This is the English version of Hroub’s book *Hamas: al-Fikr wa-l-Mumārasa al-Siyaṣiyya*, published in Beirut in 1996 by the Institute of Palestine Studies. Only Khaled Hroub, with his unique access to resources and authorities open to him by virtue of his association with the movement, could have produced such a book as early as 1996. It is an excellent account of the Hamas’s political thought and continues to be an important academic reference. In any case, few books have been written on the movement thus far.

The book is a direct narrative of the movement’s history, and an honest account of its political thought and its stand on various issues from armed struggle to power-sharing. In the first chapter Hroub traces the historic roots of the movement, linking it to the Muslim Brotherhood whose presence in Palestine dates back to the mid-1930s. He discusses the formation and dynamics of the Brotherhood in both Gaza and the West Bank, theories about links between it and Fatah (set up in the mid-1960s), and ends with the emergence of Hamas at the onset of the 1987 uprising.

In the second chapter, Hroub addresses Hamas’s political perspective on conflict. This is not as straightforward a topic as the narrative preceding it, because of (understandable) sensitivities and preferences within the Palestinian Islamic movement in favour of one opinion or the other. Nevertheless, it is still an honest account of the debate within the movement, as its leaders are challenged to put forward a political programme of some sort. Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, usually referred to as the founder and leader, is credited for Hamas’s offer of truce as an interim solution to the problem. Overall, in spite of the difficulties posed to the decision-making process, the movement has managed to maintain a balanced position. On the one hand, not a single inch of historic Palestine is negotiable, while, on the other, the movement avoids embroiling itself in conflict of any sort with other countries inside or outside the region, something that has cost the PLO so much since the late 1960s.

Chapter 3 follows up logically and leads on to deal with Hamas’s relations with other Palestinian factions. This too is an issue on which Hamas leading figures and cadres have had different opinions. But Hamas has been more than once vindicated. Significant here is its suspicion of the PLO and of the Palestinian Authority that was born out of the marriage at Oslo between the PLO and Israel. The movement must now be relieved that it resisted pressures since the early 1990s to join the PLO and subsequently the Palestinian Authority. When Hroub first published this book (1996), there was an outspoken current within Palestinian Islamists that favoured more involvement on the part of Hamas in the Palestinian Authority and even in the peace process. Today, no one believes any more in the viability of this option.
Chapter 4 is more straightforward than the two preceding chapters. Hamas’s political relations at the Arab, Islamic, and international level are discussed. Well, so much has been accomplished since the Arabic version of the book was published in 1996. Today, Hamas has offices or representatives in more than one quarter of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Over the past year and a half Hamas has been contacted by no less than four European countries, having been recognized as a formidable and essential player in the conflict. One European country has hosted a Hamas delegation in its own capital upon an official invitation. More of this, Hamas leaders say, is expected in the near future. The setback of losing Jordan as a political base has been compensated by unprecedented successes elsewhere. Ties with many Arab countries have been consolidated and popular support for Hamas across the Muslim world and among Muslim communities in Europe and North America is unrivalled. The chapter concludes with a section on Israel’s perception of Hamas. While little has changed since the mid-1990s in the way Israel perceives Hamas, there are those who believe that some time soon Israel will have to negotiate with none other than Hamas. That will be the time when the truce offer of Sheikh Yassin will seem the only exit for Israel out of its current predicament.

The fifth and last chapter of the book assesses Hamas’s action at the political, social, and military levels. Again, so much has happened since the book was first published. Nevertheless, Hroub’s assessment, true and accurate for the period to the mid-1990s, remains relevant and has held its academic value.

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Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas

In May 2002, in the wake of a spiral of violence evidenced by a major wave of suicide bombings in Israel and the Israeli invasion of the West Bank, the leader of Hamas, the largest Palestinian Islamist organization, indicated that a ceasefire with the Israeli enemy was possible. Sheikh Yassin declared, as he had on previous occasions, that Hamas would honour a ceasefire and halt suicide missions if its enemy halted the targeting of Palestinian civilians. This overture for peace seemed at odds with the general perception of Hamas as a movement locked into a religiously inspired embrace with its Israeli foe. Andrea Nusse, in this extensive examination of primary source material published under the banner of Hamas (in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or abroad), pulls out the complex, often seemingly contradictory, threads relevant to an understanding of the ideological and strategic motives of the Hamas movement.