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FRAMING HAMAS: A CASE STUDY OF U.S. FOREIGN
POLICY AND MEDIA COVERAGE

Jessika Hoffman

2010

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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**FRAMING HAMAS: A CASE STUDY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND MEDIA
COVERAGE**

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Middle East Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

by Jessica Hoffman

BA Political Science
BA Middle Eastern and North African Studies
The University of Michigan 2008

May/2010

The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

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May 20, 2010

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The American University in Cairo

FRAMING HAMAS: A CASE STUDY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND MEDIA COVERAGE

Jessica Hoffman

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Ezzedine Choukri Fishere

Officials of the United States government have, at least rhetorically, made peace in the Middle East a priority in every administration for the six decades. However, despite the premium being placed on peace agreements, foreign policy enacted by the United States often seems to be focused on more short-sighted goals, often at the expense of long-term peace. In no case is this truer than with standing policies regarding Hamas. These policies have failed to bring the Palestinians and Israelis any closer to a peace agreement. If policies fail to achieve their stated goals, one must ask why they remain in place.

A number of studies have been undertaken over the years to explain U.S. policy in the Middle East. These studies have focused on everything from Cold War politics, to the oil market, and the Israel lobby. This thesis will examine an often overlooked factor: the relationship between domestic American media coverage and the foreign policy apparatus of the United States government.

The thesis will show that the government and the media both act upon one another in a way that keeps them both locked into the status quo. Theories such as framing, indexing, cascading activation, hegemony, culturally congruent frames, and the CNN effect will all be used to analyze the relationship and its impact on foreign policy formation.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

I. Introduction

In its attempts to navigate the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States has worked with several negotiating partners on both sides over the years. In the Palestinians, the United States has, for the last several years, found a negotiating partner in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). At the same time, it has long been a pillar of U.S. policy in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that the more radical Hamas be kept from participating in the peace process until it abandoned some of its more radical positions¹ and took steps towards moderation. This policy has two possible aims in the eyes of many American government officials. First, out of a desire to have access to the United States and make genuine steps forward in the peace process, this policy could have prompted Hamas to moderate its position. Alternately, if Hamas refused to take the demanded steps, this policy would ideally keep Hamas relegated to the fringes of Palestinian politics, thereby allowing the United States and Israel to deal with another group, such as the PLO, as a negotiating partner.

As we now know, neither of these intended outcomes came to fruition. The Palestinian Authority, with the Palestine Liberation Organization leading the way, was increasingly seen as largely ineffective and even corrupt. Hamas, on the other hand, was known not simply as a terrorist organization as it is designated by the U.S. Department of

¹ Specifically, these positions include Hamas' refusal to renounce the use of violence, as well as its refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist.

State, but also as a social welfare organization. Indeed, Hamas has a long history of stepping in to provide goods and public services for the Palestinian people when the government failed to do so. It was in this spirit that Hamas took the world by surprise when it emerged from the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections victorious.

In this case, U.S. foreign policy towards Hamas was ineffective in achieving its stated goals. However, this exact policy was turned into public law less than a year after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, and is still in place today. Many attempts have been made over the years to explain U.S. policy in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and while many of these studies have merit, this thesis will examine a previously overlooked factor: the relationship between American domestic media coverage of Hamas and the federal government of the United States, specifically the foreign policy apparatus of the government. This thesis will show that both the government and the media have a history of exerting their power and influence on one another in such a way that keep them both locked into the status quo, despite the fact that the status quo has done little to advance the policy goals.

Since the group's inception in the late 1980s, Hamas and the United States have had a precarious relationship. Indeed, in Hamas's early years, both the United States and Israel supported Hamas on some level, if only to encourage the rise of a group that could counter the power wielded by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). As described by Stephen Zunes, the precursors to Hamas began to emerge in the early 1980s. Supported by funding from Saudi Arabia, schools, health care clinics, social services organizations as well as other entities were established in Palestine. Many of these organizations "stressed an ultraconservative interpretation of Islam, which up to that point had not been very common among the Palestinian population. The hope was that if people spent more time praying in

mosques, they would be less prone to enlist in left-wing nationalist movements challenging the Israeli occupation.² Simply put, religious movements were not believed to be as significant a threat to American or Israeli interests as the PLO. Additionally, while US officials were banned from dealing with representatives of the PLO, they met, intermittently with representatives of Hamas.³ As such, we can arguably say that the Bush administration pursued a working relationship with Hamas during the early years. The administration tolerated and used Hamas as leverage against the monopoly of power with the PLO held in the Palestinian political arena.

From that time on, however, the relationship between the United States and Hamas has been more antagonistic. This is true through the present time, as US policy requires that Hamas renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist before the United States will form diplomatic ties.

Since Hamas emerged as a significant factor in the Palestinian political scene in the late 1980s, US policy has always been not to negotiate with the group until they recognize Israel and renounce the use of violence. This policy, aimed in part at keeping Hamas on the sidelines, was aided by Hamas's own stance on Palestinian politics. Hamas had opted to boycott every election that took place during the group's existence. This boycott is often attributed to the fact that the Palestinian government "emerged from the 1993 Oslo accords with Israel, which Hamas rejected⁴." However, this changed in 2005 when Hamas announced that it would be putting up candidates for election.

² Stephen Zunes, *America's Hidden Role in Hamas's Rise to Power* (Centre for Research on Globalization, 4 Jan 2009) www.globalresearch.ca

³ Ibid.

⁴ Greg Myer, *Hamas Leaders Reaffirms Stance on Israel* (New York Times, 28 Jan 2006).

When Hamas emerged victorious from the elections in January 2006, the United States was forced to make a choice: attempt to engage Hamas in peace negotiations, or continue to rely on past policies and refuse to negotiate with a democratically elected political party. To choose the latter would put the United States in the precarious position of justifying two opposing policies. The first is the refusal to establish diplomatic ties with Hamas until certain conditions are met, and the other is the need to spread democracy throughout the Middle East. Several attempts have been made in the past to explain policy choices made by the United States in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This thesis will argue that the relationship between the media and the American government has an impact on American policy towards Hamas that has received too little attention. Notably, the "relationship is symbiotic; the press needs government (and other) spokespersons and public affairs officers as sources of information, while the government needs the media to get its message across and to carry out a successful foreign policy⁵." This thesis will show that the media and the government both act on one another in a way that keep both locked into the status quo. Neither one is able or even willing to respond to changes on the ground.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term media will be used to refer to the elite media, specifically newspaper coverage. This may be considered a controversial choice in an age where blogging is more popular than ever. However, as a large portion of this thesis is dedicated to the way in which framing operates in the case of coverage of Hamas, it is an appropriate distinction. In particular, the elite media are known as such because they have access to large resources. Additionally, they are sometimes known as the agenda-setting

⁵ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* (Amherst, MA, HarperCollins, 1996) 92.

media, and they “set the framework in which everyone else operates.”⁶ Included in this sector of the media are publications such as the *New York Times* as well as television outlets like CBS. The viewership is also an important factor that helps to distinguish the elite media. “Their audience is mostly privileged people. The people who read the *New York Times*—people who are wealthy or part of what is sometimes called the political class—they are actually involved in the political system in an ongoing fashion.”⁷ While other forms of media are growing in popularity, it is the elite media that has a direct relationship with the government, and is therefore of greater concern in this study.

Much like the government approach to Hamas, media coverage of Hamas is remarkably stagnant. When it comes to matters of foreign policy and international events, many Americans are under-informed. However, like at no point in history, mass media is accessible to millions of people worldwide, provides the public with a flow of information, frames the issues for them, and therefore contributes to shaping public opinion. As this thesis will show, media depictions of Palestinians, and of Hamas in particular, are of a very homogenous nature, even across political lines. As such, the American public faces mass exposure to only the dominant narrative of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. Thus, the lack of debate in the media about Hamas is reflected in the views of the American public.

By constantly framing the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in terms of the “extremist” and “Islamist” groups that are at work in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza, the U.S. print media has pigeon-holed U.S. foreign policy interests. By demonizing Hamas and approaching the Palestinians in an overly hegemonic and simplistic way, the media has made it increasingly difficult for U.S. policy makers to back away from the last 30 years of

⁶ Noam Chomsky, *What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream* (Z Magazine, Oct 1997).

⁷ Ibid.

divisive rhetoric, and take a new and pragmatic approach to Palestinian political groups. In no case is this more true than in the media treatment of Hamas and their victory in the 2006 Palestinian Parliament elections.

There has historically been an incredible amount of debate between scholars about the relationship between the government and the media. However, the problem with this debate is that in a system as fluid as American politics and media, causality is almost impossible to prove beyond all doubt. For that reason, this thesis will examine the ways in which media impacts foreign policy formation, as well as the ways in which the government exerts control over the media. Chapter 3 will cover theories about media impact on the government and policy formation. This includes a discussion of framing, gatekeeping, and the cultural congruence. On the other hand, chapter 5 will entail a discussion of the ways in which government can exercise power over and use the media. This will consist of discussions about the impact of hegemony, consensus building, and control over the flow of information. Rather than attempt to fit this case study into one school of thought regarding the directional flow of influence, this thesis will examine all of the different ways that the relationship between the government and the media can have an impact on the formation of policy towards Hamas.

In this case, both the government and media work upon one another in such a way that keeps them both locked into the status quo. I argue that the relationship between the elite media and the government to which Chomsky refers is one marked by codependency. The elite media frames the issues for the public according to one dominant narrative. By doing so, it makes politicians, individuals elected by the general public, unwilling to challenge the overriding discourse. On the other hand, the elite media gets a significant

amount of its information from official government sources. Additionally, the media is commonly used by the government as a tool through which it can defend and promote standing policies.

This thesis will show that despite changes on the ground, most notably the results of the 2006 Palestinian Legislative elections, neither government policy, nor media coverage of Hamas changed significantly in response. The relationship between elite media and government has made it difficult for either one to adopt a pragmatic approach to changes in the Palestinian political scene.

II. Research Questions

The primary question that this thesis will seek to address is the interaction between the media and the government in the formulation of US policy towards Hamas. There has been significant study of the role of media in government and policy formation, but there is little research on the way in which media directly affects policy-making in the case of Palestinian issues. This thesis will examine and question the ways in which media and government interact over the issues surrounding the formulation of policy towards Hamas.

This thesis will begin by addressing issues which will define the problem and set the boundaries for research. To do this, this thesis will cover the historical background of Hamas, as well as an overview of US foreign policy towards Hamas and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This background will be necessary to show that American policies have been ineffective.

Following this, the thesis will examine the specific ways in which media interacts with the government's policy toward Hamas. The first part will look at the way that media

has a direct impact on the actions of policymakers. The question to be answered is does the lack of debate in media coverage deter policymakers from questioning policies regardless of their level of effectiveness. Another way to approach this question is in terms of Framing: does the media frame the issues surrounding Hamas in such a way that politicians are unwilling to question the current policy? This section of the thesis is heavily based on the agenda setting approach, and will attempt to answer questions by showing that media has a great deal of influence on what the public believes is politically important, and what policies they will support.

The following section will look at political influence traveling in the opposite direction: the extent to which policymakers use the media in order to promote current policies. It will address the degree to which policymakers successfully prevent debate by using the media to support their policies. This section of the thesis will cover a number of theories and approaches which detail the manner in which the government can exert a level of control over the media. Several of these approaches focus on the ability of, and extent to which, the government can control the flow of information. The indexing approach assumes that conflict and disagreement among political elites is common. As such, debate in the media is a reflection of the debate taking place in the government. In this case study, the hegemony approach may be more applicable. This approach begins with the premise that government officials tend to agree on basic principles, and this agreement creates an environment in which the flow of contradictory information is impeded.

All of these approaches fall within the theoretical framework of agenda setting. Agenda setting can be described as the process by which issues are prioritized and then presented. The cornerstone piece of work done on agenda setting was done by Maxwell

McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1970s, who argued that the mass media has great influence in setting the agenda. This influence can be attributed, in large part to a number of processes, including salience, framing, gatekeeping, and priming. Each of these processes help to set the agenda, as well as helping to inform the public perspective and opinion.

III. Literature Review

The relationship between these elements and foreign policy making will be analyzed here through the agenda setting approach. The first extensive work on this approach was done in the early 1970s by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. They argued that by choosing what issues to cover, the media inevitably plays a role in setting the public agenda (the issues that the public views as important). They claim that, "While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues."⁸ However, this seminal work focused primarily on the impact of media coverage on political campaigns. I would argue that the ability for mass media to shape opinions in addition to the discourse increases in foreign policy matters due to the fact that the general public is arguably less familiar with international issues and therefore depends more on media for framing. This in turn makes gatekeeping more effective (assuming that there is consensus in the media on the coverage content).

Since that time, more work has been done to examine the relationship between media and government, especially in the American case. Doris Graber has written and edited a number of books on the role of media in American politics. In Media Power in Politics,

⁸ Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, *The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media*. (The Public Opinion Quarterly, 1972) 177.

edited by Graber in 1994, Patrick O’Heffernan lists some of the functions that mass media serves in foreign policy. He included: a rapid source of information useful for policy decisions, an agenda setter which influences the agendas of the U.S. and other nations, a proxy for diplomats, a diplomatic signaling system with policy influence, and a tool used by terrorists and nongovernmental organizations.⁹

This thesis will use a number of these functions to examine the role that media plays in the specific case involving US policy toward Hamas. In addition to a number of studies on the varying functions of media in foreign policy, there have been case studies looking at the role of the media in relation to a specific event or international actor. However, there has not, as of yet, been a case study of media involvement and US policy toward Hamas, which is the niche this thesis will fill.¹⁰

Finally, there are two explanations of the relationship between the media and political decision making that are currently popular: these two explanations are known as the ‘CNN effect’ and the ‘manufacturing consent thesis.’ The CNN effect has arguably grown directly out of agenda-setting theory, and argues that the mass media has the ability to set the public agenda, thereby forcing governments to act in cases in which they otherwise would have remained neutral. The manufacturing consent thesis argues that, rather than media forcing

⁹ *Media Power in Politics*. Ed. Doris A. Graber. 3rd Edition. (Washington D.C., Congressional Quarterly Press, 1994) 325-326.

¹⁰ Examples of Such case studies include Warren P. Strobel’s *Late-Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media’s Influence on Peace Operations*, which examined the role that media played in the government’s decision to deploy troops on peacekeeping missions, and Nicholas O. Berry’s *Foreign Policy and the Press: An Analysis of The New York Times’ Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy*, which used specific events such as the Bay of Pigs and the Iran hostage crisis as case studies.

government action, the media is used to support government policy.¹¹ However, once again, there has yet to be a case study with these theories involving Hamas.

The thesis will also address the past and current US policies toward Hamas and, more generally, Palestinians. As such, the thesis will make use of the foreign policy analysis approach in order to establish a history of ineffective policies toward the Palestinians. In particular, there are two models of foreign policy analysis that will be relevant: the political process model and the self-aggrandizement model. The political process model takes into consideration the impact of non-government actors, including the media. The self-aggrandizement model, on the other hand, argues that political actors act on behalf of their own interests, such as political survival.¹²

IV. Methodology and Chapter Outline

This thesis will make use of a variety of primary and secondary sources. . The primary basis for one part of my argument is that there is a lack of debate in the media about Hamas, and about the policies the US government has put in place to deal with Hamas. I will use newspaper articles in order to establish a pattern of homogenous media coverage.

For the purpose of this thesis, the articles chosen for analysis will come from two major newspapers, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. According to annual reports by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, both of these newspapers are consistently in the

¹¹ For additional information see "Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention" by Livingston, "The CNN Effect: Can the News Media Drive Foreign Policy?" and "Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics" by Robinson.

¹² For examples of the literature on these models, see Paul A. Sabatier's *Theories of Policy Process*, Valerie M. Hudson's *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Analysis*, and Howard J. Wiarda's *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes*.

top five nationally in terms of circulation numbers^{13 14}. "Of course, the best way to cover an international story is to have someone in the field who knows the area or country involved well. *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, which provide more foreign coverage than any other American newspapers, have between 20 and 30 news bureaus worldwide...Most newspapers have few or no overseas bureaus¹⁵." In order to highlight the consistency in coverage of Hamas, despite changes in the current political environment, this analysis will use several articles from each newspaper¹⁶. This thesis will make use of five *New York Times* articles from the month before the 2006 Palestinian Legislative elections, and five from the month after. Additionally, it will use three *Washington Post* articles from the month before the election, and five from the month following the election¹⁷.

Additionally, the sections of the thesis which focus on government, rather than media, primacy in this case study will feature a number of government documents, including press releases and public statements by government officials. These primary sources will show that much like the media coverage, government policy and rhetoric have gone relatively unchanged.

To go about this analysis in an organized fashion, the thesis will be formatted as follows. Chapter 2 will provide both political and historical background information for the rest of the thesis. This entails a brief history of Hamas, with special attention paid to the period after the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections. It will also include an overview of

¹³ <http://www.thepaperboy.com/usa-top-100-newspapers.cfm>

¹⁴ <http://www.infoplease.com/ipea/A0004420.html>

¹⁵ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* (Amherst, MA, HarperCollins, 1996) 78.

¹⁶ As an organizational note, this analysis will cover the *New York Times* articles in chronological order, followed by the *Washington Post* articles.

¹⁷ Attempts were made to find five *Washington Post* articles from before the election, but only three suitable articles were found.

US policy towards Hamas and the US position that Hamas is a terrorist organization. Chapter 3 will focus on theories that place the media in a position of primacy in terms of its ability to impact foreign policy formation. This will include a discussion of framing, gatekeeping, the CNN effect, cultural congruency, and the role of public opinion. Chapter 4 will then apply those theories in order to analyze the previously discussed newspaper articles. Chapter 5 will examine the reverse of chapter 3. It will look at theories which place the government in the position of primacy, and attribute changes in media coverage to fluctuations within the government. Additionally, it will use a number of government documents to demonstrate the consistent nature of US policy towards Hamas. Finally, chapter 6 will be the conclusion. This chapter will contain final analysis of the role the media plays in shaping US policy toward Hamas. It will also offer recommendations for the future if policymakers are to draft pragmatic and effective policy.

Chapter 2 – Historical Background

This chapter will provide the historical reference point from which our analysis of more recent events will stem. This chapter will begin with a brief historical overview of Hamas, with special attention paid to the period since the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections. Additionally, this chapter will give an overview of U.S. foreign policy towards Hamas, again with special emphasis on stances taken in the time near the 2006 election. As a part of the overview of U.S. foreign policy towards Hamas, this chapter will make the argument that policy stances taken by the United States have, for the most part, remained stagnant despite changes in both American administrations and the Palestinian political scene.

While Hamas as an independent organization first emerged in the mid-1980s during the First Intifada, the group can trace its roots back to the Muslim Brotherhood¹⁸, which established a wing in Palestine. While the Muslim Brotherhood has “shied away from active resistance against the Israeli occupation,”¹⁹ Hamas was “created from its own ranks expressly for that purpose.”²⁰ However, this active resistance did not take on an explicitly violent character until the First Intifada. Before that time, the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine was

¹⁸ The Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamic political, religious, and social movement that was established in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna. For a more in depth discussion of the Muslim Brotherhood, see Richard P. Mitchell's, The Society of Muslim Brothers.

¹⁹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Hamas: A Historical and Political Background* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 1993), 5.

²⁰ Ibid

focused more on “‘the upbringing of an Islamic generation’ through the establishment of religious schools, charity associations, social clubs, and so on.”²¹ While violence has undoubtedly been a part of the activities undertaken by Hamas, these sorts of social welfare projects have also continued until this day. This is a fact that is all too often overlooked during the creation of U.S. policy towards Hamas. In order for a policy to be effective, it must acknowledge the nuances of groups involved, rather than reducing groups to simple talking points. In the case of Hamas, this means that policies developed by the United States must recognize the social welfare role of Hamas in addition to the violent activities which it undertakes.

The early history of Hamas begins in 1935, “when Hasan al-Banna sent his brother, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Banna, to establish contacts there”²². In 1945, the Muslim Brotherhood officially opened its branch in Jerusalem, and by 1947 the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine had twenty-five branches²³. From these early days, the primary focus of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine was of a social and religious nature, rather than a political one²⁴.

The Muslim Brotherhood had a number of means at its disposal in spreading religious ideas and rallying support for the Islamic movement. Aside from the various associations it had established throughout the territories such as libraries and sports and social clubs, the organization used *zakat* (alms giving, one of the five pillars of Islam) to help thousands of needy families. Thousands of children were enrolled in nursery schools, kindergartens, and schools run by the Islamic movement. Loans were extended to students in Palestinian and Arab universities²⁵.

²¹Ziad Abu-Amr, *Hamas: A Historical and Political Background* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 1993), 6.

²²Ibid 6.

²³Ibid 6.

²⁴Ibid 7.

²⁵Ibid 7.

This was the case for several decades, and became the source of some discontent among the Palestinian public. Over the course of several years, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, while supportive of the groups' social welfare and religious activities, became increasingly frustrated with its unwillingness to participate in an active resistance against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

In the years following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, the Brotherhood continued to concentrate mainly on what it described as "the upbringing of an Islamic generation" through the establishment of religious schools, charity associations, social clubs, and so on. But the Brotherhood's emphasis on the Islamic restructuring of society and religious education seemed to have little relevance for a population that was seeking liberation from foreign occupation. The emerging Palestinian nationalist resistance movement had far greater appeal, and the failure of the Brothers to participate in this resistance cost them many potential adherents²⁶.

By the late 1970s, however, with the establishment of several organizational changes to the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran, public support was once again on their side. Additionally, while it was still not involved in armed resistances, the Brotherhood became more politically active, especially on university campuses²⁷. Nevertheless, within the next few years, the Brotherhood's failure to engage in armed resistance against the Israeli occupation led to the creation of Islamic Jihad, which broke away from the Brotherhood in the early 1980s²⁸. In the late 1980s, another split from the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine would take place, and this time it would lead to the creation of Hamas.

The First Intifada broke out spontaneously and took many political and religious leaders in the Palestinian territories by surprise. "On 8 December 1987, a motor accident in

²⁶ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Hamas: A Historical and Political Background* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 1993), 7.

²⁷ Ibid 7.

²⁸ Ibid 8.

the Gaza Strip involving an Israeli truck and small vehicles transporting Palestinian workers, several of whom were killed, triggered the riots that spread and evolved into what became known as the intifada²⁹." In response to the riots, some members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza met the next day to discuss ways in which the movement could be used to "stir up religious and nationalist sentiments³⁰." Individuals present at these early meetings included Shaykh Ahmad Yasin and Dr. 'Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi³¹, both of whom would be prominent leaders of Hamas for years to come.

Hamas officially came into being in January 1988, when the group began distributing leaflets under that name, encouraging the public to stand up against the Israeli occupation³². A few months later, in August 1988, Hamas released its charter, "which contains the philosophy of the Movement, its rationale, and its positions not only on such central issues as the Palestine problem but also on social welfare, the role of women, other Islamic movements, nationalist movements and the PLO, the Arab countries, and so on³³." Importantly, while the charter describes Hamas as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, there are several aspects of the charter which diverge noticeably from the Brotherhood's core goal of transforming society. Rather, the charter places a greater emphasis on jihad and the Palestine problem. There are several articles which focus on the Palestine problem and have been areas of contention during the peace process.

One of the stances taken in the charter that is of particular concern to this thesis is that participation in peace negotiations is undesirable. Article 13 of the charter says the following

²⁹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Hamas: A Historical and Political Background* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 1993), 10.

³⁰ Ibid 10.

³¹ Ibid 10.

³² Ibid 10.

³³ Ibid 12.

about peace negotiations and initiatives: "What are called 'peaceful solutions' and 'international conferences' to solve the Palestine question all conflict with the doctrine of the Islamic Resistance Movement, for giving up any part of the homeland is like giving up part of the religious faith itself."³⁴ From there, the charter goes on to say that all peace initiatives are a "waste of time and acts of absurdity."³⁵ For these reasons, among others, Hamas as refused to participate in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, and has historically called for the withdrawal of Palestinian delegations to peace conferences. However, this changed in 2005 when Hamas officials announced that the party would be putting officials up for office in the upcoming Palestinian Legislative elections.

Additionally, Hamas, with the Charter as its basis, has continually refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, and holds that "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad"³⁶. This has been a consistent source of conflict, as the renunciation of these two stances has been a requirement of the United States to allow Hamas a part in the peace process.

While Hamas's founding as a group independent of the Muslim Brotherhood was arguably a result of the First Intifada, it was during the Al-Aqsa Intifada that Hamas began to gain even more widespread recognition in Palestinian society. In September 2000, with negotiations between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat on the verge of being back on track, Likud leader Ariel Sharon insisted on visiting the Temple Mount. "Hundreds of Israeli police accompanied him. Palestinians reacted angrily to what they viewed as a deliberate

³⁴ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Hamas: A Historical and Political Background* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 1993), 12.

³⁵ Ibid 12.

³⁶ *The Hamas Charter* (Translated by the Avalon Project at Yale Law School), Article 15.

provocation, a flaunting of Israeli power and claim to control over the holy sites³⁷." The anger quickly erupted into fighting that would last nearly five years. The PLO's inability to address the issues which were frustrating the Palestinian public had been a cause for concern for several years. Hamas's role in both the First Intifada and the Al-Aqsa Intifada showed it to be a viable alternative for those Palestinians tired of waiting for the dominant party to act.

The founding members of Hamas, namely Ahmad Yasin and 'Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, played an active role in the growth of the movement during the course of its first two decades in existence. This changed in the spring of 2004, when they were both assassinated by Israeli forces, "Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, the leader, founder, and spiritual symbol of the movement, on 22 March, and Dr. 'Abd al-'Aziz Rantisi, Yasin's successor, on 17 April³⁸." This is an important moment to note in the recent history of Hamas, because it marks a turning point in Palestinian politics.

A poll carried out in the West Bank and Gaza Strip two weeks after Yasin's killing found Hamas, for the first time, the most popular movement in Palestine. Though the poll's results were undoubtedly colored by the wave of rage and sympathy that swept the occupied territories at the time, no one would question that Hamas's popularity has been steadily on the rise since the intifada began. If there is one immediate observation that can be made in the wake of the killings, it is the continuing rise of Hamas's popular legitimacy set against the continuing decline of that of the Palestinian Authority (PA)³⁹.

The Palestinian people were losing confidence in the Palestinian Authority after a series of failed peace negotiations and allegations of corruption. The fact that Hamas leaders were being targeted for assassination by Israel only served to highlight the difference between Hamas and the PA: Hamas was willing to take to the front lines of the resisting the

³⁷ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005) 373.

³⁸ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas after Shaykh Yasin and Rantisi* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 2004) 21.

³⁹ Ibid 21.

occupation, while the PA was not. Perhaps as a result, Hamas had been gaining, and would continue to gain, popularity. This popularity combined with frustration felt with the Palestinian Authority, and the PLO specifically, would lead to the largely unexpected results of the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections.

For its part, the United States under the Bush administration seemed to be losing confidence in the ability of the Palestinian Authority to maintain daily control in the Palestinian territories, and the thought of the PA enforcing a cease-fire was almost out of the question. Therefore, it was at this time that the beginnings of contention between two standing administration policies could be seen. The Bush administration would push for reform of the Palestinian government, but still refuse to acknowledge the popular appeal of groups labeled terrorist organizations by the State Department. On June 24, 2002, President Bush made the following statement in regards to the need for new Palestinian leadership before a Palestinian state can be established:

“Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership,” he said, “so that a Palestinian state can be born.” When that happens, “the United States will support the creation of a Palestinian state, whose borders and certain aspects of its sovereignty will be provisional until resolved as part of a final settlement in the Middle East...The United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian state until its leaders engage in a sustained fight against terrorist and dismantle their infrastructure.”⁴⁰

Not only did these statements set the stage for future refusals to utilize Hamas as a negotiating partner, but they also served to alienate Arafat. From this moment onward Arafat was, “little more than a junior member of the axis of evil in the view of President Bush. No American official would deal with him from here on out⁴¹.” If peace was truly the final goal

⁴⁰ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005) 398.

⁴¹ *Ibid* 398-399.

towards which this policy was aimed, then it was a bad policy decision to alienate both the current Palestinian government, as well as rule out the option for future reform. This is not an isolated event. As the next part of this chapter will show, U.S. policy towards Hamas, and the Middle East as a whole, often claims peace as a stated goal, while the actual policies are too stagnant and short sighted to have any significant chance at achieving peace.

The following section of this chapter will focus not on the history of Hamas, but on the history of US policy towards Hamas. Due to the fact that Hamas did not exist as an official independent group until 1988, this section will cover the basics of US policy under the George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush administrations. In other words, the time span examined will cover the inception of Hamas through the aftermath of the 2006 Palestinian Legislative elections.

While official United States policy towards Hamas has been remarkably consistent over the years, there has been some fluctuation beneath the surface. During the early years of the Bush administration, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was the single most powerful player in Palestinian politics. Shortly before George H. W. Bush took office, "Secretary of State George Shultz stated on December 14, 1988, that the PLO had met the conditions stipulated by the United States, and that the United States would open a dialogue with the PLO in Tunis, Tunisia, on December 16, 1988."⁴² From this point forward, not only was the PLO the most dominant force in the Palestinian political landscape, but the group also had a monopoly on diplomatic access to the United States and the peace process at large. For that reason, both the United States and Israel lent varying levels of support to Hamas in order to counter the prominence of the PLO.

⁴² *Palestinians and Middle East Peace, Issues for the United States* (CRS Report, Issue Brief for Congress, 10 Oct 2003).

Israel initially encouraged the rise of the Palestinian Islamist movement as a counter to the Palestine Liberation Organization, the secular coalition composed of Fatah and various leftist and other nationalist movements. Beginning in the early 1980s, with generous funding from the U.S. backed family dictatorship in Saudi Arabia, the antecedents of Hamas began to emerge through the establishment of schools, health care clinics, social service organizations and other entities that stressed an ultraconservative interpretation of Islam, which up to that point had not been very common among the Palestinian population. The hope was that if people spent more time praying in mosques, they would be less prone to enlist in left-wing nationalist movements challenging the Israeli occupation.⁴³

Additionally, when administration officials were still prohibited from meeting with representatives of the PLO, they would meet with Hamas officials⁴⁴. In these early years, the US policy towards Hamas was more concerned with undermining the power of the PLO than with the potential threats posed by Hamas. As such, we can say that the administration used Hamas as leverage against the political power of the PLO.

Moreover, it is important to mention that in 1989, Israel declared Hamas to be a terrorist organization, and outlawed the group following a number of violent attacks against Israeli citizens. When it comes to security concerns, few nations or groups have received as much consistent support from the United States as Israel. So it should come as no surprise that just a few years later, the United States followed Israel's example and declared Hamas a terrorist organization in January 1995 under President Clinton.

By the time President Clinton took office, Hamas was actively boycotting the peace process, and for this reason, it was a relatively simple affair to assure that Hamas remained on sidelines of Palestinian politics. Most notably, this included Hamas's refusal to acknowledge the agreements made at the Oslo Accords. This refusal was based in the idea

⁴³ Stephen Zunes, *America's Hidden Role in Hamas's Rise to Power* (Centre for Research on Globalization, 4 Jan 2009) www.globalresearch.ca

⁴⁴ Ibid.

that acknowledging Israel's right to exist in Palestine was sacrilegious. As a result, Hamas refused to participate in a government that was formed as a result of this agreement. While the Oslo Accords were ultimately unsuccessful in achieving a lasting peace, leaders of Hamas were vocal in their opposition to the Accords, vowing not to abide by the agreement.

At the time, the United States did not pursue a policy of democracy building in the Middle East, which made the goal of keeping Hamas uninvolved simple. "Although I was proud of the Clinton administration's foreign policy, and I understand that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, I regret not having done more to push for liberalization within the Arab world. We did nudge at times...But we did not make it a priority. Arab public opinion, after all, can be rather scary."⁴⁵ As such, the Clinton administration was able to avoid Hamas without dealing with the accusations of hypocritical policies that would plague the next administration.

Another factor for the Clinton administration to consider was the creation of Hamas's military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in 1992. While Hamas had been committing acts of violence for some time, the creation of an expressly military wing arguably made it much easier for American policymakers to ignore the other roles that Hamas played in Palestinian society.

Without regard to the somewhat stale argument about 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter,' the official U.S. position is problematic for two reasons. First by labeling Hamas a terrorist group, the government ignores most of what Hamas actually does. Hamas is a social movement with thousands of activists and hundreds of thousands (perhaps millions) of Palestinian sympathizers, and it engages in extensive political and social activities far removed from suicide bombers...⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Madeleine K. Albright, *Bridges, Bombs, or Bluster?* (Foreign Affairs, Sep.-Oct. 2003) 13.

⁴⁶ Glen E. Robinson, *Hamas as a Social Movement* in "Islamic Activism: a Social Movement Theory Approach" ed. by Quintan Wiktorowicz (Indiana University Press, 2003) 112.

The creation of a military wing made it easier still for the United States to continue in its efforts to keep Hamas relegated to the periphery. Rather than focus on the social welfare role that Hamas plays in Palestinian society, the United States is able to act in accordance with the dominant discourse: that Hamas is a violent terrorist organization with no role to play in the peace process. While Hamas is classified as a terrorist organization and has certainly participated in and been responsible for acts of violence, a failure to acknowledge that the group is more complicated can only lead to overly simplistic policies.

The beginning of the George W. Bush administration marked a significant shift in policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For the most part, the Bush administration was so consumed with other issues to invest the necessary time to formulate a comprehensive policy toward this conflict.

This latter attitude was well exemplified by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice in early 2002, when she declared, alluding to U.S. priorities such as the war on terror and ousting Iraq's Saddam Hussein, that there was no time for 'marginal issues' like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And because the administration's real focus has always been elsewhere – on pursuing terrorists, preparing for the war on Iraq, managing its occupation of Iraq, and attempting to 'transform' the Middle East (including ensuring Israel's regional dominance in the guise of security) – the Bush team never developed a strategy for resolving the conflict. Instead, it could only react to events – hence the Bush presidency's catalog of 'peace plans' put forward in response to international pressures and then discarded when the pressures eased or when Israel objected.⁴⁷

Without a new policy developed to specifically address the unique concerns of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Bush administration came to use a number of other previously existing and more general policies and worldviews in the case of Hamas. These included the need to fight terrorism, the desire to spread democracy to the Middle East, and the

⁴⁷ Kathleen Christison, "All Those Old Issues": George W. Bush and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (Journal of Palestine Studies, Winter 2004) 37.

longstanding refusal to include Hamas in the peace process until they renounced violence and acknowledged Israel's right to exist.

The overwhelming worldview that the Bush administration hoped to apply to the Middle East was that of democracy building, characterized by the belief that the spread of democracy, particularly in the Middle East, would lead directly to a decrease in anti-American sentiments.

The Bush administration and its defenders contend that this push for Arab democracy will not only spread American values but also improve U.S. security. As democracy grows in the Arab world, the thinking goes, the region will stop generating anti-American terrorism. Promoting democracy in the Middle East is therefore not merely consistent with U.S. security goals; it is necessary to achieve them.⁴⁸

This policy extended from places such as Afghanistan and Iraq to the Palestinian territories. This policy was encouraged in the West Bank and Gaza without consideration for the possibility that Hamas could abandon its typical stance of boycotting elections and emerge victorious.

Furthermore, this policy was arguably more self-serving than motivated by an altruistic desire to make life better for Palestinians.

Finally, the election result exposed the black hole at the heart of Washington's democracy missions in the Middle East. The mission had been sold publicly as the cure for all the ills that beset the region: authoritarianism, corrupt government, and political extremism. In practice, democracy (or more precisely elections) was promoted to grant retroactive license to U.S.-driven policies of regime change in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian occupied territories...in all cases, the political aim of democracy was to consolidate the new American order in the Middle East...⁴⁹

⁴⁸ F. Gregory Gause III, *Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?* (Foreign Affairs, Sep.-Oct. 2005) 62.

⁴⁹ Graham Usher, *The Democratic Resistance: Hamas, Fatah, and the Palestinian Elections* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Spring 2006) 21.

A lasting peace agreement simply cannot happen if the policies adopted by the U.S. administration are self-serving, rather than being enacted for the best interests of the people in the region.

The other two stances held by the Bush administration went hand in hand: the need to fight terrorism and the need to continue to marginalize Hamas. For years now it has been standard US policy that Hamas must renounce violence and recognize Israel before official diplomatic ties can be established between Hamas and the United States. While there have been fluctuations in policy and changes in administrations, this caveat has been constant. By the time the Bush administration took office, Hamas had been considered a terrorist organization by the State Department for nearly six years. According the US Department of State, there are several legal ramifications associated with groups being designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. First, it is illegal for individuals in the United States to provide such organizations with material support or resources. Members of such organizations are inadmissible to, and subject to removal from, the United States. Finally, and most importantly, any U.S. financial institution that has control over or possession of the funds of such an organization is required to retain possession and report it to the U.S. Department of Treasury⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ The actual law is available on the State Department website at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm> and reads as follows:

1. It is unlawful for a person in the United States or subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to knowingly provide "material support or resources" to a designated FTO. (The term "material support or resources" is defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2339A(b)(1) as " any property, tangible or intangible, or service, including currency or monetary instruments or financial securities, financial services, lodging, training, expert advice or assistance, safehouses, false documentation or identification, communications equipment, facilities, weapons, lethal substances, explosives, personnel (1 or more individuals who maybe or include oneself), and transportation,

The most significant aspect of these legal ramifications are the financial consequences. Following the 2006 elections, the United States opted to cut financial aid to the Palestinian territories, out of fear that the money would make its way into Hamas hands.

After the 2006 Hamas victory in PA legislative elections, U.S. assistance to the Palestinians was restructured and reduced. The U.S. halted direct foreign aid to the PA but continued providing humanitarian and project assistance to the Palestinian people through international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The ban on direct assistance continued during the brief tenure of a Hamas-led unity government (February to June 2007).⁵¹

By taking this course of action, the Bush administration chose to act on Hamas's status as a terrorist organization, rather than as a democratically elected government.

From just this one instance, it is clear that there will be situations in which the dual policies of fighting terrorism and encouraging the spread of democracy will clash against one another. In these cases, the United States must prioritize between the two and, as a result, comes off appearing hypocritical. In particular, public opinion of the United States in the Middle East is damaged by a hypocritical application of this foreign policy. "For years, Arab populations have received a distorted message from Washington: that the United States

except medicine or religious materials." 18 U.S.C. § 2339A(b)(2) provides that for these purposes "the term 'training' means instruction or teaching designed to impart a specific skill, as opposed to general knowledge." 18 U.S.C. § 2339A(b)(3) further provides that for these purposes the term 'expert advice or assistance' means advice or assistance derived from scientific, technical or other specialized knowledge."

2. Representatives and members of a designated FTO, if they are aliens, are inadmissible to and, in certain circumstances, removable from the United States (see 8 U.S.C. §§ 1182 (a)(3)(B)(i)(IV)-(V), 1227 (a)(1)(A)).
3. Any U.S. financial institution that becomes aware that it has possession of or control over funds in which a designated FTO or its agent has an interest must retain possession of or control over the funds and report the funds to the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

⁵¹ Jim Zanotti, *U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians* (CRS Report for Congress, 8 Oct 2008).
1.

stands for democracy, freedom, and human rights everywhere except the Middle East and for everyone except the Arabs.”⁵² Specifically, we see that administrations in the United States seem to support the theory of democracy building, only to back away from their rhetoric when groups antagonistic to the United States or Israel appear to be on the verge of being elected. For example, the United States supported a military coup during the 1992 elections in Algeria, when an Islamist group was poised to take control of the government. “Secretary of State James Baker will later explain, ‘We pursued a policy of excluding the radical fundamentalists in Algeria even as we recognized that this was somewhat at odds with our support of democracy.’”⁵³

In the case of the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, the United States did not opt to intervene when Hamas appeared to be performing well. However, despite the democratic nature of the elections, the Bush administration repeatedly refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the election results. This continued to be true even after the Mecca agreement and the formation of the Palestinian National Unity government. In fact, the Bush administration has refused to even speak with Hamas officials, citing Hamas’s place on the State Department’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

The official said that a ban on contacts with Hamas was required because the group was listed by the United States as a terrorist organization, and that the United States would not follow a practice of some European countries of engaging with the group’s political wing even if it also had an armed wing carrying out attacks on civilians.

‘The president has said that Hamas is on the terrorism list, and it’s there for a reason,’ said the official, speaking on a condition of anonymity. ‘We don’t

⁵² Madeleine K. Albright, *Bridges, Bombs, or Bluster?* (Foreign Affairs, Sep.-Oct. 2003) 13.

⁵³ *Context of 'January 11, 1992: Islamic Party's Election in Algeria Upended by Army Coup; Years of Violence Ensnue'* (History Commons, <http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a011102algeriaelection>)

recognize that you have changed your behavior just because a group is running candidates as well as suicide bombers.⁵⁴

Despite the fact that it is the government's right to make judgments about which organizations it will negotiate with, and judge which policies are appropriate for any given situation, we must expect that the general public in the Middle East will become skeptical of U.S. foreign policy in the region if it is not applied consistently. The United States cannot simultaneously promote democracy and the democratic process, and then interfere in that process, or refuse to acknowledge the results of such elections. To do so is to lose credibility in the eyes of the international public.

And so it was with all of these policy concerns in the forefront of the political scene that the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections took place. Despite the fact that spreading democracy was one of the pillars of U.S. foreign policy, the Bush administration announced that no matter what the election results, the United States would not negotiate with Hamas. However, these statements were made at a time when members of the Bush administration, along with many other governments throughout the world, were unaware to Hamas's surging popularity among the Palestinian people. This can arguably be attributed, at least in part, to the lack of a nuanced understanding of the role that Hamas plays in Palestinian society. In the United States, discussion of Hamas almost always centers on their activities as a terrorist organization. The Palestinian people, however, did not vote for a terrorist organization. Rather they voted for the organization that had provided social services that the PLO failed to supply consistently.

⁵⁴ Steven R. Weisman, *U.S. to Shun Hamas Members, Even if Democratically Elected* (New York Times, 7 June 2005).

Once the election results were finalized, the Bush administration stood by its promise to refuse recognition of Hamas's status as a democratically elected part of the Palestinian government. That refusal, along with Hamas's status as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, led to massive economic sanctions, leading to deteriorating economic and political conditions in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

After the 2006 Hamas victory in PA legislative elections, U.S. assistance to the Palestinians was restructured and reduced. The U.S. halted direct foreign aid to the PA but continued providing humanitarian and project assistance to the Palestinian people through international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The ban on direct assistance continued during the brief tenure of a Hamas-led unity government (February to June 2007).⁵⁵

Additionally, these positions taken by the United States have done little to improve the chances of bringing Palestinians and Israelis to the bargaining table to negotiate a lasting peace agreement. Moreover, through the course of the Bush administration, there was little indication that these policies would be altered in favor of a more pragmatic approach that might actually improve the lives of the Palestinians, and bring the Palestinian-Israeli conflict closer to a peaceful resolution.

This position was made into an official law, rather than simply a foreign policy position, in December 2006 with the passage of S.2370, also known as the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006. The law outlines, specifically, what U.S. policy towards Palestine will be.

(Sec. 2) States that it shall be U.S. policy to: (1) support a peaceful, two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in accordance with the Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Roadmap), and oppose those organizations, individuals, and countries that support terrorism and violently reject such two-state solution; (2) promote democracy and the cessation of terrorism and

⁵⁵ Jim Zanotti, *U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians* (CRS Report for Congress, 8 Oct 2008) 1.

incitement in institutions and territories controlled by the Palestinian Authority (PA); and (3) urge members of the international community to avoid contact with and refrain from financially supporting the terrorist organization Hamas until it agrees to recognize Israel, renounce violence, disarm, and accept prior agreements, including the Roadmap⁵⁶.

With the transformation of this policy from an administration position to public law, we can assert that following the Palestinian elections, U.S. policy was not only stagnant, but rather became more hard-line.

The advent of the National Unity government in early 2007 made it even more difficult for the Bush administration to isolate Hamas. However, the administration continued to divert funding away from Hamas because, "Prime Minister Haniyeh of Hamas had 'failed to step up to international standards.'⁵⁷" As a result, the administration sought to control the flow of financial assistance to the PA so that aid could be reinstated without violating U.S. laws for funding terrorist organizations.

During the first year of the Obama administration, there has been talk that the United States would be willing to speak with hostile groups in hopes of improving relations. While there has been little change in tangible policies, the change in rhetoric has been significant, and there have been reports that President Obama has been interested in altering the laws preventing American diplomats from meeting with representatives of Hamas.

Present laws prohibit any direct dealing with Hamas Movement until the Movement bows to US demands, including recognizing the Zionist state, and renouncing 'violence' (the derogatory term for resistance to the illegal foreign occupation), and recognizing al agreements signed by the PLO and Israeli occupation government, which Hamas had firmly rejected...

⁵⁶ S.2370, *The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006*.

⁵⁷ Paul Morro, *International Reaction to the Palestinian Unity Government* (CRS Report for Congress, 9 May 2007) 3.

The Obama administration, the paper added, wants to help soothe the human crisis in Gaza Strip, but 'doesn't know how' due to the ban put on dealing with Hamas.⁵⁸

At the same time, however, the Obama administration has made it clear on numerous occasions that Hamas is still required to reform before serious negotiations could ever take place. In particular, during the presidential campaign, it was made quite clear that "Hamas must change its policies toward Israel and terrorism before it can have diplomatic relations with the United States."⁵⁹

Over the course of the last three decades, the rhetoric used in policy discussions about Hamas has, as one would expect, undergone some change from one administration to the next. On the other hand, the primary policy that has been in place for the duration of that time span is that Hamas must take certain steps towards moderation before diplomatic relations will be considered. Moreover, for the last 15 years, Hamas has been labeled a Foreign Terrorist Organization. As previously covered, that label brings with it very specific legal ramifications; ramifications which have done little to bring opposing parties any closer together.

Most importantly, many policies have been very short-sighted, typically with the intent of keeping one Palestinian group or another isolated from the political process. The policies are stagnant from one administration to the next, despite the fact that they are largely ineffective.

⁵⁸ *Obama asks for modification in US law to talk to Hamas* (Al Jazeera, 29 April 2009).

⁵⁹ James P. Rubin, *Hypocrisy on Hamas* (Washington Post, 16 May 2008).

Chapter 3 – Theories of Media Impact

As shown in chapter 2, US policies towards Hamas have remained relatively stable over the last three decades. During the time period surrounding the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, policies were aimed at continuing to keep Hamas, a group hostile to both Israel and the United States, isolated from the Palestinian political scene. Once Hamas won legitimate seats in the Palestinian Parliament, the United States had to choose whether it would abide by its policy of refusing to negotiate with Hamas until steps towards moderation were taken, or if it would place greater importance and emphasis on democracy building efforts, and recognize Hamas. As discussed in chapter 2, the Bush administration opted for further efforts to isolate Hamas. This was done primarily through economic sanctions, and as a result, life in the Gaza Strip has worsened severely over the last few years. Additionally, the inconsistent application of policy on the part of the United States resulted in accusations of hypocrisy: that democracy was ideal, but only if the public will elect leaders of which the United States approves.

Assuming that finding a peaceful and permanent resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a goal for the United States, as has been stated on several occasions throughout the years, why is it that ineffective policies have become the status quo? There have been numerous attempts over the years to explain the state of U.S. policy towards Israel and towards the Palestinians. These attempts have included examinations of Cold War politics,

petroleum interests, and, perhaps most notably in recent years, the Israel lobby. However, one relationship which has gone mostly un-scrutinized in this case is the one between the media and the government. In an effort to examine the impact that this relationship has on the foreign policy towards Hamas, this chapter will focus on the theories involving the impact that the media has on the government and the foreign policy apparatus in particular. Chapter 5 will then focus on the reverse: theories about how the government has an impact on media coverage. In a case such as this, it is important to examine the flow of power in both directions, because causality is particularly difficult to prove. "The relationship, examined up close, is so intertwined that at times it is all but impossible to determine who is affecting whom – who is setting the agenda and who is following it⁶⁰."

There are several approaches at play which suggest a level of influence can be exerted by the media in the area of foreign policy. One of the most widely acknowledged of these is framing. Framing can be loosely described as the way in which a particular issue is presented. This can extend to choices about what particular aspects of an issue to focus on, the type of images shown on television, and even word choice. A more technical definition can be found in Robert M. Entman's work, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. "The verb 'to frame' (or 'framing') refers to the process of selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality, and enhancing the salience of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality⁶¹." Entman later expands this definition to acknowledge the role that word choice can play. "On the other hand, one other use of the term 'frame' seems clearly appropriate because it does refer to substantive information in the

⁶⁰ Warren P. Strobel, *Late Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997) 2.

⁶¹ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 26.

communicating text that can promote particular interpretations and evaluations⁶².” By framing an issue in a particular way, the media is able to exert some level of control over the way the general public interprets and reacts to the information that it is receiving. Most importantly, framing focuses public attention on one particular strand of the discourse present for any given issue.

The effect of framing is to prime values differently, establishing the salience of the one or the other. Framing thus tends to guarantee a disjunction between acts and (some) attitudes, not because the attitude is not sincerely held, but because it has not been primed while a competing value has. The consequence...is that a majority of the public supports the rights of persons with AIDS when the issue is framed to accentuate civil liberties considerations – and supports as well mandatory testing when the issue is framed to accentuate public health considerations⁶³.

In the case of Hamas, even a very brief overview reveals a dominant frame at work: that of the Arab Muslim terrorist. As we will see in chapter 4, this frame is present in nearly every article analyzed. Indeed, this is true not only of newspaper coverage, but also television. “...television distorts as well as informs. It provides misinformation as well as good information, which therefore affects public opinion as well as, ultimately, foreign policy formation. For example, watching television coverage of the Middle East, one would clearly get the impression that all Arabs, and certainly all Palestinians, are implacably hostile to Israel – which is not in fact the case⁶⁴.” This way of framing the Palestinian-Israeli has become dominant, in fact, that it has become increasingly difficult to challenge.

⁶² Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 27.

⁶³ Paul M. Sniderman, Richard Brody, and Philip Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 51.

⁶⁴ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* (Amherst, MA, HarperCollins, 1996) 80-81.

When one frame becomes hegemonic, the result can be a lack of debate, much like what is seen in today's coverage of Hamas. "The power of consensual news frames, exemplified by the 'war on terrorism' frame in America cannot be underestimated. A one-sided news frame can block the reception of contrary independent evidence⁶⁵." Even if journalists attempt to introduce competing frames, it may be to no avail if the frame currently in place is powerful enough.

These frames are known as culturally congruent frames, which can be defined as "frames congruent with schemas habitually employed by most citizens. An example is President Bush's post-9/11 characterization of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda as 'evil doers'⁶⁶." A more technical definition of cultural congruence is provided by Entman: "Cultural congruence measures the ease with which – all else being equal – a news frame can cascade through the different levels of the framing process and stimulate similar reactions at each step⁶⁷." As such, culturally congruent frames will experience less resistance from the media, government, and the general public. All frames fall on a spectrum of cultural congruence, with more congruent frames often enjoying greater success than less congruent frames. "The more congruent the frame is with schemas that dominate political culture, the more success it will enjoy...Finally, when it comes to news of matters incongruent with dominant schemas, common culture blocks the spread of many mental associations and may

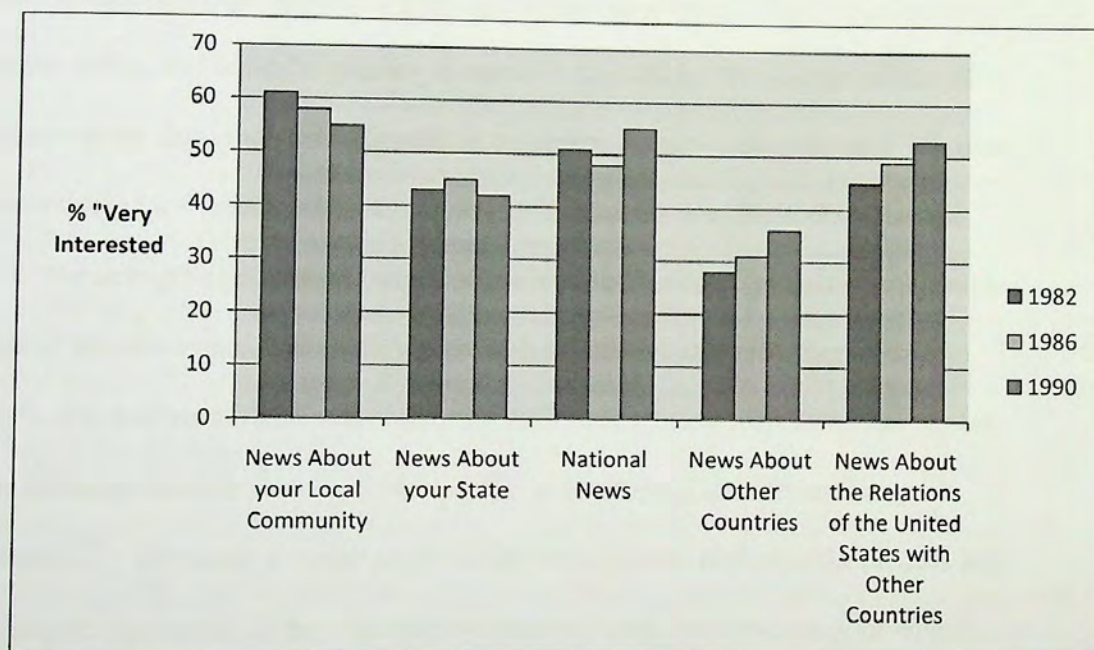
⁶⁵ Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just (Ed), *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public* (New York, Routledge, 2003) 283.

⁶⁶ Matthew A. Baum and Philip B.K. Potter, *Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis* (Annual Review of Political Science, 2008) 51.

⁶⁷ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 14.

discourage thinking altogether⁶⁸." This lack of debate is problematic in any case, but becomes even more disconcerting when the issue being covered falls in the category of foreign affairs.

Foreign affairs, and foreign policy by extension, is an area which many members of the American public are sorely under informed. As shown in the following graph⁶⁹, international news has consistently been seen by Americans as less interesting than news from closer to home.



Keeping this in mind, the lack of debate in the media (about any number of issues) becomes quite problematic. There is even more cause for concern when it becomes clear that, in

⁶⁸ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 14.

⁶⁹ John E. Reilly (Ed.), *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1991*. Council on Foreign Relations: Chicago, 1991.

addition to the lack of debate, the content of most media coverage does not prepare the average viewer to form knowledgeable opinions.

In general, the coverage of motives, goals, or explanations gets short shrift. Paletz found that less than 6 percent of newspaper coverage of selected terrorist activities was devoted to explicit explanations, and the vast majority of coverage (almost 75 percent) ignored discussion of causes of objectives altogether. Atwater found that less than 3 percent of network television coverage was devoted to these kinds of explanations⁷⁰.

These explanations are an integral part of building an informed public, and when they are absent, public opinion is based on faulty information, making dominant frames even more powerful. Media coverage, especially coverage of foreign affairs, is in a prime position to educate the public, and to be the primary source of information. "For foreign affairs, few people have direct data, and most information originates in media reports even if it is passed along selectively (or framed) in conversation with informants who themselves saw the news⁷¹." The strength of dominant frames, along with the lack of explanation provided in coverage of terrorist events, leaves the public with a muddled understanding of foreign affairs. "...the dominant frame made opposing information more difficult for the typical, inexperienced audience member to discern and employ in developing an independent interpretation⁷²." However, it is also important to back up even further in the process and discuss the fact that not all of the available information, even that which may fit within a given frame, will be presented to the general public via either newspaper or television.

I. Gatekeeping

⁷⁰ Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just (Ed), *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public* (New York, Routledge, 2003) 184.

⁷¹ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 124.

⁷² Ibid 49.

At this time, mention should be made of the concept of gatekeeping. Gatekeeping can be described as the process by which information is filtered before publication. This is an important concept if for no other reason than the fact that media is one of, if not the, most popular way for the general public to receive information about foreign affairs. "But of all the groups and institutions performing these 'transmission belt' functions – conveying the values and thoughts of ordinary Americans to decision-makers, as well as transmitting policy pronouncements back to the public – the media have emerged as number one. Americans now receive *most* of their views about foreign policy (and other matters) from the media⁷³." Given this information, we must acknowledge the incredible power that come along with being in a position to decide what information is actually makes it to the general public. These decisions can take the form of something as intentional as which sources to use, or something as mundane as the editorial process. These theories about how framing and gatekeeping impact the public lead in to the next set of theories about how media coverage can impact foreign policy through public opinion.

Because the media plays such an important role in forming public opinion through framing, a study of the way in which that public opinion then affects foreign policy is of paramount importance. Once public opinion has been developed – often with the help of information supplied by the media – it can exert enough pressure so as to limit action by politicians.

Public opinion is playing an increasingly important role in foreign policy – mainly as a limiting factor...A skillful president like Reagan or Bill Clinton can help educate and guide public opinion. But that can only be done so often or carried only so far. Public opinion thus sets parameters or boundaries on policy, beyond which presidents go only at their own peril. If they do go

⁷³ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* (Amherst, MA, HarperCollins, 1996) 74.

beyond the limits set by public opinion, they risk losing public support and probably their own reelection⁷⁴.

Perhaps the best, and at times, most dangerous aspect of a democracy, is the power that public opinion can wield. This is true no matter how ill-informed that opinion may be.

Evidence of the importance placed on public opinion can be seen in the prominence of political polling. Specifically, polling helps keep elected officials in touch with the desires of their constituents. "Reporting on majority and minority public preferences is important because the continuous presentation of the opinions and intentions of representative segments of the public through elections polls and other political surveys reinforces the purpose of the democracy and the reality that elected leaders ultimately need majority public support for their policies and practices⁷⁵." As a result, we see that even if public opinion is misguided or ill-informed, either as a result of media framing or simple ignorance, government officials will act in accordance with that majority opinion.

One idea that merges framing and the impact of public opinion on foreign policy formation is known as the CNN effect. Laura Neack describes the CNN effect in her book:

The free flow of broadcast information in open societies has always had an impact on public opinion and the formation of foreign policy, but now the flows have increased and shortened news cycles have reduced the time for deliberation. By focusing on certain conflicts and human rights problems, broadcasts pressure politicians to respond to some foreign problems and not others. The so-called CNN effect makes it harder to keep some items off the top of the public agenda that might otherwise warrant a lower priority⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* (Amherst, MA, HarperCollins, 1996) 5.

⁷⁵ Paul J. Lavrakas and Michael W. Traugott, Eds, *Election Polls, the News Media, and Democracy* (New York, Chatham House Publishers, 2000). 5.

⁷⁶ Laura Neack, *The New Foreign Policy: US and Comparative Foreign Policy in the 21st Century* (Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003) 115.

The argument is that the phenomenon of 24-hour news channels has increased the demand for quick resolutions to conflicts that receive media attention. In an age where there is little time for debate, the general public often responds in knee-jerk fashion to coverage of foreign policy matters. By focusing public attention on particular conflicts or events, and framing the coverage in a particular light, the media has managed to capture a certain level of control over foreign policy formation from the government.

Former assistant secretary of state Rozanne Ridgway has spoken of a 'CNN curve,' which she describes as CNN's ability to prompt popular demands for action by displaying images of starvation or other tragedy, only to reverse this sentiment when Americans are killed while trying to help.

A much narrower definition of the CNN effect, one that is implicit in Kennan's diary entry, describes it as a loss of policy control on the part of government officials supposedly charged with making that policy. This definition asks whether there is an independent effect on the foreign policy making process by media such as CNN, which virtually wrest control from policy makers, who in turn can do little or nothing about this transformation⁷⁷.

Whether because of lack of control, or out of a need to satisfy the electorate, government officials all too often respond to these demands for action.

Especially in a democratic system, where elected officials depend on constituent support in order to get reelected, politicians will respond to demands from the general public. Acting outside of public opinion is simply too risky. This model for explaining political behavior is called the self-aggrandizement model. "This model suggests that members of Congress and the executive branch alike are in the foreign policy 'game' not necessarily to serve the public as the usual campaign rhetoric suggests, but mainly to garner prestige,

⁷⁷ Warren P. Strobel, *Late Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997) 4-5.

power, perks, career opportunities, and even wealth *for themselves*⁷⁸." This can explain politicians' unwillingness to take a particular stance on a policy, even if the opposite may genuinely be a better or more effective policy, simply because they are apprehensive of acting against public opinion.

All of the theories described thus far can arguably be applied to the case of U.S. media coverage and policy towards Hamas. As chapter 4 will show, the framing of the Palestinian-Israel conflict, and the election and role of Hamas in Palestinian politics in particular, falls within one dominant frame, with very few attempts to challenge it. The frame through which Hamas is depicted is clearly very culturally congruent. There seems to be a complete lack of debate over what Hamas is, and the only background information present in most of the articles is that Hamas is an Islamic terrorist organization that has refused to recognize Israel. However, the other details could be seen as threatening to the dominant discourse, and therefore has a much more difficult time receiving adequate attention.

In terms of gatekeeping in the case of Hamas, access to sources and a desire on the part of the journalists to report on events rather than give background information both play a part. The sources used in cases such as this will almost inevitably be skewed in one direction. Hamas is classified as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and is seen as hostile to the United States. On the other hand, those sources that represent the opposing viewpoint would seem to be much more accessible. Israeli officials would clearly be more easily reached, due simply to the close alliance between the United States and Israel. The other primary source for information on this conflict would be official United States government

⁷⁸ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* (Amherst, MA, HarperCollins, 1996) 24.

representatives. The viewpoints expressed by American and Israeli officials would likely be very similar, and would fit with the dominant framing of the conflict by American media. Not only are Hamas officials less accessible, but the information they supply does not fit the dominant frame, meaning that journalists are less willing to use that information in a story.

Public opinion also clearly plays a large role in the way foreign policy towards Hamas is formed by the U.S. government. The United States has a long history of political allegiance with Israel, and this is no coincidence. Active support for Israel from a variety of constituencies, including the American Jewish community and born-again Christians, has made it clear that if a politician fails to support Israel, their political career could be in jeopardy. Additionally, any elected official looking to secure their political future would likely come across the group that Mearsheimer and Walt termed the Israel Lobby⁷⁹ at some point. Even if they are in support of policies that could be helpful in bringing about peace in the Middle East, many politicians are unwilling to act in such way as to draw ire from these groups, making support of Israel an almost tacit rule in Washington DC.

Both the government and media can engage in several of the theories discussed in this chapter. In particular, framing is a tool that is used consistently by several different groups hoping to control the way in which information is presented to the American people. Indeed, this is so prevalent a practice that one must remember that foreign policy towards Hamas is not the only issue impacted.

Bush and other officials used these same words many times after 9/11; he invoked evil five times and war twelve times in his 2002 State of the Union speech.

⁷⁹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

Repeating these terms helped frame September 11th to 'unite' the country behind the Bush administration's interpretation and response to the attacks and to exclude other understandings⁸⁰.

We can apply this same idea to newspaper coverage of Hamas. Chapter 4 will focus on an analysis of newspaper articles in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* from the two months before and after the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections. It is fair to say that when dealing with a frame as strong as the one utilized in the case of Hamas, there likely needs to be a major exogenous shock to the system in order for change to occur. For that reason, the media analysis will focus on the 2006 elections. It was in that moment that the Bush administration's policy of democracy building in the Middle East was challenged. It was also when Hamas went from a rogue group on the periphery of Palestinian politics that could be ignored, to an elected group that needed to be dealt with one way or another. As analysis will show, however, that even an unexpected event of this magnitude was not enough to encourage journalists and politicians to reframe Hamas, as both media coverage and political rhetoric remained stagnant.

⁸⁰ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 1.

Chapter 4 – Media Analysis

This chapter will undertake an analysis of media in order to demonstrate the theories discussed in the previous chapter. As this analysis will show, the framing of the issue as shown in these newspaper articles is homogenous both over time and between newspapers. Additionally, this chapter will feature analysis of articles from both before and after the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections. This will serve to show that despite the exogenous shock to the systems provided by the largely unexpected election results, the framing of Hamas that was in place was strong enough that the media was, by and large, unwilling to reframe the issues.

In the January 11, 2006 *New York Times* article by Craig S. Smith, "Election Role Won't Soften Hamas Anger at the Israelis, Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar reiterates the fact that Hamas would "still refuse to recognize Israel or disarm even if it won in the Palestinian elections this month"⁸¹." The article also provides the following description of Hamas: "The elections will be Hamas's debut in official Palestinian politics, a process it has boycotted since the formation of the Palestinian Authority in 1993. Since the group's founding in Gaza in 1987, its focus has been to fight Israel, and it has often used suicide bombers. Its long-term goal is to establish an Islamic theocracy over Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza

⁸¹ Craig S. Smith, *Election Role Won't Soften Hamas Anger at the Israelis* (New York Times, 11 Jan 2006). Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/international/middleeast/12hamas.html>

Strip⁸².” While this information is technically correct, it highlights one very particular aspect of Hamas. Articles such as this one tend to focus on the violent activities of Hamas, and then proceed to comment on the rise in popular support for Hamas. This is done without further explanation of the various other roles that Hamas plays in Palestinian society. The social welfare role that Hamas plays is a legacy carried over from the Muslim Brotherhood, which was responsible for the founding of schools, libraries, scholarships, hospitals, and several other establishments to support the Palestinian population⁸³. Without this additional information, readers are led by the article to correlate public support for Hamas with popular support for the violence undertaken by the party.

The article does make a short mention of Hamas’s social programs, saying that: “Hamas’s social programs in education and aid for the Palestinians’ most fragile classes had demonstrated the faction’s credentials to govern, and won it support as an organization that could be trusted to clean up a corrupt Palestinian Authority...”⁸⁴ While this mention is made, when compared to the content of the rest of the article, it is clearly just a side note.

This article also brings up an issue of increased importance in terms of foreign policy in the post 9-11 world: the possible connection of Hamas to other worldwide Islamist groups. “(Mr. Zahar) rejected what he described as recent efforts by Israel to draw a connection between Hamas and Al Qaeda. ‘Al Qaeda is not present here,’ he said. ‘We are focused on the occupation. We run no operations outside of Palestine, outside of the

⁸² Craig S. Smith, *Election Role Won’t Soften Hamas Anger at the Israelis* (New York Times, 11 Jan 2006). Available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/international/middleeast/12hamas.html>

⁸³ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Hamas: A Historical and Political Background* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Summer 1993), 7.

⁸⁴ Craig S. Smith, *Election Role Won’t Soften Hamas Anger at the Israelis* (New York Times, 11 Jan 2006). Available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/international/middleeast/12hamas.html>

occupied territories, so we are completely different from Al Qaeda⁸⁵.” Beyond this quote from Mahmoud Zahar, this article makes no other mention of the possibility of links between Hamas and Al Qaeda. However, it is important to note that while the only position on that subject is one of denial, the source, being a leader of Hamas, may not appear to be credible or trustworthy to American readers.

In “Israeli Says Any Official Hamas Role Dooms Peace Talks”, written by Greg Myre on January 12, 2006, the coverage is much the same. Hamas is referred to as a terrorist organization twice in addition to being describe as, “...an Islamic⁸⁶ group...(which) calls for the destruction of Israel and has carried out dozens of suicide bombings⁸⁷.” Once again, while this information may be correct, it only tells part of the story. Unlike the previously discussed article, this one fails to make any mention of welfare role that Hamas plays in Palestinian society.

Additionally, the article links Hamas to the inevitability of a failure in the peace process. To be fair, this article was meant to cover a conversation between President Bush and then Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, so it is fair to expect that it would reflect the Israeli political position. However, at the same time, without additional information about

⁸⁵ Craig S. Smith, *Election Role Won't Soften Hamas Anger at the Israelis* (New York Times, 11 Jan 2006). Available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/international/middleeast/12hamas.html>

⁸⁶ There is, of course, a significant debate over what precisely it means for a group or organization to be Islamic. There are also differing opinions on the causes for these movements, and what role they play in society. For a more specific discussion of this, see *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam*, edited by Richard Martin and Abbas Barzegar, and *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*, by Salwa Ismail.

⁸⁷ Greg Myre, *Israeli Says Any Official Hamas Role Dooms Peace Talks* (New York Times, 12 Jan 2006). Available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/13/international/middleeast/13mideast.html?pagewanted=all>

the parties involved, it is far too easy for an uninformed public to begin generalizing peace process failures and instinctually blame Hamas.

In an article written for the New York Times just 10 days prior to the elections, Steven Erlanger gives readers a picture of Israeli concerns in the lead up to the election.

Israelis are watching with enormous concern the deterioration of the Palestinian Authority and its mainstay, the Fatah faction led by Mahmoud Abbas, and the rise of Hamas, the radical Islamic group dedicated to Israel's destruction. A strong showing by Hamas, and such a showing is expected, would test Israel's ability even to talk about a final settlement with the Palestinians, or make any new pullback from the West Bank.⁸⁸

In addition to this description, the simple fact that the title of the article is "Israel's Hamas Problem: The Danger Begins Next Door" is indicative of the fact that there is little attempt by this journalist to explain the reasons behind the actions taken by Hamas. This is an increasing trend in journalism. "Thus, instead of an honest accounting of each side's grievances, journalists reporting the clashes in the West Bank and Gaza offer what is, in effect, a daily catalogue of seemingly unprovoked Palestinian aggression."⁸⁹ This consistent trend of simply reporting stereotypes, rather than factual evidence of the situation has, in no doubt, contributed to the way that the American public views, and votes on, the stances which policy makers take.

The article continues on to state that, "Hostility from the Palestinians is not the only threat Israel faces. But the others – in Egypt, Iran, Jordan and Lebanon – only heighten concern about the shape of a Palestinian government, because that government would control

⁸⁸ Steven Erlanger, *Israel's Hamas Problem: The Danger Begins Next Door* (New York Times, 15 Jan 2006). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05E7D6173FF936A25752C0A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=2>

⁸⁹ Seth Ackerman, *Al-Aqsa Intifada and the U.S. Media* (Journal of Palestine Studies, Winter, 2001) 62.

critical gateways to Israel⁹⁰.” Once again, we see that this story is used to tie the Palestinian elections to the greater global threat to Israel and the United States.

Another article written by Steven Erlanger on January 23, 2006, “U.S. Spent \$1.9 Million to Aid Fatah in Palestinian Elections” serves a dual purpose by commenting both on Hamas as well as U.S. policy towards the various Palestinian political groups. Throughout the course of the article, Hamas is referred to both as militant and as a terrorist group⁹¹. Additionally, the article also includes the typical statement: “Israel says it will refuse to deal with Hamas, which it, the United States and the European Union consider a terrorist group that seeks the destruction of Israel⁹².” Once again, while this information may be correct, the virtually unquestioned nature of this narrative is biased. It is in articles such as this one where one can see, in action, the concepts discussed in the previous chapter. Background information that explains the situation is lacking, and there is virtually no deviation from the dominant discourse.

While the article does bring up the fact that money was arguably used to promote one specific political party, it fails to question whether this is in line with US attempts at democracy building in the region. “American and Palestinian officials who spoke anonymously because they were not authorized to speak to reporters said that the program,

⁹⁰ Steven Erlanger, *Israel's Hamas Problem: The Danger Begins Next Door* (New York Times, 15 Jan 2006). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05E7D6173FF936A25752C0A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=2>

⁹¹ Like any other label, ‘terrorist’ is a quite subjective term, and it must be noted that while the United States considers Hamas’s behavior to constitute acts of terrorism, these same actions may be considered forms of legitimate resistance by other parties. For further readings on terrorism and its context see, *Terrorism: Perspectives from the Behavioral and Social Sciences* by Neil J. Smelser, et al., and *Terrorism in Context* by Martha Crenshaw.

⁹² Steven Erlanger, *U.S. Spent \$1.9 Million to Aid Fatah in Palestinian Elections* (New York Times, 23 Jan 2006). Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/23/international/middleeast/23mideast.html>

which started in August, was intended to help defeat Hamas and that the government had done a detailed political analysis to try to focus on constituencies where Hamas was doing well⁹³.” Despite the obvious hypocrisy involved in supporting one particular political party while promoting a policy of democracy building, the article fails to mention this problematic dynamic. However, as will be explored shortly, this lack of questioning the government is not altogether unexpected in this case. “...the media are least likely to exert independent influence when leaders employ culturally congruent frames – that is, frames congruent with schemas habitually employed by most citizens⁹⁴.”⁹⁵

The final article published before the election from the New York Times is “Palestinians Wrap Up Campaigns as Vote Nears,” written by Greg Myre on January 24, 2006. The article describes the election as a “showdown between the long dominant Fatah movement and the militant Islamic faction Hamas⁹⁶.” Even in a discussion of an election, the language used to frame the situation is indicative of violence. Describing the election as a “showdown” between Fatah and a militant group (Hamas) forces the reader to associate the election with violent individuals and terrorism, rather than with the democratic process.

This concludes the *New York Times* articles published before the election. On January 25, 2006 the Palestinian legislative elections were held, and Hamas came away

⁹³ Steven Erlanger, *U.S. Spent \$1.9 Million to Aid Fatah in Palestinian Elections* (New York Times, 23 Jan 2006). Available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/23/international/middleeast/23mideast.html>

⁹⁴ Matthew A. Baum and Philip B.K. Potter, *The Relationships Between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis* (Annual Review of Political Science, 2008) 51.

⁹⁵ A more thorough discussion of culturally congruent frames can be found in chapter 3.

⁹⁶ Greg Myer, *Palestinians Wrap Up Campaigns as Vote Nears* (New York Times, 24 Jan 2006). Available at

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE4D7133FF937A15752C0A9609C8B>

victorious, winning 76 of the 132 seats. Typically, with a major change in the status quo, one would expect a renewed interest in questioning standing policies and culturally accepted assumptions about the groups involved. However, following the elections, the media coverage of Hamas and of the US policy regarding Hamas was noticeably stagnant. This suggests, as mentioned in chapter 3, that the framing of Hamas is so entrenched in American society, that even a significant shock to the status quo was not enough to initiate a reframing.

In a January 27, 2006 article by Steven Erlanger, "Hamas Routs Ruling Faction, Casting Pall on Peace Process," Hamas is once again described as a radical Islamic party and a terrorist group⁹⁷. The article also states that, "The Hamas victory brings the group's support for armed attacks on Israel to the fore. Hamas said it entered politics 'to protect the resistance' to Israeli occupation of Muslim land, so it is unlikely to heed Western appeals to disarm and recognize Israel, which Hamas in its charter promised to destroy"⁹⁸. Rather than focusing on the reasons why Hamas performed so well in the elections, or investigating the possibility that Hamas could form a functioning government, many articles, including this one, chose to declare the peace process dead.

Like most of the other articles examined, "Hamas Leader Reaffirms Stance on Israel" written by Greg Myre on January 28, 2006 invoked the following phrases and words: young Hamas militants, violent clashes, calls for Israel's destruction, and terrorist organization⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ Steven Erlanger, *Hamas Routs Ruling Faction, Casting Pall on Peace Process* (New York Times, 27 Jan 2006). Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/27/international/middleeast/27mideast.html?pagewanted=1&r=1>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Greg Myer, *Hamas Leaders Reaffirms Stance on Israel* (New York Times, 28 Jan 2006). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E04E1D8113FF93BA15752C0A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>

However, once again we see that this article, like the ones before it, fails to provide any context for the way it depicts Hamas. To be absolutely clear, the purpose of this thesis is not to claim that these descriptions of Hamas are inaccurate. Rather, they are only part of the picture, and without the other side of the story, we lose the ability to assess the situation in a way that allows for the formation of more appropriate and effective policies.

In another article written on January 28, 2006, "Hamas Leader Sees No Change Toward Israelis," Steven Erlanger begins his writing with the following statement: "The exiled political head of the radical Islamic group Hamas said Saturday in Damascus, Syria, that the group would adopt 'a very realistic approach' toward governing the Palestinian Authority¹⁰⁰..." Once again, the issue at play here is not whether this is factual information. Rather the issue is the tone that this kind of coverage sets, not only for the rest of the article, but also for any future discussions about Hamas. Additionally, the article went on to continue quoting Khaled Meshal, saying, "He insisted that 'resistance is a legitimate right that we will practice and protect,' and he defended attacks on Israeli civilians, which included many suicide bombings until a cease-fire nearly a year ago. Then he said Hamas was 'ready to work with Europe and even the United States if they wish'¹⁰¹." Throughout this article, Hamas is framed over and over again in terms of their part in terrorist activity, while anything suggesting an ability or willingness to moderate under the right circumstances is pushed to the side.

¹⁰⁰ Steven Erlanger, *Hamas Leader Sees No Change Toward Israelis* (New York Times, 28 Jan 2006). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9400E3DE1E3FF93AA15752C0A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

An article written by John Kifner on Jan 29, 2006, "How Hamas Rose from Wild Card to Power," echoed the same sentiments that were seen in other articles. In the course of the article, Kifner describes Hamas as an Islamic fundamentalist group, and details the history of suicide bombings which the group has had a part in¹⁰². Unlike many of the articles, this one does discuss Hamas's history a bit. However, the information given still focuses on the one aspect of Hamas that fits the dominant narrative.

The final article from the *New York Times* is "Palestinians Debate Shades of Islamic Law," written by Ian Fisher on January 30, 2006. The article, written from the Palestinian village of Taybeh in the West Bank, begins with the following sentence: "This is a village of three churches, a brewer of very good beer, and no small fear – if not yet full panic – about what it means now that Hamas, the radical Islamic party is in control of Palestinian politics¹⁰³." From this sentence, the reader is clearly meant to connect with the fears of the Christian Palestinians in this village.

A thorough examination of these articles showed that little, if any, change in the nature of the coverage before and after the election. However, it is important to note that the *New York Times* is not alone in this way. The following eight articles from the Washington Post are also remarkably stagnant in the way they cover Hamas. The first article from the Washington Post, "In the Mideast, Democratic Momentum," was an editorial written by Jackson Diehl on December 19, 2005, and is perhaps the one significant example of an

¹⁰² John Kifner, *How Hamas Rose from Wild Card to Power*. (New York Times, 29 Jan 2006). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9402E6D6113FF93AA15752C0A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>

¹⁰³ Ian Fisher, *Palestinians Debate Shades of Islamic Law* (New York Times, 30 Jan 2006). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B02E2DE1F3FF932A35751C0A9609C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>

article which challenges the dominant discourse on Hamas's participation in Palestinian politics. The article holds that despite setbacks in Iraq, there have been noticeable advances towards a more democratic Middle East. In regards to democratic momentum in the Palestinian territories, Diehl states, "Last week the Palestinian Islamic movement Hamas presented its list of 62 candidates for scheduled legislative elections next month, including 10 women. The corrupt old guard of the ruling Fatah party meanwhile has been challenged by several new lists of secular reformers; elections may bring, at last, rejuvenation of the corrupt power structure created by Yasser Arafat¹⁰⁴." The only distinction that Diehl draws which echoes the sentiments of the *New York Times* articles is the Islamic vs. secular divide between Hamas and Fatah. However, what is even more significant is the recognition of the corruption associated with Fatah. Along with the noticeable absence of mentioning Hamas's status as a terrorist organization and the violent activities associated therein, this article represents a considerable departure from the dominant discourse. Additionally, Diehl's article is one of the few that even begins to examine the possibility that Hamas could moderate enough to be a legitimate participant in politics. "Most intriguing of all has been the shift by Islamic movements during 2005 from terrorism to democratic participation. Despite some lapses, both Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah have mostly refrained from violence this year while focusing on elections. While neither has disarmed, both are under pressure from public opinion in their own countries to do so¹⁰⁵." Unlike the typical coverage of Hamas, this article insinuates that while no major steps towards moderation have been taken, the possibility does exist.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson Diehl, *In the Mideast, Democratic Momentum* (Washington Post, 19 Dec 2005) A23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid A23.

The next article from the *Washington Post* was written nearly one month later on January 14, 2006 by Scott Wilson¹⁰⁶ and is titled, "Divided Fatah Braces for Check on Power; Hamas Likely to Gain in Upcoming Elections." By and large, this article covered the upcoming elections from the Fatah perspective. As such, it makes special mention of the strained relationship between Fatah and Hamas, a factor which is missing from the vast majority of the articles. Additionally, Wilson is one of the only writers thus far to bring up the almost hypocritical nature of US policy.

"Fatah lost its clue with Arafat's death, and now it's a puzzle with 2,000 pieces," said Ali Jarbawi, a political science professor at Beir Zeit University in the West Bank. "The whole system is going to change. We'll have a parliament that acts like a parliament, with blocs, majorities and minorities. Finally you'll have an opposition with the ability to question and criticize the way decisions are being made."

That would seem to be a positive step in the evolution of Palestinian politics from one-party rule to a more pluralist system. But Hamas is classified as a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States, and its campaign platform vows resistance to any post-election move to disarm its military wing.¹⁰⁷

This dichotomy is a clear obstacle to the peace process. Under the Bush administration, the United States simultaneously promoted the spread of democracy, and attempted to keep Hamas isolated and excluded from the political process.

¹⁰⁶ Several of the articles featured in the *Washington Post* from this time period were written by Scott Wilson, due to the fact that he was the Jerusalem Bureau Chief for the *Washington Post* at the time of the elections.

¹⁰⁷ Scott Wilson, *Divided Fatah Braces For Check on Power; Hamas Likely to Gain in Upcoming Elections* (*Washington Post*, 14 Jan 2006) A15.

However, while this particular article points out these problematic policy stances, it still refers to Hamas along the same lines as the other articles: as a terrorist organization with a military wing which has always been opposed to the peace process¹⁰⁸.

Another piece in the *Washington Post*, "Israel Agrees to Allow East Jerusalem Voting; Palestinians Say Some Issues Unresolved," was also written by Scott Wilson just two days later on January 16, 2006. This article details efforts by the United States to pressure Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to allow voting in east Jerusalem. Like previous coverage, the article refers to Hamas as a radical Islamist party, and a group which is classified by Israel as a terrorist organization¹⁰⁹. In particular, the article, which focuses on Israeli concerns leading up to the election, says that, "The rules governing previous Palestinian elections prohibited the participation of parties that Israel classifies as terrorist organizations, including Hamas. It remained unclear Sunday whether Israel would allow candidates from Hamas, a party at war with Israel, to appear on ballots in the city¹¹⁰." The framing in this particular article is quite obvious. Even from this one quote, we can see that the focus is on the fact that Hamas is a violent terrorist group. Alternately, the article could have framed this in such a way that questioned Israeli efforts to interfere in the Palestinian elections. However, this alternate frame is far less culturally congruent, and therefore less likely to be a significant option.

The first article written after the election was also written by Scott Wilson. "Hamas Victory Now a Major Issue in Israeli Election Campaign," was published on January 27,

¹⁰⁸ Scott Wilson, *Divided Fatah Braces For Check on Power; Hamas Likely to Gain in Upcoming Elections* (Washington Post, 14 Jan 2006) A15.

¹⁰⁹ Scott Wilson, *Israel Agrees to Allow East Jerusalem Voting; Palestinians Say Some Issues Unresolved* (Washington Post, 16 Jan 2006) A10.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid* A10.

2006, and discusses the impact that the election of Hamas will have on the Israeli political scene. In particular, it asserts that the victory for a terrorist organization was a boon for Israeli opposition parties. "The Hamas parliamentary election victory became a focal point of Israel's election campaign Thursday as opposition politicians criticized the government for failing to stop the radical Islamic movement from rising to prominence within the Palestinian Authority¹¹¹." While this is once again a story which focuses on Israeli politics, there are two important factors at play. The first is that, once again Hamas is described as a radical Islamic movement and a terrorist organization¹¹². Secondly, much like the *New York Times* article by Ian Fisher about the fears of Christian Palestinians, aspects of this article are intended to allow readers to associate Israeli concerns with American concerns by putting the Hamas victory in terms of a failure to fight terrorism.

Public opinion polls have shown Likud suffering a significant drop in popularity since Sharon and Olmert left last year to form Kadima, which polls now show to be the prohibitive favorite in the coming elections. "I warned Olmert in our first meeting after he took office" that Hamas must not be allowed to participate in the voting, (Silvan) Shalom said in his comments to the Ynet news Web site. "Now we have no one to blame but ourselves." Olmert ordered his ministers Thursday not to comment on the Palestinian returns. He told visiting Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr (D-Del) Wednesday evening that he would not "negotiate with a government that does not meet its most basic obligations – to fight terrorism."¹¹³

By framing the victory by Hamas in terms of a failure on the part of the Palestinian Authority to fight terrorism, the American public is told that Israeli fears are legitimate.

The next article, "U.S. Policy Seen as Big Loser in Palestinian Vote," was written by Glenn Kessler on Jan 28, 2006. Unlike the previous article, which focused on the failures of

¹¹¹ Scott Wilson, *Hamas Victory Now a Major Issue in Israeli Election Campaign* (Washington Post, 27 Jan 2006) A18.

¹¹² Ibid A18.

¹¹³ Ibid A18.

Israeli policy, this one focuses on the failure of attempts by the U.S. government to thwart Hamas's efforts in the political process. The article begins by describing a speech given by President Bush the day before the elections, in which he called upon the Palestinian people not to elect "leaders compromised by terror"¹¹⁴. Following this brief overview, the article states:

This week, Palestinians gave their answer, handing a landslide victory in national legislative elections to Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for dozens of suicide bombings and desires the elimination of Israel. Bush's statement calling for new leaders was aimed at the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, but in the same speech he also said it was necessary to thwart Hamas – formally the Islamic Resistance Movement – and other militant groups.

The election outcome signals a dramatic failure in the administration's strategy for Middle East peace, according to analysts and some U.S. officials. Since the United States cannot deal with an organization labeled a terrorist organization by the State Department, Hamas's victory is likely to curtail U.S. aid, limit official U.S. contacts with the Palestinian government and stall efforts to create an independent Palestinian state.¹¹⁵

While this article does point out the weaknesses in U.S. policy, it also frames the election in a very specific manner. By depicting the election as a struggle between the Israeli government and Hamas, which is labeled a terrorist organization, it aligns the results with the global war on terror being undertaken by the United States.

The next article was written on January 29, 2006 by Rhonda Roumani and Scott Wilson, and is entitled "Hamas Is Resolute on Fighting Israel; Militants to Form Army, Leader Says." Throughout the course of this article, Hamas is once again described as a

¹¹⁴ Glenn Kessler, *U.S. Policy Seen as Big Loser in Palestinian Vote* (Washington Post, 28 Jan 2006) A16.

¹¹⁵ Ibid A16.

radical Islamist movement with aspirations to develop its militant wing into a viable army¹¹⁶. Additionally, Roumani and Wilson use the following terms and phrases to describe Hamas: radical Islamic movement, terrorist, violent, military wing. The article also reminds readers of the ties between Hamas and countries which have tense relations with the United States. "Meshal said he received calls from the leaders of Yemen, Qatar and Syria and from religious figures throughout the Muslim world to congratulate Hamas on its victory¹¹⁷." This depiction of Hamas is very much in line with the culturally congruent frame discussed in the previous chapter.

Also on January 29, 2006, another article written by Scott Wilson was published. The article, entitled "Some Palestinians See End of Secular Dream; Election Win by Islamic Group Hamas Clouds Prospects for Arab Nationalism" is very similar to Ian Fisher's article, "Palestinians Debate Shades of Islamic Law," in the New York Times which describes the fears of Christian Palestinians. In this article, Wilson says of the election:

The electoral triumph by Hamas, an organization that is committed to establishing an Islamic state across territory that includes Israel and whose armed wing has carried out bombings and other attacks on Israeli targets, has had repercussions around the world. It upended the Palestinian political order, complicated peace efforts with Israel and threatened the continuation of financial aid from the United States and other Western countries. At the same time, closer to home, it has also clouded the aspirations of a generation of Palestinian nationalists who have served time in jail, in exile and underground for the cause of creating their own secular state.¹¹⁸

Like those articles already examined, this one expresses a very particular view of Hamas and of the elections as a whole. Rather than present the election as an opportunity to encourage

¹¹⁶ Rhonda Roumani and Scott Wilson, *Hamas is Resolute on Fighting Israel; Militants to Form Army, Leader Says* (Washington Post, 29 Jan 2006) A21.

¹¹⁷ Ibid A21.

¹¹⁸ Scott Wilson, *Some Palestinians See End of Secular Dream; Elections Win by Islamic Group Hamas Clouds Prospects for Arab Nationalism* (Washington Post, 29 Jan 2006) A1.

moderation on the part of Hamas, it is shown to essentially be the death of the peace process for the time being.

The final article published in the *Washington Post* is the only article which comes close to challenging the culturally congruent frame that is at work in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Written by Jackson Diehl on February 13, 2006, "Caught Between Ballots and Bullets," argues that groups such as Hamas are at a crossroads, and have the ability to choose whether to proceed peacefully or violently. This is a far cry from the other articles which portray violence as an innate quality of Hamas. According to Diehl, "Hamas and Hezbollah, once firmly in al Qaeda's camp, now straddle the gap. Both movements have joined in parliamentary elections, and both have ceased acts of terrorism for the past year while refusing to give up their militias, weapons or the option of violence¹¹⁹." Hamas could, in Diehl's opinion, make the choice to move in either direction, and refuses to reflexively denounce the victory. Rather, he argues that there is a chance for the peace process to move forward with Hamas.

Somewhere in the middle lies the possible outcome suggested by the Brotherhood – a nonviolent Palestinian Islamic cabinet that, while unready to endorse Israel, will accept existing Palestinian-Israeli agreements and the results of future elections. A peace accord would have to wait – one was in any case most improbable – but a foundation for the peaceful and democratic Palestinian state Bush has called for could at last be laid.

The odds are not great. Even if the administration can calibrate the right mix of pressure and de facto tolerance and get Israel to go along, Hamas might not respond. It may be, as some argue, that Islamic militants are incapable of converting to democracy as have secular terrorist movements. But without the elections, there would be no opportunity at all¹²⁰.

¹¹⁹ Jackson Diehl, *Caught Between Ballots and Bullets* (Washington Post, 13 Feb 2006) A21.

¹²⁰ Ibid A21.

This is a cautiously optimistic view of the future role that Hamas might have in Palestinian politics. However, it is important to note that this article, like the first *Washington Post* article analyzed in this chapter, is an editorial written by Jackson Diehl. Editorials are, by definition, the sole opinion of the author, and are thus more likely to express differing points of view in comparison to pure news articles.

What is important to note is, with the exception of the editorials written by Diehl, the amazing homogeneity of views expressed in the articles from both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Despite the election of Hamas, which undoubtedly altered the political scene, the coverage remained stable, and quite in line with the dominant frames used to describe the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Throughout the time period covered, and in both periodicals, the coverage of Hamas and the Palestinian legislative elections were consistently biased in one direction. According to the agenda setting approach, this level of bias, and the framing of Hamas present in these articles has a large impact on the way the general public will perceive the issue. As such, until such a time that the media can present more nuanced coverage of Hamas and the conflict as a whole, it is unlikely that the public will be willing or able to accept policies aimed at challenging the status quo.

Chapter 5 – Theories of Government Impact

The previous two chapters provided an in-depth examination of the bias in the way that the media covers Hamas and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As was shown in chapter 4, the framing of Hamas is particularly strong. So much so that even the external shock provided by Hamas's strong performance in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary election was insufficient to provoke reframing. However, despite the fact that the media has an important role to play in foreign policy formation, and the considerable amount of influence the media can wield, it is only half of the story.

Any serious look at the reasons behind certain foreign policies must examine the role that the government and political figures play, if for no other reason than the fact that the government has the greatest access to information about foreign affairs. "When considering the 'joint' agenda setting between government officials and media, can we say the balance of influence leans more toward one side or the other? We might conclude with some degree of certainty that the 'power' tilts in favor of those with information – officials – although not overwhelmingly so¹²¹." Arguably, while the media may exert a certain level of power over the formation of foreign policy via framing and public opinion, the government ultimately controls the vast majority of information. Additionally, it is government officials, and not

¹²¹ Laura Neack, *The New Foreign Policy: US and Comparative Foreign Policy in the 21st Century* (Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003) 117.

members of the press that make final policy decisions. For this reason, a number of theories have been developed to understand the relationship between media and government in foreign policy.

Two of the most prevalent approaches that work on the assumption that media is a subservient power to the government are the hegemony and indexing approaches. The hegemony approach is based in the idea that government power is gained from being able to control the flow of information. In particular, this approach argues that, despite some conflict, government officials tend to agree on first principles. This in turn leads to, "a harmony that impedes the flow of independent information and consistently (although not inevitably) produces pro-government propaganda – and public consent of acquiescence to White House decisions¹²²." Piers Robinson echoes this approach in his work *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*, arguing that when there is consensus among the political elites involved, "the media operate within 'sphere of consensus' and reflects elite consensus on policy¹²³." Because of this, "the media remain uncritical and help build support for official policy¹²⁴." With general agreement present among policy officials, the media and the public by extension only receive the very limited information that falls within the ideological boundaries of the administration.

While hegemony assumes that government officials tend to agree, the indexing approach assumes that disagreement and conflict are actually quite common. Rather than

¹²² Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 4.

¹²³ Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention* (New York, Routledge, 2002) 31.

¹²⁴ *Ibid* 31.

view the media as a vehicle for pro-government propaganda, indexing theorists will argue that media coverage is a reflection of conflict within the administration.

If sufficiently vigorous disputes over the White House line erupt inside the foreign policy establishment, critical views appear in the news. In perhaps the most thorough exposition of indexing, Mermin summarizes its basic conclusion: "The press...does not offer critical analysis of White House policy decision unless actors inside the government (most often in Congress) have done so first. This means the media act, for the most part, as a vehicle for government officials to criticize each other¹²⁵."

According to this approach, not only is the media in a lower position of power than the government, but the media makes virtually no independent contributions to the formation of foreign policy.

In the case of Hamas and U.S. policy during the time of the 2006 Palestinian elections, these theories are relatively easy to apply. During the first term of the Bush administration, it was relatively well known that there existed two camps occupying two very different schools of thought in foreign policy matters. On the one hand, Colin Powell was the Secretary of State. Powell was well known for his long military career, and had served as national security advisor under President Reagan. Most importantly, he had been present "when the dialogue between the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) began in late 1988, and he had gone public with his criticisms of the neo-cons and their excessively ideological and right wing views¹²⁶." On the other hand, the rest of the administration was made up of individuals like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, John Ashcroft, and Paul Wolfowitz. Many of these members of the administration were from the neo-conservative wing of the Republican Party and had a very

¹²⁵ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 4.

¹²⁶ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005) 388.

particular worldview. These members of the Bush administration tended to be staunchly pro-Israel, and for the most part argued that American unilateral military power could be used to protect American interests. Additionally, one of the primary (non-military) vehicles by which to promote pro-American sentiments in the Middle East is to encourage the spread and growth of democracy.

With these two camps firmly established, Colin Powell more often than not found himself overruled by the majority opinion within the administration. While there was mention of the rift building between Powell and the rest of the administration, the vast majority of media coverage focused on the official message coming from the White House.

The message only became more unified following Bush's election to a second term in office.

Shortly after the election, Secretary of State Powell announced his resignation. He had long been one of the voices within the administration calling for more attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His departure, along with that of his deputy and several other Middle East experts in the department, led some observers to question whether a second Bush term would bring a more "evenhanded" approach to the conflict. Powell's successor as secretary was Condoleezza Rice, who had developed close ties to Israel during her time at the White House. First indications were that the second term would find the president surrounded by a national security team that was more united in its conservative, hard-line views¹²⁷.

With the one consistent voice of dissent within the Bush administration resigning, there is little doubt that the message coming from the White House would be a hegemonic, pro-government message. In a statement at the World Economic Forum given on January 26, 2006, the day following the elections, Condoleezza Rice confirmed that White House policy towards Hamas would not be changing.

¹²⁷ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005) 408.

The Palestinian people have apparently voted for change, but we believe that their aspirations for peace and a peaceful life remain unchanged. Those aspirations can only be met through a two-state solution, which requires a renunciation of violence and turning away from terrorism and accepting the right of Israel to exist and the disarmament of militias. As we have said, you cannot have one foot in politics and the other in terror. Our position on Hamas has therefore not changed¹²⁸.

Furthermore, a primary source of information for the media about foreign affairs is White House Press Briefings. In this setting, the journalists present can only expect to receive the information which is in line with the consensus view in the White House. An example of this is the White House Press Briefing conducted on January 27, 2006, just two days after the elections. In the briefing, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan answered questions from reporters about the election, and how the United States would proceed. Several of the questions brought up the conflict involved with the Palestinians electing a group with a history of terrorist activity. However, none of the questions mentioned the contradictory nature of U.S. policy: a policy which encourages the spread of democracy, but reserves the right not to recognize the results of those elections.

In the course of one short briefing, Scott McClellan reiterated two points several times. The first was the same message delivered by Secretary Rice: that U.S. policy would not be changing. "We'll see how the government forms. But our views on Hamas remain unchanged. And we've made very clear what our views are and what our policy is with regards to Hamas¹²⁹." The Press Secretary made nearly this exact statement three times in just the one briefing. The other point that was emphasized was that the Palestinian people expressed in their vote a desire for peace and a change in the status quo. While this is true –

¹²⁸ Condoleezza Rice, *Statement on Palestinian Elections* (Remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, 26 Jan 2006).

¹²⁹ *White House Press Briefing* (27 Jan 2006).

Hamas was seen as a viable alternative to the PLO, which was viewed by the Palestinian people as corrupt – without additional explanation, simply saying that the Palestinian people have aspirations of peace rings hollow.

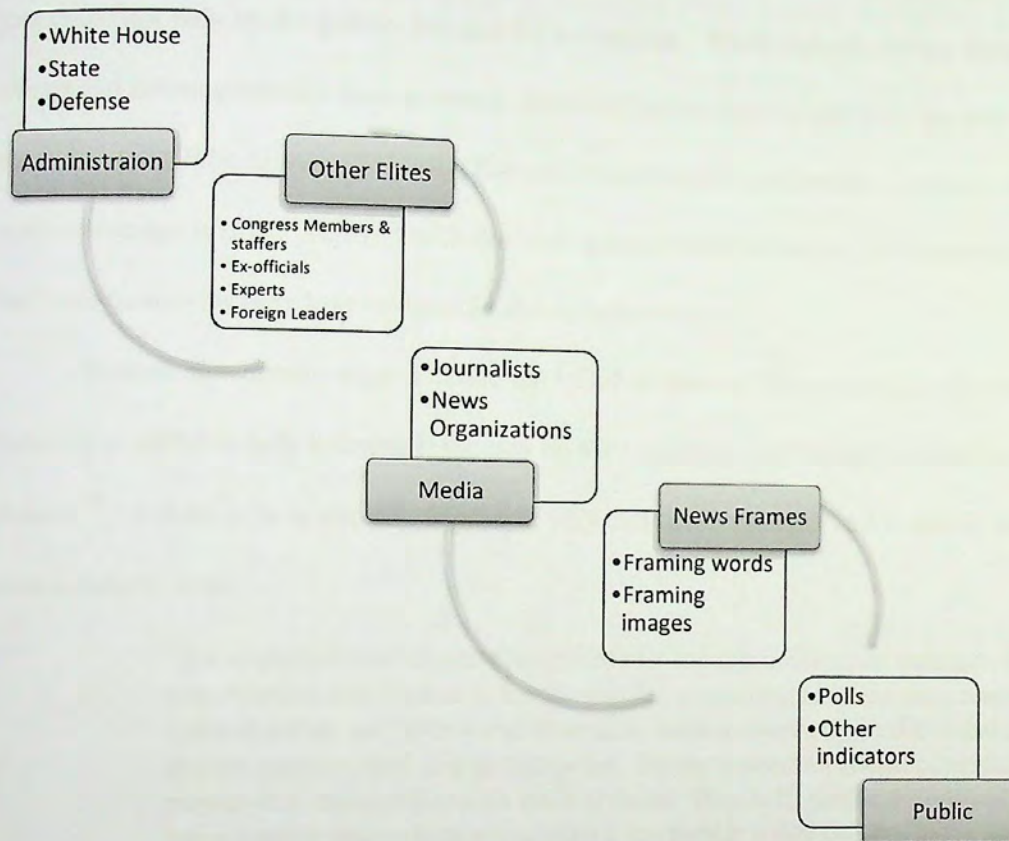
This is largely in line with something pointed out by Nicholas Berry in his work, *Foreign Policy and the Press: An Analysis of The New York Times' Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy*. In this book, Berry quotes James Reston, an American journalist whose career lasted for nearly six decades (much of it with The New York Times), saying that, “we are fascinated by events but not by the things that *cause* events¹³⁰.” And indeed, as was evidenced in chapter 4, it is not simply press briefings that lack in background information and explanations, but also the vast majority of newspapers articles and even media coverage as a whole.

Clearly, both the hegemony and indexing approaches have areas of applicability. However, in *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Robert Entman set out to develop a new approach which he terms the cascading activation model. According to Entman, “The cascading activation model is designed to help explain how thoroughly the thoughts and feelings that support a frame extend down from the White House through the rest of the system – and who thus wins the framing contest and gains the upper hand politically¹³¹.” One of the aspects of this theory which may be seen as particularly important is the connection between the order in which sources are approached, and the importance of the order in which information is presented. Entman envisions a system in which information flows from elite sources, through a number of levels, and to the

¹³⁰ Nicholas O. Berry, *Foreign Policy and the Press: An Analysis of The New York Times' Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 140.

¹³¹ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 9.

general public. The following is a recreation of the diagram found in Entman's book representing the flow of information according to the cascading activation approach¹³².



In this approach, when a foreign affairs story breaks, journalists begin by approaching administration sources, followed closely by other political elites and other media contacts. It is in these initial encounters that the dominant frame and storyline are developed. "The more often journalists hear similar thoughts expressed by their sources and by other news outlets,

¹³² Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 10.

the more likely their own thoughts will run along those lines, with the result that the news they produce will feature words and visuals that confirm the same framing¹³³." These initial encounters are vital in determining the frame in which subsequent information will be processed not only by the public, but also by journalists. "Early stimuli arising from news events and issues generally have primacy, since activation spreads out from the initial idea¹³⁴." As will be discussed shortly, this can be especially problematic, because initial media coverage is often prepared with the least amount of information, and reporters have had little time to become knowledgeable about the issues.

Entman also details what is called the spiral of silence. Entman argues that while indexing is useful largely because it focuses on the importance of "openly voiced elite dissent¹³⁵," it does little to explain when and why this dissent occurs and in which situations dissent fails to arise.

The sequence works something like this: the administration commits to an intervention and frames it for the media; oppositional elites may respond in some number and with some intensity; media cover any initial debate. All this occurs quickly, and it is at this point, during the initial round of criticism, that power and strategy become most critical. By itself, media enterprise may bring useful new information before the public a day or two, but without the push from continued, strategically adroit opposition by anti-administration leader, potential counterframes receive insufficient magnitude and resonance to yield much learning or questioning by the public. The low salience to the public interrupts any tendency for oppositional thinking to spread further among elites, which in turn reduces its ability to cascade down repeatedly into prominent news reports and cohere into a counterframe. The paucity of publicly voiced opposition among U.S. elites discourages journalists' attention to critical views, both by depriving reporters of raw material (quotes) for use

¹³³ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid 7.

¹³⁵ Ibid 73.

in substantive criticism, and by keeping the proliferation of public opposition below the threshold of political significance¹³⁶.

In regard to this particular case study of media coverage and U.S. policies towards Hamas, this spiral of silence can be useful in attempts to explain how the both policy and media coverage have become locked into the status quo. If counterframes do not receive adequate attention, they will eventually fade, and over time it will become more difficult to resurrect such counterframes. Significant exogenous shocks to the status quo would become necessary in order to once again encourage the introduction of counterframes. The fact that the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary election was not sufficiently powerful to force a reintroduction of counterframes simply speaks to the strength of the dominant frame.

Another aspect of how the government's control over access to information can impact media coverage is the way in which this control affects the behavior of journalists during the different stages of foreign policy coverage. Nicholas Berry argues that in the early stages of foreign policy formation, the need for journalists to gain information leads them, almost inevitably, to government sources.

In the foreign policy formulation stage getting the story demands a focus on what U.S. officials say and do. Naturally, the president and his National Security Council dominate page one because they dominate foreign policy formulation. In the execution stage of what U.S. officials, diplomats, intelligence agents, or soldiers are doing also garners the lion's share of press coverage. There is a great deal of coherence and centralization, if not always wisdom, in foreign policy execution¹³⁷.

Due to the limited amount of information available about foreign policy matters, journalists are quite dependent on government sources. It should therefore come as no surprise that the

¹³⁶ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 73-74.

¹³⁷ Nicholas O. Berry, *Foreign Policy and the Press: An Analysis of The New York Times' Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 139-140.

media coverage present in the early stages will present the official government views of events. "The effect of all this finds reporting largely consistent with U.S. foreign policy, because the setting and the facts are largely consistent with that policy. They are home grown¹³⁸." Until the facts of an event become clear and reporters have time to gain an understanding of the background and nuance, media coverage is essentially the official government script.

It is important to note though that this influence decreases over time, as additional sources present themselves and competing frames are introduced by opposition leaders in the government.

However, at the outcome stage, getting the story means reporting on whether the foreign policy is having the intended effect abroad. Reporters rely less on what U.S. officials say and do and more on what foreigners say and do. When foreign events are inconsistent with policy, reporters are disposed to report just that – regardless of obvious attempts by the executive to manipulate the media¹³⁹.

This sudden influx of dissenting opinions, Berry asserts, makes it appear that the media is an active participant in foreign policy formation with a significant level of influence¹⁴⁰.

However, according to Berry this is not quite true. "Actually, they are trying to get the story as they were in the early stages, except they are doing a better job of it. The main reason for more incisive, in-depth reporting is the fact that reporters know far more about a foreign policy at the outcome stage than at the formulation stage¹⁴¹."

In addition to a lack of information about a particular event, a lack of knowledge can lead to an increased chance that reporters will accept policy consensus. "Journalists bring

¹³⁸ Nicholas O. Berry, *Foreign Policy and the Press: An Analysis of The New York Times' Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 140.

¹³⁹ Ibid 140.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid 140.

¹⁴¹ Ibid 140.

some knowledge to their coverage of events. Journalists also exist within Washington's foreign policy consensus with its set of assumptions. Both variables are inversely proportional. The more knowledge journalists have in an area, the less they rely on the foreign policy consensus to explain events. And vice versa¹⁴²." It is most often the case that journalists are asked to know the basics of many topics and areas, rather than to develop their knowledge of one particular area. "In academics, specialization is everything. In journalism, narrow specialization reduces one's overall capabilities and usefulness¹⁴³." Moreover, foreign affairs and the resulting policies are a very complex subject matter. "Understanding foreign policy requires knowing not only one's own political process, but also the political processes of other countries that are to be influenced by U.S. foreign policies. Few people are knowledgeable enough to judge the consequences of foreign policy action¹⁴⁴." This lack of knowledge combined with the complex nature of international politics results in reporters relying dominant storylines and policy consensus.

Each of the theories outlined in this chapter begin with the acknowledgement that the government, especially in the early stages of foreign policy formation, is easily the most abundant source of information. This power allows the administration a head-start on framing the issues, which was seen in the repetitive rhetoric utilized by Condoleezza Rice and Scott McClellan in the aftermath of Hamas's victory. However, in the days and weeks following, alternate views can become more obvious, and any counterframes that may emerge have the opportunity to challenge dominant frames. In the case of Hamas, however, we can see that the frame that has been in place for years was simply too entrenched. This

¹⁴² Nicholas O. Berry, *Foreign Policy and the Press: An Analysis of The New York Times' Coverage of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 140.

¹⁴³ Ibid 141.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid 141.

framing along with the spiral of silence described by Entman have kept both the American domestic media and the U.S. government locked into the status quo despite ineffective policies.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Since its inception, US policy towards Hamas has been remarkably stable. However, this stability has not been a product of successful and effective policy, but rather in spite of ineffective policies. In order to explain the longevity of these ineffective policies, this thesis sought to examine the role that the relationship between the government and the media plays in the formulation of foreign policy.

To do this, I utilized a number of different theories and approaches that dealt both with the media's influence over foreign policy, and the ability of the government to exert power over the media in foreign policy issues. Chapter 3 dealt with theories of media impact on foreign policy. While the CNN effect and other such approaches were worthy of mention, theories surrounding the practice of framing were clearly the most applicable in this case study. Chapter 4 embarked on an in-depth analysis of the frames at work in newspaper coverage of the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections. In the course of this analysis it became clear that despite the exogenous shock provided by the results of the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections was not enough to prompt the formation of the counterframes that could alter the discourse surrounding Hamas. Chapter 5 reversed the flow of power and influence in the search for answers. The featured approaches about the ability of the government to exert influence over the media in matters of international politics pointed out that it is important to remember that while the media can certainly play a role in encouraging

the growth of frames, it is ultimately the government that holds the most information and will make the final policy decisions.

To be clear, this thesis is by no means saying that Hamas is being inaccurately categorized as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Nor is it asserting that involving Hamas in negotiations would automatically lead to a more productive peace process. However, the current policy has been in place for the better part of three decades, and has failed time and time again to achieve its own goals. Rather, this thesis is meant to shed light on the fact that both media coverage and U.S. foreign policy have been allowed to stagnate, not because either is particularly effective, but because they have acted upon one another in a way that encourages the maintenance of the status quo.

Keeping in mind that agenda setting, the theoretical basis for this thesis, describes the way in which issues are presented and prioritized on the public and political agenda, this study illustrates some additional consequences of that process. In this case, not only has agenda setting made the Palestinian-Israeli conflict a central policy issue to several presidential administrations, but it has also framed the conflict in absolutes. From framing, the public and politicians alike know who is good and who is bad, who the United States should support and who should be treated as a pariah. However, the world is more nuanced than agenda setting and framing allow issues to be. In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, framing has allowed policies to remain in place, despite their ineffectiveness. Moreover, in this particular case, it is not purely the government or the media that takes precedence in setting the agenda. Rather, both parties are acting upon one another simultaneously in such a way that keeps both of them locked into the status quo.

Despite this pattern of behavior on the part of both the media and government when it comes to dealing with Hamas, there are signs that steps towards reform could be taken in the near future. In particular, President Obama has spoken about the importance of engaging in diplomacy with countries and groups considered to be threats to the United States or Israel if progress is to be made in the future.

Through the first year and a half of President Obama's time in office, the administration has not released a comprehensive foreign policy doctrine. However, that has not prevented political analysts from attempting to define what has been termed the "Obama Doctrine." The Obama Doctrine represents a marked shift from the approach to foreign policy under George W. Bush in that it seems to hold that measures taken to protect the national security interests of the United States do not need to violate the ideals that are at the core of the country. According to an article in *Newsweek* by Daniel Klaidman, Obama's approach to foreign policy, "is a carefully balanced approach that does not lend itself to pithy slogans. It reflects a melding of hardheaded realism and aspirational idealism that looks to be the hallmark of an emerging Obama doctrine"¹⁴⁵. This understanding of the Obama Doctrine is arguably the result of President Obama's repeated calls for the need to engage in diplomacy with rogue states, while still reserving the right as president to resort to sanctions or military force to protect American interests. President Obama's acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize has been held up as a prime example of an articulation of this doctrine. During the speech, President Obama stated that while war is sometimes necessary, he would also engage rogue states, and rely on sanctions before resorting to military force.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Klaidman, *Defining the Obama Doctrine* (*Newsweek*, 19 Dec 2009). Accessed 7 May 2010. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/227581>

But the president's speech was about much more than the regrettable necessity of war. It also contained the fullest exposition so far of Obama's evolving approach to global democracy, including his attempts at "engagement" with hostile regimes in places such as Iran, North Korea and Sudan – in other words, the emerging Obama doctrine.

"I know that engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation," he said. "But I also know that...no repressive regime can move down a new path unless it has the choice of an open door."¹⁴⁶

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that this approach was in place during the early days of the Presidential primary campaign, and had begun to solidify by the time the field had been narrowed down to Barack Obama and John McCain. Throughout the 2008 Presidential campaign season, then-Senator Obama made it clear that he did not believe that the practice of attempting to isolate groups such as Hamas was an effective way of inducing moderation. The first of three Presidential Debates between Senators Obama and McCain took place on September 26, 2008, and was focused primarily on foreign policy issues. When questions posed to the senators turned to the candidates' favored approaches to potentially threatening countries, Obama said that in addition to tougher sanctions, "...we are also going to have to, I believe, engage in tough direct diplomacy with Iran and this is a major difference I have with Senator McCain, this notion by not talking to people we are punishing them has not worked. It has not worked in Iran, it has not worked in North Korea...That will change when I'm president of the United States¹⁴⁷." President Obama has made it clear that any new dialogues would begin at a very low level, but that a willingness to negotiate with hostile groups could provide the best opportunity for significant progress.

¹⁴⁶ Doyle McManus, *Obama Doctrine emerges in Oslo speech* (Los Angeles Times, 13 Dec 2009). Accessed 7 May 2010. <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/13/opinion/la-oe-mcmanus13-2009dec13>

¹⁴⁷ *First Presidential Debate* (The New York Times, 26 Sept 2008). Accessed 7 May 2010. <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/debates/transcripts/first-presidential-debate.html>

Beyond repressive regimes and hostile states, this approach to foreign policy has also been applied by the Obama administration to Hamas. Diplomatic contacts with Hamas would admittedly begin at a very low level, but even in the weeks leading up to President Obama's inauguration there were reports that the incoming administration was prepared for such contact with Hamas.

The incoming Obama administration is prepared to abandon George Bush's doctrine of isolating Hamas by establishing a channel to the Islamist organization, sources close to the transition team say.

The Guardian has spoken to three people with knowledge of the discussions in the Obama camp. There is no talk of Obama approving direct diplomatic negotiations with Hamas early on, but he is being urged by advisers to initiate low-level of clandestine approaches, and there is growing recognition in Washington that the policy of ostracizing Hamas is counter-productive.¹⁴⁸

These are clearly small steps, but considering how well established the discourse and policies surrounding Hamas in the United States is, these steps are significant nonetheless.

This new approach was also featured in President Obama's speech in Cairo on June 4, 2009. In particular, President Obama emphasized the need for all peoples to work together towards a shared future, while still expressing the right of the United States to protect itself. "Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; our progress must be shared...In Ankara, I made it clear that America is not – and never will be – at war with Islam. We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security..."¹⁴⁹ In direct reference to Hamas and the Palestinians, President Obama said the use of violence must be abandoned, and called on Hamas to moderate and live up to the

¹⁴⁸ Suzanne Goldenberg, *Barack Obama administration 'prepared to talk to Hamas.'* (The Guardian, 9 Jan 2009). Accessed 8 May 2010.

¹⁴⁹ Barack Obama, *Remarks by the President on a New Beginning* (Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 4 Jun 2009).

responsibility they had been given by being elected. " Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have to recognize the have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist.¹⁵⁰" However, it is important to note that these statements were coupled with almost unprecedented calls upon Israelis.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

And Israel must also live up to its obligation to ensure that Palestinians can live and work and develop their society. Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be a critical part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.¹⁵¹

Once again, we see that while these are only small steps, they seem to be evidence of a significant shift in the approach the United States will take in forming foreign policy about Hamas.

As this thesis has shown, it can be extremely difficult to challenge the dominant frame. This is especially true in the case of Hamas, where the frame is strong and there are several groups that have an interest in maintaining it. However, it is important to keep in mind that the situation in which the United States finds itself is not entirely unfamiliar. In the 1980s, the framing of the PLO as a dangerous terrorist organization that would never make the necessary steps towards peace was quite strong. Over time, that frame was recast, and

¹⁵⁰ Barack Obama, *Remarks by the President on a New Beginning* (Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 4 Jun 2009).

¹⁵¹ Ibid

policies began to change. Most notably, a series of low-level diplomatic meetings took place in the late 1980s between the United States and the PLO, which allowed for greater steps forward in the future. These unofficial channels of communication and low-level diplomatic meetings proved to be vital to the peace process in the case of the PLO, and are quite similar to what has been proposed by the Obama administration.

However, as this thesis has shown, while political rhetoric must change, so too must the framing of media coverage change. In the case of the PLO, the intifada was a strong enough exogenous shock to the dominant frame that there was a shift in the way the media covered the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. "Within days images of savage Israeli beatings of Palestinian youngsters were a part of the American evening television news. Public reaction was strong. Even from within the normally pro-Israeli American Jewish community there was an outpouring of criticism and concern¹⁵²." Not only were the Palestinians being portrayed in a more sympathetic light, but coverage was increasingly critical of Israel.

Media coverage was comprehensive, and the mood in the United States – official and unofficial – was increasingly critical of Israel and its ironfisted policy. More and more people were expressing sympathy with the Palestinians and supporting their demands for an end to Israeli occupation.

Daily scenes of violence – Palestinian children brutally beaten, hospitals and schools teargassed, innocent men and women killed – were too much to tolerate.¹⁵³

This shift in the framing of the conflict marked a significant turning point in the ability of both the government and media to be critical of Israel and to suggest the possibility of negotiations with the PLO. This is, at least in part, because the negative backlash associated

¹⁵² William B. Quandt. Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967. 3rd ed. 274.

¹⁵³ Mohamed Rabie. U.S. – PLO Dialogue: Secret Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995. 5.

with challenging a dominant frame was no longer an issue. In the case of Hamas, this thesis has shown that the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections were not enough of a shock to the status quo to induce a reframing. However, with a presidential administration in place that is already discussing the possibility of meeting with Hamas, events in the future may provide the opportunity for the issues to be reframed.

There exist two primary avenues for future research. The first would involve expanding this study to include and account for television and the internet. While the New York Times and Washington Post are certainly elite media, television and internet has a much more direct impact on the general public. The alternate avenue for research would involve a more detailed examination of the politics involved in the development of foreign policy, and the passage of laws as related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

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