

HAMAS

Andrea Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*,
(Harwood Academic Publishers, The Netherlands, 1998),
187 pages. ISBN: 90-5702-334-2

Shaul Mishal & Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*,
(Columbia University Press, New York, 2006),
280 pages. ISBN: 0-231-14006-1

Mathew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*,
Yale University Press, 2006,
324 pages. ISBN: 978-0-300-12258-9

Serpil AÇIKALIN

After the death of Yasser Arafat at the end of 2004 a new process began not only for Palestinians, but also for the Middle East region and the whole world. Following the death of Arafat many important events occurred in the governance of Palestine, and Hamas (an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawima al-Islamiyya, Islamic Resistance Movement) has become the most important actor after its victory in the 2006 elections. As the most important social and political movement in Palestine today, which is calling for the destruction of Israel in its charter, Hamas deserves to be mentioned. Although there are many books dedicated to give the deepest knowledge about the movement unfortunately it is impossible to give all aspects of its history in one study.

In this context it is very timely to read the books written by Andrea Nüsse, Shaul Mishal & Avraham Sela and Matthew Levitt mainly because each of these books emphasizes different aspects of the movement. In this study, after short information about each of them there will be comparison between three books.

Andrea Nüsse, the author of the first book, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas*, is a German journalist, who studied Arabic and history in Hamburg, Cairo, Paris and Oxford.

Nüsse's book consists of two main parts and is divided into 18 short chapters. Since the "Islamic fundamentalism" concept is simplified in the media and daily life even by the experts, her aim is to stress the nationalist and democratic elements in the ideology of Hamas. In the book she tries to examine Hamas'

system of thought, strategy, goals, ideological foundations, arguments and its religious and western references. As she highlights in the beginning of the book, there is no effort to explain the structure and composition of the Islamist group, and if you are looking for the chronology or stories of suicide attacks by Hamas it is advised to look for another book, because, the attacks are mentioned only once in the 185 page-book.

The main sources of the book, which are used to demonstrate the ideology and political outlook of Hamas are: the Koran, Hadith, and movement's paper, *Filastin al Muslima*, and its leaflets. These sources may be considered beneficial to give a general idea but interviews with leaders would also complement the study.

The first part of the book starts with Islamic thought and revival of Islam in the 20th century, and examines the ideology and all motivations of the movement. In this part, Sayyid Outb is presented as the most important intellectual and theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas was a wing of Muslim Brotherhood). Another thinker, Al Mavdudi provided the blueprint for Hamas to develop a "Jami'a Islami".

Nüsse is trying to prove the deep-seated conflict between the two parties, Israel and Hamas, partly inspired on the Koran. According to Hamas, although the role of religion in Israeli society was very powerful, in reality according to the Koran they strayed from the right godly path and falsified their religion.

"...This conviction represents a variation of the idea of the unchangingness of human nature which is a characteristic trait of the traditional Islamic world-view."(p.35)

In contradiction, Nüsse says that the concept of Islamic anti-Semitism, different from Western anti-Semitism, was not based on race or blood but the feeling of anti-Semitism became more visible as a result of the more recent political conflict over the territory.

She also states that Hamas' view of nationalism differs from Koran and the interpretation of Outb, and defense of homeland and nationalism seem acceptable according to Hamas' ideology. However, although the author refers to Koran and Hadith to prove the idea there are some contradictions. She claims that except for Mecca and Medina no other place is mentioned in the Koran, and the specific mention of Palestine as a holy place has emerged more recently. (p. 48) This is not accurate information because in the sura of Isra (17:1) the name of Mescid al Aqsa is mentioned explicitly. Another claim of the author is that Hamas has influenced by Judaism in which the notions of sacred territory and the Promised Land are prominent. (p. 49) There is one point she missed because the Koran already refers to "the sacred and fertile territory" in Sura of Enbiya . (21:71) Some interpretations of Koran say that this territory is today's Palestine. These examples demonstrate that Nüsse has not fully consulted her source materials: the Koran and Hadith.

The following pages of the book explain other roots of Hamas' ideology which arose as a reaction to Western domination in the region, the inefficiency of International organizations in responding to crises, the deterioration of the Arab regimes and their leaders who seemingly obey the West.

Moreover, the author sees specific political events such as the Gulf War, the mass deportation of Islamists to South-Lebanon in December 1992 and the massacre of Hebron in 1994 as a factor for shaping of Hamas' ideology.

According to Nüsse, Hamas' ideology does not only reflect the Islamic teachings, but also it is a combination of non-Islamic notions such as Christian anti-Semitism, and the Judaic idea of holy territory, both of which are being used in the form Islamic discourse for Jihad duty against Israel and PLO.

Although the book does not mention the organizational/social structure of the movement and has some grammatical errors, it is beneficial for a person who wants to learn more about the ideological bases of Hamas as an introduction.

The other book looking from a different aspect, *Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, was written by two Israeli academics, Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, and first published in 2000. The book was re-issued with a new preface after the victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections.

The most striking aspect in the book, instead of stressing the terrorist activities of the movement, the authors are using a moderate approach to Hamas. The book comprises six chapters, focusing on the movement's roots, institutional structure and social community services. The book begins by explaining of the birth of Palestinian national thought after the 1967 War, and how Hamas conferred an Islamic approach to Palestinian nationalism opposed to the secular and national approach of PLO -Palestinian Liberation Organization-. Hamas combined the jihadist and nationalist beliefs to mobilize the community just as Mujamma (Islamic Center) did in 1973. The book emphasizes that the activities of Hamas were similar to the services of Mujamma in educational, health, social and cultural fields for the aim of Islamisation of the society.

The authors aim to prove that although the doctrine of Hamas is based on dogmas and violence, its decision making process actually has a balance and pragmatism. A sense of political realism and "hear and now" considerations were all the signs of pragmatism.

What is more, Mishal and Sela explain the hierarchical structure of the movement by asking how to find a middle way between the fundamentalist goals and politically adjusting to the PLO on the inside and Israel on the outside. The transformation from informal and interpersonal relationship based on trust and persuasion to hierarchical order leads Hamas to operate in accordance with bureaucratic hierarchy in internal security, military, political activities and preaching.

In the last part of the book it is stated that similar to the position of Egypt today it is not far away for Hamas to be an ally of Israel in the future.

The last book, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism, in the service of Jihād*, was written by Matthew Levitt. As a former FBI counterterrorism analyst and deputy assistant secretary of the Treasury for intelligence and analysis, it is not surprising for him to use the intelligence reports and analyses of FBI and Treasury Department to furnish the reader mostly about the financial background of Hamas.

In the book Levitt's main argument is that, as a terrorist organization, Hamas gears all of its social, charitable and educational wings to reach its ultimate goal i.e. Israel's destruction.

In the book Levitt expresses that since the unitary organization has a single leadership, it is not possible to separate the activities of the movement and charitable works. These include hospitals, education centers, sport centers and mosques which are being used in the way of service of Jihād and actually all of them are tools of terror. In this regard he cites to Israeli and American documents to persuade the reader. Moreover, although his argument is based on the terrorist and suicide bombing activities of the movement, it should not be forgotten that Hamas is an offspring of Muslim Brotherhood. And in the first years the aim of Hamas was defined as the "Islamization" of society. Besides the terrorist activities, Hamas' success in the 2006 elections was a result of its charity activities serving to its "Islamization" goals. Levitt also claims that the enormous cost of operations in the name of *dawa* is funded via religious and charitable fronts.

The neutrality of the author is in question because it is not an objective book and the tone of Levitt's language proves his tendency to Israel. However, in detailing the financial sources of military attacks and *dawa* projects, recruitment of militants, money laundering activities of the movement the book is probably the most comprehensive study in this field.

Hamas is a multi-dimensional organization as being different from other movements in the Middle East. It is associated in minds both with terror and social activities, and according to the approaches of the authors, the studies about Hamas stress different aspects of the movement. Each book focused specifically on one dimension of the organization. While Nüsse stresses mainly ideology and historical roots of the movement, Mishal and Sela comprehensively examined the social aspect of Hamas, and concluded that we must be hopeful about the future of the organization. Finally, through trying to discredit the justification of Hamas, Levitt's book aims to demonstrate that the social dimension of the movement does not make it acceptable. It is possible to say that the three books complement each other because they focus on different aspects of Hamas. Thus after reading the three one can get a well rounded viewing of Hamas.

ERRATUM

Dergimizin 3. Cilt – 12. sayısında yayınlanan 'Da Costa ve CILFIT Kararlarından Sonra Ön Karar Prosedürü Çerçevesinde Başvuru Zorunluluğunun Kapsamı' başlıklı makalenin mizanpajı sırasında oluşan iki hatadan dolayı özür diler ilgili düzeltmeleri siz okurlarımızın dikkatine sunarız:

- 1- Dergide makalenin ikinci yazarı olan Pınar Girgin'in ilk ismi belirtilmemiştir. Herhangi bir karışıklığa yol açmaması için yazarın adının **A. Pınar Girgin** olduğu belirtilir.
- 2- Derginin 55. sayfasındaki "ATAD'ın Başvuru Zorunluluğuna İlişkin Olarak CILFIT Önerisi Yaklaşımı" başlığının doğrusu "**ATAD'ın Başvuru Zorunluluğuna İlişkin Olarak CILFIT Öncesi Yaklaşımı**" şeklinde olacaktır.