

## Prospects for Peace:

# A Panel of Experts Tells *Time* What Hamas's Victory Might Bring

by [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](/experts/dennis-ross)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Dennis Ross, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama, is the counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute.

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**D**ENNIS ROSS Former U.S. envoy to the Middle East

Hamas is going to have to make choices because they're going to need the outside world if they're going to deliver for the Palestinians. No one should make it easier for them and let them off the hook. International organizations and governments that want to get aid to the Palestinians shouldn't deal with Hamas without exacting a commitment to peace. The Hamas win will cement Israel's belief that there isn't a partner; the unilateral impulse will remain the driving force in Israeli politics.

MOISES NAIM Editor in chief of Foreign Policy

The optimistic view is that there is a silver lining to Hamas' ascent to power: there is nothing more educational and transformational than running a government in a poor country. The pessimistic view is that this will be the last election in Palestine for a long time, that Hamas' win will not go down in history as an example of the global march toward democracy but as another instance of the "one person, one vote ... one time" syndrome. It is too soon to tell which of these will be correct. The experiments in the Palestinian laboratory will yield answers with global consequences.

ABDUL SATTAR KASIM Political scientist at An-Najah National University in Nablus

Palestinians want to see an end to the corruption and chaos that we have felt for the past few years. There has been so much damage to the ethical and social fabric of our people that it's going to take time to rebuild. But Hamas is not

going to work to the timetable of the international community--I mean Israel and the U.S. It has its own timetable and priorities. At the same time, I hope Hamas will not cut all threads to past negotiations. I hope they are reasonable and rational because they can achieve a lot if they really want to.

ZIAD ABU AMR  
Gazan legislator and political scientist at Birzeit University

Hamas have been taken by surprise by this as much as anyone else. They expected a strong showing but not this overwhelming victory. They tried to form a national-unity government, but Fatah refused the offer. Now Hamas is on its own and figuring out how to handle things. Before it deals with the question of Israel, it will play to its domestic strengths. That means cleaning up corruption and building the social and welfare network it has run over a number of decades.

RICHARD HAASS  
President of the Council on Foreign Relations

It's important not to read too much into this. Hamas did not campaign on the question of Israel. They won because they stood for change, and they weren't associated with corruption. No matter who had won, the only peace process for the foreseeable future was one of continued Israeli withdrawal. If Ehud Olmert wins the upcoming election in Israel, the Israelis will make several withdrawals from the West Bank and then say, "We'll only go beyond here if we have a Palestinian partner." My sense is, no matter what happened last week, we'd have several years of sorting out on the Palestinian side.

DANIEL PIPES  
Director of the Middle East Forum

The Hamas victory will have the largest impact not in relations with Israel, where its goals and those of its predecessor Fatah resemble each other, but in two other arenas. Within the Palestinian Authority, Hamas will run a very different show from the anarchic, corrupt, sloppy dictatorship bequeathed by Yasser Arafat. Expect to see a far stricter, more religious, more disciplined order, with Fatah members, including Mahmoud Abbas, sidelined and probably repressed.

Second, Arab Islamists have already achieved electoral success and takeover in Iraq, but Hamas represents the first Arab Islamist terrorist group to be legitimated through the ballot box. Comparable groups in countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco will watch and be encouraged, should there be any show of acceptance of Hamas by the U.S. and other governments.



Time

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