Politics", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Spring 1995, p.92

²⁴ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.29

²⁵ Ibid., p.31

²⁶ Graham Usher, "What Kind of Nation? The Rise of Hamas in the Occupied Territories", in *Political Islam: Essays From the Middle East Report*, Joel Beinin and Joe Stock (eds.), (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers 1997), p.351, note.6

²⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Worldwide Rise of Religious Nationalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50, No. 1, Summer 1996, p.7.

²⁸ Mark Juergensmeyer, op.cit., p.1

Islamic²⁹. He asserted that the PLO members had no commitment to Islamic values, and said, “I do not believe that a person who joins Fateh is a Muslim militant when at the same time he does not pray... Loyalty is acceptable only when it is devotion to God”³⁰.

Hamas, as the most powerful political opposition in Palestinian politics, challenged the PLO’s legitimacy and authority since its foundation. In addition to its criticisms concerning the PLO’s concessions on peace process, it criticized the PLO for its domestic policies. For instance, Hamas criticized the PLO through using the conservatism of Palestinians and their reactions against the corruption. Mahmoud Zahhar, one of Hamas leaders claimed that there was corruption in the PLO in his interview to *Haaretz* in 1991. He asserted that the PLO misused funds because it gave to its adherents the money that it collected in the name of the Palestinians and to Zahhar the PLO also punished its political opposition. He criticized the PLO’s strategy by asserting that it could not get the United States to pressure Israel at least for halting settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territories so it could not get more concessions from Israel. He concluded his critiques by asserting the PLO’s secularism as the basic difference between Hamas and the PLO: “Anyone can see the failure of the secular method”³¹. In 1995, he criticized the PLO as “corrupt... debauching themselves, drinking, signing and dancing, carrying on like they did in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunis. But what they forget is this is Gaza”³². To Zahhar, there were two camps in the Arab world: Islamist camp supported by Arab masses and secular nationalist camp and the winners would be Islamists whose victory was a question of time³³.

To sum up despite such oppositions against the PLO policies and its functioning the PLO did not change its policies and strategies according to Islamic

²⁹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.31

³⁰ Chris P. Ioannides, op.cit., p.102

³¹ Glenn E. Robinson, *Building A Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p.155.

³² Beverly Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, “Waving Not Drowning: Strategic Dimensions of Ceasefires and Islamic Movements”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, No. 3, September 2004, p.301

³³ Interview with Mahmoud Zahhar by Hussien Hijazi, “Hamas: Waiting for Secular Nationalism to Self-Destruct. An Interview with Mahmoud Zahhar”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.24, No. 3, Spring 1995, p.85

lines. However such political Islamist opposition could lead the PLO to increase its usage of Islamic rhetoric.

4.3. The Intensification of the PLO's Islamic Rhetoric: The Case of the First Intifada

In the First Intifada of 1987, the Palestinians inside the Occupied Territories revolted collectively against the Israeli occupation forces. With the Intifada, conservatism and political Islam were on the rise in Palestine “largely as a result of the highly repressive environment that Israeli military occupation created”³⁴, the continuation of the occupation, deprivation and hopelessness. Also outside developments such as Khomieni's call for an Islamic struggle affected many Palestinians who felt betrayed by Arabs. For the PLO, especially for its Marxist and Christian components, his call could not be acceptable. Despite this fact, they could not ignore it due to the fact that the call had a political weight for the Palestinians³⁵.

Furthermore, the PLO crisis affected the rise of political Islam in Palestine. Before the eruption of the Intifada, the PLO faced the most difficult time in its history. The PLO faced splits and trouble in maintaining national unity. Also, with Israel's occupation of Lebanon the PLO was forced to withdraw from its base with heavy losses. At the time of Intifada's beginning, the PLO was at a low point following Arab Summit of November 1987, “at which Jordan's King Hussein had publicly snubbed Arafat”³⁶. In other words, the Palestinian struggle so the PLO was ignored by the Arab world. In addition to this the armed struggle to liberate Palestine became an empty slogan when the Palestinians launched their armed struggle against the Israeli forces. Then, when Arafat headed PLO could not terminate the Israeli occupation Hamas became second force in the Intifada. Some Palestinians recognized the PLO's failure as a result of weakness of its secularist and nationalist

³⁴ Mahmood Monshipouri, “The PLO Rivalry with Hamas: The Challenge of Peace, Democratization and Islamic Radicalism”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. IV, No. 3, March 1996, p.89

³⁵ Chris P. Ioannides, op.cit., p.102

³⁶ Joshua Teitelbaum and Joseph Kostner, “The West Bank and Gaza: The PLO and The Intifada”, in *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century*, Ted Robert Gurr and Farrakh Moshiri (eds.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1991), p.315

ideology³⁷. Moreover, as stated before, Israel was another factor for Hamas' rise because she fostered Hamas as a counter to the PLO.

The rise of political Islam also manifested itself in the domestic tension concerning character of the future Palestinian state. Several Palestinian movements' graffiti indicated such tension. For instance Fateh, which aimed national unity, issued a graffiti styled as a two-masted boat, a cross and crescent: "Abu Ammar is our leader, Palestine is our home, and Jerusalem is our capital"³⁸. The Palestine Communist Party's graffiti gave unity message through stating "Let the churches and mosques embrace each other in national unity"³⁹. Whereas Hamas mentioned its goal and ideology: "Yes to an Islamic state"⁴⁰, "The destruction of Israel is a Koranic imperative"⁴¹, "The Koran is the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people"⁴².

As the political Islam increased its strength, its impact on the Palestinian politics and on the PLO's official discourse was also increased. For example, the PLO started increasingly to refer to religious invocations and citations from verses of the Koran in its statements, communiqués and speeches⁴³. A lot of communiqués issued by the PLO's United National Command for the Uprising (UNC) started with Islamic invocation 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate'. The PLO through its increased use of religious expressions in the UNC leaflets indicated that it was aware of the rise of political Islam in Palestine⁴⁴. The UNC resorted to Islamic rhetoric to contend the Israeli repression, Hamas' growing power, and the threat of absorption by the PLO leadership in Tunis. Furthermore, the PLO's naming the

³⁷ Jonathan Schanzer, "The Challenge of Hamas to Fatah", *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2003, p.30

³⁸ Julie Peteet, "The Graffiti of the Intifada", *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 1-2, January-April 1994, p.164

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, op.cit., p.78

⁴³ Jamil Hilal, op.cit., p.114

⁴⁴ Ziad Abu-Amr, "Hamas: A Historical and Political Background", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, Summer 1993, p.18

Intifada leadership as the United National Command demonstrated its aim to counterweight Hamas. Because the UNC's Arabic equivalent was *al-Qiyada al-wataniyya al-muwahada* or QWM, which meant people or nation in Arabic. Then QWM was adopted as a counterweight to Hamas whose acronym was the Islamic Resistance Movement⁴⁵.

Furthermore, the invocation 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate' was used in an official PLO Executive Committee Statement first time in March 1988⁴⁶. This invocation was also used in the Declaration of Independence with a verse from the Koran. To Glenn E. Robinson, by referring to these Islamic allusions, Fateh tried to "strengthen its religious wing against any drift of its members towards its largest competitor, Hamas"⁴⁷. Then the First Intifada led to Islamization of Fateh's symbolism⁴⁸. In other words, its instrumental level used to mobilize the Palestinians gained more Islamic flavor.

4.3.1 The PLO Executive Committee's Statement: On the Intifada (April 1988)⁴⁹

The PLO Executive Committee's statement contained Islamic allusions such as verses from the Koran, terms *jihad* and martyr. It mentioned that with the First Intifada, the world understood that the Palestinians were determined to continue "the way of *jihad* and struggle until, with the help of God"⁵⁰ achieving full victory and establishing the independent Palestinian state on their "sacred national soil"⁵¹. The PLO referred to *jihad* for secular-nationalist use rather than religious use, namely religious war fought in the name of religion. Because in the statement the PLO used the term for establishing state, furthermore the religious use would be inappropriate

⁴⁵ Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), p.100

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, op.cit, p.161

⁴⁹ PLO Executive Committee: Statement on the Intifada (April 1988), in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (London: Penguin Group, 2001), p.323

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

due to the fact that the PLO did not recognize Israel as the enemy of Islam, not recognize Palestine as *waqf*, and in late 1980s it adopted two-state formula. However, it mentioned the divine help to strengthen its claim of the Palestinian victory, and to have political Islamists' support.

The term martyr was used for those Palestinians who died in the course of liberating Palestine thus it was used in secular-nationalist meaning. Martyr (*shahid*) meant the person who died in the course of struggle⁵². Like *jihad*, martyr could be used in secular contexts, albeit these two terms were “usually ones in which the dominant Islamic nuances are playing upon”⁵³. In Islam, martyr referred to one who died in the Path of God and though it can mean one who died in this Path in peaceful circumstances, its most common reference was to one who died in *jihad*⁵⁴. Despite this fact to some Palestinians *shahid* had no religious meaning. For instance they defined the term as a person who died in the battle. They accepted its religious roots however they argued that they did not use it as Muslims and Christians⁵⁵. Henceforth, martyr given to one who died in battle had a wide range of possible interpretations although its origins and lexicography were Islamic themes⁵⁶. In the Palestinian political discourse, it was always used to name the Palestinians who died for the sake of liberation of occupied Palestinian territories.

After referring the Palestinians as martyrs, the Statement on the Intifada continued with the argument that the Palestinians “proved that the banner of *jihad* will continue to fly”⁵⁷ until the establishment of the Palestinian state and the liberation of Palestine “from the aggression and occupation of the Zionists”⁵⁸. The term *jihad* was used in secular-nationalist perspective because it was used to refer the armed struggle to liberate Palestine from the Zionists, namely ending occupation not destructing the state of Israel and not raising the banner of Islam in Palestine.

⁵² Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.70

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.79

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ PLO Executive Committee Statement on the Intifada (April 1988), op.cit., p.324

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The Statement affirmed the PLO goal that just and comprehensible solution had to be based on the achievement of the national rights and national independence under the PLO leadership. It repeated the PLO's appropriate framework for just solution, which was U.N. sponsored international conference based on international legality and on U.N. resolutions. This argument indicated the PLO's exclusion of Islamic rhetoric from its policies regarding Israel and peace process. Furthermore the Statement called on the Palestinians to struggle more, to adhere more on unity. It claimed that the Palestinian state was definitely coming and that victory would be achieved with God's blessings. Then it cited the traditional Islamic prelude 'In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate' and the 105th verse from the Chapter of Repentance (*sura* 9) from the Koran: "Say work, for God, His messenger, and the believers will see your work"⁵⁹. It tried to convince the Palestinians that their work would be evaluated and then they would have the outcome for their struggle. Apart from convincing the Palestinians for the certain success of the PLO goals, it also wanted to appeal to political Islamists in Palestine to increase its support.

4.3.2 The Communiqués of the United National Command (UNC):

The UNC was composed of Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the PCP. Islamic Jihad was member of the UNC for a short period of time. But after leaving the UNC, the Islamic Jihad continued to participate to the Intifada's activities in conjunction with the UNC's efforts although it avoided affiliating itself with the UNC⁶⁰. Through inclusion of Islamic Jihad the PLO aimed to cooperate with political Islamists because their participation to the Intifada gave the political Islamists the right to have a say in the Palestinian politics and in the Intifada's battle field composed of streets and mosques of Gaza and West Bank⁶¹.

The UNC's leaflets perceived the conflict in secular-nationalist terms so they represented the national camp⁶² i.e. Muslims and Christians albeit in some of its communiqués Islamic references were used. However in general the UNC's

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.326

⁶⁰ Helena Cobban, "The PLO and the Intifada", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 2, Spring 1990, p.214

⁶¹ Chris P. Ioannides, op.cit., p.102

⁶² Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, op.cit., p.33

communiqués rarely mentioned Islamic history, Islamic heroes or Islamic events. Instead, the primary focus was given to the Palestinian figures that became national heroes such as Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini and Ghassan Kanafani⁶³. Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini had died in the battle for the Qastel, outside Jerusalem in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. He had been the commander of Arab irregulars in the Jerusalem area and the nephew of the Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Ghassan Kanafani had been PFLP member, writer and poet killed in a car explosion in Beirut in 1972.

Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam had been a pioneer of the Palestinian armed struggle and was killed by British forces in 1935. He had both religious and national significances for Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian political discourse. Not only the secular Palestinian movements such as the UNC, Fateh and the PFLP but also the political Islamist movements such as Hamas referred to Qassam. Hamas named its military wing as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. On the other hand Fateh perceived Qassam more as a national hero than a religious figure⁶⁴. In addition to this, the Palestinian left regarded Qassam as a social rebel⁶⁵. Qassam's movement deeply affected the Palestinian politics because his rebellion was the first organized popular resistance against the British mandate and the Zionist settlements. To Qassam *jihad* had been the only way to eliminate British imperialism and Zionist settlements from Palestine⁶⁶. Furthermore, Qassam had believed that only devout Muslims could liberate Palestine⁶⁷.

In the Communiqué No.2 of 10 January 1988, the UNC called the Palestinians as people of martyrs, descendants of Qassam, brothers and comrades of Abu Sharar, Khalid Nazzal, and Ghassan Kanafani⁶⁸. Abu Sharar had been a Fateh activist killed in Rome. Khalid Nazzal, who had been DFLP member, was killed in Greece. The communiqué labeled Israeli authorities as neofascists who would be

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.40

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.41

⁶⁸ Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, op.cit, p.55

forced to admit the outcomes of the uprising, which was marking the road to national independence. Instead of religious figures, national ones who were important for the Palestinian struggle and independence were mentioned.

The UNC's Communiqué no.1 started with the Islamic prelude 'In the name of God the merciful and compassionate'⁶⁹. It called the Palestinians for a general strike to unite the Intifada and to resist against the Israeli occupation. It defined Palestine as Arab Palestine. It was important that the PLO decided to use the Islamic salutation for beginning of its first communiqué. Because it was its first time to address the Palestinian public in the Occupied Territories in the Intifada. The PLO through this invocation might aim to show its Islamic credentials while at the same it might try not to alienate the Palestinian Christians. However in the rest of the first communiqué Islamic references were not used rather secular-nationalist references in conjunction with the PLO goals were used such as in the argument of "Long live free Arab Palestine"⁷⁰.

The Communiqué No.12 on the Qastel Proclamation of 02 April 1988 was started with the secular slogan: "No voice will overcome the voice of the uprising, of the Palestinian people-the people of the PLO"⁷¹. Apart from strengthening the PLO goal of victory over Israel, another reason of the PLO to use this slogan was Hamas' challenge to the PLO authority through issuing separate dates and ways for the strikes, boycotts, and closures. In the Communiqué the Palestinians were again called as the people of Qassam and Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini. The linking of two names was meant to signify the connection between Qassam's movement, *Ikhwan al-Qassam*, and *al-Jihad al-Muqaddas* with the UNC⁷². In this leaflet, the secular-nationalist and Islamic allusions were used together to mobilize the Palestinians on behalf of the national goals. In mentioning the sovereignty over Jerusalem, the PLO did not refer the explicit sovereignty of Islam.

The Communiqué No.28 of 30 October 1988 that issued the Independence Proclamation started with the secular PLO heading. The UNC urged the Palestinians

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.53

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.54

⁷¹ Ibid., p.77

⁷² Ibid.

to continue the Intifada till the realization of inalienable national goals above all the right of return, self-determination, and establishment of an independent state with East Jerusalem as its eternal capital. According to the PLO, the Intifada that was a glory unparalleled in the annals of human civilization would continue until the victory⁷³. The UNC described the Intifada as a revolution against dispossession, oppression, and fascism; it mentioned that the Intifada was not an attempt to kill Palestinians or Jews. The language used was national and in the communiqué Islamic references were not used. It was a crucial communiqué due to the fact that it proclaimed the independence.

Whereas in the Communiqué No.29 of 20 November 1988, named as the Joy of the Independent Palestinian State Proclamation, an Islamic allusion was used. It started with the Islamic invocation ‘In the name of God the merciful and compassionate’ and followed by the secular PLO slogan. It was mentioned that the declaration of independent Palestinian state emphasized the Palestinian identity of the land and their sovereignty over that land. It called on the United States and the Western states to convene an international conference under U.N. auspices on the basis of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 with the PLO participation on equal footing and to realize the Palestinians’ permanent national rights. It claimed that such calling was not a “gratuitous concession but a realistic, revolutionary, and responsible manifestation which has put an end to the Zionist lies”,⁷⁴ regarding the Palestinian struggle. Albeit it started with an Islamic reference the Communiqué called on the USA and its language was mainly secular-national. It articulated the goals, rights of the Palestinians solely on national terms. Also it opposed political Islamists’ arguments on peace process as concessions on nationalist grounds.

The 48th Communiqué of 10 November 1989 was concerned about the proclamation of independence. It started with the Islamic salutation ‘In the name of God the merciful and the compassionate’ followed by the PLO’s secular slogan. The Communiqué asserted that the Intifada demonstrated “the possibility of triumphing and of realizing”,⁷⁵ the Palestinians’ national aspirations based on the national plan approved in the 19th meeting of the PNC and gained inter-Arab and international

⁷³ Ibid., p.141

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.148

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.176

support. It indicated that this support was crucial in resolving the conflict. It called the USSR and the socialist bloc as the first and foremost allies of the Palestinians and called them to increase their efforts for convening an international conference. It welcomed the stand of Pope John Paul II who supported the Palestinians' "just cause"⁷⁶. Also, it called the European Community to support the Palestinians' legitimate rights and to exert pressure on the US and Israel to accept the international will. It mentioned the celebrations for the first anniversary of the independence holiday on which Palestinian flags would be flown, national anthem would be sung. It called the Palestinians to a general strike to protest Israeli measures and policy against their holy places, and its repeated actions to enter the Temple Mount and build the temple in Al-Aqsa Square; and to commemorate the fall of al-Qassam. This communiqué started with Islamic reference and contained the importance of international world for the Palestinians. Then this communiqué indicated that albeit sometimes it referred Islamic references, the PLO had national goals that needed support from different states. In celebrating the independence, it referred to national symbols not on religious ones. However Israeli attempt 'to build the temple in the al-Aqsa square' and the fall of Qassam became issues to protest by a general strike.

The 55th Communiqué dated 19 April 1990 was concerned with proclamation of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the independent Palestinian state. It started with the Islamic salutation and followed by the PLO's secular slogan. With the Communiqué, the United National Command defined Jerusalem as the heart of Palestine and as the holy of holiest. It urged the Palestinians to struggle until the establishment of peace and freedom in Jerusalem. It called the Palestinians to a general strike, with emphasis on Christian-Islamic solidarity on Jerusalem Day 22 April 1990⁷⁷. The Communiqué was important to analyze the place of Jerusalem in the PLO's Islamic rhetoric during the Intifada. The UNC did not use any Islamic references in describing Jerusalem although it mentioned the religious peculiarity of the city. In conformity with its declared national objectives, the PLO mentioned that the struggle would continue until the establishment of peace and freedom, rather than

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.178

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.186

establishing Islamic rule in Jerusalem. It preserved the national unity through calling on Christian-Muslim solidarity.

4.3.3 The PLO's Declaration of Independence

In the 19th session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in Algiers in November 1988, the PNC recognized the U.N. Resolutions 181, 242 and 338. Its recognition meant the PLO's formally adoption of the two-state solution. Therefore the PLO in a way recognized Israel's existence and its permanence within its pre-1967 borders. The PNC called the Israeli withdrawal from the territories it occupied in the 1967 War: the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Sinai, and Syrian Golan Heights. Except the PFLP, the rest of the PLO voted for the new policies whereas the PFLP opposed to the adoption of the U.N. resolutions.

This altered strategy of the PLO resulted in the political Islamist groups' opposition that could not succeed in changing the PLO goals. Even before the PNC session, in October 1988, the Islamic Jihad issued a statement in which it declared that it broke its alliance with the PLO and called for restarting of the armed struggle through breaching the UNC directives concerned with unarming of the Intifada. Furthermore, the Islamic Jihad in its leaflet which called on 'the masses of Palestinian Muslim people' asserted that "the peace is sacrilegious, that commitment is null and illicit, that the partition of the homeland with the enemy and the recognition of its legitimacy go against the divine order"⁷⁸.

Hamas in its statement condemning the PLO's recognition of Israel asserted that Palestine belonged to the Muslim generations until the Day of Judgment and it retained the device of *jihad* until the liberation of historical Palestine. It condemned all the efforts that called for ending *jihad* and struggle, and "for establishing peace with murderers, and the attitudes which call for the acceptance of the Jewish entity any part of our land"⁷⁹. In its leaflet dated 25 November 1988 Hamas mentioned that the dominant reason for the failure of liberating Palestine was stemmed from Arab regimes' attack on Islam and their attack against, imprisoning and killing Islamist activists⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, op.cit., p.163

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.164

4.3.3.1 Palestinian National Council: Declaration of Independence of 15 November 1988⁸¹

As one of the most important texts in Palestinian history, it contained Islamic references such as Islamic prelude and a verse from the Koran in spite of the criticisms of the secular wing of the PLO especially the left wing forces. But to appease and get support from the political Islamists and have support of society to whom mentioning the word of God was important, the PLO used Islamic references and allusions. The Declaration of Independence started with the Islamic prelude: ‘In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful’. It referred Palestine as the land of the three monotheistic religions and land of the Palestinian Arab people. To indicate the Palestinians’ connection to the land it mentioned that “the call went out from Temple, Church and Mosque that to praise the Creator, to celebrate compassion and peace was indeed the message of Palestine”⁸². It was asserted that despite the historical injustice of the U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 that divided Palestine in two states and prepared the deprivation of the Palestinians from their land, the Resolution included the conditions of international legitimacy which guaranteed the Palestinians’ right to sovereignty⁸³. To the Declaration of Independence, the international legitimacy recognized the Palestinian Arab people’s national rights including the right of return, the right of independence, and the right of sovereignty over territory and the homeland⁸⁴.

It was mentioned that the PLO had three standings: on the Palestinians’ inalienable rights, on Arab national consensus, and on international legitimacy. Thus the PLO based the right of declaring the independence on the natural, historical, and legal rights of the Palestinians, on the resolutions of the Arab Summit Conferences and of the United Nations. It mentioned that the independence was declared through Palestinian Arab people’s performing of their rights to self-determination, political independence, and sovereignty over its territory. The PLO clearly mentioned that its

⁸¹ Palestinian National Council: Declaration of Independence (November 15, 1988), in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (London: Penguin Group, 2001), p.354

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., p.355

⁸⁴ Ibid.

survival and the Palestinian independence rested on the national rights and international legitimacy not on the Islamic principles as articulated by Hamas.

However, the PLO resorted to Islamic discourse in proclaiming the independence of the Palestinian state. Because the PNC declared the establishment of the Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital in the name of God and in the name of the Palestinian people⁸⁵. So the PLO mentioned its pious religiousness, which was another example of its Islamic rhetoric. However, Islamic principles or allusions were missing in the description of characteristics of the state and the Palestinian people. For instance, the state would be governed by parliamentary democratic system based on the freedom of expression and freedom to form parties. Also it was stated that the state would safeguard the Palestinians' political and religious convictions and their human dignity. It was mentioned that the minority rights would be respected by the majority. Its governance would be based on principles of social justice, equality, and non-discrimination in public rights of men or women, on grounds of race, religion, colour or sex under the constitution. It was mentioned that thus there would be no departure from "Palestine's age-old spiritual and civilizational heritage of tolerance and religious coexistence"⁸⁶. Then such characteristics of the state revealed a secular conception of the future Palestinian state⁸⁷ that was not guided by religion or religious principles. The Declaration, which mentioned that Palestine was an Arab state and integral, indivisible part of the Arab nation ended through quoting the 26th verse from the Chapter of Imran (*sura* 3) of the Koran:

Say: Oh God, Master of the Kingdom. Thou givest the kingdom to whom Thou wilt, and seizest the Kingdom from whom Thou wilt, Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt; in Thy hand is the good; Thou art the powerful over everything⁸⁸.

Through strategically choosing and quoting this verse, the PNC used Islamic discourse on behalf of the Palestinian national goals. It wanted to strengthen its establishment of state with adhering to divine will. To the PLO, the establishment of

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.356

⁸⁶ Jamil Hilal, op.cit., p.112

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Palestinian National Council: Declaration of Independence, op.cit., p.358

the state in a way was dependent on divine will. It wanted to acclaim that God also wanted the establishment of state of Palestine. Furthermore, it wanted to say that God would take the land from Israel and give them to the Palestinians. The quotations were not related to establish Islam's rule in Palestine and to social affairs. It referred to Islamic rhetoric because Fateh wanted to strengthen its religious wing *vis-à-vis* Hamas that could attract pious Muslim members of Fateh. Also the PLO wanted to appease the political Islamists inside Palestine.

4.4. The Islamic Rhetoric of the PLO with the Establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA):

The Palestinian national movement's legitimacy was rooted in the PLO's legacy, the Oslo agreement and its outcomes. With the Oslo process, the PLO leadership together with Israel founded the PA, which was a state-like institution that lacked enough power. But it controlled the financial resources, had and received diplomatic recognition from the international community, and had the authority over bureaucracy and security services⁸⁹. Since its establishment, the PA faced difficult problems mainly having responsibility for the welfare over 800,000 people most living in the conditions of poverty, overcrowding, unemployment without enough resources and economic power.

The political support for the PA started to decrease in the last years of the Oslo but since 2000 this support decreased further because of the general militarization of the Palestinian environment; continuing Israeli attacks, closures, "and the withering of its own basic service provision as a result of the above"⁹⁰. The PA's lost of support resulted in favor of Hamas, which increased support among the Palestinian community. Furthermore the eruption of the Second Intifada further increased the influence of political Islam in Palestine. The PA was aware of this fact as the PA official Mamduh Nawfal claimed in 2002 that if the Israeli siege on Arafat would be lifted, its reason would be Israel's understanding of the Palestinian

⁸⁹ Khalil Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1, January/February 2002, p.95

⁹⁰ Beverly Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, "Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace Process", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, Summer 2004, p.41

situation that “there is no alternative to Arafat, that the foreseeable alternative is chaos and the rise to power of the more extreme religious current”⁹¹.

As a result of threats to its legitimacy, credibility and rise of political Islam, the PLO/PA increased its reference to Islamic discourse. After the formation of the PA as a self-governing body, due to the growth of political Islam “secularism was no longer taken for granted as it was in the heyday of the PLO”⁹². Then with the establishment of the PA, the PLO officially standardized its usage of religious invocations and quotations from the verses of the Koran against the rising power of political Islam that threatened its legitimacy and authority⁹³. For instance, in his letter of resignation in 2003 former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas cited a Koranic verse to strengthen his resignation. He mentioned the Israeli policies that prevented the progress of the peace process and oppressed the Palestinian people. To Abbas, absence of firm international stand to implement the Road Map also prevented peace. He also referred to the internal Palestinian factors that prevented the development of the Palestinians. At the end of his speech, he cited 72nd verse from the Koran’s Chapter of the Clans (*sura* 33):

We did indeed offer the trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof. But man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish⁹⁴.

Then he added the phrase “Verily God has spoken”⁹⁵. Abbas through citing the verse compatible with his arguments of resignation, tried to strengthen his claims and the difficulty of his post. He wanted to tell that realizing the post of prime minister was a very difficult duty. His reference to ‘Verily God has spoken’ sentence after his verse quotation aimed to evoke divine legitimacy for his claims. Moreover Ahmed Quray in his policy statement in the Palestinian Legislative Council on 12

⁹¹ Dialog, “PA’s Nawfal Says to Turn Arafat into Figurehead Futile”, *Al-Ayyam*, 06 June 2002, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=153951125,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 22 August 2005

⁹² Jamil Hilal, op.cit., p.114

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Dialog, “Text of Prime Minister Abbas’ Letter of Resignation”, *Al-Ayyam*, 07 September 2003, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=176850145,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 19 September 2005

⁹⁵ Ibid.

November 2003 did not refer to any verse instead he started to his speech by Islamic invocation “In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate”⁹⁶.

Furthermore political Islam’s growing strength was manifested in “political manipulation of popular religiosity and ‘traditional’ solidarities, and a strategy of ‘Islamization’ of the public sphere”⁹⁷. For instance, Islamists’ hostile views on secularism, and their restraining women policies became frequent issues of the Palestinian political system⁹⁸. Henceforth, the PLO-dominated PA, like in the rest of the Middle East, tried to appease political Islam through referring to Islamic symbols and rhetoric, expanding support for Islamic institutions such as mosques and schools, increasing religious programming in the media, being more attentive to public religious observances such as the fast of Ramadan⁹⁹, and maintaining the control of the mosque through keeping religious officials on the government service thus having an influence on the content of the Friday sermons.

The PLO leadership’s especially late PLO leader Yasser Arafat’s attendance the Friday sermons, activities during the religious holidays, and occasions were always mentioned in full details in the Palestinian media. For instance, his activities during the *Id al-Fitr* (religious holiday at the end of Ramadan) in February 1998 were reported on pro-Palestinian daily *al-Ayyam*. On the first day, the newspaper mentioned Arafat’s celebration of the holiday including his reference to Jerusalem: “We would celebrate the next *Id* in Jerusalem, the capital of the independent State of Palestine”¹⁰⁰. Also his visit to Sheikh Yasin’s home and his receiving with great

⁹⁶ Dialog, “PA Minister Delivers Palestinian Government Statement at PLC”, *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel*, 12 November 2003, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=180151028,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 19 September 2005.

⁹⁷ Jamil Hilal, *op.cit.*, p.105

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.117

⁹⁹ John L. Esposito, “Islamic Movements, Democratization, and U.S. Foreign Policy”, in *Riding the Tiger: The Middle East Challenge After the Cold War*, Phebe Marr and William Lewis (eds.), (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), p.191

¹⁰⁰ Dialog, “West Bank: Report Details Arafat Activities During Id Holiday”, *Al-Ayyam*, 02 February 1998, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=7465442,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 13 October 2005

hospitality and traditional salutations at Yasin's home were mentioned¹⁰¹. Moreover, Arafat's performing the *Id al-Fitr* prayers in the Martyr Abu-Jihad Mosque was mentioned. In the newspaper it was stated that Arafat visited the martyrs' cemetery and read the opening verse of the Koran "to invoke mercy for the martyrs"¹⁰². It was also mentioned that the Palestinians stopped Arafat's motorcade "many times to salute him and congratulate him on the occasion of the *Id*"¹⁰³.

With the establishment of the PA, Fateh as the most powerful movement in the PLO, started to focus on state-building project, control over resources, and state institutions such as legislative, executive, security, and judicial branches. Such focus led Fateh to make concessions to political Islamists in cultural field as long as they did not impede Fateh's state-building project¹⁰⁴. Furthermore, the PA-Hamas clashes demonstrated Hamas that the PA was the sole authority to use arms and that Hamas should not seek to take political power. Instead, Hamas would take over the cultural field where there was the least resistance. Hamas asserted that it did not want a conflict with the PA while acknowledging that the PA had to afford Hamas social and cultural dimension of the Palestinian society through the schools, mosques and law¹⁰⁵. In other words, Hamas would have the opportunity for 'Islamization' of Palestinian society. Moreover several secular movements' alliance with Hamas against the PA facilitated the political Islamists' rising influence on the socio-cultural field such as education, work, health, mass media, legislation and on the relation of women to the public sphere because of secular parties' absence in the socio-cultural field¹⁰⁶.

As a result of political Islam's growing strength new contradictions were emerged over the shape and structure of the Palestinian society as seen in women

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Jamil Hilal, op.cit., p.118

¹⁰⁵ Graham Usher, "The Islamist Movement and the Palestinian Authority: Bassam Jarrar, interview with Graham Usher", in *Political Islam: Essays from the Middle East Report*, Joel Beinin and Joe Stock (eds.), (London. I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997), p.355

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

politics¹⁰⁷. Personal status was one of the areas of contradictions and some Palestinian women formed organizations “against what they perceived to be a capitulation by the secular parties to Islamist conservatives on a ‘personal status’ issues”¹⁰⁸.

The Basic Law issue reflected the PLO’s policies concerning women. After signing the Oslo Agreement, Arafat asked men lawyers to draft a Basic Law to serve as a temporary constitution. In the earlier draft women’s rights were absent so as a result of strong protests, another draft was issued which gave women equal rights in public life. However this draft gave private life to the principles of *Shari’a* law¹⁰⁹. In November 1994, several women organizations met with the late PA Chairman Arafat to ask his opinions about the women rights. Arafat warned that he could not challenge the Islamic conservatives on women rights, and he advised women to be patient¹¹⁰. Therefore the PA in internal politics tended to appease the Islamists “by not ‘giving in’ to women’s demands”¹¹¹. Despite this fact, several women organizations worked on Women’s Charter to improve the women’s rights. The Charter included the abolition of gender discrimination in public and private life, included women’s right to vote and hold public office, and equal payment for equal work¹¹². Arafat repeatedly refused to approve the Charter. To some arguments, the reason for his refusal was rooted in the calculations concerning PA-Hamas relations. Although the PA sometimes supported the women’s movement, mostly its women policies were shaped by a vision “that was acceptable to Hamas”¹¹³.

Furthermore, the PA’s support for the Palestinian Women’s model parliament, which convened in 1998, reflected the PA’s relation with the political

¹⁰⁷ Dan Connell, “Palestine on the Edge: Crisis in the National Movement”, *Middle East Report*, May-June/July-August 1995, p.7

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.9

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Nahla Abdo, “Gender and Politics Under the Palestinian Authority”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Winter 1999, p.49

¹¹² Dan Connell, op.cit., p.9

¹¹³ Rema Hammami, “From Modesty to Collaboration: Hamas, the Women’s Movement, and National Identity in the Intifada”, in *Political Islam: Essays From Middle East Report*, Joel Beinin and Joe Stock (eds.), (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1997), p.207

Islamist movements. The parliament discussed certain issues such as personal status and legislation. In Ramallah the governor participated to the opening of the parliament and mentioned that Arafat would support the parliament on condition that it did not contradict with the *Shari'a*¹¹⁴.

Moreover, the political Islamists' influence was manifested in increase of their strength in the universities, in the Palestinian official media, in dominance of the 'Islamic mode of dress'. The political Islamists influence also led to the self-censorship of newspaper articles related with religion to not provoking the Islamists¹¹⁵. Also proposals for education curricula for government schools were affected by the power of political Islam. For instance, in the late 1990s, Bassam Jarrar who was a leading political Islamist in Palestine and expelled by Israel in December 1992 for alleged membership in Hamas, mentioned that the dialogue between Hamas and the PA rested on the latter's attitude on elections, education and personal status law¹¹⁶. He claimed that the Islamists wanted a cultural curriculum based on Arab and Islamic civilization, "not one that is adulterated by foreign influences"¹¹⁷ because this meant falsifying the Palestinian history. He asserted that the personal status law must be based on *Shari'a*¹¹⁸ because to Jarrar it guaranteed Palestinians' human rights as Muslims¹¹⁹. Hamas recognized the preservation and consolidation of *Shari'a* over personal status as "the greatest potential prize of self-rule"¹²⁰. In addition to this, the political Islamists wanted a total separation between the *Shari'a* courts dealing with personal status and the PA's Ministry of Justice that would employ positive law. To sum up, the political Islamists asserted that a state could not be neutral with respect to religion; rather it should institutionalize Islam in life.

¹¹⁴ Fadwa Labadi, Penny Johnson, Rema Hammami, Lynn Welchman, *Islamic Family Law and the Transition to Palestinian Statehood: Constraints and Opportunities for Legal Reform*, <http://www.law.emory.edu/IFL/cases/Palestine.htm>, accessed in 09 March 2005

¹¹⁵ Jamil Hilal, op.cit., p.118

¹¹⁶ Graham Usher, op.cit., p.336

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

In accordance with Jarrar's arguments, the Revision of the Third Draft of the Palestinian Constitution gave Islamic character to the Palestinian state. The Revision will be the new constitution when the Palestinian state will be established, and when the Palestinian National Council will convene and approve it as the constitution. The Article 5 stipulated that Arabic shall be the official language and Islam shall be the official religion in Palestine¹²¹. While according to the 5th Article Christianity and other monotheistic religions, shall be equally respected. However the Revision guaranteed equality in rights and duties to all citizens irrespective of their religious belief.

Furthermore with the Revision of the Third Draft of the Palestinian Constitution that would replace the current Basic Law, Islam continued to merge into the customary law. Because to the seventh article of the Revision not only the principles of Islamic *Shari'a* would be a major source of legislation but also the civil and religious matters "shall be based on religious teaching and denominations of the monotheistic religions within the framework of law and in a manner that preserved the unity and independence of the Palestinians"¹²². In other words, like in the rest of Arab world, responsibility for personal status issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance were still given to religious communities in accordance with the Personal Status Code known as the Family Law.

To sum up although the PLO in its Constitution and in National Charter, in its domestic policies, Israeli policies and peace process policies did not give Islam any role it referred to Islamic rhetoric. Henceforth the PLO was a semi-secular organization. Because it was not religiously neutral, it did not refer to Christian symbols or allusions unlike it referred to Islamic symbols in spite of the Christian Palestinians' strength in the PLO. Although the PLO replied the rise of political Islam with intensification of its Islamic rhetoric, it succeeded in preserving the balance between its Islamic rhetoric and its Third World revolutionary rhetoric. The former did not overwhelm the latter that guaranteed the international community's recognition of the Palestinian conflict as a national one and the PLO as a secular-

¹²¹ The Palestinian National Authority, "The Revision of the Third Draft of the Constitution of the State of Palestine", <http://www.mopac.gov.ps/constitution/english%20constitution#CHAPTER%20ONE>, accessed on 10 October 2005

¹²² Ibid.

national organization, which adopted negotiations and compromises as policies to solve the Palestinian conflict. In other words, the content of the PLO's Islamic rhetoric never described the Palestinian struggle as an Islamic struggle fought with an Islamic ideology with a united Islamic front. So that the PLO still asked help of the international community based on the claim that the Palestinian conflict was a national cause of the Palestinians dedicated to liberation, self-determination, and independence. Despite the political Islamist criticism that it faced since its foundation, the PLO did not change the content of its articulation of the Palestinian nationalism; its recognition of Palestine, Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict along the Islamic lines. However with the rise of political Islam and with the threats to the PLO's legitimacy and authority the PLO intensified its resort to Islamic discourse though the content remained same.

CHAPTER 5

YASSER ARAFAT'S ISLAMIC DISCOURSE:

5.1. Refugee's Becoming of a National Leader:

Yasser Arafat was the embodiment, symbol of the Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian struggle for liberation of the occupied Palestinian territories from the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent state of Palestine. Moreover, he was recognized especially in the Third World countries as a revolutionary in the battle against imperialism, and colonialism. He was born as Abdel-Rahman Abdel-Raouf Arafat al-Qudwa al-Husseini in 1928, probably in Jerusalem¹. He claimed Jerusalem as his spiritual home; however it was not known whether he was born in Jerusalem, in Gaza or in Cairo. Through his mother side Arafat's family had links to the Husayni clan that was a prominent family in Muslim community in Jerusalem. Arafat had been personal secretary of Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni who had fought against Israel in the 1948 War. By 1955, Arafat had met with other Palestinian nationalists in Gaza and Cairo, where he had met with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) first time.

5.1.1 Arafat's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood:

Raphael Israeli argues that Arafat had been a MB member in Egypt during his university education and his membership was the main reason for his Islamic commitment². On the other hand to Yezid Sayigh, Arafat's status as supporter or member of the MB remains uncertain³. But Arafat had been one of the Palestinian activists drawn to the MB. Through his relationship with Hajj Amin al-Huseyni who had been mufti of Jerusalem, Arafat had fought with under Abd-al-Qadir al-Husayni and then with the MB contingent in Gaza and in Jerusalem against Israel⁴. Moreover,

¹ William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: University of Californian Press, 1973), p.83.

² Raphael Israeli, "From Oslo to Bethlehem: Arafat's Islamic Message", *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2001, p.423

³ Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-93*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.81

⁴ Ibid.

Arafat had continued his relationship with the MB through participating some MB's attacks on British forces in the Suez Canal zone between 1950-1954, and by training university students⁵. His 'sympathy' with the Brotherhood and his involvement in local affairs resulted in his harassment by the Egyptian regime in late 1950s when he had been a reserve officer clearing minefields.

5.1.2. Arafat's Becoming a Palestinian guerilla:

During the mid-1950s, he received military training at the Egyptian Military Academy, particularly in the use of explosives. In 1956, he became the chairman of the Palestinian Student Union in Cairo University. He participated to the 1956 Suez War alongside with the Egyptian Army. He set up the most important Palestinian movement, Fateh, in 1957 in Kuwait with Faruq Qaddumi, Salah Khalaf (alias Abu Iyad), Khalil al-Wazir (alias Abu Jihad), Mahmoud Abbas (alias Abu Mazen), Mohammed Yussef al-Najjar, and Kamal Adwan. His visit to Algeria in 1962 inspired him to adopt the guerilla warfare for the Palestinian liberation, so that the Palestinian national movement took the Algerian and Cuban revolutions as guerilla fighting model in its struggle against Israel. By Fateh's takeover of the PLO in 1968, Arafat became the PLO leader. With the Oslo Accords he became the head of the Palestinian Authority (PA) established through recognition and making peace with Israel. In 1994, together with the PLO's outside leadership he returned to the Occupied Territories and had contact with his people for the first time ever. On 11 November 2004, he died in France far away from his homeland that he wanted to liberate. Even though he wanted to be buried in Jerusalem, he was buried in Ramallah because Israel did not give permission.

5.2. Arafat's Islamic Rhetoric

The Islamic principles did not affect Arafat's recognition of Israel, Palestine, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which were three main components of the Palestinian nationalism. Rather, Arafat had no peculiar ideology in defining and recognizing these components. In the late 1960s he said that the Palestinians did not have any ideology, rather their goal was the liberation of Palestine by any means necessary. He claimed that Palestine could only be liberated with blood and iron that

⁵ Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory? The Politics and History of the PLO*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.6

“have nothing to do with philosophies and theories”⁶. Arafat based his recognition of Israel, Palestine and the conflict on secular-national grounds however as the leader of the Palestinians he used Islamic rhetoric albeit he was not an Islamist who aimed to re-Islamize the society and govern the state along the Islamic principles. His quotations from the Koran, making parallels between the Islamic wars, figures in Islamic history and the current problems of the Palestinians and the PLO goals, using Islamic allusions such as *jihad* and martyr were general components of Arafat’s Islamic rhetoric.

There were several reasons for his usage of Islamic rhetoric. Firstly, referring to Islamic rhetoric sustained his image of devout Muslim. Secondly, such usage resulted in maintaining the support of the Palestinians to whom religion was a crucial component of culture and daily life⁷. Thirdly with such usage he succeeded, from time to time, in limiting the political Islamist movements’ opposition to the Palestinian national movement and prepared the ground for cooperation with them. Moreover his connection with the MB and Palestine’s place for Islam were another reasons for his usage of Islamic rhetoric. But the impasse of the peace process, the PLO’s failure in ending the occupation, the continuation of the Palestinians’ social and economic crisis, and the corruption charges that brought threats to the PLO’s legitimacy and authority were the most crucial reasons for Arafat to refer to the Islamic discourse. To put it in another way living under occupation and struggling to achieve a state made natural or convenient to Arafat to refer Islamic and nationalistic rhetoric to mobilize the masses⁸.

In the early 1980s Arafat increased his resort to Islamic discourse. With the authority crisis especially after the PLO’s expulsion from Lebanon in 1983 and after the political competition inside Fateh, Arafat’s Islamic rhetoric such as citing religious references in his words and speeches became more frequent as in his speeches on the anniversary of the establishment of Fateh in 1978 and 1988⁹. In 1978 speech Arafat cited six verses from the Koran, and in his speech on 1988 on Fateh

⁶ Barry Rubin, op.cit., p.19

⁷ Barry Rubin and Judith C. Rubin, *Bir Siyasi Biyografi: Arafat*, (İstanbul: Kitap Matbaası, 2005), p.9

⁸ Raphael Israeli, “From Oslo to Bethlehem: Arafat’s Islamic Message”, op.cit., p. 428

⁹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.47

anniversary he cited five verses¹⁰. In 1988, second year of the First Intifada, the PLO faced problems including threats to its authority and legitimacy. Moreover the PLO leadership was still in exile and continued to direct the Intifada from Tunis. Also its peace initiatives were accepted neither by the USA and nor by Israel. Furthermore, the Iran-Iraq War together with Arab world's economic crisis resulted in the PLO's isolation and in the sharp decline of Palestine question's in the agenda of Arab world's priorities. So that, the Arab Summit of November 1987 was the sole Summit in which the Palestine question was not the dominant concern of the Arab states. Thus in his 1988 speeches he referred to Islamic rhetoric and used these Islamic references for political aims such as appeasing the leaders of the political Islamist movements in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. His Islamic rhetoric also aimed to appease the PLO's rich conservative allies such as Saudi Arabia that was concerned with the leftist factions within the PLO¹¹.

According to Mark Juergensmeyer, Arafat was a secular Palestinian leader¹². To Barry Rubin, Arafat's name such as his *nom de guerre* Abu Ammar reflected his Islamic orientation despite this fact to Rubin, Arafat was a centrist nationalist who was indifferent to class struggle or Marxism-Leninism¹³. Abu Ammar meant father of Ammar in Arabic and Ammar meant the command of God. In addition to this Ammar, after Ammar ibn Yasir, meant a helper of the Prophet Mohammed¹⁴. Ammar ibn Yasir also was a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and fighter in his all battles. Thus Arafat wanted to indicate his piety and to strengthen his authority on the Palestinian struggle by referring to such allusions. Glenn E. Robinson argues that Arafat was "neither a Marxist believing in the efficacy of class struggle nor an Islamist advocating an austere view of the good polity nor even a true revolutionary

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Worldwide Rise of Religious Nationalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50, No.1, Summer 1996, p.7

¹³ Barry Rubin, op.cit., p.19

¹⁴ Ibid., p.6

nationalist”¹⁵. According to Nels Johnson, Arafat was the fittest of Palestinian leaders because he was devout Muslim and so “the best leader for the *jihad*”¹⁶.

5.2.1 Indicating his image of devout Muslim through Islamic rhetoric:

To indicate his commitment to Islam and sustain his image of devout Muslim he used Islamic discourse. In an interview of 1986 Arafat said that the Prophet Muhammad was the person who fascinated him most and whom he admired in the world¹⁷. In the same interview, Arafat answered the question of the person who fascinated him and whom he admired in Islamic history, as Umar Ibn-al-Khattab¹⁸. Umar Ibn-al-Khattab was the second Caliph of Islam who had captured Jerusalem from Byzantine in AD 638. Thus, Umar by his conquest had put an end to Christian rule. As a head of movement dedicated to liberation and independence, Arafat chose the Caliph Umar who fascinated him and whom admired in Islamic history mostly because of his capture of Jerusalem. His choice reflected Arafat’s usage of Islamic rhetoric on behalf of Palestinian goal that was establishing Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In his speech for Fateh’s Anniversary on 31 December 1992 he called on the Palestinians especially the ones in the Israeli jails and in detention camps to be patient because “victory is from God. Victory needs no more than an hour’s patience”¹⁹. But he continued to recognize Israel on secular-nationalist grounds as he finished his speech calling on the Palestinians to unite against Israel that “occupies our land and homeland and sanctities”²⁰. However his mentioning of sanctities revealed the importance given to them as equal to importance giving to the establishment of the state. After the Madrid negotiations and in the anniversary of

¹⁵ Glenn E. Robinson, “Being Yasir Arafat: A Portrait of Palestine’s President”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.82, No.6, November/December 2003, p.137

¹⁶ Nels Johnson, *Islam and the Politics of Meaning in Palestinian Nationalism*, (London: KPI Limited, 1982), p.75.

¹⁷ Ziad Abu-Amr, op.cit., p.47

¹⁸ Ibid., p.47

¹⁹ “PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat: Speech for Fatah’s Anniversary (December 31, 1992)” in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), p.407

²⁰ Ibid., p.411

Fateh that had started the armed struggle against Israel Arafat wanted from the Palestinians to believe in the establishing the Palestinian state because victory was from God.

Moreover, in his speech to the Palestinians on 31 December 1995 during his first visit to Tulkarem after its placement under the PA's jurisdiction, he acknowledged that he believed in victory because he said that "...I rely on God and on this brave people"²¹. Furthermore in his address to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) on 12 November 2003, he asserted that in spite of the Israeli repression the Palestinians and their leadership would not surrender due to the fact that to Arafat they did not kneel to anybody except almighty God²². In his speech on 15 May 2004 in Ramallah *Al-Nakbah* Anniversary that was the anniversary of the Palestinians' mass expulsion from Palestine with the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Arafat asserted that the Palestinians would not cease to struggle because the will of the Palestinians was from the will of God²³. Henceforth Arafat resorted to God and divine help to demonstrate his faith, to mobilize the Palestinians for the victory, to justify his claims of victory, to represent these claims as absolute truth, to appease the political Islamists, and to strengthen the PLO legitimacy.

5.2.2. Referring to the Koran:

Yasser Arafat referred to the Koran and its verses to legitimize and strengthen the PLO policies, to exemplify and to illustrate the Palestinians' and the PLO's situations. For example, in 1996 concerning the PLO's abandonment of its Charter's several articles that called for the destruction of Israel, Arafat referred to the Koran to strengthen his argument. He said that "in the holy Koran, a verse cancels previous ones. If this is the case in the divine constitution, how cannot we apply the same to

²¹ Hillel Frisch, "Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat's Rhetoric", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.41, No.3, May 2005, p.326

²² Dialog, "Arafat Addresses PLC Session on New Cabinet, Israeli Actions, Domestic Issues", *Gaza Palestine Channel Television*, 12 November 2003
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=180150484,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 19 September 2005.

²³ Dialog, "Speech by PA President Yasser Arafat on *al-Nakbah* Anniversary in Ramallah on 15 May 2004", *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 15 May 2004,
http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csus.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1103626, accessed on 05 May 2005

positive law?”²⁴. He mentioned that after signing of the Oslo Accords he recognized the Charter *caduc* that meant obsolete in French. The recognition of Israel and making an agreement with it, ‘relinquishing’ the historical Palestine and accepting two-state solution on the basis of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 were radical policies for the PLO. Arafat against the criticisms of the PLO opposition such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and opposition within the Occupied Territories such as Hamas abandoned these articles. In doing this he tried to legitimize the amendment through referring to the Koran. Islam’s peculiarity of canceling the previous verse was used by Arafat to cancel the articles.

On the other hand, the majority of the Palestinians did not think in the same way as Arafat did in amendment of certain articles in the Palestinian National Charter as stipulated in the Wye Accord. According to a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion in the West Bank and Jerusalem, the majority of the respondents (61 percent) did not support the amendments made in the Charter. Whereas 25.5 of those poll conducted supported the amendments²⁵.

Arafat as the leader of the Palestinian national movement tried to mobilize the Palestinians on behalf of nationalist goals that were predominantly self-determination, right of return of refugees and establishing an independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital through the Koran’s verses. He aimed to strengthen, justify, and to represent his nationalist messages as absolute truth through strategically selecting and using verses from the Koran that were most suitable to his claims. Because these verses through representing and supporting the content of his speech and his messages could indicate that the Koran contained the actions or policies similar to the PLO policies or to the events in the Palestinian history thus Arafat could have the opportunity of being justified rather than being criticized. In other words, these chosen verses could improve the credibility of Arafat’s message.

²⁴ Dialog, “Palestinian Affairs: Arafat on Amending Charter, Jordan, Hamas”, *al-Dustur*, 22 April 1996, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=42100299,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 27 April 2005

²⁵ Dialog, “West Bank and Gaza Strip: West Bank Poll Shows 45 Percent Oppose Wye Record, *al-Ayyam*, 02 November 1998 <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=88351230,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 13 October 2005

In a way, through such verses he articulated a Palestinian national history that was mobilizing and emotional, and avoided any normative content regarding future character of the state and destruction of Israel because rhetoric with normative content “could constrain Arafat and play into the hands of his significant Islamic opposition”²⁶. Hillel Frisch claims that albeit Arafat identified with Islamic religious beliefs, he never identified “these percepts or messages as being self-consciously Islamic”²⁷. However, his exclusive reference to the Islamic symbols and allusions were in contradiction with his arguments that the Christian Palestinians were also part of the Palestinian society on an equal basis²⁸.

5.2.3 Arafat’s perception of Palestine and the Palestinian-Israeli

Conflict: Justifying the Palestinian sovereignty over Palestine through Islamic rhetoric

Depending on the audience he was addressing Arafat generally referred to Islamic rhetoric or Third World revolutionary rhetoric in defining Palestine and in defining the Palestinian struggle. Because to Arafat the Palestinians addressed themselves “equally to those who wish to offer help because they wish to see the Holy places liberated or to those revolutionaries in Africa, in Asia and Latin America”²⁹ who recognized the Palestinian struggle as a part of struggle against oppression and colonialism.

For instance in an interview made in August 1969 his recognition of Palestine, the enemy, and the conflict lacked Islamic allusions rather the language he resorted was a Third World revolutionary one. He acclaimed that the Palestinian struggle was part of every struggle against imperialism and oppression in the world. Furthermore, to Arafat the Palestinian struggle was “part of the world revolution which aims at establishing social justice and liberating mankind”³⁰. To him, Israel

²⁶ Hillel Frisch, “Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat’s Rhetoric”, op.cit, p.322

²⁷ Ibid., p.323

²⁸ Ibid., p.326

²⁹ PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat (Abu Ammar): An Interview (August 1969), in *The Israel-Arab Leader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), p.136

³⁰ Ibid., p.139

was “an artificially created alien state in the midst of an Arab world”³¹. Arafat acknowledged that Israel would remain as an enemy as long as it was invading, racist, fascist state³². Arafat gave such answers because at that time the PLO had pursued the policy of establishing a secular, democratic state in all Palestine.

However, Arafat’s speeches during his visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 were examples of his using of Islamic discourse where he connected Iran and Palestine against the same enemy. In Iran “he was given a tumultuous hero’s reception during his five days there, addressing rallies and prayer-meetings almost as vast as those which had swept Khomeini to power”³³. Upon his arrival in Tehran he proclaimed that the day of the Iranian Revolution was a victory for Muslims as well as for Palestinians due to the fact that the Revolution proved that Islam would not “bow to oppression”³⁴. He continued, “the pressure surrounding the Palestinian brothers was released with the Iranian revolution”³⁵. He further drew parallels between the Iranian Revolution and Palestine:

This is our road, which we have jointly conceived: one road, one revolution, one people and one faith, we travel side by side together to victory. This great Iranian people lives with us in one trench raising together the same emblems-all of us are fighters, all *mujahidin*, all revolutionaries under one flag- the flag of our Islamic nation against imperialism³⁶.

Arafat conformed during his visit to the Iranian Islamic context of anti-imperialism and Islamic struggle. He mentioned the only common bond with the Iranian people, which was Islam. According to Arafat, these two nations were struggling against the Western imperialism that attacked Islamic nation. He defined the Palestinians and Iranians as *mujahidin* who committed *Jihad*. Like *Jihad*, the term *mujahid* was derived from the root *JHD* and had a specific Islamic content. It meant

³¹ Ibid., p.135

³² Ibid., p.137

³³ Helena Cobban, op.cit., p.104

³⁴ Chris P. Ioannides, “The PLO and the Islamic Revolution in Iran”, in *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, Augustus Richard Norton and Martin H. Greenberg (eds.), (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Press, 1989), p.74

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.88

the person who was in the course of *jihad*. It “literally meant one who struggles, but its recognized meaning was that of a holy warrior or a soldier in a *jihad*”³⁷.

Like the terms *jihad* and martyr, *mujahid* had also both secularist-nationalist and religious interpretations. For instance Arafat referred to its religious sense for the Iranian revolution where he said that “all of us are fighters, all *mujahidin*, all revolutionaries under one flag- the flag of our Islamic nation against imperialism”³⁸. Arafat wanted to say that the Palestinians and the Iranian people were part of the Islamic nation and fought against imperialism. So Arafat traced the Islamic dimension of the Palestinian struggle. Concerning its secular-nationalist sense, some Palestinians defined the term as *fedayeen* and claimed that being a *fedayeen* was not related with religion. These Palestinians claimed that *fedayeen* “is not a Muslim or a Christian because these religious differences are not important in the revolution”³⁹. Furthermore Arafat during his marking the death anniversary of Fateh founder, Khalil al-Wazir, on 15 April 2004 used the term to describe people who fought for the sake of Palestine’s liberation. He used term with the secular-national goals of the PLO. In his speech, he stated that the ‘martyr’ leaders, cadres, strugglers, and ‘*mujahidin*’ demonstrated that the Palestinians would not abandon their goal of freedom, national independence and the independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. In his speech, he labeled Fateh’s first armed attack against Israel as the start of the march of freedom and national independence and the outbreak of the Palestinian revolution⁴⁰.

To sum up, Arafat’s Islamic rhetoric in his statements during the Iranian visit demonstrated that the parameter, which shaped his Islamic rhetoric was the PLO’s reliance on strategic balance of power between it and Israel. At the time of the Iranian Revolution, Egypt was about to sign the Camp David Accords with Israel. Henceforth, the PLO lost its most powerful Arab ally in its confrontation against Israel. In the beginning, the Iranian Islamic Revolution became an asset to substitute

³⁷ Ibid., p.69

³⁸ Ibid., p.88

³⁹ Ibid., p.80

⁴⁰ Dialog, “Speech by PA President Yasser Arafat Marking the death Anniversary of Khalil al-Wazir, *Abu Jihad*”, *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 15 April 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1072618, accessed on 19 April 2005

Egypt. Iran recognized the PLO, it granted ambassadorial status to the PLO representative in Iran, it stopped oil shipments to Israel, and it broke off relations with Egypt. As Arafat claimed Iran changed the strategic balance in the Middle East against Israel and the USA because according to Arafat “the Camp David document will be merely ink on paper following the basic changes brought by the Iranian Revolution, both in the region and our Islamic nation and in world strategy”⁴¹. To Arafat, Iran recognized herself as a confrontation state against Israel so she did no longer constitute threat to Iraq, Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia so these three states could participate into the PLO’s military struggle alongside Iran against Israel. He asserted that “Yes indeed we lost the western front of Egypt, yet we gained instead a strategic depth from Beirut to Eastern Persia”⁴².

But the PLO-Iranian alliance collapsed because of the ideological contradictions and the PLO’s reliance on Arab states especially Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The PLO-Iranian alliance did not affect Arafat’s understanding of the conflict and future character of the independent Palestinian state. To give an example, in contradiction to Khomeini’s claims of Islamic state, Arafat pursued the PLO policy of nonsectarian and democratic state in Palestine. Following his warm relations with Khomeini in Iran, he was asked whether the secular democratic state of Palestine was replaced by an Islamic one, and “he answered angrily: ‘Stop that; it is laughable and stupid ... I consider the imputation that I have been stressing Islam (in Iran) as a distortion of facts’”⁴³. Thus Arafat’s expression during his visit about liberating Jerusalem under a united Islamic flag “did not go beyond the realm of symbolism and rhetoric”⁴⁴. Also, Arafat in his visit to Iraq, after his visit to Iran in March 1979, issued a joint declaration in conformity to the PLO strategic policies. According to the PLO-Iraqi joint declaration the struggle to liberate Palestine was “progressive, nationalist, and Pan-Arab struggle”⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Chris P. Ioannides, *op.cit.*, p.75

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.81

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.78

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.82

In opposition to his arguments in Iran Arafat in his speech to the Palestinian National Council (PNC) on 14 February 1983 stressed that the Palestinian struggle would continue until the Arab nation's aims were realized⁴⁶. He continued that the Palestinians fought for the freedom of their homeland and there was no solution to the conflict without establishment of national rights of the Palestinians⁴⁷. Also he mentioned that the Palestinians were with every struggler against imperialism, Zionism, colonialism, oppression and racial discrimination and that they were with every struggler for a better life and future⁴⁸.

His recognition of Palestine on secular grounds also was seen in his speech to the Palestinians on Labor Day 01 May 2004 when he again asserted that the independent national decision was based on the higher national interests of Arab nation and supported by "the free and honest people and friends worldwide"⁴⁹. He mentioned that they defended not only freedom and independence but also their holy places. Furthermore in his address to solidarity rally in Gaza on 29 April 2004, he said that the Palestinians were potential martyrs in the defense of Palestine and in the defense of Islamic and Christian holy sites⁵⁰.

Arafat also used the term *jihad* to refer the Palestinians' liberation. Like other secular-nationalist Arab leaders who referred *jihad* in their discourse against the Western domination and influence, Arafat also used the term. Arafat used *jihad* both in secular and religious senses. For instance, in his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1978 he used the term to describe Jerusalem's liberation. He made his speech at Mina, the

⁴⁶ PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat: Speech to the Palestinian National Council (February 14, 1983), in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), p.274

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.276

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Dialog, "Address by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at Labor Day celebration at the Presidential headquarters in Ramallah", *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 01 May 2004, http://countrywatch.com.libproxy.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1090479, accessed on 23 April 2005

⁵⁰ Dialog, "Arafat Addresses Gaza 'Solidarity Rally, Reiterates Palestinian Demands", *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 29 April 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1086865, accessed on 19 April 2005

place east of Mecca where pilgrims symbolically stone the devil⁵¹. During his pilgrimage, he mentioned that Palestine and Jerusalem had not only Palestinian, and Arab dimensions but also Islamic dimension. He claimed that both Jerusalem and Palestine had been a problem for every Muslim. To Arafat the liberation of Jerusalem was *fard taklif* upon every Muslim that meant the liberation was a commandment from God from which no Muslim was exempted. He continued that under these circumstances it could not remain as *fard kifayah*, a duty incumbent on the Muslim community as a whole but freed if someone in the community performed it. He concluded that he declared the opening the gate of holy war (*jihad al-muqaddas*) to liberate Palestine and to recovery of Jerusalem in Mecca⁵². Nels Johnson mentions that Arafat's referring to *jihad* was one of the indications of religious use of *jihad*⁵³. Arafat in this event with strong Islamic content, as the pilgrimage to Mecca was one of the five pillars of Islam, called for Muslims to help the Palestinians to liberate Palestine and declared that the Palestinian conflict had also Islamic dimension. To have the support of the Muslims, he asserted that the liberation of Palestine was commandment from God and he used the term *jihad* to define the Palestinian struggle and liberation of Jerusalem.

Also in his statement after the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon he asserted that "it was us that gave *jihad* a meaning in the present time after it has been absent for so long"⁵⁴. Because to Arafat the Palestinians' lost of 72.000 dead and wounded in Lebanon were the reasons for the Palestinians' giving meaning to *jihad*. He commented the battle as the most suitable one for *jihad* because they gave serious losses for liberation of Palestine that was a national goal. His speech after the expulsion showed that Arafat wanted to transform the PLO's most serious defeat into a historic and heroic battle in which the Palestinian guerillas fought with their utmost power.

Moreover in his speech for Fateh's Anniversary on 31 December 1992 he mentioned that on 01 January 1965 the Palestinians started their armed revolution

⁵¹ Nels Johnson, op.cit., p.74

⁵² Ibid., p.75

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Politics in Palestine*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p.202

because they thought that the only device to liberate Palestine was armed struggle⁵⁵. He claimed that Fateh “has proven that there is no going back on the *jihad* for Palestine, on the homeland, or on martyrdom...”⁵⁶. In 1992, the PLO passed Madrid Peace Conference that meant the PLO’s recognition of the existence of Israel, and its aim of establish an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. So *jihad* in this speech meant the national goal of liberation of occupied Palestinian land, not destruction of Israel for the sake of Islam. Arafat referred to *jihad* for secular-nationalist usage because the PLO accepted two-states solution as its strategic goal not as tactical goal. Furthermore, he stressed that the Palestinian land would remain Arab and the present generation of Palestinian would not give one inch of Palestine or Jerusalem. So, he solely mentioned the Arab character of Palestine and stressed that Jerusalem would not be given.

Arafat also referred to the verses from the Koran to illustrate, strengthen the Palestinian sovereignty over Palestine and to de-legitimize sole Israeli sovereignty over Palestine in his speeches especially to the Palestinians. For instance, in his speech on the *al-Nakbah* Anniversary on 18 May 1998⁵⁷, and in his speech at Labor Day Celebration in Ramallah on 01 May 2004⁵⁸, he quoted the 71st verse from the Chapter of Prophets (*sura* 21): “And We delivered him [Abraham] and Lot, unto the land that We had blessed for all beings”⁵⁹. He cited it to justify his claims that Palestine was ‘blessed for all nations’ including for the Palestinians, and it would become under their sovereignty after a short period of time. Henceforth he tried to mobilize the Palestinians under the PLO leadership at the time when it faced serious problems. For instance in 2004, he was isolated from the negotiation table by Israel and the USA, and was besieged by Israel in his compounds while Hamas increased its power.

⁵⁵ PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat: Speech for Fatah’s Anniversary (December 31, 1992) in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), p.407

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.408

⁵⁷ Hillel Frisch, “Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat’s Rhetoric”, op.cit., p.334

⁵⁸ Dialog, “Address by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at Labor Day celebration at the Presidential headquarters in Ramallah”, *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 01 May 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1090479, accessed on 23 April 2005

⁵⁹ Hillel Frisch, “Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat’s Rhetoric”, op.cit., p. 334

5.2.4 Arafat's perception of East Jerusalem: Justifying Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem through Islamic rhetoric:

Like his perception of Palestine, Israel, and the Palestinian conflict Arafat's recognition of Jerusalem and its policies were not directed by Islamic principles. Rather national principles and international legitimacy primarily U.N. resolutions directed the PLO's Jerusalem policies. To Arafat the reason for the PLO to decide on East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state was Jerusalem's belonging to Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Henceforth Arafat declared, "only East Jerusalem, that is the Holy City would be the Palestinians capital"⁶⁰. Then to Arafat Jerusalem would be a capital for two states, i.e. Palestine and Israel like Rome⁶¹.

Arafat acclaimed that the attempts for Palestinian sovereignty over Jerusalem had to be done through the city's accommodation of three religions. He claimed that the Wailing Wall was a sacred place of worship for Jews given by the British mandate in 1929. He continued that the Palestinians could not stop Jews from praying there⁶². In his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, he asserted that for Palestinians Jerusalem was the city of cities. He argued that like the Christian and Muslim shrines, the Jewish shrines in Jerusalem were Palestinians' shrines⁶³. So he claimed that Jerusalem had to be an international symbol of "this spiritual harmony and this religious heritage of humanity as a whole"⁶⁴. However, he claimed that the PLO would adhere to the Islamic and Arab principles in East Jerusalem, and it would not make any concession on a complete sovereignty over East Jerusalem⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ Dialog, "Arafat Says Israelis do not Meet Deadlines", *al-Nahar*, 01 February 2000, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=111150417,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 20 April 2005

⁶¹ Dialog, "Palestinian Affairs: Arafat on Amending Charter, Jordan, Hamas", *al-Dustur*, 22 April 1996, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=421000299,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 17 April 2005

⁶² Dialog, "Paper Reports Minutes of Jerusalem Committee Meeting", *al-Safir*, 01 September 2000, <http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=121750816,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 28 April 2005

⁶³ "PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat's Speech in Accepting Nobel Peace Prize", in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), p.494

⁶⁴ Dialog, "Paper Reports Minutes of Jerusalem Committee Meeting", *al-Safir*, 01 September 2000

⁶⁵ Ibid

Arafat was aware of Jerusalem's meaning and power of attraction not only for Palestinians but also for the Muslim community. For example, Jerusalem was one of the rallying points of his speeches in Iran in 1979 when he was invited as the first Middle Eastern politician and first foreign leader after Khomeini's return from exile. In Tehran he transformed Jerusalem as a rallying point for the Iranian-Palestinian alliance. As stated above he claimed that the Palestinians and the Iranians were all Muslims and they would march to Jerusalem under a united Islamic flag⁶⁶. He continued to use the City as rallying point for the Muslim community as seen in the 22nd Arab Summit where he called for an extraordinary Islamic summit to discuss "the fate of this holy city and its future its worth consideration"⁶⁷.

Also on the Arab level Arafat used Jerusalem as a rallying point and to take Arab states' support for the Palestinian conflict. Even though he undertook the guardianship of Jerusalem and its holy sites through stating that the Palestinians defended their people, their land and their Islamic and Christian holy places, he gave responsibility of safeguarding Jerusalem to all Arab leaders as well⁶⁸ for instance, against the Israel's Jerusalem policies recognized by Arafat as "threats of destruction and Judaization of the Holy City"⁶⁹. In the Arab Summit of 22 June 1996, Arafat called the summit to "adopt a clear and firm position on the risks threatening holy Jerusalem"⁷⁰ on the bases of the U.N. resolutions.

Against Israeli policies of Jerusalem such as annexation, increasing the Jewish settlements Arafat mentioned Jerusalem's Palestinian, Arab, Islamic, and Christian characters. He indicated that such Israeli policies were threats to Palestinians, to Arabs, to Muslims, and to Christians. Because Arafat acknowledged

⁶⁶ Chris P. Ioannides, op.cit., p.80

⁶⁷ Dialog, "Inter-Arab: Arafat Speaks at 22 June Session of Cairo Summit, *Middle East News Agency*, 23 June 1996,
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=45200115,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 17 April 2005

⁶⁸ Dialog, "Arafat calls for Arab action against Israeli threats", *Xinhua News Agency*, 23 May 2004,
http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1109486, accessed on 22 April 2005

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Dialog, "Inter-Arab: Arafat Speaks at 22 June Session of Cairo Summit, *Middle East News Agency*, 23 June 1996,
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=45200115,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 27 April 2005

that Jerusalem was the first of the two *qiblahs*, the location of Prophet Muhammad's night journey to heaven, the cradle of Christ and contained Islam's third holy mosque⁷¹. To Arafat, Judaization policies concerned the whole world because Jerusalem was a historical issue that entailed global dimension⁷². He acclaimed that Jerusalem was not at the sole disposal of the Palestinians to do what they wanted rather it was "actually at the disposal of the Palestinian people, the Islamic nation, and Christian worldwide"⁷³. So by mentioning such characteristics Arafat aimed to have international support to attract Israel and the USA to the negotiations. In addition to this, such mentioning according to Arafat's strategy would retain the place of Palestine at the top of not only Arab but also international agenda.

Having sovereignty over Jerusalem brought legitimacy so that no Palestinian leader could relinquish Palestinian claims over the city. For example, Arafat denied such relinquishment in 1991 by stating "By God, even if one put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I would not do that"⁷⁴. Furthermore, aware of this relationship between legitimization and sovereignty over East Jerusalem, against the Israeli claim of shared sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif during the Camp David Summit 2000, Arafat asked to former US President Bill Clinton: "Do you want to attend my funeral?"⁷⁵. Because to Arafat no Palestinian would give one inch of Jerusalem. He said that any person who gave inch would stop being Palestinian and Palestinians would "embrace martyrdom rather than give up its Islamic sanctities"⁷⁶.

⁷¹ Dialog, "Arafat Discusses Maps with Mubarak, Leaves Cairo, *Middle East News Agency*, 01 December 1999
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=108050807,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 09 October 2005

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Dialog, "Arafat Hold News Conference, Says Talks Were Hard", *Middle East News Agency*, 26 July 2000
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=119900819,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 28 April 2005

⁷⁴ Muhammad Muslih, "Palestinian Images of Jerusalem", in *A City of Great King*, Nitza Rosovsky (ed.), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.199

⁷⁵ Glenn E. Robinson, "Israel and the Palestinians: The Bitter Fruits of Hegemonic Peace", *Current History*, Vol. 100, No.642, January 200, p.20

⁷⁶ Dialog, "Arafat Appeals for Arab Aid, Donations to Palestinians at Arab Finance Ministers Meeting", *Middle East News Agency*, 23 November 2000,
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=73931801&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=125900925,FM=9,SEARCH=MD.GenericSearch>, accessed on 28 April 2005

Arafat always mentioned religious character of Jerusalem and the PLO goal of sovereignty over East Jerusalem in his speeches especially in his meeting with the Palestinians because of the City's "powerful unifying and mobilizing symbol"⁷⁷. In majority of his speeches, he mentioned the towns to be liberated and then he concluded his speech by vowing to march to Jerusalem or pray in Jerusalem. For instance, in his speech of *al-Nakbah* anniversary on 16 May 2001 he terminated his speech by saying that:

Until we meet in Palestine, until we meet in Palestine, in Holy Jerusalem in Holy Jerusalem, the first of the directions of prayer and the third of the holy places, the [sight of the] nocturnal ascent of Muhammad the Prophet, May God Grant him peace, the abode of our Master the Messiah Peace be Upon Him, to the meeting place there, there there, together and in unison, until victory, until victory, until victory.⁷⁸

Almost in his every speeches to the Palestinians such as the one on the death anniversary of Khalil al-Wazir on 15 April 2004⁷⁹ and in his news conference on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in the Hague on the Separation Wall on 09 July 2004 Arafat mentioned the PLO goal of establishing the independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. He chose several verses from the Koran to represent and support the Palestinian sovereignty⁸⁰:

Together and side-by-side we will march to Jerusalem. One of our cubs and one of our flowers shall raise the flag of Palestine over the walls, minarets, and churches of Jerusalem. They see it far and we see it near⁸¹ and we are truthful⁸². And to enter your temple as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction all that fell in their power⁸³. God will not fail to fulfill his promise⁸⁴.

⁷⁷ Raphael Israeli, "From Oslo to Bethlehem: Arafat's Islamic Message", op.cit., p.425

⁷⁸ Hillel Frisch, "Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat's Rhetoric", op.cit., p.327

⁷⁹ Dialog, "Speech by PA President Yasser Arafat marking the death anniversary of Khalil al-Wazir, *Abu Jihad*, in Ramallah, *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 15 April 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories.aspx?UID=1072618, accessed on 19 April 2005

⁸⁰ Dialog, "News Conference by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in the Hague on the Separation Wall—Live", *Gaza Palestine Satellite Channel Television*, 09 July 2004, http://www.countrywatch.com.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/cw_wire_stories?UID=1165291, accessed on 25 April 2005

⁸¹ Chapter of Stairways, *sura* 70, 6th and 7th verses

⁸² Chapter of the Cattle, *sura* 6, verse 146

⁸³ Chapter of Night Journey, *sura* 17, 7th verse

With his reference to the 6th and 7th verses of the Chapter of Stairways, Arafat wanted to acclaim that although Israel did not share its sovereignty over Jerusalem with the PLO, to Arafat the Palestinians would have sovereignty over the City. To him the sovereignty over the City was just a matter of time. Then with his reference to the 146th verse of the Chapter of the Cattle, Arafat wanted to convince the Palestinians through referring to divine word that the PLO was certain in its goal of having sovereignty over Jerusalem. Next through referring to seventh verse from the Chapter of the Night Journey he tried to explain that the Palestinians like they did before the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem would enter the al-Aqsa Mosque that meant the Palestinian sovereignty over the City. Actually his quotation “alludes to the Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab’s entry to Jerusalem, particularly the Temple Mount and the erection of the Aqsa Mosque”⁸⁵. According to Hillel Frisch Arafat used the verse by his understanding that Umar’s conquest of Jerusalem was the entrance for the ‘first time’⁸⁶. Henceforth, to Arafat the Palestinians would enter the mosque for the second time. Arafat transformed the verse from punishment, i.e. destruction of the temples into a story of the liberation of the temple and Jerusalem by the Palestinians in the future. Finally to strengthen the credibility of his message he cited the verse “God will not fail to fulfill his promise”. He wanted to say that the Palestinian sovereignty and so the victory were certain like the divine word because these two goals were promises of God.

Another component of Arafat’s Islamic rhetoric concerning Jerusalem was Salah al-Din al-Ayubbi who had recaptured Jerusalem in 1189 and had put an end to Christian rule there. Muhammad Muslih mentions that the Islamic world perceives the regaining of Jerusalem during the Third Crusade “as an event of monumental religious and historical significance”⁸⁷. Therefore in his speeches Arafat referred to al-Ayubbi who had taken back Jerusalem from the Crusaders to make connection between al-Ayyubi’s conquest of Jerusalem and the PLO goal of retaking

⁸⁴ Chapter of Romans, *sura* 30, 6th verse

⁸⁵ Hillel Frisch, “Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat’s Rhetoric”, *op.cit.*, p.329

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Muhammad Muslih, “Palestinian Images of Jerusalem”, *op.cit.*, p.180

sovereignty of East Jerusalem. To give an example, in his visit to Iran in 1979 after the Islamic Revolution, Arafat compared Ayatallah Khomeini with Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi⁸⁸. His comparison stemmed from the fact that Arafat wanted to indicate the Iranian officials that the Palestinian struggle, like the Iranian Revolution was against imperialism, which was an old enemy of Islam. Also in his speech on 31 December 1995 in Tulkarem, Arafat called on the Palestinians as the “brothers of Salah al-Din”⁸⁹ to strengthen his claim of Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem.

To sum up, Arafat while mentioned the goal of establishing Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, at the same time he also performed the role of protector holy sites of Jerusalem; the role of guardian of Arab-Islamic character of Jerusalem in the face of Israeli annexation, of increasing Jewish settlements, and in the face of Israeli sovereignty claims over city. For instance in every opportunity he called on the international community to convene to discuss the Israeli threats against the holy sites. And especially in his statements to the Palestinian community he usually acclaimed that the Palestinians in addition to their fight for homeland and freedom they also fought for their holy places. Israel’s Jerusalem policies, religious importance of the city, decreasing legitimacy of the PA in addition to its isolation from negotiation politics by USA and Israel prepared the ground for Arafat to mention Jerusalem in his speeches through referring to Islamic rhetoric. Stressing Jerusalem and the Palestinian sovereignty over the city became more frequent especially in issues of cooperation between political Islamists. To Arafat, although there had been some differences between Hamas and the PA they could still cooperate and maintain national unity due to the fact that this unity was “for the sake of the first *qiblah*, and the second holy place, the *masra* (the point of departure for the midnight journey to the seven heavens)” of the Prophet Muhammad and the birthplace of Jesus⁹⁰.

To sum up Arafat always referred to Islamic rhetoric in his statements especially to the Palestinian community. He used the rhetoric mainly to mobilize the

⁸⁸ Nels Johnson, op.cit, p.89

⁸⁹ Hillel Frisch, “Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat’s Rhetoric”, op.cit., p.326

⁹⁰ Dialog, “West Bank: Arafat on Peace Process, Relation with Hamas, Succession, Interview by Hatim al-Butaywi, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 11 June 1998
<http://toolkit.dialog.com/intranet/cgi/present?STYLE=739318018&PRESENT=DB=985,AN=81150467,FM=9,SEARCH=MD,GenericSearch>, accessed on 13 October 2005

Palestinians for the PLO goals, to appease the political Islamists, to maintain the PLO's authority and legitimacy, to indicate his religiosity and he used the Islamic discourse due to Islam's place in the Palestinian culture and nationalism. The religious rhetoric that Arafat used in his speeches, were part of his nationalist message and his articulation of the Palestinian destiny⁹¹. Because the verses he chose from the Koran, the Islamic references and figures were transformed into the history of Palestine's liberation to mobilize the Palestinians. These verses were used to describe the PLO goals, politics and the Palestinians. As stated above Arafat chose the most suitable verses to describe the Palestinian history. He strategically chose and placed them "to provide the overall framework for the internal contents"⁹² of his speech. In other words, he chose the verses, which were related with victory, patience, transforming from downtrodden to master of the land, steadfastness, struggle, and legitimizing policies such as making mistakes or making peace with Israel. Due to the fact that stating the PLO's secular-national goals such as the establishment of the Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as capital and citing a verse gave the impression that the legitimacy of reaching to this goal was rooting in the Koran⁹³.

According to Hillel Frisch Arafat's Islamic rhetoric was similar to other secular Arab leaders because Arafat like such leaders used Islamic references without identifying them as Islamic. Henceforth to Frisch Arafat referred "religion universally"⁹⁴ that enabled him to appeal to the Christian Palestinians as well. However his solely usage of Islamic rhetoric while leaving beside Christianity made him a semi-secular and pragmatist leader who pursued the PLO goals formulated on secular lines. As the PLO and Fateh did, Arafat increased his reference to the Islamic discourse with every crisis of the Palestinian national movement. For instance he increased his resort to Islamic rhetoric in the early 1980s when the PLO was expelled from Lebanon with the Israeli occupation. As mentioned before, in his 1988 Fateh Anniversary speech he cited 5 verses from the Koran whereas in his Statement

⁹¹ Hillel Frisch, "Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat's Rhetoric", op.cit., p.327

⁹² Ibid., p.326

⁹³ Hillel Frisch, "Has the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Become Islamic? Fatah, Islam, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.17, 2005, p.397

⁹⁴ Hillel Frisch, "Nationalizing a Universal Text: The Quran in Arafat's Rhetoric", op.cit., p.334

on the Intifada on 1989 he cited 8 verses and he cited 14 verses in his statement on the PLC in August 2004 when the PA and PLO faced serious authority and legitimacy crisis.

His usage of Islamic rhetoric demonstrated that Arafat was not only a semi-secular but also a pragmatic leader. Because he used Islamic rhetoric depending on the audience he addressed. If he addressed to Islamic community then he referred to Islamic discourse even he conformed to such Islamic context as seen in his speeches in Iran after the Islamic Revolution when he stated liberation of Jerusalem under united Islamic flag. However in his speeches to the international community, to Third World countries and to the U.N. he decreased or abandoned the Islamic rhetoric and referred to Third world revolutionary rhetoric, which was the fundamental asset of the Palestinian nationalism.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Palestinian nationalism as articulated by the PLO was a form of secular nationalism because the PLO specified ethnicity irrespective of religion as the center of its nationalism. The PLO formulated secular-nationalist loyalties and based the legitimacy of the state on the will of people that was not related with any religious principles. Also it adopted Western notions of negotiation, conflict resolution, liberal-democratic models of government and accompanying economic structures¹. The late 1960s goal of establishing democratic, secular state in Palestine in which the Jews together with the Christians and Muslims would live in equality without discrimination was another example for secular character of the PLO and its secular-nationalism. In addition to the existence of the Palestinian Christians within the PLO, its distinction between Zionism as a political ideology and Judaism revealed its secular character too. Moreover as stipulated in its Constitution, in the Palestine National Charter and in Fateh's Constitution Islam had no role in formulating and defining the PLO goals, in defining the Palestinians, the Palestine, Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rather the PLO like Fateh and Arafat formulated policies according to Palestinian nationalist principles and to international resolutions such as United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Also the PLO based its recognition of Palestine, Israel and the conflict according to Palestinian nationalism and Third world revolutionary rhetoric. For instance the PLO defined the Palestinian struggle as part of Arab struggle, part of worldwide struggle against Zionism, international imperialism, and as a national struggle between Zionism, international imperialism and the Palestinians.

However the PLO like Fateh and Yasser Arafat resorted to Islamic rhetoric in its discourse of Palestinian liberation dominantly as a result of rising power of Hamas *vis-à-vis* decreasing legitimacy and authority of the PLO, of Islamic component of Palestinian nationalism and identity, and as a result of shift in the

¹ Beverly Milton-Edwards, "Political Islam in Palestine in an Environment of Peace?", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.2, 1996, p.202

Palestinian society's perception of the conflict along the Islamic lines. The PLO had an instrumental and pragmatic usage in its resort to Islamic rhetoric due to the fact that the PLO did not change its ideology along the political Islamist lines. Also this Islamic language did not contradict with the PLO's state-centered and secular-national goals, with the Palestinian nationalism. Rather it continued to be bound with secular-national policies and international resolutions. Moreover it continued to recognize the land, the enemy and the conflict according to Palestinian nationalism, Third world rhetoric and to international resolutions.

As explained throughout the thesis the PLO has also instrumentalized Islam in its national struggle. The PLO resorted to use the Islamic rhetoric mainly to mobilize the Palestinians for its leadership and its national goals, and to strengthen its authority and increase its legitimacy against the rise of political Islam that brought shift of the Palestinian political discourse along the Islamic lines. For instance, in spite of the criticisms of the PLO's left wing the PLO started its Declaration of Independence with traditional Islamic invocation and ended it through referring to a verse from the Koran that strengthened the PLO goal of establishing the state. The PLO declared independence in 1988 when it faced authority crisis and isolated in the Arab world.

The Palestinian society faced several waves of Islamization such as in the late 1970s, early 1980s, during the First Intifada, with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and lastly with the Second Intifada. There were several reasons for the rise of political Islam in Palestine such as East Jerusalem, its importance for Islam, and Israeli policies on the City, Islam's place in the Palestinian culture, identity and nationalism, conservative and traditional structure of the Palestinian society, deteriorating social and economic conditions of daily life, corruption charges against the PA, the authoritarian politics of the PA. And lastly the PLO's failure in ending the Israeli occupation and establishing the Palestinian state.

Secondly, the PLO referred to Islamic discourse due to the fact that Islam was a basic component of the Palestinian identity and nationalism. For example, according to the polls, the Palestinians believed in the need of mentioning word of God and they thought that a leader's commitment to Islam was the second important quality after his commitment to fight Israel. For instance Arafat in an interview stated that the Prophet Muhammad was the person who most fascinated him in the

world history. Thirdly, Islamic discourse became a device to attract the support of the Arab and Islamic worlds. For instance Arafat especially in his addressing to Islamic and Arab communities always mentioned religious importance of East Jerusalem. Lastly, together with Palestine's importance for Islam, the PLO used the Islamic rhetoric as a counter-response against Zionism and its religiously based politics and claims on Palestine. Such claims were increased especially with the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the increasing power of the Likud Party. These policies and claims led the PLO to refer to the Islamic rhetoric to assert the Palestinian identity and the Palestinian connection to the land. For instance to de-legitimize the sole Israeli sovereignty over Palestine Arafat cited the Koranic verses that legitimized the Palestinian sovereignty over Palestine.

Henceforth the PLO referred to Islamic allusions such as *jihad*, *mujahid* and martyr that were related with conflict. Also the PLO referred to Islamic events and heroes to which the PLO could draw parallel with contemporary Palestinian politics. For instance Arafat articulated the Palestinians as sons of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi who captured Jerusalem from Crusaders. Then Arafat wanted to strengthen his claim of Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem. Moreover the PLO cited the Koranic verses that were related with struggle, sovereignty, and establishing state. Then the PLO used the Koran to strengthen, legitimize its authority, and to justify its policies. The content of Islamic rhetoric was never aimed to make Islam as the normative and legal basis of the Palestinian society. Fateh leaders and the PLO leaders such as Yasser Arafat chose and used the Islamic symbols and references, which were most suitable to their claims. For example, if Arafat wanted to justify his claim of the Palestinian sovereignty over the land, he referred to the verses from the Koran that were related with, becoming masters of the land victory, and divine help.

The Islamic allusions such as *jihad*, martyr, and *mujahidin* were used by Fateh, the PLO and Arafat for describing the Palestinians and the Palestinian liberation. Also these allusions were ambiguous in a way that they can be used for both secular and religious meanings. In other words, these terms that had Islamic roots can be part of secular field through using it with secular concepts such as imperialism and revolution. For example, Arafat in his addressing to the Iranians after the Islamic Revolution he recognized the Palestinians and the Iranians as *mujahidin* who struggled against imperialism that was the enemy of Islamic *umma*.

However in his speech to the Palestinians on death announcement of one Fateh founder on 2004, he referred term in a secular-nationalist way due to the fact that he articulated *mujahid* as the Palestinian Muslim or Christian who was in the course of liberating Palestine, freedom and national independence.

The components of Fateh's, the PLO's, and Arafat's Islamic rhetoric were part of the Palestinian nationalism and the Palestinian political culture. In other words the Islamic symbols or allusions were used in different manner and in different periods of the Palestinian nationalism. The PLO followed the ancestors of the Palestinian nationalism i.e. Hajj Amin al-Huseyni and Izz al-Din al-Qassam who had referred to religious terms in their opposition both to the Zionists and to the British mandate, which demonstrated that Islam had outstanding role on the antecedents of Palestinian nationalism. Neither the Islamic symbols and nor allusions were new articulation of the Palestinian nationalism that the PLO recently formulated nor they belonged to the sole disposal of the PLO.

The PLO like Fateh and Arafat referred to the Islamic discourse since its foundation. Like Fateh and Arafat, the PLO did not adopt the resorting to the Islamic discourse as a new strategy against the rising power of political Islam headed by Hamas in the occupied Palestinian territories. For example, the PLO in the 1960s, established the Palestine Liberation Army through naming its four battalions with the four wars of the Islamic history: Hattin, Yarmuk, Qadisiyah and Ayn Jalut divisions. The Islamic rhetoric of the PLO was not transformed to more Islamic lines or the PLO did not change the components of its Islamic rhetoric. The PLO continued to use the same symbols of Islam with the same content to describe the Palestinian struggle. It did not refer to the Islamic discourse on personal ethics, religious reform or proper behavior.

On the other hand, the PLO like Fateh and Arafat intensified usage of religious rhetoric in every crisis faced by the Palestinian national movement. The crisis brought intensification of the political Islamists' power and then brought the PLO's resort to use Islamic rhetoric. Since the early 1970s the PLO together Fateh and Arafat faced serious crisis. Then the Islamic rhetoric of the PLO was increasing. For instance the PLO 'responded' the rise of the political Islam during the First Intifada by increasing its references to Islamic symbols such as the Islamic

invocation “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” and by increasing its quotations from the Koran.

Also Fateh in its early communiqués used Islamic references such as the Islamic invocation, *jihad* and mentioned the word of God. It used these references because its leaders were devout Muslims, wanted to mobilize the Palestinian masses, to appease the political Islamists as well as its conservative allies. Even political Islamist movements recognized these references as Islamic credential of Fateh set up to answer the problems of Islamic movement. In 2000, Fateh chose to establish al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade with an Islamic content as a response to religious content of the Second Intifada and as a response to the rising strength of Hamas. On the other hand, Hamas recognized this intensified usage of Fateh’s Islamic rhetoric as Fateh’s approaching more to Islamic lines. For instance, in its official web site Hamas recognized Fateh as a “quasi-secular nationalist Palestinian movement”². As it was known, before to Hamas, Fateh was a secular movement.

Arafat albeit indicated his religiosity since his participation to the Palestinian struggle he increased his references to the Islamic symbols with every point of crisis in the Palestinian politics. For instance his citations of verses from the Koran increased with the signing of the Oslo Agreements and with his return to the Occupied Territories. Also, Second Intifada with the rise of political Islam led to increase in his resort to the Islamic rhetoric. Due to the fact that the PA especially with the Second Intifada, functioned as a weak administration with limited authority. In July 2003 Israel reoccupied the West Bank, which meant the collapse of the Oslo Process. With the reoccupation the PA became a powerless authority to govern the Palestinians, or to have a role with the international powers in negotiations. Then some Palestinians approached more to political Islam albeit many Palestinians did not identify with Hamas’ political Islamist ideology. However their sympathy to Hamas was increased further with its social services that the PA could not provide, but most importantly their support was increased because Hamas did not face corruption charges. Whereas, the PA and Fateh were recognized as corrupt institutions that were concerned with their own good at the expense of the Palestinian society.

² Hamas, “Hamas Announces Participation in Legislative Elections”, 13 March 2005, <http://www.hamasonline.com/nucleus/plugins/print/print.php?itemid=1554>, accessed on 04 May 2005

The content and boundaries of the PLO's Islamic rhetoric was specified by the PLO's dependence on international legitimacy, on its Third World revolutionary rhetoric. Thus the PLO like Fateh and Arafat referred to Islamic discourse through balancing it with Third worldist rhetoric that was fundamental asset of the Palestinian discourse and nationalism. They used Islamic discourse in a strategically way that it did not overwhelm the Third worldist rhetoric. Because the international community and its recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people were the most important factors for the PLO's survival in Palestinian politics, in intra-Arab politics and in international politics especially its relations with Israel. With an intensified Islamic language or with an Islamic discourse similar to Hamas, the PLO cannot survive leaving aside making peace with Israel. The PLO's survival was dependent upon the international politics that were based on secular nationalism not on religious principles.

Furthermore the PLO's adoption of the negotiation device in solving the Palestinian conflict entailed the international acceptance especially the United States' acceptance of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Then the PLO had to be careful not to make the USA to oppose the PLO's goal of solving conflict through negotiations. Especially after the 11 September attacks, in the era of U.S.'s war on Islamic terrorism and in a unipolar world under the U.S. hegemony, the PLO had to be more careful in its Islamic rhetoric because in this international context of the post-September 11, some Israelis compared Arafat with Usame bin-Ladin, and the PLO with Taleban³. To liberate the occupied Palestinian lands, it had to convince the USA and Israel that it had continued to recognize the conflict and its solution on nationalist-secular terms. Recognition in religious terms would alienate these two actors and the European Union from negotiation table due to the fact that such recognition would strengthen the political Islamists' position in the Middle East. Also an intensified Islamic discourse can lead Israel to adopt more harsh policies. Moreover recognition the conflict on religious grounds will lead the conflict to be more complicated because of religious principles. In other words, with such discourse the PLO can compromise its international position and challenge international norms.

³ Mete Çubukçu, *Bizim Filistin: Bir Direnişin Tarihçesi*, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2002), p.46

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